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SISODIA VOWS NOT TO BOW **DOWN AMID FIR IN** RS 2,000-CRORE CLASSROOM SCAM



# Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme set to be implemented in Delhi

NEWDELHI: The Delhi Government is all set to sign an MoU with the National Health Authority to implement the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) on March 18, official sources said on Thursday.

With this, Delhi will become the 35th state/UT to implement the health insurance scheme. West Bengal will remain the

only state to not have adopted the scheme

"The MoU will be signed on March 18 in the presence of Union Health Minister JP Nadda and five families will be given AB-PMJAY cards making them beneficiaries of



The implementation of the scheme was one of the major promises of the BJP for the Delhi Assembly elections.

The previous AAP government had devised its own scheme and had refused to implement AB-PMJAY.

The BJP won the February 5 Delhi Assembly elections returning to power in the city after over 26 years.

The AB-PMJAY provides health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to approximately 55 crore beneficiaries corresponding to 12.37 crore families constituting economically vulnerable bottom 40 per cent of India's population.

On October 29, 2024, the Union Government had expanded the AB-PMJAY to provide free treatment benefits of up to Rs 5 lakh per year to all senior citizens aged 70 years and above, irrespective of their socio-economic status.

### RBI Likely to Cut Rates Next Month amid Easing Inflation: HSBC

**NEW DELHI:** After the decline in retail inflation in February to 3.6 per cent, the March inflation print is also trending below the RBI's 4 per cent target which is likely to lead to another rate cut by the central bank next month, according to an HSBC Research report.

"The RBI has already embarked on a rate cutting cycle and is likely to go in for another 25 basis points reduction in the April monetary policy committee meeting, taking the reporate to 6 per cent," HSBC Research

"Currently, March quarter inflation is trending lower than the RBI's forecast for the quarter. While winter crop sowing has been good, temperature in the next few weeks is important as the wheat crop is in its grainfilling stage," the report states.

Deflation in food continued for the second consecutive month in February, down 1.0 per cent month-on-month. This was led by a fall in vegetable, pulses and egg, fish & meat

prices. That said, prices of cereals, sugar and fruits rose, the report points out.

Core inflation, which excludes food and fuel goods, rose across all definitions due to a sharp rise in gold prices during February. However, excluding gold, core inflation also remained firmly below the 4 per cent mark in annual terms and, at its long-term average in sequential terms, the report said.

It also highlights that the rupee has depreciated by 4 per cent vs USD since October, which could add 30 bps to inflation, going by the FX sensitivities. However, a benign outlook on oil prices (HSBC commodity forecast for Brent is USD73/b for 2025), and Chinese excess capacity is likely to report added.

Yamuna's capacity to sustain life almost

non-existent in Delhi: parliamentary panel

keep a lid on core inflation. Putting it all together, we think that headline inflation will likely average 4 per cent in FY26, the report concludes.

RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra last month announced a 25 basis cut in the policy rate from 6.5 per cent to 6.25 per cent in the monetary policy review to accelerate growth amid global uncertainties.

He said that inflation has declined and is expected to further moderate and gradually align with the RBI's target of per cent.

HSBC has projected India's GDP growth at 6.5 per cent. It sees an upsurge in rural demand post-harvest, a growth impulse from a cut in the income tax rate for the middle class, and monetary policy easing is likely to support growth in the April-June quarter. However, weaker goods exports after the global restocking cycle, ahead of US President Donald Trump's tariff threats, could be a drag, the

#### President approves FIR against AAP leaders sisodia, jain in Rs 2,000 crore classroom scam



New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu has given her approval for the registration of an FIR against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) lead ers Manish Sisodia and Satyendar Jain in connection with an alleged Rs 2,000 crore scam in the construction of classrooms in Delhi govern ment schools, sources said. The approval comes under Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, which requires prior sanction for any inquiry, investigation, or inquiry into offences related to decisions taken by public servants in the discharge of

their official duties.

In 2022, the vigilance direc-

torate of the Delhi government recommended an investigation into the alleged scam and submitted a report to the chief secretary. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), in a report dated February 17, 2020, flagged "glaring irregularities' in the construction of classrooms undertaken by the Public Works Department (PWD). The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) report stated that the construction involved 12,748 classrooms, with a total expenditure of approximately Rs 2,892.65 crore. The report claimed that the construction was carried out at a rate of Rs 8,800 per square foot, whereas the average market cost for similar projects was around Rs 1,500 per square foot. Additionally, classroom construction costs were allegedly inflated to Rs 24.86 lakh per room, whereas similar rooms

lakh per room. The allegations first surfaced July 2019 when BJP leader Harish Khurana and then AAP rebel MLA Kapil Mishra, now a minister in the Delhi government, lodged a police complaint. They alleged that the Delhi government had carried out construction work at highly inflated costs, defrauding the taxpayer and siphoning off public funds under the pretext of development expenses. As per RTI documents, 18 classrooms at the Government Girls Senior Secondary School in Nathupura, Burari, were allegedly constructed at an exorbitant cost of Rs 12 crore, raising concerns over financial mismanagement.

could be built for around Rs 5

#### the scheme," the sources said. N. Ganapathy Subramaniam **Appointed Chairman of Tata**



MUMBAI: The Board of Tata Communications Ltd approved the appointment of N Ganapathy Subramaniam as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Tata Communications Limited on Friday.

Subramaniam had joined the Board of Tata Communications Limited as a non-executive director on December 2, 2021.

He has been a part of Tata Consultancy Services Limited (TCS) and the Indian IT In-

nounced that the Board of Directors of the Company have, based on the recommendation of the Nomination and Remuneration Committee, appointed N. Ganapathy Subramaniam, Non-Executive, Non-Independent Director as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Company with effect from March 14, 2025.

"He has played a strategic role in several landmark initiatives that TCS undertook across banking, telecom and public services globally," the company said in a statement.

# Centre Speeds Up Work on 8 Road, Railway and Metro Projects under PM Gatishakti Plan

NEW DELHI: The 89th meeting of the Network Planning Group (NPG) evaluated 8 infrastructure projects in the Road, Railway, and Metro sectors to enhance multimodal connectivity and logistics efficiency in alignment with the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Friday.

These initiatives are expected to boost logistical efficiency, reduce travel times, and deliver significant socio-economic benefits across regions, the statement said.

The four projects evaluated in the road sector include the development of a two-lane highway from Darugiri to Dalu secdustry for over 40 years. He tion in Meghalaya. The project stepped down as the Chief involves the development of the



in Meghalaya.

This 136.11 km-long stretch asses through East Garo Hills, South Garo Hills, and West Garo Hills, significantly enhancing regional connectivity. Given its strategic location, this corridor is essential for facilitating cross-border trade and regional economic development.

Director of TCS in May 2024. highway with a paved shoulder lane tunnel connectivity across Tata Communications an- along the Darugiri to Dalu sec- River Brahmaputra between tion of NH-62 (New NH-217) Gohpur and Numaligarh. The

project involves the construction of India's first-ever road tunnel beneath a major river.

The four-lane tunnel under the Brahmaputra will reduce travel time from 6.5 hours to just 30 minutes, shortening the distance from 240 km to 34 km. This twin-tube, unidirectional underwater tunnel The second project pertains will enhance connectivity to

and other northeastern states.

to four lanes of the Kaliabor-Numaligarh section was also taken up for evaluation.

This project aims to upgrade the existing highway from two lanes to four lanes along the Kaliabor-Numaligarh section (NH-37/NH-715) in Assam.

Covering 85.67 km across Nagaon, Karbi Anglong, and Golaghat districts, the project incorporates wildlife-friendly measures such as an elevated corridor and wildlife crossings to protect Kaziranga National Park's biodiversity. The fourth road projects involves the construction of a two-lane highway from Mayjilar to Jaisalmer with Jaisalmer Bypass Link Road.

Spanning 138.177 km, this project in Rajasthan includes brownfield and greenfield stretches along NH-11 and NHconnectivity, boost tourism, fa-The widening and improve-cilitate defence movement, and

### SEBI to Remove Digital Performance Tracking From Employee Appraisals

**NEW DELHI:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has decided to remove the linkage of its digital Management Information System from employee appraisals.

The regulator is now reassessing its performance review methods to bring in a more balanced approach, according to an NDTV Profit report.

An internal circular has been

issued regarding these changes. While the SEBI is working on modifying its review process, it will not completely discard the older methods but rather re-evaluate them for improvement, the report said.

The concept of Key Responsibility Areas (KRAs) has been a part of the bSEBI's system for over 20 years. However, like any evolving system, the regulator is



now considering changes to make performance assessments more effective. Previously, the SEBI employees' performance apprais-

als were significantly influenced by the digital Management Inwas not accurately represented through numerical targets, the report added.

#### formation System (MIS). The system tracked targets achieved and success rates, which played a crucial role in determining career progression. However, this approach led to concerns as some departments felt that their work

levels remain alarmingly high. The committee called for

**NEW DELHI:** A parlia- lution and restore the river's health. It added that out of the 33 monitored sites, only four in Uttarakhand and four in Himachal Pradesh met the primary water quality criteria.

out of the 33 monitored sites, The Central Pollution Conincluding six in the national trol Board (CPCB) assessed capital, failed to meet primary water quality at 33 locations water quality standards. between January 2021 and The Yamuna flows through May 2023, with state pola 40-km stretch in Delhi, enlution control boards. The tering at Palla from Haryana assessment covered four key parameters of Dissolved Oxyand exiting at Asgarpur into gen (DO), pH, Biochemical

The dissolved oxygen (DO) wels which reflect t capacity to sustain life, were found to be almost non-existent in the Delhi stretch, the parliamentary standing committee on water resources said in its report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday.

Uttar Pradesh.

mentary panel has said the

Yamuna river's capacity to

sustain life has been found to

be almost non-existent in the

Delhi stretch, noting that 23

In its report on the Upper Yamuna River Cleaning Project and river bed management in Delhi, the panel warned that despite the construction and upgrade of sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, pollution

#### all four monitored sites in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh met the required standards, while all six sites in Haryana failed. In Delhi, none of the seven sites complied with the standards in 2021, although the Palla site showed improvement in 2022 and 2023. The panel raised particular concerns over encroachment along the Yamuna floodplains. While Delhi and Haryana

provided information on en-

croachments, Uttar Pradesh

and Uttarakhand are yet to

Oxygen Demand (BOD), and

The analysis showed that

al Coliform (FC

a coordinated response from all stakeholders to tackle pol-

### furnish complete details. NASA Analysis Shows Unexpected Sea Level Rise in 2024

**NEW YORK:** Global Sea levels rose faster than anticipated in 2024, primarily due to the expansion of ocean water as it warms, NASA reported on Thursday.

A NASA-led analysis found that last year's rate of sea level rise was 0.59 centimetres per year, higher than the expected 0.43 centimetres per year, Xinhua news agency reported.

"Every year is a little bit different, but what's clear is that the ocean continues to rise, and the rate of rise is getting faster and faster," said Josh Willis, a sea level researcher at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Southern California.

The unexpected increase was attributed to an unusual amount of ocean warming, combined with meltwater from land-based ice, such as glaciers,

NASA explained. In recent years, about twothirds of sea level rise was driven by the addition of water from melting ice sheets and glaciers, with the remaining third attributed to thermal expansion



However, in 2024, these contributions were reversed, with two-thirds of the rise coming from thermal expansion, ac-

cording to NASA. "With 2024 as the warmest year on record, Earth's expanding oceans are following suit, reaching their highest levels in three decades," said Nadya Vinogradova Shiffer, head of physical oceanography programmes and the Integrated Earth System Observatory at NASA Headquarters in Washington. Since the satellite record of ocean height began in 1993, the rate of annual sea level rise has more than doubled. In total,

global sea levels have risen by 10 centimetres since 1993, according to NASA. The long-term record is based

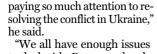
on observation from the oceanobserving satellites starting with TOPEX/Poseidon in 1992. The current ocean-observing satellite in that series, Sentinel-6 Michael Freilich, launched in 2020 and is one of an identical pair of spacecraft that will carry this sea level dataset into its fourth decade. Its twin, the upcoming Sentinel-6B satellite, will continue to measure sea surface height down to a few centimetres for about 90 per cent of the world's oceans.

# Putin thanks Modi, Trump for 'noble mission' to resolve Ukraine conflict

New Delhi: Russian President Vladimir Putin has thanked world leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for their "noble mission" to end the fighting between Ukraine and Russia

Putin said this on Thursday while making his first public remarks on Ukraine's ceasefire proposal. Putin confirmed on Thursday that Russia is ready to discuss a ceasefire but that the terms of such an arrangement should be clarified. Putin has said as far back as July 2024 that Moscow is not interested in short-term pauses but is ready to engage on addressing the causes of the conflict, RT News reported.

Washington and Ukraine both endorsed a 30-day temporary truce following a meeting between their respective delegations in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. "Before I assess how I view Ukraine's readiness for a ceasefire, I would first like to begin by thanking the President of the United States, Trump, for



to deal with. But many heads of state, the president of the People's Republic of China, the Prime Minister of India, the presidents of Brazil and South African Republic are spending a lot of time dealing with this issue. We are thankful to all of them, because this is aimed at achieving a noble mission, a mission to stop hostilities and the loss of human lives," Putin said. "Second, we agree with the proposals to stop hostilities. But our position is that this cease-

peace and eliminate the initial causes of this crisis." Since the Ukraine conflict began in February last vear, Prime Minister Modi has spoken to Putin as well as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky a number of times.

Modi, during a meeting with Trump at the White House last month, stressed that "India is not neutral" in its stand on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. "India is not neutral. India is siding with peace. I have already said to President Putin that this is not the era of war. I support the efforts taken by President Trump," the Prime fire should lead to a long-term Minister had said.

# West Bengal Leads in MSME Manufacturing & Women-Led Enterprises: CM Mamata Banerjee

KOLKATA: West Bengal has achieved a significant distinction by leading the country in MSME manufacturing industries while simultaneously recording the highest percentage of women-headed establishments, according to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's announcement on Monday.

The Chief Minister referenced the recently published findings of the 'Annual Survev of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises' conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO), which highlighted the state's exceptional performance across multiple economic sectors.

Banerjee shared this information through a post on the social media platform X, expressing pride in the state's achievements.

"Happy to share that the recently published findings of the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises conducted by the National Statistics Office, Government of India, once again establish Bengal's top position in MSME



simultaneously, our women's wonderful performance there," Banerjee stated in her social media post. The survey revealed that

West Bengal has the highest percentage of women-headed establishments in the country, standing at an impressive 36.4 percent. This statistic underscores

the significant role women entrepreneurs play in the state's economic landscape. Furthermore, the Chief Min-

ister noted that West Bengal has emerged as the national leader in workers engaged in 'Manufacturing Enterprises,' contributing 13.81 percent to the country's total workforce of seawater. in this sector.



# Sisodia vows not to bow down amid FIR in Rs 2,000-crore classroom scam

**OUR CORRESPONDENT** New Delhi

"File as many cases as you want-against me, Satyendar Jain, Atishi, Arvind Kejriwal, or any other AAP leader-we will not bow down before the BJP," asserted senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia on Sunday, hours after the President approved the registration of an FIR against him in connection

President Droupadi Murmu has given her approval for the FIR against Sisodia and his party colleague Satyendar Jain, sources confirmed. The case pertains to alleged irregularities

Rajasthan Housing Policy: Why Banning Other State

**Residents to Own Plot?** 

**JAG MOHAN THAKEN** 

The Indian Constitution has given

freedom to its citizens to reside and

settle in any part of the territory

of India as a fundamental right

under Article 19 (1) (e). Even in

the previously restricted areas of

Jammu and Kashmir, after abro-

gation of Article 370 in October

2020, the Union Home Ministry

(UHM) had issued a notification

stating that any Indian citizen can

buy land, except agricultural, in

municipal areas of Jammu and

Kashmir without being a domicile.

