





45-day special drive for quick redressal of revenue cases: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Dr. Mohan Yadav has said that due to the success of the first phase of Revenue Maha Abhiyan (January- March 2024), the state government will launch Revenue Maha Abhiyan-2 from July 18 to August 31 for quick disposal of revenue cases and to correct revenue record errors.

Aadhaar of Samagra through e-KYC and measles through Samagra/Aadhaar and implement farmer registry. The digital crop survey will be conducted from August 1 to September 15.

Chief Minister Dr. Yadav sought information regarding the Revenue Campaign through a video conference at Samatva Bhawan located at the Chief Minister's residence. In the meeting, Revenue Minister Karan Singh Verma, Chief Secretary Veera Rana, Additional Chief Secretary of Chief Minister's Office Rajesh Rajoura, Principal Secretary of Chief Minister's Office Sanjay Kumar Shukla, and senior officials were present.

negligence will be tolerated in this. The work of map correction in the campaign should be good. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav instructed the Principal Secretary to monitor the campaign constantly. It should be ensured that the benefits of Swamitva Yojana are given, but care should be taken that it is not misused.

Abhiyan, Pandhurna stood first, Burhanpur second, Khandwa stood third while Harda stood tenth. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Bhopal, Singrauli, Morena, Umaria should do good work in the second phase, no complaints were received. Concrete action should be taken on disputed matters. It is necessary to verify the total with Aadhaar.



Madhya Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla at Akshaya Patra Kitchen during his visit to Vrindavan Temple in Uttar Pradesh on Monday. Pioneer photo



B.Ed students of Regional Institute of Education pose for a group photograph during their study tour at Regional Science Center in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

City buses' strike continues for 12 days

Bhopal: Out of the total 149 city buses in Bhopal, 139 have not run for the last 12 days. Despite the meeting of Mayor Malti Rai, BCLL (Bhopal City Link Limited) officers have not been able to resolve the issue.

there is no agreement between ticket collection and BCLL. On the routes where 149 buses run, an average of 40000 passengers travel there in a day. Passengers are upset due to non-operation of buses.

Promote traditional fairs and grand yatras: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said that the traditional grand fairs and yatras of the state like Bhagoria Utsav and Mahakal's ride etc. should be promoted through impactful means.

adventure activities that attract youth. Co-ordinate with production houses and artists coming to the state for shooting and publicize the good schemes and achievements of the state.

employment. Also, try to run way-side amenities and high-way treats etc. near tourist places through cooperative.

XAT announces registration

New Delhi: The Xavier Aptitude Test (XAT), one of India's most esteemed national-level MBA entrance exams, is pleased to announce the commencement of registration for XAT 2025.

CM exhorts Jan Abhiyan Parishad to develop model villages

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has urged Madhya Pradesh Jan Abhiyan Parishad to develop model villages focussing on agriculture, animal husbandry, environmental protection. Creating awareness among the general public towards development of model villages should also be undertaken on priority.

Chief Minister Yadav said that the activities taken up by the Parishad are commendable. The work of encouraging panchayats for the development of model villages should be undertaken continuously by the Parishad

done to boost awareness in the field of heritage and rural tourism and to mobilize public support in the villages. Similarly, by contacting the farmers, zero budget farming must be promoted.

Eight booklets include Introduction to Social Work, Environmental Studies, Hindi Language, Admission Brochure, English Language and Indian Culture, Social Work and Other Concepts, Yoga and Meditation, Concept and Implementation of Development.

paings like Jal-Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan. Educating the villagers about conservation of heritage sites should also be included in the creative efforts.

Skyview by Emyprean to host four-day 'Sama-Vaya' art retreat from August 22 at Jammu

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The culturally-rich and beautiful valley of Jammu is all set to welcome art-lovers and collectors from around the world yet again! Skyview by Emyprean, a 22-acre mountain harbour that seamlessly blends premium hospitality, adventure, nature and luxury in the Sanget-Patnitop region is gearing up to host the second edition of the interactive art-retreat 'Sama-Vaya' on its premises between August 22-25, 2024.

year was so overwhelmingly positive that we had to come back with yet another edition to celebrate all forms of art against the beautiful backdrop of Jammu! I'm delighted to have crafts curator Anu Chowdhury Sorabjee bring in her crafts expertise this year.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav releases booklets of MP Jan Abhiyan Parishad, at State Mantralaya in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

OFFICE OF THE NAGAR PARISHAD, GARHIMALHARA DIST- CHHATARPUR. Section-1 Notice Inviting Tenders. NIT No. 817. Online Lumpsum bids for the following works under 'SBM(U) - 2.0'.

Table with 6 columns: Sl. No., Particulars, Amt., etc. It lists various public works and their estimated costs.

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd. Corporate Office: Unit No. 802, Natraj Rustomjee, Western Express Highway and M.V. Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400069

POSESSION NOTICE Appendix IV (for immovable property). Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002...

Table with 4 columns: S. No., Name of the Borrower(s), Description of Secured Asset, Demand Notice Date & Amount, Date of Possession.







## Expectations from the budget

The Union Budget must address infrastructure growth, job creation and clean energy initiatives

The 2024 Union Budget will be presented in the Lok Sabha on July 23rd. This will be the first budget by NDA-3, likely to continue its earlier policies. However, setbacks in the recent elections might lead to course corrections, and some populist measures may be included in the budget by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. As the Union Budget 2024-25 approaches, the Indian economy stands at a pivotal juncture, characterized by robust growth prospects and lingering challenges. The GDP growth forecast remains optimistic, buoyed by a strong recovery in various sectors, particularly manufacturing, services, and technology. However, inflationary pressures, high fiscal deficits, and global economic uncertainties pose significant challenges. The government has made concerted efforts in the past to enhance infrastructure, digitalisation, and clean energy initiatives, reflecting its commitment to sustainable development. Despite these strides, issues like unemployment, income inequality, and rural distress persist, necessitating targeted fiscal measures. The forthcoming budget is expected to address these concerns, aiming to foster economic resilience, stimulate investment, and ensure inclusive growth for the nation. It is an opportunity to streamline the economy and heal ailing sectors. People's prime concerns remain inflation, which can be dexterously handled with tight fiscal planning. The Union Budget under NDA 3.0 must prioritise infrastructure growth and job creation, aiming to boost manufacturing through public-private partnerships. Changes in personal taxation and pension schemes are also expected, focusing on long-term fiscal sustainability and middle-class relief.



There is significant industry expectation for reforms and incentives to bring them back on track. The real estate sector, a major catalyst for economic growth and a vital provider of employment, urgently needs industry status to access lower-cost financing and tax benefits. High taxes on essential materials like cement and steel, particularly the 28% GST on cement must be addressed to sustain growth. India's electric vehicle (EV) sector stands at a crucial juncture, with high expectations for the upcoming budget. The government should prioritise incentivising firms to use EVs for last-mile delivery operations. Reducing GST rates for renewable energy components from the current 18% to 5% could lower the cost structure for green energy projects, promoting faster adoption across the country. The upcoming budget is expected to focus on employee welfare, formal job creation, reducing compliance complexity, and addressing the skill gap. Job creation and equipping people with desired skills, especially in technology, must be focal points. The budget should allocate more funds to tech infrastructure and resources, preparing students for a tech-driven job market and supporting entrepreneurial growth. Overall, the Budget must provide a definitive direction for India's economic agenda, with a strong emphasis on infrastructure, job creation, clean energy, and comprehensive sectoral reforms.

## PICTALK



Devotees carry idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra on the occasion of Ulta Rath Yatra in Nadia. PTI

## High seas treaty: A crucial step for marine biodiversity protection

This treaty represents a significant international effort to protect our oceans, promoting equity and cooperation among nations

The world's oceans, vast and mysterious, are crucial to the health of our planet. They regulate the climate, produce half of the oxygen we breathe, and support a rich tapestry of life that is vital to global biodiversity. Marine ecosystems are incredibly diverse, hosting countless species, many of which remain undiscovered. Protecting this biodiversity is not just an ethical obligation but a practical necessity. Healthy marine ecosystems provide essential services, such as carbon sequestration, which helps mitigate climate change. They also support fisheries that millions of people rely on for food and livelihoods. Yet, the high seas—the areas of the ocean that lie beyond national jurisdictions—remain largely unprotected and poorly managed. The significance of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement comes into the picture here. BBNJ is an international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement, also