As per the notification issued by

the UHM, no domicile or perma-

nent resident certificate is required

for purchasing non-agricultural

Whereas, the BJP led cen-

tral government is taking pride

to claim that it has showered a

freedom bonanza to the citizens

of the country, empowering them

to purchase a plot and reside in the

Jammu and Kashmir regions, but

the same BJP led state govern-

ment in Rajasthan is restricting

the other Indian states residents

to purchase even a small size plot

to reside and settle there. Is it not

curtailing the fundamental right

of the citizens, residents of other

them to reside and settle anywhere

The Ban Prompts Illegal

Colonizers The restriction im-

posed by the Rajasthan govern-

ment compels the residents of

other states, who want to own a

plot in Rajasthan, either to pay

much higher rates to get a plot

in government approved bigger

townships, which are generally

developed for rich people, or due

to the luring cheap rates, they fall

prey to the illegal colonizers and

in the country?

land in Jammu and Kashmir.

with the alleged Rs 2,000-crore

classroom construction scam

in Delhi government schools.



execution of the project.

sion of the Budget Session of

Delhi Assembly will commence

on March 24 and last till March 28 with Chief Minister Rekha

Gupta presenting Budget 2025-

26 on March 25, said an official

After the discussions on the

Annual Budget on March 26, it

is likely to be passed on March

27, said a Bulletin issued by the

Assembly Secretariat. The Bul-

letin also indicated the revival of

the practices of Question Hour

and Private Members' resolu-

tions that were discontinued

under the AAP government

For transaction of business,

Speaker Vijender Gupta has

scheduled sittings on March

24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 besides

issuing fresh guidelines for is-

suing Visitors' Gallery Passes.

tion under Rule 280 of Rules

of Procedure and Conduct of

Business will also be restarted.

indicated the Bulletin.

The practice of Special Men-

on Monday.

Reacting to the FIR, Sisodia accused the BJP-led central government of using investigative agencies for political vendetta. "It has come to my attention that the central government has filed an FIR against me and Satyendar Jain regarding the construction of school buildings and classrooms," he stated. Sisodia also targeted the BJP over its unfulfilled electoral promises. "Holi is tomorrow. Where are the free cylinders you promised to Delhi families? When will you fulfil your commitment of providing Rs 2,500 per month to the women of Delhi?" he questioned.

The investigation into the alvigilance directorate recommended a probe and submitted a report to the chief secretary. The case gained traction following complaints filed in July 2019 and then AAP rebel MLA Kapil Mishra, who is now a minister

# Sprinklers, Anti-Smog Guns to Combat Pollution in Delhi: CM Rekha Gupta

Minister Rekha Gupta said in a statement on Thursday that sprinklers and smog guns would be deployed throughout the year except during the monsoon to combat pollution in the national capital.

To make Delhi pollutionfree, the Chief Minister outlined plans for a clean, green and healthy city.

"We are dedicated to creating a clean, green and healthy capital with the support of Delhi's residents," CM Gupta said in a post in Hindi on X.

Air Quality Management, Delhi Development Authority, and

erate pollution-control efforts.

side Delhi contribute signifition would follow any violations. cantly to pollution. That is why She directed the officials to we have directed the departpresent an action plan within

She added that under the

"We have started essential preparations to ensure a cleaner,

Rajasthan How government money is siphoned off under the guise

of government schemes? How the government officials misuse their power, post and lacunas of the system and how the officers, responsible for the check and balance, keep their eyes closed to overlook the ruining of the system? A sample of this came into public domain, when a question was asked on Monday by a member of the house in the Rajasthan Assembly regarding misuse of public money under Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme?

Fraud in PM Kisan Samman Nidhi: Who

Let the Loot Go?

On Monday, Minister of State for Cooperation (Independent Charge) Gautam Kumar in a written reply to the original question of MLA Kesa Ram Choudhary in the Assembly, informed that a total of 13 thousand 858 ineligible persons have been registered under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana in Marwar Junction Assembly constituency, who have received the benefit of Rs 826.66 lakh through various nstalments under the scheme. He placed the details of the amount transferred to these ineligible persons on the table of the House. He informed that out of these 13 thousand 858 ineligible persons, the names of 13 thousand 720 persons are such who are not residents of those villages. District Collector Pali has been directed to investigate this matter. After investigating the entire matter of showing ineligible farmers eligible and providing benefits, disciplinary

nel found responsible. The Minister said that the be taken against the culprits

after investigation.

action will be taken as per rules against the officials and person-

The Minister of State for Co-Samman Nidhi from ineligible

The review covered the key

"Our government is commit-

Regular inspections and immediate responses are crucial to improving air quality," CM Gupta asserted.

visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Delhi government had intensified efforts to combat air pollution as part of the Viksit Delhi Sankalp Patra (Developed Delhi

pollution-free capital."

# Delegation Visits Alwar, Condemns Police Brutality in Tragic Infant Killing



A high-level delegation from Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), led by Vice President Prof. Saleem Engineer and National Secretary Maulana Shafi Madani, visited Kolani (Telia Bas, Raghunathgarh) in Alwar district to express solidarity with the grieving family of a newborn tragically killed during a police raid. The appalling incident occurred on March 2 when personnel from Nogawan police station conducted an early morning raid under the pretext of investigating cybercrime. Shockingly, the operation was carried out without a warrant or the prescourse of their reckless actions, the police allegedly trampled a newborn child to death. This inhumane act has left the entire village in deep mourning and heightened fears of police excesses in the region. During their visit, the JIH delegation met the bereaved family, offering their heartfelt condolences and support. They also interacted with village elders and local leaders, includ-

# Delhi CM Rekha Gupta celebrates Holi, pledges prosperity and progress for capital



**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta expressed gratitude for the overwhelming love and support from the public, stating that leading the capital fills her with pride. She pledged to work towards making Delhi a progressive and prosperous city under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Speaking to a news agency, for the city's development. "We are receiving immense love from the people, but today, as Chief Minister, I feel especially proud. My responsibility is to paint the picture of Delhi with the colours of happiness and prosperity and make it a model of progress," she said.

The Chief Minister was seen celebrating Holi with locals in Pitampura and Shalimar Bagh, joyfully engaging in the festivities by smearing colours, embracing residents, and us-

ing water guns. Earlier in the day, she extended her best wishes to the people of Delhi and the nation, hoping that the festival would bring joy, love, and harmony into everyone's lives. She also urged citizens to celebrate Holi in an environmentally friendly and respectful manner. Gupta later attended the

'Holi Mangal Milan' event at the BJP office, where Delhi chdeva also marked the occasion. Sachdeva celebrated Holi with party workers, applying gulal and sharing the festive spirit. He remarked that this year's Holi felt especially significant with the BJP government now in power in Delhi.

The festival of Holi is being celebrated across the country, with people gathering in temples, streets, and homes to rejoice in the spirit of colours, music, and traditional

#### recovery will be made soon by following the prescribed procedure from the ineligible persons who took unfair benefits under the Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi. He said that an Additional District Collector has been appointed to investigate the case of improper transfer of funds under Kisan Samman Nidhi in Pali district. Action will

supplementary questions asked by the member in this regard during the Question Hour. He said that at the beginning of the Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, the benefit amount was transferred only on the basis of the declaration form given by the farmer. Later, uploading the land report was also made mandatory. The Central Government has also given instructions to recover the amount of

#### Police busted gang involved in fake recruitments with 5 arrests SATISH HANDA of India, inhabitants of any state

Police busted a gang involved in making fake recruitments with the arrest of five individuals who allegedly duped unemployed youths in search of jobs by promising them government jobs. Their modus operandi was fake websites, and issuing bogus appointment letters. The gang had got the idea to cheat unemployed youths resembling the Bollywood movie 'Special 26'. The police launched an investigation after receiving a complaint from Neeraj, a resident of Jatu Lohari in the district who alleged that the accused took Rs 7 lakh from him offering a job in the fictitious 'Shagun



and ID card issued to him was

Following his complaint, an FIR was registered by the police on February 24, 2025. Cyber Crime team, led by Sub-Inspector Vikas Kumar started investigation, cracked the case, found that the gang was running a racket to cheat unemployed youths by issuing fake appointments and Haryana Health and Fam- arrested the prime accused ily Welfare Council' scheme Baljeet and Ritu from Panipat and the appointment letter on March 3. Their interroga-

tion led to the arrests of their other three companions identified as Sanjay Kumar from Hisar on March 4, Balkar from Jind and Gulshan from Chandigarh on March 7. During the raid, police seized crucial evidence including 11 CPUs, 10 LCDs, 3 printers, 2 biometric devices, 13 mobile phones, 8 payment slip books, 22 cheque books of different banks and Rs 1,57,000 in cash from them and Rs 1,21,000 deposited in

### lose all their capital. **Holi Procession and Friday Prayers Conclude Peacefully Amid Tight Security In Sambhal**

Meanwhile, a large Holi pro-

cession passed near the mosque,

with around 3,000 people par-

ticipating. To maintain law and

order, a heavy police deploy-

ment was in place throughout

the city. Police Officer Anuj

Chaudhary expressed satisfac-

tion with the peaceful proceed-

ings. "People have celebrated

Holi with great harmony in

Sambhal. There have been no

reports of any disturbances.

Worshippers offered namaz

Local communities took

without any issues," he said.

the initiative to cover mosques

themselves. I thank Chief Min-

ister Yogi Adityanath for ensur-

ing law and order," he added.



Holi is being celebrated with joy and enthusiasm across the country. The festivities coincided with Friday prayers, which prompted heightened security measures to ensure peace and order in Uttar Pradesh, particularly in Sambhal, where last year a riot took place in which four people were killed. Holi celebrations in Sambhal

have remained peaceful and the planned processions on the festival were taken out across the city without any problem.

At the same time, namaz was also offered in different mosques in the city. At 2:30 p.m., worshippers gathered at the Shahi Jama Masjid to offer prayers on Sambhal Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Bishnoi also highlighted the cooperative spirit in the region. "Everything is going on peacefully and with affection. People here are fostering brotherhood. The diligent efforts of the Sambhal police have paid off," he remarked. Sub-Divisional Magistrate

(SDM) Vandana Mishra noted that a total of 68 Holi processions took place in Sambhal, including two that passed through areas with mixed populations. "Thanks to the teamwork of

our administration and security personnel, everything proceeded smoothly," she said. Sambhal DM Rajender Pen-

siya said, "People celebrated Holi with traditional fervour. More than 60 processions were taken out in the city under tight security. Given the overlap of Holi and

Friday prayers, authorities had issued an alert across the state, with special arrangements made in Sambhal to prevent any untoward incidents. A strong police presence and community cooperation ensured that both Holi festivities and Ramzan prayers were observed without disruption.

# Haryana has become a hub of paper leaks: Kumari Sailja



New Delhi

General Secretary of All India Congress Committee, former Union Minister and Member of Parliament, Kumari Sailja said that none of the examinations in the state has been conducted with transparency, paper leakage has become a common thing in every examination and Harvana state has become a notorious paper leak factory in the country and even the MBBS exams have not been spared, in which the answer books in both the annual and supplementary examinations were rewritten.

While talking to media persons, Kumari Sailja said that for a long time no exam has been completed in the state without any disruption. She said, paper leaks have become common in most of the examinations of the state due to cases of large-scale copying, increasing incidents of changing the answer sheets, going out of the answer sheets, copying by the examination invigilator are coming to the fore, rightly saying Haryana has come to be known as the paper leak factory. When there is no transparency in an exam, the most talented candidates are troubled by it.

# Police busted gang involved in fake recruitments with 5 arrests

busted a fake recruitment gang by arresting five individuals who allegedly duped unemployed youths by promising them government jobs. Their modus operándi — fake websites, fabricated recruitment exams and bogus appointment letters **SATISH HANDA** 

Bhiwani police have

Bhiwani

Police busted a gang involved in making fake recruitments with the arrest of five individuals who allegedly duped unemployed youths in search of jobs by promising them government obs. Their modus operandi was fake websites, fabricated recruitment exams and issuing bogus appointment letters. The gang had got the idea to cheat unemployed youths resembling the Bollywood movie 'Special 26'. The police launched an investigation after receiving a complaint from Neeraj, a resident of Jatu Lohari in the district who alleged that the accused took Rs 7 lakh from him offering a job in the fictitious 'Shagun Haryana Health



scheme and the appointment letter and ID card issued to him was found fake. Following his complaint,

and Family Welfare Council'

an FIR was registered by the police on February 24, 2025. Cyber Crime team, led by Sub-Inspector Vikas Kumar started investigation, cracked the case, found that the gang was running a racket to cheat unemployed youths by issuing fake appointments and arrested the prime accused Baljeet and Ritu from Panipat on March 3. Their interrogation led to the arrests of their other three companions identified as Sanjay Kumar from Hisar on March 4, Balkar from Jind and Gulshan from Chandigarh on March 7.

During the raid, police seized

crucial evidence including 11

CPUs, 10 LCDs, 3 printers, 2

biometric devices, 13 mobile

phones, 8 payment slip books,

banks and Rs 1,57,000 in cash from them and Rs 1,21,000 deposited in a bank account. Investigation revealed that the

22 cheque books of different

gang was operating from frauduent offices in Bhiwani, Jind, and Yamunanagar using a fake entity called 'Shagun Gramin Health and Family Welfare Council'. Their website was used to lure unemployed youth across Haryana, charging them hefty sums for bogus recruitment processes. According to police preliminary investigation, the scamsters had conducted fake recruitment exams in Hisar and issued appointment letters, ID cards and salary slips to nearly 50 fake recruits and sent them to rural areas to scam local residents by offering benefits under nonexistent government schemes like the 'Mukhyamantri Vivah Shagun Yojana' and 'Pradhan Mantri Shadi Shagun Yojana'.



in the construction of around 12,748 classrooms during Sisodia's tenure as Delhi's education minister. The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) report estimates the scam to be worth approximately Rs 2,892.65 crore, citing highly inflated costs in the

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta to Present

The Bulletin said members

who want to raise matters under

Rule-280 may give notice of the

same by 5 p.m. on the working

day preceding the date of sitting

on which the matter is proposed

to be raised. Balloting for fixing

inter-se priority for the first 10

notices will be held in the room

of the Secretary, Legislative As-

sembly at 9.30 a.m. on the day

which it is proposed to be raised,

it said. "Notices for Special men-

tion can be given for March

24, 26, 27 and 28. Members

are requested to confine the

text of the Special Mention to

8-10 lines only and not to devi-

ate from the original text while

raising the same on the floor of

Budget 2025-26 on March 25

NEW DELHI: The second sesting the House. Any

leged scam was initiated in 2022 when the Delhi government's

by BJP leader Harish Khurana in the Delhi government.

the House. Any deviation will

be disallowed and treated as

summarily expunged from the

proceedings. The matter should

relate to only one department

and raise only one issue," said

While issuing guidelines for Visitors' Gallery, the Speaker has

mandated that members should

recommend the names of per-

sons for visitors' gallery only

if they are personally assured

about the visitors' antecedents.

for passes will not be entertained

unless they bear the signature

and stamp of the MLA con-

cerned and are enclosed with

copies of photo I-Cards of the

visitors duly attested by the

concerned MLA. "Telephonic

requests for issuance of passes

will not be entertained and ap-

plication forms for the issue of

visitors' gallery passes must be

submitted by 5 pm on the work-

ing day previous to the date for

which the visitors' gallery passes

are required," said the Bulletin.

The Bulletin said applications

the Bulletin.

She chaired a meeting to discuss steps to make the national capital cleaner and pollutionfree that was attended by Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa and senior officials from the environment and the public works departments, Delhi Police, Commission for

During the meeting, the Chief Minister directed the departments and the agencies to accel-

She also directed increasing the number of enforcement teams at Delhi's borders to monitor vehicle emissions.

"Vehicles coming from out-

ments to increase enforcement teams at the border points and install digital display boards to raise awareness about pollution," the statement quoted Emphasising the need for regular upkeep to control dust pollution, CM Gupta said, "All

road-owning agencies, including the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, public works department and the Delhi Development Authority, have been instructed to submit weekly reports on road repair and cleanliness.

contributors to pollution, with the Chief Minister stressing that strict monitoring and swift ac-

a week to ensure coordinated efforts among the departments. ted to safeguarding the people of Delhi from air pollution.

Resolution).

# Jamaat-e-Islami Hind



**KAVITA SHARMA** 

ing former Rajasthan minister Mr. Nasruddin, who provided a detailed account of the situation.

# Holi a symbol of India's precious cultural heritage: President Murmu

Droupadi Murmu extended her heartfelt greetings to the nation on the auspicious occasion of Holi, emphasising that the festival is a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage.