known as the High Seas Treaty, is a significant international treaty aimed at the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. The agreement recognises the differing capacities of developed and developing nations in managing marine resources. It includes provisions for capacity-building and the transfer of marine technology, helping to level the playing field and enable all nations to participate effectively in ocean governance. This is vital for ensuring that the benefits of marine resources are shared fairly. The BBNJ Agreement represents a vision of global stewardship where nations come together to protect the shared heritage of our oceans. It establishes mechanisms for creating marine protected areas (MPAs), conducting environmental impact assess-

ments (EIAs), and sharing marine genetic resources (MGRs) and associated benefits equitably. This holistic approach ensures that conservation efforts are globally coordinated, scientifically informed, and inclusive of all stakeholders. It is a testament to the power of multilateralism in addressing global challenges. While the BBNJ Agreement is a significant step forward, it faces considerable challenges. Ensuring compliance and enforcement in the vast and remote high seas areas will be complex. Effective implementation will require robust monitoring systems, international collaboration, and sufficient funding. Moreover, the agreement must harmonise with existing regional and sectoral bodies to avoid conflicts and duplication of efforts. An international agreement like the BBNJ Agreement, where countries work together for a common goal, is a beacon of hope for resurrecting our planet from the hardships caused by human activities. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

Ancient Duggar region (land of warrior-Dogras spanning J&K, Himachal Pradesh, and parts of Punjab) has given maximum sacrifice and earned the highest number of gallantry awards in the annals of the Indian Armed Forces. Geographically, they have been the first line of defence against all invading forces. The noble land birthed the likes of King Porus, and the warrior sans pareil, General Zorawar Singh. Unbeknownst to many, the legendary Zorawar's audacious conquests included regions that are now in Pakistan and China like Gilgit-Baltistan, Skardu, Hunza, to even large swathes of Tibet. With such martial traditions, it is the only region in the country that populates not one but four fiery regiments of the Indian Army i.e., Jammu & Kashmir Rifles, Dogra Regiment, Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry and Punjab Regiment, besides other arms, and services. But the Jammu & Kashmir Rifles or Jak Rif, has a hallowed place in history and imagination as a proud and direct legatee of those Zorawar's daredevilry traditions. The only 'State Force' of the Princely Dogra Kingdom to be fully amalgamated in the Indian Army, they remain the quintessential 'Gentlemen Soldiers' owing to pedigree, immense dignity, and professional restraint in personal conduct, but unmatched ferocity in battle. In 1947 the 'Saviour of Kashmir', Brigadier Rajendra Singh Jamwal, MVC, and his band of 300 indefatigable warriors held off Pakistani tribals for crucial three days to allow the confabulations and the landing of Indian troops in Srinagar. The Maharaja and Commander of J&K State forces had ordered, "Brigadier Rajender Singh is commanded to hold the enemy at Uri at all costs and to the last man" - he did so by paying the "ultimate sacrifice" himself. In another theatre, Brig Sherg Jung Thapa, MVC, of the J&K State Forces earned the title of "Hero of Skardu". Even the first Param Vir Chakra of India, Maj Somnath Sharma, was from the Duggar region. Decades later, when the enemy attempted to



cross over yet again, it was the unparalleled heroics of the 13th Jak Rif Battalion, atop the unforgiving heights of the Kargil War that galvanized the nation. Two combatants from the traditional Duggar catchment areas of Palampur and Bilaspur were to send shivers down the spine of the enemy with their regimental war cries of "Durga Mata ki Jai" as they retook Point 5140. Captain Vikram Batra was to immortalise the moment with his "Yeh dil mange more" spirit and Rifleman (later Subedar Major) Sanjay Kumar would fight to defend their land just as their forefathers did, for aeons. Both won Param Vir Chakra. Even the peace-time equivalent of gallantry, Ashok Chakra, was bestowed on 2/Lt (later Maj Gen) Cyrus Pithwalla of 17th Jak Rif, to be the only 'General' officer with the highest gallantry award. It is from this deep fount of distinguished soldiering, that the 30th Chief of Indian Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, takes over the reigns. Commissioned in the 18th Rif battalion, he is the first Army Chief from the decorated Regiment. Understandably, people in the Duggar land (especially those from the Jak Rif fraternity) are justifiably proud. As 97 years



GENERAL DWIVEDI ASSUMES THE RESPONSIBILITY THAT HIS REGIMENTAL FOREFATHERS HELD WITH MUCH APLOMB, ELAN AND PROFESSIONAL ACUMEN THAT BEFITS THEIR MOTTO, PRASHATA RANVIRTA OR VALOUR IN BATTLE IS PRAISEWORTHY!