In a message shared on the social media platform X, she highlighted Holi as a celebration of unity, love, and harmony, urging the country to come together in spreading the colours of progress and prosperity.

"Heartiest greetings to all countrymen on the auspicious occasion of Holi, the festival of colours. This festival of joy gives the message of unity, love and harmony. This festival is also a symbol of India's precious cultural heritage. Come, on this auspicious occasion, let us all together pledge to fill the lives of all the children of Mother



India with the colours of continuous progress, prosperity and happiness, "President Murmu wrote in her post. Union Home Minister Amit Shah also took to social media to wish the nation, posted on X. Similarly, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh shared his festive wishes with the nation, emphasising the joy and energy that Holi brings. "Heartiest greetings to all of

you on the auspicious festival of Holi. This festival, a symbol of joy, happiness and new energy, may fill your life with the colours of happiness and good health, this is my wish. May your Holi be joyful and safe! Best wishes to you on the vibrant festival of Holi! May the colours of joy, enthusiasm & amp; new energy fill your life with happiness and health. Have a wonderful & amp; safe Holi!" he wrote. The nation is celebrating Holi on Friday with a spirit of unity, highlighting the cultural significance of the festival and reinforcing the importance of togetherness and joy.

# ED Begins Probe, Conducts Raids in Ranya Rao Gold Smuggling Case

ment Directorate (ED) on Thursday launched an investigation into the sensational gold smuggling case involving Kannada actress Ranya Rao, the stepdaughter of Karnataka DGP K. Ramachandra Rao.

Sources confirmed that the ED has conducted searches and raids at eight locations in Bengaluru and other places. The sleuths have conducted raids till late in the evening at the residence of Ranya Rao on the upscale Lavelle Road in Bengaluru. The sleuths did not even take lunch break and the food was taken to them.

Simultaneous raids were also conducted on the residence of Tarun Raju, a close friend of Ranya Rao and grandson of a star hotel owner on the Kumara Park East Road in Bengaluru. Tarun has been arrested and



grilled by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) currently. The raids were also conducted on the owner of a gold mortgage and loan company in Koramangala locality of Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) was also conducting raids at nine locations across Bengaluru, targeting the flats and properties of Ranya Rao's husband, Jatin Vijaykumar Hukkeri. On

Tuesday, Jatin obtained an interim order from the High Court restraining the DRI from arresting him. Sources revealed that investigations have found that Ranya Rao had booked roundtrip tickets from Bengaluru to Dubai using Jatin Hukkeri's credit card, raising suspicions about his involvement in the gold smuggling case. The ED has lodged ECIR (Enforcement Case Information Report) in the case and tracking movement of gold and hawala transactions. On the other hand the CBI is probing the syndicate, international links and involvement of officers. The DRI is probing the aspect of involvement of Ranya Rao and others. It is revealed in the probe that DGP K. Ramachandra Rao, the step father of Ranya Rao had made call to the protocol officer Basavaraj





Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, extended his wishes to women on the occasion of International Women's Day, acknowledging their vital role in shaping

Taking to X, Rahul Gan-dhi posted, "Women are the backbone of our society. Their strength, resilience, and voice shape our nation's future."

"On this International Women's Day, I stand with you and for you -- committed to breaking every barrier until every woman is free to shape her own destiny, chase every dream, and rise to greater heights. Happy Women's Day!" Rahul Gandhi added.

LoP Gandhi also shared a video message in which he encouraged women to become self-reliant and independent, urging them not to be suppressed by anyone.

He highlighted the significant role of homemakers, stressing that women caring for their children at home are equally contributing to the nation's future.

Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge also extended his greetings, stressing the importance of gender equality for national progress.

"National transformation begins with gender equality. Women, through their wisdom, dedication, and strength, are powerful agents to reshape societies. Greetings on International Women's Day 2025!" Kharge posted on X.

Congress leader and Wayanad MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also took to X to greet women on the special occasion.

#### progress and affluence in the extending his warm greetings TN Govt's Removal of Rupee Symbol From Budget Logo Undermines National Unity: FM Sitharaman

Minister M.K. Stalin's decision to remove the rupee symbol (₹) from the logo of the state's 2025-26 Budget, which will be presented in the Assembly on Friday, has sparked widespread criticism.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is among the latest to condemn the move.

Taking to social media platform X, she criticised the DMK government, calling it "a completely avoidable example of language and regional chauvinism". She also said that the decision reflects a dangerous mindset that undermines India's unity. Union Minister Sitharaman questioned the DMK's opposition to the rupee symbol, pointing out that it was officially adopted in 2010 under the Congress-led UPA government, during which the DMK was part of the ruling alliance at the Centre.

"This is more than mere sym-



bolism — it signals a dangerous mindset that weakens Indian unity and promotes secessionist sentiments under the pretence of regional pride. A completely avoidable example of language and regional chauvinism," she

She also reminded elected representatives of their constitutional duty to uphold the sovereignty and integrity of the nation, adding that removing a national symbol from state **Budget documents contradicts** that commitment.

Union Minister Sitharaman

also highlighted the irony be-

hind the decision, pointing out

that the rupee symbol was de-

signed by D. Udaya Kumar, the

son of former DMK MLA N.

on this vibrant occasion.

"Heartiest greetings to all the

countrymen on the festival of

joy, enthusiasm, and colours,

'Holi'. May this festival of co-

lours bring increased prosperity,

Dharmalingam. By erasing it now, the DMK is not only rejecting a national symbol but also utterly disregarding the creative contribution of a Tamil

youth," she said. BJP IT Cell Chief Amit Malviya also criticised the move, emphasising that Udaya Kumar, who designed the symbol in Devanagari script, is the son of a former DMK MLA. "Chief Minister Stalin is inword for rupee. sulting Tamilians by dropping

the Tamil Nadu Budget 2025-26 document," he wrote on X. Meanwhile AIADMK General Secretary and Leader of the Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami also condemned the DMK government's move, calling it a publicity stunt to

the Indian rupee (₹) sign from

In a social media post, he accused Chief Minister Stalin of engaging in "empty advertisement campaigns" that do not address the people's real needs.

divert attention from admin-

He also criticised CM Stalin for delivering "scripted dialogues written by others", dismissing the move as a political

Tamil Nadu BJP President K. Annamalai joined the chorus of criticism, questioning Stalin's decision to replace the rupee symbol with the Tamil letter

"Ru" from "Rubaai", the Tamil

"The DMK government's state Budget for 2025-26 replaces the rupee symbol, which was designed by a Tamilian and adopted by the entire nation. How stupid can you become, Thiru @mkstalin?" he wrote.

The controversy comes amid an ongoing dispute between the Tamil Nadu government and the Centre over language policies, with the DMK-led administration repeatedly accusing the Union government of imposing Hindi.

The removal of the rupee ymbol is seen as part of this broader opposition, escalating Tamil Nadu's resistance to the National Education Policy.

The Tamil Nadu government defended its decision, stating that the Budget logo, released on Thursday, now carries the Tamil letter "Ru" from "Rubaai" to reflect the state's linguistic

### Hold discussion on voters list in Parliament, demands Rahul Gandhi

Rahul Gandhi demands to hold discussion on voters list in Parliament

**NEW DELHI:** The Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi on Monday demanded a detailed discussion in the Parliament on the contentious issue of voters list, citing alleged discrepancies in the electoral rolls and duplication of **Electors Photo Identity Card** (EPIC) numbers. Rahul Gandhi, speaking in

Lok Sabha during the Zero Hour, said that the entire Opposition wanted a discussion on the voters list and appealed to Speaker Om Birla to facilitate the same.

Congress MP's demand for a discussion on the electoral rolls comes in the wake of the raging controversy over EPIC numbers. Days ago, Congress and TMC trained guns on



manding that it must come clean on the 'duplicacy' in the electoral rolls, failing which it will carry out an 'expose' on the poll panel. Last month, Congress also

questioned the alleged anomalies in Maharashtra Assembly elections claiming that more voters were added to the list in the past five months, as compared to the past five years. Raising the pitch on the alleged discrepancies, Rahul Gandhi said in Lok Sabha, "The voter lists are being questioned across the country.

strengthening press infra-

access to information, and

safeguarding journalists'

rights. Steps will be taken to

revive and support the Press

Club in both Jammu and Sri-

nagar, providing journalists

with a dedicated space for pro-

fessional collaboration and

when the J&K administration structure, ensuring greater suspended the registration of the KPC just as it was preparing for elections. The club had around 300 registered journalists. Official records indicate that the re-registration of the KPC was put on hold due to pending verification of its managing body members by

public discourse," he said. His remarks come amid freedom in the region. National Conference legislator Bashir Ahmad Veeri recently raised the issue of journalists allegedly being detained for reporting on the felling of their work without fear or chinar trees in Anantnag. He urged the Speaker to intervene and ensure journalists are protected from harassment.

press club since January 2022,

security agencies. Omar Abdullah further as-

would work towards creating a more secure and transparent environment for journalists. "We will ensure that media professionals can carry out undue restrictions. Our commitment to press freedom is unwavering, and we recognize the need for a thriving Srinagar has been without a and independent press in a democratic society," he added.

# Sexual crimes against women at alarming stage, unacceptable says JIH

KAVITA SHARMA New Delhi

The National Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH), Ms. Rahmathunnisa, has voiced strong concern over the alarming rise in crimes against women in India on the occasion of In-Briefing the media at the JIH

Monthly Press Conference at their headquarters, Ms. Rahmathunnisa said, the latest NCRB report records 51 cases of crimes against women per 100,000 women in 2022, with a rape reported every 16 minutes. This is alarming and unacceptable. The conviction rate of 69.4% for murder with rape/gang rape drops to 27.4% for rape cases,

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader

Rahul Gandhi extended his

heartfelt greetings to the na-

tion on the occasion of Holi, highlighting the vibrant and

joyous spirit of the festival on

Taking to social media plat-

form X, Gandhi shared his

wishes with the public, stat-

ing, "Heartiest greetings to

all of you on the holy festival

of Holi. May this festival of

trymen on Holi.

"Let us fill our multi-cultural



exposes the grave failure in our and is leading to poor deter- must be enforced effectively, but rence as the NCRB data shows. Recent incidents, including the Prophet Muhammad (peace be rape and murder of a medical doctor in Kolkata and the rape you is the one who has the best of a woman in a bus in Pune, morals." We urge the governreveal the fragility of women's ment, educational institutions, safety in our country. The harassment of Union Minister Raksha Khadse's daughter proves that and move beyond tokenism to let alone common women, even VIPs are not safe and secure."

May this festival of colours bring new enthusiasm, excitement: Rahul Gandhi

Delving on the moral aspect of the crisis, the JIH National Secretary said, "Thousands of unreported cases of eve-teasing and molestation highlight a deep moral decay in society. Jamaate-Islami Hind asserts that real societal reform is equally crucial. upon him) said, "The best among and civil society to instill respect for women from an early age ensure women are treated with the dignity they deserve.

### Omar Abdullah hints to reopen Kashmir Press Club in Srinagar Jammu

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, in a significant budget statement, underscored his government's unwavering commitment to press freedom in Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing the legislative empowerment lies in securing assembly, Abdullah emphawomen's safety, dignity, and sized the vital role of the media in upholding d strengthening institutions, and ensuring transparency in governance.

Ömar Abdullah has indicated that his government may work towards reopening the Kashmir Press Club (KPC) in Srinagar, which was shut down three years ago under the Lieutenant Governor's administration.

Speaking during his budget



on Friday, Abdullah emphasized the importance of a free

democracy.

and independent press in a

# "We are committed to

#### Foreign Tourists Join Holi Food wastage: India fares better than global annual average of 79 per kg per capita Festivities in Varanasi

Nations Environment Programme Food Waste Index Report 2024, the estimated food wastage in India in 2022 is 55 kg/capita/year which is significantly lower than the global average of 79 kg/capita/year, shows official data.

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FS-SAI) takes measures to prevent food wastage, including "Save Food Share Food" Initiative to promote surplus food donation by industry, including food caterers. According to Minister of State for Consumer Affairs. Food and Public Distribution B.L. Verma, to combat the problem of minimal outreach of surplus food distribution agencies, a pan India network of surplus food distribution agencies has been created as Indian Food

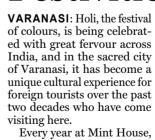
Sharing Alliance (IFSA). "A total of 82 agencies have been registered under IFSA reaching out to 90-plus cities. There is a dedicated website for share food which provides a city-wise list of IFSA members and information on prevention

of food waste, "said Verma. He said states/UTs are advised from time to time by the Central government to include a chapter on prevention of food wastage in the school syllabi to inculcate awareness among young students and sensitise



them on prevention of food waste. The FSSAI releases the State Food Safety Index (SFSI) annually that reflects the overall performance of the states/ UTs on various parameters of food safety. The index evaluates the performance of state on parameters including compliance, consumer empowerment, training and capacity building, food testing infrastructure and surveillance. Kerala with a score of 63,

Punjab (57.5), Tamil Nadu (56.5), Madhya Pradesh (56), Uttar Pradesh (52.5) and Gujarat (48.5) are some of the high ranked states in the Index Rankings. Among Union Territories, J& K and Delhi are among the top performers with scores of 59.5 and 49.5. The Ministry, however, maintains that the scores allocated to States/ UTs in various SFSIs may not be compared to analyse and capture the issues and progress made by states/UTs in various parameters of food safety as



travelers from around the world gather to immerse themselves in the joyous spirit of Holi, dancing and smearing each other with bright gulaal, to a mix of Indian and international tunes.

One first-time visitor from abroad shared, "I'm loving it! This is my first Holi in India, and it's amazing to see how everyone is celebrating together."

Another tourist expressed similar excitement, saying, "I am first time celebrating Holi here, and it's such a great experience.

Rajendra, the event organiser, explained, "We started this celebration about 20 years ago. Every foreigner who visits us gets to see and experience our culture, and they come specifically for Holi.

As the entire nation joins in the colorful revelry, Indian leaders have extended their heartfelt greetings for the occasion. Prime Minister Narendra



Modi wished everyone a joyful piness," she shared. Holi, praying for happiness and unity

"May this festival, filled with joy and vibrant colours, bring new energy into everyone's lives and strengthen the unity among our people," he posted on X. President Droupadi Murmu also conveyed her warm wishes, highlighting the significance of Holi in promoting love and harmony.

"Holi is a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage, and it brings people together. On this auspicious day, let us pledge to fill every child's life with progress, prosperity, and hap-

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, too, extended his wishes, praying for the public's well-being and health. "May this festival bring joy, good health, and new energy into your lives," he posted.

The festival of Holi began across the country on Thursday, from Chhoti Holi. People come together to celebrate with colours, music, and traditional festivities.

From temples to streets, vibrant hues and joyous gatherings mark the onset of the festival, symbolising the triumph of good over evil.

colours bring new enthusiasm, new excitement and lots of happiness in your life.' Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge also shared his wishes, reflecting on the deeper significance of the to have harmony and goodwill, colours, joy, enthusiasm, hap-He called for fostering Taking this to social media harmony and goodwill and platform X, Kharge wrote, "Holi is a festival of diversity. echoed the true spirit of the It is a festival of eradicating festival, which celebrates not fear, malice, jealousy, hatred just colours, but human conand discrimination. Holi inspires us to enjoy the diversity Congress leader Priyanka wrote. of colors. Heartiest wishes and

congratulations to all the coun-

Gandhi Vadra also extended greetings on Holi. She took to X to extend

her Holi wishes, emphasising society with vibrant colours, themes of brotherhood and spirit of unity and brotherhood equality. "Heartiest greetings and take a pledge once again on Holi, the great festival of and joy.

piness, brotherhood, equality and harmony. While playing Holi, embrace everyone with love. Share happiness with your family, society and every citizen of the country. Happy Holi to all of you!" Priyanka

The nation is celebrating Holi on Friday with a spirit of unity, highlighting the cultural significance of the festival and reinforcing the importance of togetherness

# **NEW DELHI:** As per United

parameters are not constant and are updated from time to time.