'young', Major General Goverdhan Singh Jamwal (the only General who was commissioned by Commander-in-Chief of J&K State Forces, Maharaja Hari Singh) extended congratulations and recalled the countless regimental sacrifices that, "made the State as crown of newly independent India". Today, General Dwivedi assumes the responsibility that his regimental forefathers held with much aplomb, elan and professional acumen that befits their motto, Prashata Ranvirta or Valour in battle is Praiseworthy! The General assumes the mantle time in most challenging times, but as the Military truism goes, "The harder the conflict, the greater the triumph". With the Indian Army, he takes over the most disciplined, combat-hardened, and restrained institution of the nation - much like his own regimental ethos. Regrettably, such a selfless attitude in a selfish world can often lead to being 'taken for granted' or lead to institutional diminishment. Transmitting that 'voice' for redressal to the powers-that-be will be his foremost challenge. To his singular credit, he has tenanted the most sensitive posts e.g., Army Commander of the Northern Command that dealt with dual nemesis



BHOPINDER SINGH

## New army chief follows Zorawar's footsteps

The ancient Duggar region has produced many of India's bravest warriors and earned the highest number of gallantry awards in the annals of the Indian Armed Forces

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ROT IN THE SYSTEM

Madam — It is ridiculous that the central institutions are being pulled in for series of alleged discrepancies in the entrance exams one after another. After NEET exam paper leaks, now its time for UPSC exam. Probationary IAS officer Puja Khedkar's issue in Pune, is now on the limelight to raise many doubts regarding the UPSC and its selection process which is lenient towards IAS officers' daughters and sons. It seems that the rules were bent in favor of her due to the political influence of her father and the impact of nepotism while clearing her medical examination certificate under OBC, PwBD quota, which was accepted despite it was done by the private hospital with an excuse of COVID-19 and posting. It is highly doubtful that she passed the exam under OBC category by misusing the law and fooled the interview board regarding her credentials which is not supposed to fall under OBC, PwBD quota as her asset worth is 22 crore. Her attitude, lavish life and pomposity on her probation period was unethical and disrespect to such highest post in the government. Perhaps, its just because of such candidates the honest and deserving get deprived of a chance to serve the society and nation building. It raises a red flag whether rules were misused in the past as well under the guise of obtaining OBC certificate by showing disability by the candidates who have had political affiliation and support. One hopes for fair and proper investigation of this matter to wipe out the rot in the system. Janga Bahadur Sunuwar | Jalpaiguri

### Trump dodges the bullet



In the shooting incident in Pennsylvania at a Trump rally, the Ex president fortunately had a narrow escape. History is replete with attempts at assassination of US presidents. In

fact world over national leaders elsewhere too have been targeted for differing reasons. In the Trump incident, political observers have highlighted increasing and consistent effort at polarisation in the US, fed by hateful political rhetoric in the past few years. Trump as the serving President would refuse to concede defeat in his bid for re-election in 2020, even after losing it by as many as seven million votes. He not only stuck to a theory of conspiracy to deny him a win but created a partisan following that would recklessly storm into the parliament. The Pennsylvania incident must carry a larger and universal lesson. As a leader grows tall his onus to public propriety and temperance in speech, becomes exponential. Else it stands to rapidly fray the socio-politic fabric of a nation. R N Narayanan | Mumbai

Court held Indira Gandhi guilty for her electoral malpractices. The Allahabad High Court delivered its judgment on June 12, 1975. The adverse judgment against Indira Gandhi threatened her position as Prime Minister. Top national leaders Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Vajpayee, and many others were arrested when Indira Gandhi had the premonition that her power and position would be in peril. The justification given for imposition of emergency was 'the internal disturbance'. Vajpayee did not indulge in electoral malpractices for facing a situation of the kind Indira Gandhi faced. He never hankered after power. Power came in search of him. The thought of Raut that Vajpayee would have imposed emergency if he had faced similar situation makes a laughing stock. What is wrong if Modi calls the day of emergency as the day of murder of the Constitution? K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

### RESPECT GANDHI'S LEGACY

Madam — I want to express my deep concern and disappointment over the recent

removal of the Mahatma Gandhi statue in Doomsday, Assam. The abrupt decision to dismantle this statue, which stood as a symbol of peace and unity at Gandhi Chowk, has understandably sparked widespread outrage among the community, particularly student leaders and local civil society. The statue's removal not only disrespects the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi but also undermines the values of non-violence and harmony that he tirelessly promoted. Such actions can have far-reaching negative impacts on our society, eroding the respect for historical figures who played pivotal roles in shaping our nation. I urge the authorities to reconsider their decision and engage in a dialogue with the community to address their concerns. Restoring the statue or finding a more inclusive solution will help in maintaining social harmony and respecting the sentiments of the people. Masood Ahmad | Barabanki



## FIRST COLUMN MANY REASONS FOR THANKING GOD

God helps us in many ways, and the least we can do is thank Him for His generosity



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Anyone, who has even tried to link with God either by praying or by chanting or by any other spiritual practice, would have benefited in some way. Because God can never be a debtor; He doesn't have to be. After all, He is the controller. I do many spiritual activities, and I am rewarded much beyond my expectations. How do I respond? I thank God profusely. This entitles me to more favours from God because thanking God is a high-class spiritual act. Over a long period of being in the shelter of God, many changes have occurred in my life. I am more peaceful; feel more secure; am 'sukhi' (happy); bad times don't last long; help comes, as required; guidance is generally available; etc. There are multiple reasons to thank God. I will detail a few. The first one has to be God's role in keeping the Creation going for our benefit. There have been many wars. But the world remains intact. Because God is the only entity, who could have prevented an all-out war like a nuclear war, which could have destroyed the world. God keeps the Creation going for His parts (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7). A businessman tries to keep his business going for his children, grandchildren, etc, but doesn't always succeed, because we all are limited; God is not.

God uses good souls, those who possess divine qualities to keep the Creation going. He rewards them in many ways including a better next birth. Shouldn't we thank God for this 'kripa' (grace)? The second reason to thank God profusely is for protecting good souls from demons. Lord Krishna has stated in verse # 16.6, "There are two types of living beings in this world: possessing divine qualities and having demonic qualities. Every person has either the predominance of divine or demonic qualities." Those with a preponderance of demonic qualities remain engaged in cruel acts. (16.4) There is a good percentage of such people. How do good people, i.e. having a preponderance of divine qualities, escape their attention?

God manages that. I cannot imagine living the way I do, i.e. with freedom and escape from being hurt by them. Believe me, I thank my Lord for this great mercy a lot, knowing how vulnerable I am. My third reason to be thankful to God is for bailing me out of all troubles, which make



their painful appearance due to my past bad/sinful acts, mostly in my past lives. I must have, otherwise I wouldn't be giving birth in this *dukhalaya*. God has promised this to all those who have God's consciousness. The fourth reason to thank God is for acting as karta (doer) in my life. There are five factors for accomplishing any task. These are: the place of action and the doer and many different kinds of instruments and many different efforts and fifth in this connection is the providence only." (18.14) Only God can control all the five. No human being has control over any other factor except being a doer. And when God is the karta, a task gets surely done. God does this kripa on us whenever He feels that it is according to dharma and we deserve it.

The fifth reason to thank God, especially by me is for God using me as His nimitta (instrument). I am one of many whom God has chosen. I suspect that all good people get this privilege, as Arjuna was. (11.33) The sixth reason to thank God one and all human beings is His mercy in allowing very simple spiritual practices like praying, naman (obeisance), chanting and, yes, thanking.