# India's growth resilient, but risks persist

ndia's economic momentum received a much-needed boost in February, with the services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) surging to 59. This sharp rise follows the encouraging GDP growth figures released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) for the December quarter (Q3FY25). The services PMI's rebound from a 25-month low of 56.5 in January helped counterbalance a decline in the manufacturing PMI, which dropped to a 14-month low of 56.3. With both sectors still in expansion mode, India's economic fundamentals remain robust despite capital outflows from its markets. Manufacturing and services, which have constituted nearly 80% of India's GDP since 2010, continue to demonstrate resilience. A key reflection of economic strength is the strong net profit growth reported by most companies in the benchmark Sensex index for Q3FY25. However, despite these positive indicators, India's economy faces formidable headwinds that could disrupt this trajectory. The global trade landscape presents a growing challenge. The United States, under President Donald Trump's administration, has announced reciprocal tariffs set to take effect on April 2. This move threatens India's manufacturing exports and could impede the sector's recovery. Meanwhile, the services sector is grappling with rapid advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), which are reshaping industry practices, reducing earnings from new contracts, and altering traditional hiring and training models. Although the NSO reported 6.2% real GDP growth for Q3FY25, IT sector leaders have expressed concerns that industry growth could slow to 5.1% in FY25, up from 3.8% in FY24. While this remains an increase of \$29 billion, bringing the sector's value to \$283 billion, the long-term implications of AI disruptions and global protectionism cannot be ignored. India's econom ic outlook depends on its ability to navigate these challenges. Policymakers must prioritize diversifying trade partnerships and fostering innovation to sustain long-term growth. A strategic approach will be crucial in ensuring India's continued economic

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resilience amidst global uncertainties.

## Don't be much closer to anyone,

Because a small change in their behaviour hurts a lot

### THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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**EDITOR\* ABDUL WASEY** 

(\*RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTION OF NEWS UNDER THE PRB ACT)

#### DR. ARUN GUPTA ON HOW WEAK LAWS LET JUNK FOOD GIANTS PRIORITIZE PROFITS OVER HEALTH



# Food norms fuel obesity crisis

ime Minister Narendra Modi's call to tackle obesity and the 2025 Economic Survey's recommendation of imposing a 'health tax' on ultra-processed foods (UPFs) to curb their consumption are both laudable. But these efforts risk being derailed by India's ambiguous, industry-friendly, and subjective food marketing regulations. In India, one in four adult men and women are obese and one in four adults are either diabetic or pre-diabetic (National Family Health Survey-5). This underlines the urgency

Right to Information responses and official communications expose how various Ministries and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have not been able to implement the labelling or advertising regulations planned in 2017 and continue to rely on regulations that are ambiguous and subjective in nature. No wonder there are so many advertisements of UPFs, and no front-of-pack labels yet.

#### Labelling and advertising

of the problem.

In September 2022, the FSSAI proposed the Indian Nutrition Rating, a health star' labelling system modelled on Australia's not-so-successful framework, which was developed by a food industry technologist. In this system, half a star means that the food is 'least healthy' and 5 stars means that it qualifies as 'healthiest'. Right to Information responses confirm that the FSSAI relied on an IIM Ahmedabad study to justify the rating system — a study it never critically evaluated. Worse, food industry representatives dominated key stakeholder meetings and members of the scientific panel were sidelined. The whole process sided with industry, as a member of the stakeholder group pointed

out. Moreover, the FSSAI ignored its own 2021 draft regulations indicating 'traffic light' colour-coded and mandatory warning labels and instead bowed down to industry lobbying.

The Indian Nutrition Rating system is flawed because the stars, at best, can mislead consumers by creating a health halo on all pre-packaged unhealthy food products. The system allows foods high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS) and UPFs, such as biscuits, flaunt two stars on the packet when they might otherwise have four warning signals. Similarly, a soft drink that should have a high warning in sugar instead gets two stars. Corn flakes, which is is high in sugar and sodium, gets 3 stars. This means that the system allows all these foods to be some level of healthy.

Globally, warning labels that say the product is high in sugar/salt or bad fats allow consumers to know the true nature of the product and make a choice. Most of the front-of-pack labels in use today are warning labels. For instance, Chile's

black 'high in' labels reduced consumption of UPFs by 24%. The fix is therefore to ensure that front-of-pack labels are notified soon and replace stars with mandatory 'high in' warnings on HFSS foods and UPFs, based on the World Health Organization's guidelines or the National Institute of Nutrition's Dietary Guideline for Indians.

India has four laws to curb misleading advertising for HFSS/ UPFs but none of them is effective, according to reports and data. The National Multisectoral Action Plan, 2017, called for an amendment to these laws to include restric-

tions on advertisements on HFSS foods, but no regulatory action has been taken so far.

Existing regulations are ambiguous and subjective. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, defines as 'misleading' any product or service that deliberately conceals important information. If we interpret important information to be about fat/sugar or salt, FSSAI does not agree. FSS regulations nowhere specify that nutritional information of a food product must be provided in the advertisement. This means that a cola drink can target people, especially children and youth, without disclosing that the drink contains 9-10 teaspoons of sugar per bottle. FSS regulations are yet to provide a definition of HFSS or UPFs and thresholds beyond which these will be regulated.

The result is continued freedom to advertise unhealthy addictive food products across media. This puts people at risk of obesity and diabetes. Studies show that

if regulations banning junk foods are implemented, it would cut the rate of childhood obesity significantly.

#### The path forward

The Economic Survey rightly demands stringent front-of-pack labels and stricter marketing curbs. To achieve this, India needs to take the following steps. First, it needs to scrap the Indian Nutrition Rating system and adopt warning labels. Second. there must be clear sugar/salt/fat limits for HFSS foods. The World Health Organization's SEARO guidelines and the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Nutrition guidelines offer a template. Third, advertising loopholes need to be closed through the amendment of existing laws or the enactment of a new one harmonising all laws under a unified UPF/HFSS advertisement ban. Fourth, the government could consider launching a campaign on the risks of UPFs in all languages

India's obesity crisis is not a public failure but a policy failure. The Economic Survey offers a road map to rectify this. Without urgent action, the plan to halt obesity by 2025 will not be successful. The Prime Minister's vision of a healthy India demands more than rhetoric; India needs a regulatory approach that does not sacrifice children's health for corporate profit. The suggestions in the Economic Survey can break the cycle to achieve the Prime Minister's vision. It is for the policy makers to show urgency and will.

Dr. Arun Gupta, pediatrician, public health expert, and convenor of the Nutrition Advocacy in Public Interest. He is a former member of the PM's Council on India's Nutritional Challenges. Views are personal.



JAYNA KOTHARI SAYS NORMALIZE WOMEN'S APPOINTMENTS IN HIGHER JUDICIARY FOR TRUE EQUALITY

# Bridge the gender gap in higher judiciary



omen in law have seen great progress over the last 100 years in India. The first woman lawyer, Cornelia Sorabji, was entitled to practice in 1924. Since then, the number of women lawyers has increased. several women have been designated Senior Advocates, and there have been many women judges in the lower judiciary.

However, there remains a glass ceiling for women in the higher judiciary. The share of women judges in the High Courts is only 14.27% (109 out of 764). In eight High Courts, the number of woman judges is limited to just one. The High Courts of Uttarakhand, Meghalaya, and Tripura have no woman judge. The Allahabad High Court, which is the largest High Court in the country with 79 judges at present, has only three women judges (2%). Not only is there a disproportionately low number of women judges in the High Courts, but they are also of appointment of men is 51.8 years, but for women it is 53 years. Thus, women judges do not reach positions of seniority. Out of 25 High Courts, only the Gujarat High Court has a woman Chief Justice.

The numbers for the Supreme Court are much worse, with only two women judges  $serving \ at \ present-Justice \ B.V. \ Nagarathna$ and Justice Bela Trivedi. With Justice Bela Trivedi due to retire in June 2025, the top Court will be left with just one woman judge. The last woman judge appointed to the Supreme Court was in 2021. Since then, 28 judges have been appointed to the Supreme Court, and not a single of them is a woman. Over the last 75 years, the Supreme Court has elevated nine men from the Bar directly to the Supreme Court, but only one woman



has been elevated directly from the Bar to

Many justifications are given for not appointing women. It is said that there not enough women with seniority, or that women do not want to become judges. All of this is merely top dressing, when the underlying factor is one of deep inequality, to borrow the analogy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. One of the main causes for the exclusion of women from the higher judiciary is deep-rooted and systemic inequality, where women are seen as inferior within the legal profession. Women lawyers nominated for judgeship face heightened scrutiny. Far from compromising on merit, women are almost always required to prove merit more than men.

We also have the collegium system of appointments, which is opaque and nontransparent. There are no clearly stated criteria for eligibility or merit and there is

no transparency in the process. This also works against women. The collegiums almost always comprise men and little or no effort is taken to get names of meritorious women lawyers for elevation. This is not the only hurdle. Even when names of women are recommended by the collegium, women are disproportionately not confirmed by the government. Since 2020, nine women's names were recommended by the collegium for appointment to the High Courts, but were not confirmed. Of these, five were the only names to be rejected.

This year, as we celebrate International Women's Day and 75 years of the Supreme Court, we need a transformation of our courts. Constitutional courts have to be gender equal in the true sense, where women are working, serving and leading in equal measure, especially on the Bench.

#### Steps towards equality

Women's representation in the judiciary is key to ensuring that courts represent their citizens and hand down sound judgments. Having an equal number of women on the Bench will enhance the legitimacy of courts and give a signal that our judiciary is inclusive and representative of the people whose lives they affect.

First, the collegium could frame a transarent process and provide clear criteria for appointment. This must include a process for lawyers to express interest in being considered for appointment, such as through applications. There must be

dards of excellence and integrity, and a specified time frame during which the recommendations be made.

clear criteria based on the highest stan-

Second, there has to be a focus on gender diversity while making appointments. Diversity and merit are not contradictory; rather, in a pluralistic society such as ours, diversity makes the judiciary more representative, thus fostering impartiality and enhancing the moral legitimacy of the institution. There is, at present, a clear consideration of State-wise representation of judges, as well as of caste and religion. Gender diversity also needs to be taken into account to ensure that at least onethird of our higher judiciary, if not half, is composed of women.

This will mandate the appointment of competent, independent, and impartial judiciary capable of upholding constitutionalism and the rule of law in the country, solely based on merit and encourages diversity in the range of persons appointed, so as to enhance public confidence in the institution. Most importantly, gender balance needs to be a stated objective of

the judiciary in making appointments. Justice Indira Banerjee, a former judge of the Supreme Court, famously said in one of her interviews that she did not want any fanfare when she was appointed just because she was a woman. We have to ensure that women's appointments to the Supreme Court and High Courts are so normalised that it does not seem out of the ordinary at all.

Jayna Kothari, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India. Views are personal.



BOOKS: REVIEW

# New book tells a chaotic tale of bureaucracy and belonging

ichel Houellebecq remains one of the ures in contemporary literature. His work neither comfortably fits into the mold of highbrow literary fiction nor aligns with purely commercial bestsellers. Instead, he exists in a peculiar limbo, widely read yet deeply controversial. His latest novel, Annihilation, originally published in French as Anéantin (2022) and translated by Shaun Whiteside, encapsulates these contradictions.

At over 500 pages, *Annihilation* weaves two disparate storylines. One follows an enigmatic group of terrorists executing calculated attacks against the symbols of global capitalism. The other, more substantial narrative revolves around Paul Raison, a senior bureaucrat in France's Ministry of Finance. His life, marked by a loveless marriage and bureaucratic ennui, undergoes a shift when his father, Édouard, suffers a de-

siblings—his religious sister Cécile and discontented younger brother Aurélien—navigate the familial crisis, old tensions resurface and reshape their relationships.

Unlike conventional thrillers or tightly structured novels, Annihilation defies narrative urgency. The terrorist subplot, while seemingly integral, is ultimately dispensable, contributing little to the novel's thematic weight. Instead, the book dwells on Paul's internal transformation, his estrangement from his wife Prudence (who, in a quintessentially Houellebecqian touch, is a Wiccan convert), and his slow reawakening to emotional intimacy. In this sense, the novel follows a familiar trajectory in Houellebecq's oeuvre, exploring alienation, existential drift, and the bleakness of modernity.

Yet, what Annihilation lacks in plot, it compensates for with Houellebecq's signature stylecaustic humor, unexpected asides, and incisive social commentary.

bilitating stroke. As Paul and his Whether dismissing job-centre advisors as trained clowns or detailing the nuances of smoking in a hospital setting, the novel is littered with sharp, sometimes absurd observations. These tangents, however, also expose Houelebecq's limitations. His novels thrive on cynicism and acerbic wit, but they often struggle to evoke genuine tragedy or grandeur. Unke literary figures such as Edgar Allan Poe or Marguerite Duras, whose works grapple with existential horror and deep emotional intensity, Houellebecq remains flippant, indulging in nihilistic satire without fully embracing its dramatic weight.

In some ways, Annihilation is a paradox. While it possesses Houellebecq's characteristic sense of disillusionment, it also hints at a rare sentimentality. Paul's ultimate realization—that life's true meaning may lie in simple human connection—is a striking departure from the bleak conclusions of his previous works. How-



Annihilation By Michel Houellebeco Translated by Shaun Whiteside Picador; 544 pages; Rs 1,000.

ever, this shift does not necessarily result in a more compelling novel. The absence of a strong narrative drive and the lack of any profound thematic revelation leave Annihilation feeling more like a series of disconnected musings than a cohesive literary statement.

That said, the book remains an engaging read, particularly for those familiar with Houellebecq's distinct voice. His critiques of contemporary society, while at times veering into self-indulgence, offer moments of sharp clarity. Yet, for all its intellectual provocations, Annihilation does not quite ascend to the level of literary necessity. It is a novel worth reading once, but perhaps not twice.

One of the novel's more intriguing aspects is how it subtly critiques the modern political landscape. Houellebecq's pro-

tagonists are often disillusioned men navigating the ruins of Western civilization, and Annihilation follows suit. Through Paul's bureaucratic career and the government's response to various crises, the novel sheds light on the disjointed nature of contemporary governance, where personal ambition often overshadows collective responsibility. This thematic exploration adds a layer of realism to the novel but also highlights Houellebecq's broader pessimism regarding the state of the world.

Moreover, the book's treatment of relationships, particularly marriage, exemplifies Houellebecq's ongoing fascination with human intimacy—or the lack thereof. Paul's marriage to Prudence is devoid of passion, reduced to cold interactions and unspoken resentments. This bleak depiction resonates with the author's long-standing critique of modern relationships, which he often portrays as transactional or doomed to failure. Yet, unlike his previous novels, Annihilation suggests a sliver of hope, as Paul begins to rediscover the value of connection. This subtle shift, while not entirely redemptive, adds a new dimension to Houellebecq's usual cynicism.

# Centre Launches New Schemes to Speed up R&D in Steel Sector

search Technology Mission of India (SRTMI), a joint initiative of the Indian steel industry and academia supported by the Ministry of Steel, launched three new R&D schemes and a web portal during the event "Catalyzing R&D in the Indian Steel Sector" at Vigyan Bhawan here on Wednesday.

The event saw participation from major steel companies including SAIL, the country's top academic institutions such as IIT Kanpur, IIT Bombay, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi, IIT Madras and ISM Dhanbad and research startups.

International entities such as the Swedish Energy Agency and the Asian Development Bank also took part in the event.

Minister of State for Steel &



Srinivasa Varma launched the R&D schemes and the SRTMI web portal, emphasizing their role in driving innovation and sustainability in the steel sec-

The minister said that the new R&D initiatives and Steel-Collab will play a critical role as India moves towards a 300 innovation method - supporting open research proposals from academia and researchers in collaboration with industry and start-up accelerator supporting early-stage startups to develop cutting-edge steel technologies The SteelCollab platform

will act as a matchmaking hub, connecting industry leaders, researchers, startups, and academia to drive decarbonization, digitalization, and advanced steel development. The solution seekers such as steel industries can pose their problems while researchers and startups can put forward their research / innovation

ing critical industry-wide chal-

lenges of national interest, open

### **India's Software and IT Services Exports** reach \$200 Billion in 2023-24: Report

**NEW DELHI:** India's software and IT services exports continued to grow in the financial year 2023-24, reaching an estimated \$200 billion, a new report said on Thursday This marks a 3.63 per cent

increase from the \$193 billion recorded in the previous year, according to a report by the **Electronics and Computer Soft**ware Export Promotion Council (ESC). The steady growth highlights the sector's resilience and its crucial role in India's digital economy. The report also sheds light on the regional contribution to software exports across India. The southern region remains the largest contributor, accounting for \$131.1 billion, which is about 65.55 per cent of the total exports.

The western region follows with \$34.1 billion (17.05 per cent), while the northern re-



gion contributes \$30.78 billion (15.39 per cent). The eastern region has the smallest share, with \$4.02 billion (2.01 per cent).

India's IT and electronics industry has seen remarkable growth, attracting major global companies due to its skilled workforce, cost advantages, and a favourable business environment, the report said. The rise of new technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and cloud computing is further boosting India's status as a global digital leader.

and technical workforce is meeting global standards, particularly in the IT sector, which is transforming the country into the world's outsourcing hub,' ESC Chairman Veer Sagar said.

He added that the growth in

IT Software and Services, Software Product Development, and BPO Services is a key driver of this trend. "The major countries for India's software exports in 2023-24, with the USA leading at US\$ 109.40 billion (54.70 per cent), followed by the UK at US\$ 28.70 billion (14.35 per cent), Singapore at US\$ 7 billion (3.50 per cent), and China at US\$ 5.50 billion (2.75 per cent)," the ESC's Chairman, Global Outreach, Sandeep Narula, said. Narula further stated that this underscores the Indian IT industry's position as a global

#### Starlink will be useful for Remote Area **Railway Projects: Ashwini Vaishnaw**



**NEW DELHI:** Union Minister for Railways, Electronics and IT. Ashwini Vaishnaw, on Wednesday welcomed Elon Musk's affordable satellite internet service Starlink to India.

India's leading telecom giants, Airtel and Jio Platforms, have partnered with SpaceX to bring Starlink Internet services to the country.

'Starlink, welcome to India! Will be useful for remote area railway projects," the Union Minister posted on X social media platform.

A day after Airtel's announcement about partnering with SpaceX to bring Starlink internet service to India, Jio Platforms on Wednesday announced a similar pact with the US-based company.

Airtel and SpaceX will explore offering Starlink equipment in Airtel's retail stores, Starlink services via Airtel to business customers, opportunities to connect communities, schools, and health centres, among many others, in even the most rural parts of India.

Airtel and SpaceX will also explore how Starlink could help expand and enhance the Airtel network, as well as SpaceX's ability to utilise and benefit from Airtel's ground network infrastructure and other capabilities in India, said the company.

Sunil Bharti Mittal, Founder and Chairman, Bharti Enterprises, said that a new era of seamless global connectivity beckons for customers. Mitta said that soon, customers will be able to carry their mobiles to the remotest part of the world, with them in the skies and blue oceans. In his opening remark at the recently concluded 'Mobile World Congress 2025' in Barcelona, Mittal made a call to both the telecom and satellite players to work together, combine their strengths, and complete the mission of connecting the unconnected, covering the oceans and the skies as well as difficultto-reach areas. "I am glad that this is being followed through with active announcements of partnerships between satellite companies and telecom operators," he said in a statement. For the telecom industry, the satellite te ogy should be no different from

#### India to Cross \$800 **Billion in Exports this Year with Major Share** of Services: Piyush Goyal



**NEW DELHI:** India is on the path to cross \$800 billion in exports this year with the major share of Services exports, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal, has reiterated. Reflecting on the changing global scenario, the minister has assured that the government is working on overtime basis and will leave no stone unturned to ensure a good future for Indian exporters, both merchandise and service and to protect the interest of the country. During his address to the Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) and industry associations, the minister complimented the positivity among the exporter community and their optimism to convert this crisis, that the world is facing today, into an opportunity. Allaying the concerns of the industry with regard to the US, the minister has called on the EPCs to reflect on their strengths and share their demands and interests with the government for better engagement with the US. On the ongoing efforts on bilateral agreements, Goyal stated that the government is

## **SEBI to Remove Digital Performance Tracking From Employee Appraisals**

**NEW DELHI:** The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has decided to remove the linkage of its digital Management Information System from employee appraisals.

The regulator is now reassessing its performance review methods to bring in a more balanced approach, according to an NDTV Profit report. An internal circular has been

issued regarding these changes. While the SEBI is working on modifying its review process, it will not completely discard the older methods but rather re-evaluate them for improvement, the report said.

The concept of Key Responsibility Areas (KRAs) has been a part of the bSEBI's system for over 20 years. However, like any evolving system, the regulator is now considering changes to make performance assessments

SEOUL: Hyundai Motor plans

to build its first hydrogen fuel

cell systems plant in South Ko-

rea for the start of operations

in 2028, the company's labour

Hyundai Motor currently

operates a hydrogen fuel cell

systems plant in China. If built,

the domestic facility will be the

carmaker's second such plant

globally. The company will

union claimed on Tuesday.



Hyundai Motor planning to build 1st local hydrogen fuel cell plant

more effective.

Previously, the SEBI employees' performance appraisals were significantly influenced by the digital Management Inormation System (MIS).

2030. He highlighted the need

to accelerate technology com-

mercialization and indigenize

capital goods manufacturing.

He also noted that the SRTMI

web portal will foster engage-

ment, idea exchange, and

industry-wide collaboration.

by SRTMI include challenge

The three schemes launched

The system tracked targets achieved and success rates, which played a crucial role in determining career progression.

begin the plant's construction to the union website, reports union, "a company spokesper-

felt that their work was not accurately represented through numerical targets, the report added. Now, under the leadership of the new SEBI Chairperson, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, there has been a shift in approach.

According to the report, the focus has moved from quantity to quality, with less emphasis However, this approach led to concerns as some departments ments. Reports also indicated

been actively engaging with employees across departments to address their concerns. Meanwhile, the market has reduced the timeline for completing rights issues from 126 days to just 23 days. The new rules will come into effect from April 7, allowing companies to raise capital faster. In a circular on March 12, the SEBI also introduced more flexibility in allotting shares to specific investors in rights issues.

that Chairperson Pandey has

Under the revised framework, rights issues must now be comoleted within 23 working days from the date the company's Board of Directors approves the issue.

According to the market regulator, companies must keep the rights issue open for at least seven days and a maximum of

Nexo hydrogen fuel cell electric

vehicle (EV), hydrogen-powered

Elec City bus and hydrogen

The first plant in Guangzhou

began operations in 2023. It

is capable of manufacturing

hydrogen fuel cell systems that can power 6, 500 hydrogen

Meanwhile, the government

will spend 129.3 billion won

(\$88.6 million) this year to sup-

commercial vehicles.

# **India's Tea Exports** Surge to 10-Year High



NEW DELHI: India's tea exports touched a 10-year high at 255 million kg in 2024 despite the uncertainties in the global market triggered by geopolitical tensions, data compiled by the Tea Board of India shows. The country's exports shot up

by a robust 10 per cent during the year from the corresponding figure of 231.69 million kgs recorded in 2023, according to the figures. showed. The average price of Indian

tea in the export market also went up by 10 per cent, bringing welcome relief to the tea industry, which had been hit by inclement weather in 2023.

There was a sharp increase in shipments to Iraq, accounting for 20 per cent of tea exports, and merchants are expecting the shipment volumes there, he said. India exports tea to more

than 25 countries, with UAE, Iraq, Iran, Russia, the US and the UK as the major markets. India is among the top five tea

exporters in the world, accounting for about 10 per cent of total world exports. India's Assam, Darjeeling, and Nilgiri teas are considered some of the finest in the world. Most the tea exported out of India is black tea, which makes up about 96 per cent of total exports. The other varieties include regular tea, green tea, herbal tea, masala tea and lemon tea. India has taken several steps to boost tea output. create a niche brand for Indian tea and ensure the welfare of the families associated with to send 40-50 million kg to the the tea industry. The Assam west Asian country this fiscal Valley and Cachar are the two

#### ear at its mainstay "To push ahead with the plan, If confirmed, Hydrogen fuel ing technologies that will help tracks and each one of those car manufacturing plant in who entered several markets of In West Bengal, Dooars, Terai tracks is aimed at ensuring best Ulsan, about 305 kilometers there should be consultations cell systems produced at the achieve carbon neutrality and West Asia when the Sri Lankan and Darjeeling are the three bringing new technologies to its crop was low, managed to retain major tea producer regions. interest of the Indian exporters. southeast of Seoul, according between the company and the new plant may be used in the ensure a stable supply of energy.

# On the Right Side of Regulations: The USFDA and Indian Pharmaceutical Companies **ANGRISH**

he Indian Pharmaliance (IPA) recently shared U.S. FDA inspections have declined globally to close to about 1,849 annually in 2014. But for Indian pharmaceutical companies, the concern is that 18 per cent of global pharmaceutical companies now account for 40-45 per cent of the total generic drug volume in the US market.

The IPA represents 23 research-based pharmaceutical for Indian pharmaceutical companies from India. IPA companies as the US forms was formed as an association about one-third of total export 41 manufacturing facilities in August 1999 when six top pharmaceutical companies namely Cipla, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Lupin, Pira- tors list observed conditions mal, Ranbaxy (part of Sun or practices in Form FDA-Pharma now), and Wockhardt joined as its founding members. Latest details show that members of IPA now have 85 per cent of the private sector investment in pharmaceutical R&D, 64 per cent share of the domestic market sales, 62 per cent share of price-controlled submission of their corrective medicines, and 80 per cent action plan with supporting share of India's exports of documentation, and promptly drugs and pharmaceuticals.

Manufacturing facilities of

ation Agency (EMEA), UK Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), Medicines Control Council (MCC) of South that the total number of the Africa, Federal Institute for Drugs and Medical Devices (BfArM) of Germany, Brazil-940 in the year 2024 from ian Health Regulatory Agency (ANVISA), the World Health Organization (WHO), South Korea's Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, and Japan's inspections were conducted in Pharmaceuticals and Medi-India in 2024, up from just 6 cal Devices Agency to name per cent of global inspections the prominent ones. Hence, in 2014. It should also be seen regulatory concerns of global in the background that Indian regulatory agencies are of utmost importance as Indian pharmaceutical companies operate in almost all territories lobally. The US market is the most important market of drugs and pharmaceuticals The U.S. FDA investiga-

483 Inspection Observations, Form FDA-4056 Produce Farm Inspection Observations, or notated in the Establishment Inspection Report. Further, inspected firms are encouraged to respond in writing in 15 days' time, through implement corrective actions.

In 2023-24, Sun Pharma pharmaceutical companies are had pending USFDA complicertified by global regulatory ance issues at three facilities to supply to the US cleared observations related to oncolagencies such as the USFDA, comprising import alert at the USFDA Audit. The U.S. ogy product operations was to be 'inspection ready' for USFDA. In FY24, one facility to which the company sub-

Classification	Brief Explanation
No Action Indicated (NAI)	When facility is in an acceptable state of compliance. The facility, usually, not issued a Form FDA-483 at the conclusion of the Inspection
Voluntary Action Indicated (VAI)	When the Inspection found objectionable conditions or practices but the U.S. FDA has determined the facility can voluntarily correct its deficiencies and will not recommend any action. Form FDA-483 Issued.
Official Action Indicated (OAI)	Indicates a facility is in an unacceptable state of compliance. Issue of Form FDA-483 at the conclusion of the Inspection

the receipt of non-compliance letter for the Mohali facility (Punjab), both during FY23. The inspection classification status of Dadra facility (in Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu) was determined as Official Action Indicated (OAI) after inspection by the USFDA in December 2023. Till March 31, 2024, the company had comprising 27 finished dosage manufacturing facilities and

Divi's Labs has two manufacturing facilities, and third one is in the set-up stage. The company is recognized as the largest API manufacturer in the world for 10 of the Generic APIs manufactured.

continents

Cipla Limited had 46 manufacturing facilities in five countries by March 31, 2024. In FY24, Cipla underwent 52 regulatory inspections by major regulatory authorities. China facility of Cipla Limited that is expected

the Halol facility (Gujarat), Food and Drug Administration conducted four inspections as manufacturing sites of the company in Fall River, Islip, Hauppauge (USA), and Qidong (China). The company reported that all these inspections were concluded without any observations except that it received five Form 483 observations for the inspection at Central Islip. These observations were subsequently classified as Voluntary Action Indicated (VAI). Regarding facilities in 14 API facilities, spanning six India, the company received a Warning Letter from the USFDA for cGMP inspection that was conducted at Indore site (Madhya Pradesh).

Torrent Pharma had 8 manufacturing facilities at various locations in India through which it caters 40+ countries across the world. In December 2023, Torrent Pharma's Oncology Oral Solid manufacturing facility at Bileshwarpura underwent a USFDA Pre-approval Inspection (PAI) for capsule dosage forms. A Form FDA 483 with five procedural



FY24, the company's Dahej facility got clearance from the USFDA. Two procedural observations were identified by the regulatory body during an inspection in May 2023 for which corrective actions were initiated by the company. Further, the company reported that the regulatory body issued an Establishment Inspection Report (EIR) in August 2023 through which the agency officially closed the inspection with a classification of Voluntary Action Indicated (VAI). During FY24, the company's sales from the US business declined to US \$128 Mn from US 138 Mn in FY23. Degrowth of 7 per cent was mainly attributed to lack of new products approval due to pending USFDA inspection of the company's USFDA approved facilities.

By the end of FY24, Dr. all of their facilities were fully compliant with USFDA regulations and were maintained

March 31, 2024, the status for all other facilities was either

NAI or VAI. Lupin Limited has 15 global manufacturing sites, out of which, the company has 11 U.S. approved sites. The company addressed the warning letter from the U.S. FDA with regard to their facilities in Pithampur and Goa. The company is committed to target of zero warning letters/ OAI issues by FY25. There were 9 U.S. FDA inspections (including GMP and Bioresearch Center) in FY23 and FY24. Number of Form 483 came down to 2 in FY24 from 7 in FY23. Number of Total Observations substantially came down from 55 in FY23 to iust 3 in FY24. The U.S. FDA Inspection Warning Letters remained 1 in FY23 as well as FY24.

dosage formulations and APIs. 16 out of 33 facilities have been inspected by the integrity related observations

in Ahmedabad SEZ received mitted a detailed Corrective an Establishment Inspection and Prevention Plan to get Report with VAI status from a closure of the inspection. the regulatory body against an in FY23. Facilities namely Biologics fill finish facility at Zydus Biotech Park, Animal health formulations manu-Ahmedabad SEZ and the newly constructed OSD facility II in Ahmedabad SEZ completed USFDA inspections without any observations.

By the end of FY24, Aurobindo Pharma had 29 com- of being on the right side of mercial manufacturing facilities in India, Portugal, the US and Brazil. In FY24, six units received EIRs from US FDA. dia has the unique distinction Inspection of Eugia-III unit of Eugia Pharma was concluded on February 2, 2024, that resulted in the identification of nine observations. There was a temporary pause of production line too. Corrective Action and Preventive Plan (CAPA) was submitted by the company. By March 31, 2024, Alkem

Labs had 19 manufacturing manner through commitment facilities. In FY24, three manufacturing facilities, i.e., Ankleshwar, Mandva, and Baddi, of Alkem Labs were inspected by the USFDA. Inspection of Ankleshwar facility was closed without any observations. Form 483 with 3 observations was re-Zydus Lifesciences has 37 ceived for Mandva facility Reddy's Labs had 23 manu- manufacturing facilities out and through EIR in March facturing facilities globally. of which 33 facilities are for 2024, inspection was closed The company reported that manufacturing of finished successfully. Form 483 with 10 observations was received for Baddi facility with no data

Glenmark Pharma has 4 inspection that was conducted manufacturing facilities approved by the US FDA out of 11 manufacturing facilities globally. In FY24, the company's facilities underwent facturing facility located in 32 regulatory inspections conducted by various regulatory bodies across different regions, up from 29 in FY23, 16 each in FY22 and FY21.

Top pharmaceutical companies have realized the benefits regulation as reflected in the data pertaining to compliance with the U.S. FDA norms. Inof being a country that has the highest number of USFDA inspected plants outside the US, housing 25 per cent of US FDA-approved plants outside the U.S. With more product launches in the U.S. market, these pharmaceutical companies are likely to come under higher scrutiny. By addressing these concerns in a proactive to targets of zero warning letters or OAI issues can pave the way for smooth progress in the U.S. market. This will generate a positive signal for other regulatory bodies in different countries and help in building Bharat Brand.

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.

# TN presents budget amid controversy over rupee symbol removal

nance Minister Thangam Thenarasu presented the state budget for the financial year 2025-26 on Friday in the Assembly Hall of the Assemblycum-Secretariat complex at Fort St. George here.

Speaker M. Appavu stated that the House's Business Advisory Committee would convene to determine the duration of the budget session. Additionally, the state government will present the Agriculture Budget for 2025-26 on Saturday, March 15.

The presentation of this year's budget has been overshadowed by controversy following Chief Minister M.K. Stalin's decision to remove the Indian rupee symbol (₹) from the state budget's official logo. Instead, the Tamil alphabet 'Roo' ('Jb') has been used to represent 'Roobai,' the Tamil word for rupee

On Thursday (March 13), CM Stalin unveiled the promotional logo for the budget, featuring the new symbol along with the slogan "Ellarkum Ellam" (Everything for Everyone), emphasising inclusiveness. However, the move has drawn sharp criticism from opposition leaders and Union Ministers, who have accused the DMK government of promoting linguistic and regional chauvinism.

AIADMK General Secre-



tary and Leader of Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) condemned the DMK's decision, calling it a publicity stunt aimed at diverting attention from governance failures. In a social media post, he criticised CM Stalin for prioritising symbolic gestures over addressing the real issues faced by the people. He also accused the chief minister of delivering "scripted dialogues written by others" and dismissed the move as a political gimmick.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also weighed in, strongly condemning the highlighted that the symbol was

DMK government's decision. Taking to social media, she described it as "a completely avoidable example of language and regional chauvinism."

She argued that the removal of the rupee symbol undermines national unity and fosters divisive sentiments. Sitharaman also pointed out the irony of the DMK's stance, noting that the rupee symbol was officially adopted in 2010 under the Congress-led UPA government, in which the DMK was a coalition partner. She further

designed by D. Udaya Kumar, the son of former DMK MLA N. Dharmalingam. "By erasing it now, the DMK is not only rejecting a national symbol but also disregarding the creative contribution of a Tamil youth, she remarked. Tamil Nadu BJP president K. Annamalai also criticised the move, questioning the rationale behind replacing the rupee symbol. In a sharp remark directed at CM Stalin, he wrote: "The DMK government's state budget for 2025-26 replaces the rupee symbol, which was designed by a Tamilian and adopted by the entire nation. How stupid can you become, Thiru @mkstalin?' The controversy comes at a time of ongoing tensions between the Tamil Nadu government and the Centre over language policies. The DMK-led administration has consistently opposed the Union government's alleged imposition of Hindi, particularly through the National Education Policy (NEP). The removal of the rupee symbol is being seen as part of Tamil Nadu's broader resistance to Central policies perceived as undermining regional identity.

As the budget is presented, all eyes will be on how the government addresses economic challenges and development priorities amid the political storm.

# Big Reforms on Agenda of Upcoming SEBI Board Meet

unauthorised access, iden-

is another key issue on SEBI's

Currently, CCs are fully

owned by their parent ex-

all market participants.

rules for ESG (environmental,

social, and governance) rating

clude rules for rating with-drawals, enhanced disclo-

sures, audits, and governance

The proposed changes in-

fraud.



**MUMBAI**: In the upcoming first board meeting under the leadership of newly appointed Chairperson Tuhin Kanta Pandey, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is slated to discuss several major regulatory proposals.

The agenda on the cards includes UPI-like protections for demat accounts, ensuring the independence of clearing corporations, expanding the scope of qualified institutional buyers (QIBs), and changes in fee collection by research analysts.

To enhance investor security, the SEBI has proposed implementing a system similar to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) for demat accounts.

The proposal, introduced on February 18, suggests that each investor's unique client code be linked to the SIM of a mobile phone.

For ratings under a "sub-scriber pays" model, the SEBI suggests that withdrawals should only be allowed if there are no active subscrib-

Under the "issuer pays" model, additional conditions such as a minimum three-year rating period and approval from 75 per cent of bondholders before withdrawal have been proposed.

SEBI Chairman Pandey last week emphasised that tity theft, SIM spoofing, and the capital markets regulator is making extensive use of The independence of clearing corporations (CCs) from technology to enhance efficiency, transparency, and their parent stock exchanges investor protection.

At a media event, he said SEBI is committed to reduc-In November 2024, SEBI ing risks in the system and board member Ananth Naensuring a secure environrayan highlighted the need ment for investors for a review of the existing

"An informed investor is well protected. SEBI's efforts in the days ahead would be to create awareness among both existing and prospective

changes in India, while globally, they are often indepeninvestors," Pandey remarked. dent public utilities serving The SEBI has proposed broadening the definition of The market regulator is Qualified Institutional Buyers QIBs) to include Accredited also slated to discuss stricter

Investors for angel funds. This move, proposed on February 21, would allow angel funds to raise capital beyond the existing 200-investor limit under the Com-

the emirate since 2020.

Dubai attracted a record-

its historv. Dubai also achieved a

historic milestone in FDI attrac-

tion with 1,826 announced FDI

from 1,650 projects in 2023, said

tracting Greenfield FDI for the

fourth consecutive year is a tes-

the report.

as the lender's internal review projected an adverse impact of approximately 2.35 per cent on its net worth (as of December 2024). The steep fall erased around Rs 14,000 crore in the bank's market

MUMBAI: IndusInd Bank

shares were locked in a 20 per

cent lower circuit on Tuesday

**Indusind Bank's Stock** 

hits 20% Lower Circuit, Erases Rs 14,000 Cr in

**Market Value** 

value. The stock hit a 52-week low of Rs 720.35, to go below the lower band on the NSE. The bank's net worth is expected to decline by nearly Rs 2,100 crore after accounting discrepancies of 2.35 per cent of

its net worth were found in its

derivatives portfolio during an

internal review. The Hinduja-promoted lender plans to absorb this loss in its Q4 earnings or the first quarter of the

next fiscal year (FY26). The internal review findings have sparked a string of target price cuts from several brokerages for the bank's stock amid fresh turmoil, days after the Reserve Bank of India allowed only a oneyear extension to Chief Executive

Officer, Sumant Kathpalia. The bank has appointed an external agency to independently review and validate its internal findings on the derivatives portfolio, as per the Reserve Bank of India's September 2023 guidelines on bond investment classification and valuation.

IndusInd Bank will face a "litestimated FDI capital, a 33.2 per mus test" from the succession cent increase from AED 39.26 viewpoint and the board is likely billion (\$10.69 billion) in 2023, to evaluate both external as well marking the highest FDI value as internal candidates, Citi said. ever recorded in a single year for Recent developments have raised the risk perception and impact disclosed borrowings cost too, breaking 1,117 Greenfield FDI it added. "We downgrade IIB projects in 2024, the highest in to 'HOLD' from 'BUY' as we cut multiple to 1.0x from 1.4x driven by uncertainties relating to earnings quality and future leadership. projects, an 11 per cent increase Woes continue for IIB since an irregularity was unearthed in derivative accounting," said Gaurav Jani from PL Capital-Prabhudas "The city's ranking as the world's No.1 destination for at-

This discrepancy spanned across a 5-7 year period till March 31 2024, however, due to an RBI directive, there are no irregulari-

"In our view, this episode had a bearing on RBI's decision to extend MD and CEO's tenure only for 1 year. Valuation is 0.9x price to Rs 1,000 from Rs 1,400,

# India Has Taken the Lead in Financing India Top Source Country for FDI into **Green Energy Projects: RBI Governor**

NEW DELHI: India has taken the lead in providing finance to renewable energy projects by including them in "priority sector lending" to accelerate the country's transition to a low carbon economy in the fight against climate change. Addressing a policy seminar

on Climate Change Risks and Finance, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said, "Central Banks in Advanced Economies have traditionally followed an asset neutral approach. Central Banks in emerging markets and developing economies, on the other hand, have adopted directed lending policies to channelise credit to certain sectors of their economies given their individual country circumstances and develop-

He highlighted that In-



based, windmills, micro-hydel plants and non-conventional energy based public utilities viz. street lighting systems, and remote village electrification projects as part of priority sector lending," Malhotra said.

The RBI Governor pointed out that while the role of the Central Banks in managing dia's priority sector lending risks posed by climate change energy. "We have included fi- their role in facilitating the nance to small renewable en- financing of green and sus-

ergy projects - solar, biomass tainable transition has been a matter of debate and has varying dimensions to it.

Malhotra said that as a Central Bank, the Reserve Bank is mindful of its role in addressing and mitigating risks to the financial system from climate change. In this context, endeavour has been to play the role of a facilitator including supporting capacguidelines facilitate credit to to the financial system is in- ity building and fostering a from 1.2 per cent in 2023. ducive regulatory fram work for promoting green and

# Dubai with \$3 Billion Investment

direct investment (FDI) into Dubai surged to \$3.018 billion in 2024 — a five times jump from \$589 million in 2023, making the country the top investor in Dubai, a report showed on Tuesday.

India, the US, France and the UK were top source countries for FDI into the emirate. India was the top source country with the highest total estimated FDI capital into Dubai, accounting for 21.5 per cent, followed by the US (13.7 per cent), France (11 per cent), United Kingdom (10 per cent), and Switzerland (6.9 per cent), according to Dubai Department of Economy and

Tourism's Dubai FDI Monitor. While Greenfield FDI projects in 2024 was at par with 2023 performance of 73.5 per cent, reinvestment FDI projects increased in 2024 to 3.3 per cent

dian FDI projects also increased to 275 from 249 in 2023. This



place in project count rankings. According to the report, India's

investments were concentrated in key sectors, with Business Services accounting for 26.9 per cent of projects, followed by Software & IT Services (23.6 per cent), Consumer Products (9.8 per cent), Food & Beverages (8.4 per cent), and Real Estate (6.9

Real estate dominated with a 51.4 per cent share, followed 52.3 billion (\$14.24 billion) in

cent), Transportation and Warehousing (8.4 per cent), Business Services (6.4 per cent), and Consumer Products (6.2 per cent).

Dubai ranked world's top destination for attracting Greenfield FDI for fourth successive year. Total estimated FDI capital surged by 33.2 per cent, the highest single-year value recorded

In 2024, Dubai attracted AED

#### tament to its ability not only to ties with effect from Apr 1 2024.

set new global benchmarks for sustained, rapid growth but also to continuously evolve its investment proposition in response to changes sweeping the international market," said Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown

**Govt Announces** 

\$1 Billion Fund for

### **Decline in inflation paves** way for higher GDP growth

Gold prices hit All-Time High,

retail inflation to a level that is below the RBI's targeted level of 4 per cent is expected to pave the way for accelerating GDP growth ahead as it provides the central bank with more headroom to cut interest rates and expand liquidity to spur economic activity and create

A Moody's report expects monetary easing, apart from the government's capital expenditure and tax cuts for the middle-class, to play a key in role in accelerating India's growth rate. The report expects the country's GDP growth to exceed 6.5 per cent in 2025-26.

The report states that following a temporary slowdown

**NEW DELHI:** Gold prices on

Thursday reached a new all-

time high amid market uncer-

On the Multi Commodity

Exchange (MCX), 24-carat gold

April futures rose by 0.21 per

cent, touching Rs 86,875 per 10

grams. The surge in gold prices

is mainly driven by global insta-

bility. Uncertainty surrounding

US President Donald Trump's

tariff policies has led investors

to turn to gold as a safe-haven

asset. As a result, international

gold prices have climbed to

\$2,945 per ounce on March 13. According to the Indian

**Bullion Jewellers Association** 

(IBJA), the spot price of 24-car-

at gold in India was Rs 86,670

per 10 grams, while 22-carat

tainties



with Q4 now at 3.8 per cent."

in mid-2024, India's economic and register one of the fastest would undershoot RBI's target in Q4, thus opening more policy space by RBI in terms of easing, CPI to be at 4.6 per cent in FY25



growth is expected to accelerate rates among the world's large economies. Bank of Baroda economist Dipanwita Mazumdar said: "With the current inflation print in line, we believe CPI to support growth. We expect

gold stood at Rs 84,590 per 10

grams. The prices for 20-carat,

18-carat, and 14-carat gold were

Rs 77,140, Rs 70,200, and Rs

55,900 per 10 grams, respec-

tively. Experts believe that on-

going trade tensions and tariff

uncertainties are pushing inves-

tors toward gold. Additionally,

a drop in inflation in the US is

supporting higher gold prices.

Lower inflation increases the

likelihood of interest rate cuts,

which further strengthens the

demand for gold.

#### Despite correction, low volatility suggests peak WAVES 2025: panic still ahead: Nuvama on India stocks **NEW DELHI:** Despite low as per the Nuvama report. The

volatility in the domestic stock markets over the past few months, investors are expected to tread cautiously going ahead, in the backdrop of the recent meltdown in the Indian equity market, according to the latest Nuvama report.

"Nifty has declined by 15 per cent over the past five months, marking the longest correction streak since September and the worst post-COVID. Despite this, low volatility suggests that peak panic may still be ahead," the report said. The report by Nuvama highlighted that India's valuation premium to other emerging markets has dropped significantly to 50 per cent, down from 70 per cent, bringing it back in line with



historical averages. Additionally, the report said that global risks have intensified due to slowing US growth, with Q1 2025 GDP now cast at 0.5 per cent, down from 3.8 per cent.

It said that there are concerns that the Make America

Great Again (MAGA) tariffs

and Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) spending cuts could fuel inflation or even trigger a recession in the United States. A weakening job market further adds to risk-off sentiment, potentially leading to emerging market currency weakness, including the Rupee,

report further added that market bottoming remains uncertain as earnings revival appears distant due to weak demand and fading margin tailwinds. Policy easing is also limited, with bond yields still elevated, restricting monetary flexibility, the report added in its analysis of the condition of the market.

A bottoming indicates that the market has reached its low point and could be in the early stages of an upward trend. Stock markets, especially Indian equity benchmarks, have shown mixed sentiments with investors reacting to global and domestic economic cues. On March 13, the stock markets ended on a negative note with Nifty standing at 22,397.20, declining 73.30 points or 0.33 per cent.

ment Summit (WAVES) 2025, said Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw on Thursday. The event to be held in Mumbai from May 1 to 4 "will give creators community a platform to create high value

**NEW DELHI:** The govern-

ment will create a billion-

dollar fund for the creator's

economy as part of the World

Audio-Visual and Entertain-

content", said Vaishnaw at a high-level session on WAVES 2025 organised on Thursday at Sushma Swaraj Bhawan here. The session, organised by

the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB), sought to engage the international community ahead of the World Audio Visual & amp; Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025 — set to take place in Mumbai. "The intersection of creativity, media and technology is transforming the media landscape of the world and reaching a new level of convergence," Vaishnaw said. The Union Minister announced that a "billion dollar fund will be created for creators' economy". "WAVES will serve as a pivotal platform for fostering discussions, collaboration, and innovation for the Media and Entertainment industry," added Union Minister for External Affairs Dr. S. Jaishankar.

He noted that the event



stakeholders, and innovators to explore opportunities, address challenges, and shape the future of the sector.

WAVES summit is set to bring together global leaders, media professionals, artists, policymakers, and industry stakeholders.

The digital age presents both challenges and opportunities. Artificial intelligence, streaming revolutions, intellectual property rights, misinformation, and media sustainability are key concerns. It is the first-ever event of its kind, aims to address these issues by promoting cultural diversity, innovation, and equitable access to media

witnessed a Memorandum of Understanding exchange between the Ministry of Information & amp; Broadcasting and the Government of Maharashtra, strengthening collaboration in media, entertainment, and digital outreach.

Meanwhile, the event also

# Cross Rs 86,875 per 10 Grams Current Turbulence Provides Saner Entry Points for Long-Term Investors: SBI Report

**NEW DELHI:** The current market turbulence provides saner entry points for longterm investors, a new report said on Monday, adding that the mid to long-term story for Indian equities continues to hinge on earnings upcycle.

"On earnings, while we are navigating a near term slowdown, the medium-term trends stay encouraging. India's corporate profits as a proportion of GDP have reverted higher over the past 4 vears after secularly declining for 12 years between 2008-2020," according to the report by the SBI Funds Management

"Sectorally, we have stayed constructive on discretion-



theme given the disproportionate boost the category derives from rising incomes as India's GDP approaches US\$3,000 per capita," it mentioned.

The thrust in the Union Budget through lower taxes comes as a tailwind for this sector. On the other hand, "we also stay positive on manufacturing and investment cycle related plays from a longer-

believe the recent correction may present interesting opportunities in some of these names," the SBI report said. As the current

panic subsides, the report believes markets will become more discerning and move back towards companies which have strong business models, long-term earnings growth visibility and sustainable cashflows.

Now that the RBI has initiated the policy rate easing cycle, given the view that the space currently is limited, the emerging issue to be tackled would be the dynamics of

term standpoint and liquidity. "This would be an ongoing process and should have a material impact on the shape of the curve as well as on spreads going forward," said the report.

While rate easing remains a theme that still warrants portfolio duration to stay around the upper bands, it must be appreciated that market dynamics could limit the extent of incremental gains. "At the same time, current dynamics in market yields, provides opportunities that enable a more relative value with lower risk that can be played through specific funds. This should also align with investor preferences in terms of risk tolerance and tenors," said the report.

will unite industry leaders,

# Creators' Economy

# World Knows Where Epicentre of Global Terrorism Lies: India Slams Pak on Train Hijack Claim Canada Challenges US Steel, Aluminum Tariffs at WTO

jected Pakistan's allegations that New Delhi is behind the ethnic violence raging in the neighbouring country, saying it should look inwards instead of shifting blame for its own problems and the world knows where the epicentre of global terrorism lies. In response to media queries

on the remarks made by the Pakistan side, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Friday that India strongly rejects the allegations as baseless.

"We strongly reject the baseless allegations made by Pakistan. The whole world knows where the epicenter of global terrorism lies. Pakistan should look inwards instead of pointing fingers and shifting the blame for its own internal problems



Randhir Jaiswal in a statement.

India has snubbed Pakistan after it hinted at India's role in fomenting trouble in the restive Balochistan region.

The government's response came after a senior Pakistani hours, and 21 hostages and four official accused India of "spon-

and failures on to others," said soring terrorism" and trying MEA Official Spokesperson to destabilise its neighbouring countries. The accusation came after the hijacking of the Jaffar Express by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) during its journey from Quetta to Peshawar. The siege lasted about 30

Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan said the train attack was orchestrated from abroad, but did not directly implicate India. He said the rebels were in contact with their handlers based in Afghanistan throughout the train siege. When asked if Pakistan had

changed its policy from blaming India in the past for BLA activity, he said its accusations against India hold even today. "There is no shift in our policy. And again, the facts have not changed...India is involved in sponsoring terrorism against Pakistan. What I was referring to was, in this particular incident, we have evidence of calls being traced to Afghanistan, said the Pakistani official ad-

> obligations under GATT 1994, Xinhua news agency reported. Mary Ng, minister of export and manufacturing base, while

ergy and electric car policies.

EPA announced that it will

reconsider the Biden adminis-

tration's regulations on power

plants, regulations for the oil

and gas industry, mandatory

greenhouse gas reporting pro-

gram, vehicle regulations that

In a series of statements, the

OTTAWA: Canada has taken

official steps by requesting

consultations with the World

Trade Organization (WTO) to

dispute US import duties on

steel and aluminum products

from Canada, according to a

statement issued by the trade

The request was circulated to

tional trade and economic development, said Wednesday that Canada was seeking formal consultations with the US regarding tariffs on steel and

aluminum. "Canada is deeply disappointed that

the US has chosen to reimpose these unjustified tariffs that hurt workers and businesses on both sides of the border," Ng said in the statement. "These unilateral tariffs violate the United States' obligations under both the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) and the WTO Agreement."

WTO members on Thursday, Francois-Philippe Champagne, minister of innovation, said the statement. Canada argued that US measures, which science and industry, made a ceased its exemption and instatement on Thursday that creased duties, contravene US Canadian steel and aluminum form the basis of North America's critical infrastructure

supporting vital US industries, including defense, shipbuilding and automotive.

The industry minister said he directed Industry Canada to prioritise funding of projects that use predominantly Canadian

steel and aluminum.

Canada announced Wednesday reciprocal tariffs on US steel and aluminum imports worth 29.8 billion Canadian dollars (\$20.7 billion). This trade move came in response to US President Donald Trump's 25 per cent tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports coming into effect on the same day. On February 10, US President Donald Trump signed proclamations to raise tariffs on aluminum from 10 per cent to 25 per cent, aligning them with the existing tariff rate for steel. He also decided to eliminate duty-free quotas, exemptions, and exclusions for steel and aluminum tariffs. These measures were set to take effect on March 12.

American families, unleash

American energy, bring auto jobs back to the US and more,

said EPA Administrator Lee

shift in its climate policy, Xi-

nhua news agency reported.

#### dent Donald Trump said that he believes the US would annex Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark, during a meeting with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte in the Oval Office, US news outlets

reported.

Trump vows to annex **Greenland again during** meeting with NATO chief: Media Reports

Trump expressed confidence the US would annex the large island, even suggesting the head of the NATO alliance could be a key player in facilitating the acquisition, Xinhua news agency reported quoting the Hill reported. "I think it will happen, " Trump told reporters in the Oval Office during the meeting, said the report. In response, Rutte said that any discussion about Trump's attempts to acquire Greenland is outside of his purview and he doesn't want to drag NATO in that, the report stated.

"A boat landed there 200 years ago or something. They say they have rights to it, "Trump said in the Oval Office, adding that "I don't know if that's true. I don't think it is, actually, "according to the report. Trump noted that the United States already has a military presence in Greenland and, "Maybe you'll see more and more soldiers going there, "the report added.

Since early this year, Trump has repeatedly stated his desire to obtain Greenland, even suggesting the possibility of using force. Acknowledging the uncertainty sparked by Trump's moves, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen reaffirmed Denmark's position earlier this month, emphasising that Greenland's future is solely for its people to decide. Greenland's opposition Demokraatit (Democrats) party won Tuesday's parliamentary election, according to preliminary data released by the Central Election Committee on Wednesday. The party favors a gradual move toward independence from Denmark and has criticized Trump's threat to

annex Greenland. Greenland, the world's largest island with a population of around 60, 000, was a Danish colony until 1953, when it became an integral part of Denmark with Greenlanders given

# UN welcomes agreement between Syrian govern-ment, Kurdish forces



United Nations welcomed an agreement reached by the Syrian interim government and the Kurdish-led forces after the violent escalation in the country's coastal region last week, a UN spokesman said.

"We welcome the agreement signed by the leaderships of the Caretaker Authorities in Syria and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that took place on Monday, "Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said at the daily briefing on Tuesday.

Geir Pedersen, UN special envoy for Syria, expressed his hope in a statement that the agreement can support and feed into a broader, credible and inclusive political transition process, in line with the key principles of Security Council resolution 2254, that leads to a new constitution and free and fair elections, Xinhua news agency reported.

Pedersen also encouraged key international stakeholders, including the US, Turkey, and regional partners, to support their Syrian partners.

# Ukraine says US resumes military aid to Kyiv

security personnel were killed.

KYIV: US military aid to Ukraine has been restored, the Interfax-Ukraine news agency reported Wednesday.

The agency cited Pavlo Palisa, Deputy Head of the Ukrainian President's office and a member of the delegation to talks with the United States held in Saudi Arabia's port city of Jeddah. Palisa also noted that the agreements reached during the negotiations "are beginning to be implemented.

Meanwhile, the local Ukrainska Pravda media outlet reported that the United States has also lifted its pause on intelligence sharing with Ukraine, citing US Director of National



Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. On Tuesday, the US and

Ukrainian delegations held talks in Saudi Arabia. After the meeting, they issued a joint statement announcing that the United States would resume security assistance to Ukraine and restore

intelligence sharing. The United States suspended its military aid for Ukraine earlier this month after a rare shouting match at the White House between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in late February.

#### **US Environmental Protection Agency to roll back climate-related rules** WASHINGTON: The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it will roll back a series of rules from the Joe Biden administration aimed at reducing pollution and mitigating climate change, stepping back from green en-

provided the foundation for the electric vehicle mandate, and other related rules.

"We are driving a dagger straight into the heart of the climate change religion to

The EPA's latest announcement was unsurprising, given the Trump administration's prior indication of a major

US President Donald Trump has consistently emphasised rolling back environmental regulations, and prioritising fossil fuel industries over re-

# drive down cost of living for

### India and Mauritius announce Enhanced Strategic Partnership (IOR), are natural partners in

Vow to work together in safeguarding larger strategic interests in IOR

PORT LOUIS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam on Wednesday expressed satisfaction over their comprehensive discussions on the entire gamut of bilateral relations and agreed that their special and close bilateral partnership has acquired significant strategic depth after being raised to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

tegic Partnership' released on

the second and final day of PM Modi's landmark State Visit to the Indian Ocean archipelago highlights the special and unique relationship between the two countries that remains unparalleled, given the shared bonds of history, language, culture, heritage, kinship, and values.

During his visit, PM Modi engaged in extensive discussions with the Mauritian leadership to strengthen bilateral ties with talks focusing on enhancing collaboration in key sectors, including infrastruc-The 'India-Mauritius Joint ture, housing, digital technol-

both leaders emphasised that it remains an important pillar of bilateral relations and close Focusing on the defence and achieved a strategic dimension

maritime security cooperation, and benefited both countries immensely. They further agreed that India and Mauritius, having a shared commitment to

the region and reiterated their resolve to work closely in countering maritime challenges and safeguarding the larger strategic interests in the region. The Prime Minister of Mau-

ritius conveyed his appreciation to India for its unwavering support to Mauritius in protecting its vast Exclusive Economic Zone through provisioning of defence and maritime assets, regular deployment of ships and aircraft, conducting joint maritime surveillance, hydrographic surveys and patrolling, bilateral exercises and inforsecure Indian Ocean Region support, thereby emerging as

a significant security provider for Mauritius. "The Prime Minister of Mau-

ritius further thanked India for its continued assistance towards refit of Coast Guard Ships Victory, Valiant and Barracuda, on grant basis. The Prime Minister of India noted that Mauritius is a special maritime partner for India and is an important partner under India's Vision SAGAR. Given our shared objectives in the region. The Prime Minister of India reiterated India's continued support and assistance to Mauritius in augmenting its defence and Vision for an Enhanced Stra- ogy, healthcare, AI and more. cooperation in this domain has ensure a free, open, safe and mation sharing and training security needs, "read the Joint Vision statement.

## Danish citizenship.

#### CHALLENGING CORRUPTION

# Modi Hesitates, but Trump Picks up the Gauntlet



dian Prime Minister Narendra of justifying sexual equalities Modi couldn't achieve what the US President Donald Trump Even schools were asked not to has done within three months of assuming the most admired teenagers, especially those keen

With his formidable team comprising irrepressible tycoons. Elon Musk and Vivek other toxic substances, thus Ramaswamy of Indian origin, Trump appears to be better having a strong support base assisted than Modi, who by his behaviour projects himself being dictated to his supporters in the industry instead of leading them.

political office in the world.

A few weeks before exposing the details of the liberal ferred cash and financial asdistribution of millions of dollars as business loans to farmers and the tribal. It has children aged 11 years or less, earned him worldwide admithe Trump Administration ration, but in recent months, has dared to challenge the he appears to have lost his corruption in the federal drive in pursuing the key bureaucracy. Earlier, he had curtailed funds of the USAID the anti-corruption drive. It across the continents, including to be ascertained yet how ing some political leaders in Modi's efforts to eradicate cor-India irrespective of their ruption have been stalled. It is ideologie. It caused ripples also being asked why he could in the American deep state. not hit the ongoing rampant They were using these funds corruption in the farming to a 157-year old man to the for promoting pro -US proxies in different countries.

Apart from the exposure recently made by the US federal and politicians. agencies in the distribution of and who were real beneficiaries of this loot.

Meanwhile, the Trump Ad- current third term, Trump is highest executive office. His

ministration has stopped nearly 400 million USD earmarked for funding studies regardgeneral ing gender and related issues perception in Columbia University. For that in spite of his many, his action might undernoisy rhetoric, In- mine the decade-old approach and respect for the bisexuals. question sexual choices among to solemnise same sex marriages. Trump has also stopped the free sale of marijuana and challenging the drug lobby in various American state in-

Fortunately, for Modi, the Indian courts have refused same sex marriages, and he also has successfully transsistance to millions of poor agenda of his government, sector, where in the name of siphoned off by local officials

a whopping sum of USD 300 Modi and Trump appears million to children, yet to be to have become more proidentified for what purposes nounced in recent months; while Modi has lost his zeal against corruption during his



ny capitalism being promoted by the weapon-manufacturing lobby. They are the new symbols of American capitalism, blended with corporate social responsibility and technology. **Diluting RTI** 

by Department of Government Efficiency or DOGE under Elon Musk regarding the financial assistance tune of USD 36,000, has fursubsidies billions of rupees are ther exposed the rot set in the American bureaucracy. It has triggered the demand The difference between for more transparency in the regulatory systems in the US. On the other hand, Modi has failed to address even a single press conference since 2014, he is occupying the country's

safely kept in the government files against the corrupt and his continuous refusal to share the details with Parliament and media has undermined his image as a crusader against corruption. The investigation agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation, Enforcement Directorate and the department of income tax have also been kept out of purview of the Right to Information Act 2005. These Institution's selective targeting against some politicians and bureaucrats has also undermined The recent exposure made Modi's image, and there is a suspicion that these agencies are also used against the officials refusing to surrender before the ruling party.

For many, Modi is no more serious against corruption. On the other hand, Trump's vigorous campaign against corruption and wasteful expenditures of the federal government has brought him the position of a world leader genuinely committed to checking corruption and promoter of transparency in governance.

Within three months of as-

American presidency, he not only set up DOGE, but also exposed rampant corruption in the federal government, thus saving billions of US dollars. In India, on the other hand,

most of the political parties irrespective of their ideologies have just been indulging in the rhetoric of anti-corruption, but after assuming power they used to forget their promise of making government transparent and accountable, and were seen strengthening the corrupt systems eating the vitals of the Indian state. Modi, who initially had dared to streamline the system, but in recent years, especially after losing his majority in the Lok Sabha, appears to have succumbed to the political expediencies. It may not be surprising, because his party, BJP despite the rhetoric of honesty and nationalism seldom dared to pick up challenges, whether it is related to the country's security or transparency in the governance.It may be recalled that the BJP president, Bangaru Laxman, was exposed for accepting bribes for an alleged defence deal in a sting operation. He was removed but his wife was fielded in the

election as a BJP nominee. Similarly, the Modi government has recently honoured L.K. Advani, with the country's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna despite his admiration political neutrality. of Muhammad Ali Jinnah as a secular political figure: Jinnah had led the partition of India

It appears that the BJP after losing the majority in the

on communal lines.

seats in 543-strong Lok Sabha, Modi's anti-corruption campaign too has been diluted. Modi's third term is a coalition under the banner of NDA, thus compromising his strong image of a leader committed

to eradicate corruption.

A Lone Fighter During the past three months since his inauguration on 20 January, 2025, in the White House, Trump has been asserting himself as a symbol of a democratic leader, who could challenge the well-entrenched corruption in his country's vast federal bureaucracy. If compared with Modi, Trump has achieved much more against the deadwood within such a New Delhi in power for more

than 10 years. Modi could have a strong ally in Trump, but he made a few unforgivable mistakes in recent months. During his visit to the US in 2024, Modi ignored Trump's request for a meeting, when the latter was locked in a fierce battle for his political survival. Modi's decimake a phone call might have forced his American friend not to trust him any more. He could attempts, while maintaining

blame anyone for this faux India a land of 150 billion country has to face the consequences for Modi's preference realise that few Indians in of subservient babus being India as well as abroad are

suming the coveted office of 2024 election having just 241 given cabinet positions, who ready to accept the logic of the are advising him on crucial issues than a seasoned politician of his own party.

these babus enjoying positions of power in New Delhi do not enjoy the respect ministers like Sushma Swaraj or other cabinet ministers enjoyed in the Vajpayee government enjoyed in Washington, New York and

other world capitals. Initially, Modi was an adans in the US, but his inability to live up to their expectations has almost eclipsed his shine. further become palpable following the justification of the handcuffing and enchaining support, he may succeed in of Indians deported to India. A number of them confided to Niray Modi and his matershort period than his friend in the Financial World that the nal uncle Mehul Chowksy, explanation offered by India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jayashankar on the floor of the Raiva Sabha has not only hurt India's image worldwide, but also it has undermined the pride of being Indians, who had been toiling hard to lead big corporations in the US.

There is a general feeling in India as well as in the US sion not to meet Trump or even that unless Modi rediscovers his pride and potential, the country is going to suffer further, especially when a US have met him to greet him for President ignores Indian insurviving two assassination terests. For this, if necessary, he should not hesitate to get rid of babus in his cabinet, Modi, however, cannot who have been projecting an pas. It is not only him, but the comprising mostly shameless or cowards. Modi has to

country's top diplomat, who should have resigned on his own instead of justifying the It is not surprising that standard operating procedure of homeland security in the US for handcuffing Indians.

#### An Opportunity

If Modi agrees to shed off his image of a leader travelling across continents only to indulge in noisy or hyperbolic rhetoric, he should reinvent mired leader among the Indi- a substantial agenda to renew his ties with Trump. He has to remember that Trump had conducted programmes Their disenchantment has on television, and he cannot outwit him in media projections. However, with Trump's tracking down thieves like who had decamped with ten thousand crores by cheating the Punjab National Bank, but for this he has to be serious. Trump has already decided to hand over India Tahawwur Rana, the mastermind behind the Mumbai terrorist attack of 26-11 in 2008. If Modi shows genuine interest and political courage, these fugitives can be brought to justice in India. For this, however, Modi has

to reinvent and reassert his historical role, he had been promising his countrymen since occupying the apex.

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

Gopal Misra has been

# Nana Patekar, Ganesh Acharya's lawyer releases official statement on Tanushree Dutta case

nesh Acharya's lawyer Padma Shkatkar has released an official statement over the sexual harassment case by former actress Tanushree Dutta and said that the "court has not taken the cognizance of the case as it was barred by the Limitation Act due to delay in registration of FIR."

The statement, which went with the headline: "Finally justice served to Actor Nana Patekar, Choreographer Ganesh Acharya , Sami Siddhiqui (producer) and Rakesh Sarang (director)" stated that Tanushree was targeting the lawyer's clients.

The statement read: "The FIR bearing No. 448/2018 in Oshiwara police station filed on 10.10.2018 by complainant actress Tanushree Dutta primarily mentions of an incident dated 23.3.2008 which was false from day one targetting my clients. She later aggravated the issue



cluded his innocence.'

Siddiqui conducted on 5.10.2018

and the court has rightly con-

the police officials thoroughly

officer thoroughly conducted

the investigation and filed a 'B

summary report' to the Hon'ble

Andheri Magistrate court and

the court has not taken the

cognizance of the case as it was

barred by the Limitation Act due

to delay in registration of FIR."

conducted the investigation.

According to the statement,

"The Oshiwara police station





The lawyer mentioned that "the complainant failed to make an application for condonation of delay they even failed to prove the maintainaibility of their case and the court has dismissed their case." "Prima facie there was no sufficient evidence to prove her contention even when there were

more than 100 people present at

the set while shooting. My clients

failed to understand the reason

for coming up with these false allegations.

and dedication and the present allegations were made merely to malign the images of my clients with an ulterior motive behind.'

"But some females take advantage and misuse law targeting big respected names of the industry which is wrong and unethical leading to the downturn of the career of veterans."

The lawyer's statement also stated that her "clients have faced a lot in these 7 years and had to undergo excessive trauma, stress and sufferings and I have seen this personally. "Today the Hon'ble Magistrate Court, Andheri has given

the verdict dismissing the case of the complainant. This case is definitely a beacon of light for all those men being targeted with ulterior motives by the 'Me too' category of litigants. We had faith in law and order, judiciary "They have a large fan fol- and we are delighted with the lowing due to their hard work outcome of the case today.'

#### Rakhee Gulzar makes a comeback after 22 years with

**'Aamar Boss'** 



khee Gulzar is all set to make her acting comeback with Nandita Roy and Shiboprosad Mukherjee's upcoming Bengali film "Aamar Boss". The makers have unveiled the teaser of the first song from the drama "Bawshonto Dekeche Amake". The entire track will be available to the audience on March 10. The song brings together a stellar female cast featuring the legendary Rakhee alongside Shruti Das and Souraseni Maitra. Kanchan Mallick and Gaurav Chatterjee also join the frame, adding further charm to this vibrant celebration of life and relationships.

### Karan Johar on collaborating with Gippy Grewal for 'Akaal': Here's to a start of a great partnership

MUMBAI: Bollywood mogul Karan Johar is stepping into the Punjabi cinema with Gippy Grewal's much-awaited drama, "Akaal". KJo recently took to social media to drop a heartfelt note on being associated with the project.

The filmmaker revealed that "Akaal" will be the first Punjabi film to be released in Hindi in cinemas worldwide.

The 'Kuch Kuch Hota Hai' maker wrote on the photosharing app, "It gives me so much pride to have Dharma Productions associating with the legendary & amp; accomplished Gippy Grewal to mark our first foray into Punjabi cinema. Akaal not only represents the culture, history of Punjab but I am positive it will resonate on a deeper level with the entirety of India and beyond. Which is why we are even prouder to present Akaal being the first Punjabi

film to be released in Hindi in 10th April, 2025 in Punjabi cinemas worldwide...so that the magic of cinema continues to

conquer beyond borders." Highlighting his primary association with Punjabi heartthrob Gippy Grewal, Karan Johar added, "@gippygrewal, here's to a start of a great partnership and hope we continue to meet where cinema begins! Akaal releasing in cinema worldwide on & amp; Hindi."

Gippy Grewal has not only starred in "Akaal" but has also directed and written the project. The film will also see Nimrat Khaira, Apinderdeep Singh, Mita Vashisht, Prince Kanwaljit Singh, Nikitin Dheer, Gurpreet Ghuggi, Shinda Grewal, Ekom Grewal, and Jaggi Singh in prominent

### Janhvi Kapoor to resume 'Param undari' shoot



MUMBAI: One of the most bankable Bollywood actresses Janhvi Kapoor is juggling between the shoot of her two promising projects, "Param Malhotra and "Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari" opposite Varun <u>Dhawan</u>.

Janhvi used social media to reveal that after shooting for "Sunny Sanskari Ki Tulsi Kumari", she is ready to take on the role of 'Sundari'. "Hair still kind of red

from Tulsi's holi rager but

gotta get back to Sundari life (character clues on my sipper)", Janhvi captioned The 'Mili' actress also

dropped a couple of pics on her IG. In one of the photos, she can be seen holding a sipper with 'Sundari' writ-

### Kiara Advani begins her Holi morning on a sweet note expecting mother Kiara Advani started her Holi morning on a Malhotra announced that they

Kiara took to her Instagram shared a glimpse how she has started her day of celebration. The actress shared a picture of chocolate pancakes drizzled with a nut butter sauce. The pancakes are topped with fresh strawberries and blueberries. On the side, there are beautifully arranged mango slices in a floral pattern. She added a colourful "Happy Holi" sticker on the image.

Kiara and husband Sidharth are all set to become parents.

In a joint post on Instagram, stories to wish her fans and the couple shared an image, which shows hands gently holding a pair of white knitted baby booties with delicate ribbon bows. The picture symbolizes expecting parents.

"The greatest gift of our lives... Coming soon," the picture was captioned.

It was on the sets of "Shershaah", where the two met and fell in love in 2020. The two maintained their silence on



dating rumours. In 2023, they married in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan in a traditional Hindu wedding

On the work front, Sidharth will next be seen in "Param Sundari" with actress Janhvi Kapoor. The two have wrapped up the Kerala schedule. The film stars Sidharth as

Param and Janhvi Kapoor as Sundari. The film is set against the picturesque backwaters of Kerala, the romantic comedy promises to be a rollercoaster of laughter, chaos, and unexpected twists. It is a cross-cultural love story, centers around a love tale where two contrasting worlds collide, a "North ka munda" meets a "South ki Sundari." Kiara was last seen in "Game Changer" starring Ram Charan. She will next be seen in "War 2" alongside NTR Jr. and Hrithik

#### to celebrate International Women's Day **OUR CORRESPONDENT** New Delhi

Park hospital flags off all-women bike rally

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in Gurgaon, Park Group of Hospitals organized an all-women bike rally to mark International Women's Day. The event aimed to encourage women to take charge of their health and careers while challenging societal norms. Over 100 women bikers participated in the ride, which commenced from Park Hospital

and concluded at Park Plaza,

Connaught Place, New Delhi.

about women's health. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. (Maj.) Nitika Poonia, Chief Operating Officer, Park Hospital, said, "This bike rally is our way of promoting women's empowerment and health awareness. The belief that women

Inclusive India Mission." As art of a larger initiative, expert bikers will provide training to women, enabling them to secure employment opportunities. The program aims to train over 1,000 women in bike riding, addressing the increasing demand for female riders in companies like Zomato, Swiggy, and Ecom

are proud to contribute to the

goal is to empower more than 1,000 women by teaching them bike riding skills, helping them can't ride bikes is outdated. We gain financial independence."



### Seasonal diet, Exercise Need of hour for womens health: Dr Jathar

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES** 

Mumbai

Women need to focus on health through better concentration on diet and exercise including consumption of seasonal foods, while also following up strongly on ensuring their dreams become reality, according to Dr Shubadha Jathar, MD, DGO, Dip. Gy. Endo.

She was addressing a group of women on the occasion of Global Women's Day at the heard and their dreams have NatureCure Centre at Uruli

Kanchan, near Pune in Maha rashtra. Praising all women who break barriers, defy expectations and inspire generations, Dr Jathar expressed hope that their "strength be never questioned, their voices always be

**FW DESK** Gulmarg

An outdoor fashion show held in Gulmarg, Jammu and Kashmir, during the holy month of Ramzan has ignited a political controversy. The event, part of the Elle India fashion show organized by designers Shivam and Narresh, took place at the popular ski resort and featured models walking down a snowcovered ramp in bikinis and

A video from the show, which went viral on social me-



sponded to the backlash, saying that the

Jammu and Kashmir Minister Omar Abdullah's office re-

"shock and anger" were understandable. The office said, "The shock and anger are totally understandable. The images I have seen show a complete disregard for local sensitivities

# Fashion show in Gulmarg during Ramzan sparks controversy, CM orders inquiry sparks controversy. MUMBAI: Bollywood super-

stars Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan and Salman Khan came together for an early celebration of Aamir Khan's 60th Birthday with a special Iftaar party in the city.

On Wednesday, the director took to the Stories section of his Instagram, and shared a BTS picture from the set.

The picture shows his team member holding a clapperboard with details of the shot being taken. This will be Shanaya's third project after she wrapped up 'Aankho Ki Ghustakhiyan', and 'Tu Ya Main'. Earlier, Abhay's music video of 'Pehla Nasha 2.0' was released. The actor called it an ode to Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan.

The video features Abhay and Pragati Nagpal that perctly captures tl



love and pays tribute to Aamir Khan's 1992 blockbuster 'Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar'.

Talking about the song, Abhay Verma had said, "Pehla Nasha' is not just a song. It has been like a love language for me. It's an ode to my idol Aamir sir in my own little way. made popular by Udit Narayan It was an absolute honour to and Sadhna Sargam, shares recreate what these levends

respectful way and I feel more than fortunate to present this

tribute as the face of the song". Pragati Nagpal, singer & Samp; featuring artist in the music video, whose fresh voice adds a new dimension to the song

# Be Cautious, while using Messaging Apps and social media



SINGH elegram tored closely globally for its

negative activities. Australia's e-Safety Commission had issued notices to You-Tube, Twitter X, Facebook, Telegram in March 2024 for promoting extremist activities through live-streaming features, algorithms and recommendation systems and had specifically asked Telegram to state what steps they are taking to prevent content re-In August 2024, Telegram founder Mr. Pavel Durov was arrested in France for using This year, question papers of Madhya Pradesh Board 10th and 12th examinations were being bought and sold on Telegram before examination. These instances are just a model, there is a long list of wrong deeds being done on these platforms.

Many types of illegal activities are being materialized through channels and groups active on the Telegram messaging app. In this, sharing movies, web series, e-books, software, hacking software, etc. without permission is the most common. Fraud is carried out on this platform under the guise of investment, lottery or other fake attractive schemes. Not only this, drugs, pornographic photos and videos, credit card details, etc. are bought and sold through the dark web. Fake news, and rumours are also propagated here, which can



parties, individuals and busito promote their agenda and various products. Extremist lated to child sexual abuse. organizations also propagate terrorist activities through it. Since Telegram promotes independent sources and private the app in illegal activities. messaging, it is difficult for its promoters to control it. WhatsApp is the most popu-

lar messaging app in the world and just like Telegram, it is also used to promote many illegal and unethical activities. Criminals, fraudsters, and scammers are misusing this platform as it has become a secure medium for confidential communication and digital fraud. Due to the end-to-end encryption facility in both WhatsApp and Telegram, it is easy to carry out illegal activities on both these

Rumours and fake news spread rapidly through WhatsApp forwards. Fake news is used to incite political and religious controversies. Even during the Corona pandemic, people were confused by spreading misleading information related to vaccine, health, government schemes. Fraud is also being done by sending lead to social, religious and messages about fake lottery and political instability. Political job offers, banking and OTP a big hub of pornographic ing of insecurity.

fraud, investment in crypto, nessmen use this platform false investment schemes, KYC update fraud, SIM being blocked etc. Fraud is also being implemented through deepfake and morphed photos. Under the dating scam, people are being cheated by creating fake profiles in the name of girls. Fake goods are being sold by creating fake WhatsApp business accounts. Fake products are being delivered under cash on delivery fraud. Under the discount scam, people are being duped by offering huge

discounts and then delivering

fake or defective products. Snapchat is the most dangerous among messaging apps. Taking advantage of its "disappearing message" feature, drugs, weapons, and fake documents are being bought and sold on this platform. It has become common to make friends with people by creating fake profiles on Snapchat and then blackmailing them by threatening to leak their private photos and videos. There have been many cases then, obtaining their nude photos, and then, sexually ex-

content. Here, paid subscription models are active. Adult YouTube is also a big metium of fraud. Illegal content content is bought and sold illegally on Snapchat through codewords like "private snap"

money. Facebook and Inspopular social media platforms in the world, but followers, likes, comments and views are being bought and sold on these platforms for fraud and cheating and such pressure is affecting people's self-confidence and making them victims of depression. Fraud is being done very easily through fake engagement, fake influencers and fake fol-

tion and bank details are being stolen by sending fake job offers and fake links on social media. Fake identity cards like Aadhar card, passport, driving license are being sold on these. Online gambling and betting are done. Cricket betting, online casino and other illegal activities are being materialized.

Fake brands and online stores are also active on these platforms, which carry out fraud by luring people to sell products at cheap rates. People are being cheated with the help of schemes like "get rich quick". Crypto currency is also a big factor in fraud. The glamorous lifestyle and of brainwashing minor girls, filtered photographs shown on Instagram are also making the youth fall prey to depresploiting them by deceiving sion and at the same time they them. Snapchat has become are also suffering from a feel-

and semi pornographic reels are being shown here too. Also, subscribers, views and or "premium snap". likes are being bought and sold. Piracy and copyright inis to connect people, entertain fringement, fake gurus, fake and share information, but motivational speakers etc. are criminals are using it to earn all running a fraud shop on this channel. Many YouTube tagram are among the most channels earn crores of views and money by spreading misleading news, rumours and false claims. Money is also being earned by creating controversial content related to religion, politics and society. Many types of false claims are made, in which health is the most prominent. People can even lose their lives due to misleading and fake informa-

The government is aware People's personal informa- of the illegal activities being carried out on messaging apps and social media, but till now it has not been able to come up with any law or measure that can free the common man from these problems. For now, users need to be cautious. They can do this by not joining unknown groups and channels, not clicking on any suspicious links, not forwarding fake news, reporting suspected cybercrimes to the cyber cell or concerned agencies, etc.

tion in this matter.

The responsibility of parents regarding minors has increased a lot in the changed environment. They need to be alerted all the time, maintain a friendly behaviour with children and keep a close eye on their activities.

 $Satish\ Singh, Ahmedabad$ Based Senior Columnist, views are personal.