Once we begin doing them, God is in the picture. He doesn't wait for us to become His devotees; God begins to help us to become one. Because all these acts signal to God our intention to take His shelter. In my case, God has been micromanaging my life for a long time encouraging me to go on with my spiritual activities like writing spiritual texts such as articles and books. All the religions promote this act of thanking God. If we don't thank when we should we are becoming a debtor. I look for opportunities to thank others, and to God of course. He gives me plenty of reasons to be thankful.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Prioritising growth and regional development



A S MITTAL

### The first budget by NDA-3 is anticipated to address the demands of stakeholders and States seeking assistance to bridge regional disparities



The NDA-3 government is gearing up to present its first budget on July 23. This budget carries high expectations as it is anticipated to outline a 5-year economic agenda and is expected to deliver substantially to meet the demands of stakeholders and states seeking assistance. Discussions are underway regarding the reinstatement of special status for states like Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, with demands from Janata Dal (United) and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in exchange for their support for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government. Andhra Pradesh's CM, N. Chandrababu Naidu, has demanded Rs one trillion to support the state's industrial and infrastructure development. The demand for special category status for Bihar and Andhra Pradesh poses the crucial question of why a similar approach should not be adopted to accelerate and expand the industrial growth of Punjab, a landlocked border state. This expectation arises at a critical time when the state is experiencing a significant divergence in its industrial activities due to stagnant growth and reduced exports. These circumstances demand new measures to catapult the state to greater heights. In the mid-nineties, neighbouring hill states like Himachal Pradesh reaped the benefits of a central special industrial package, while Punjab faced significant setbacks as many major players expanded and shifted their operations to the hilly states. The geographical disadvantage of being distant from seaports has led to certain investment disadvantages and stagnant growth in the industrial sector. Today, Punjab demands a level playing field to compete on an equal footing, as its key manufacturing industries have the potential to become an 'Engine of Growth.' Punjab inherited a fragile industrial base at the time of India's partition in 1947, which was further eroded with the creation of Haryana in 1966. The 1980s and 1990s were tumultuous due to terrorism and social unrest, impacting industrial growth in the region. Currently, Punjab only accounts for 5% of industrial units in the country, with a 3.6% Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) in the industrial sector over the last five fiscal years. In contrast,



THE DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS FOR BIHAR AND ANDHRA PRADESH POSES THE CRUCIAL QUESTION OF WHY A SIMILAR APPROACH SHOULD NOT BE ADOPTED TO ACCELERATE AND EXPAND THE INDUSTRIAL GROWTH OF PUNJAB, A LANDLOCKED BORDER STATE

neighbouring states like Haryana have demonstrated higher growth rates at 5.9%. Punjab is positioned 10th with a score of 58.95 in the Export Preparedness Index (EPI) ranking 2023, whereas Haryana holds the 5th position with a score of 63.65. It raises concern that Gujarat has the highest number of 8 districts among the top 25 districts in terms of export share, followed by Maharashtra with 5 districts, Haryana with one, and Punjab with none. Moreover, in terms of foreign direct investments (FDI), Punjab ranks 12th, having attracted only 0.49% of FDI. This is in stark contrast to neighbouring Haryana, which ranks sixth with FDI equity inflows accounting for 4.17% of the total inflows. The erosion of industry is a pressing crisis in Punjab. Despite efforts by successive governments to attract investments, significant hurdles such as location disadvantage, law and order and frequent protests persist. One major issue is the location disadvantage, as Punjab's distance from seaports makes its industrial operations non-competitive in the global market. Two years ago, CM Bhagwant Maan announced in the Vision Punjab conclave of ASSOCHAM that Punjab aims to become the first state in the country to own wagons (Punjab on wheels), offering a potential solution to dilute the freight burden. However, the success of this endeavour depends on the support from both the central and state governments. Punjab is an exceptional hub for textile yarn, bicycles, hosiery, tractors, automobile components, sports goods, engineering goods, and leather. These industrial clusters possess immense potential and can be further strengthened. Ludhiana proudly leads as the top producer of blended yarn and hosiery, as well

as the second-largest producer of polyester silk, fibre, and cotton yarn. It dominates woollen knitwear (95%) and hosiery (65%) exports, showcasing its strength in the global market. While China holds a dominant position with a 37% share, India is positioned with a 5% share in the global export market, and there is huge potential for expansion in export markets such as the USA, UAE, UK, Germany, France, and Australia. Ludhiana also commands a remarkable 92% of India's total bicycle parts production and 75% of bicycle production, securing its position as the leading exporter of bicycles from India with an 80% share. While India lags behind China in bicycle exports, there is clear potential to aggressively expand global exports with untapped opportunities in the US, European countries, and Africa as burgeoning bicycle markets. Jalandhar holds a solid 45% share of the total production, with 75% of the country's sports goods being exported from the city. Despite China's dominant position as the largest exporter of sports goods with a share of 42.2%, India's current 0.56% share of global exports signifies the untapped potential for Punjab's growth, with lucrative prospects in the USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, and Argentina. Punjab plays a pivotal role, hosting one-third of total OEMs in the farm equipment segment and serving as the leading tractor manufacturer, contributing one-third to India's production. With a commanding share in exports, Punjab stands tall as the largest exporter. Despite India's current 2.2% share, the potential for over 2 lakh tractors to be exported in the next 3 years to burgeoning markets such as Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, SAARC, and African nations is undeniable. Wish List: Priority Focus on PLI:

The Production Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme should be thoroughly re-evaluated to ensure it delivers the intended impact on competitiveness and scale. Monitoring its progress closely is critical. The slow progress of the PLI scheme, especially in labour-intensive sectors like textiles, automobiles, and components, must be addressed urgently. To achieve broader goals such as enhancing exports, attracting significant investments, and generating employment, expanding PLI to new sectors like bicycles and sports goods is imperative to encompass the maximum number of MSMEs. Assertive GST Rationalization: There is an urgent need to rationalize the current GST structure to eliminate the complex hurdles created by multiple tax slabs. Transitioning from the existing structure to a simplified two or three-slab framework and providing exemptions for previously exempted items such as farm implements is crucial to streamline the system. Critical Focus on Logistics Cost: Competitive and efficient logistics are the foundation for industrial growth. Policy-backed support for state-owned wagons in landlocked border states like Punjab is essential to address the over-freight burden and provide a level playing field to manufacturing hubs. Incentivizing labour-intensive and export-oriented industries in the upcoming budget is vital to driving the country's economic growth and employment generation. (The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)

# Cinema: A potent tool in global politics and cultural diplomacy

### In our multipolar world, cinema has become a critical component of soft power, shaping global perceptions through its captivating narratives

Movies have evolved far beyond mere entertainment; they now play a significant role in global politics and cultural relations. Through creative expressions, films harness the ecosystem comprising key stakeholders to nurture and develop soft power dynamics and geopolitical equations. In the realm of geopolitics, movies are more than art; they are potent tools used by countries to showcase their soft power and expand their influence worldwide. Through their film industries, nations share stories that resonate globally, reflecting their identities and serving as diplomatic instruments. Films offer profound insights into the societal dynamics of different countries, profound



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

enhancing communication and ushering in a new era where technology plays a pivotal role in shaping these interactions. The emergence of the new players can be attributed to the concept of Soft Power dynamics. This idea, coined by Joseph S. Nye, describes the ability to attract and persuade through culture, political ideals, and policies. In this context, cinema has become an essential component of Soft Power. Cinema, as a medium and platform, acts as a catalyst to position soft power dynamics, decoding perceptions, perspectives and geopolitical stances globally. The portrayal on the big screen infuses fresh thinking into the policy debate dynamics, global issues and management of ideas in a

global framework, bound by multipolarity and instant communication. Many films in the past have mirrored multidimensional dynamics and impact on different ecosystems, nations and individuals. Cinema and foreign policy interface reinforces the global appeal of a concept, or idea leading to a dynamic framework for cultural diplomacy. Cinema as a medium has added a new tool to the dynamics of bilateralism, the use of creative tools in the portrayal of a new point of view, ideology and intervention along with better cultural understanding. Cinema has emerged as a vehicle of Collaboration, Cooperation, Cohesion, Coordination, and Convergence — the 5Cs of cinema. On the global front, cinema breaks barriers, overcomes obstacles, and thrives on the creativity of both old and new players. It no longer caters solely to Western or Eurocentric narratives but embraces a diverse global perspective, which plays a crucial role in shaping cinema perceptions and adding a soft touch to global power dynamics. The importance of cinema in geopolitics has

grown significantly over recent years, with governments increasingly funding film projects that reflect their national interests and cultural heritage. Many countries use their film industries as a powerful tool for soft power to shape their global impression. The impact of movies is greatly amplified by their global presence, thanks to the rise of streaming services that have revolutionised film distribution, making it easier for films from smaller markets to reach a worldwide audience. Platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu have democratised access to movies from various countries, allowing filmmakers worldwide to showcase their cultural stories without relying on traditional distribution.



Cinema transcends power structures by influencing public opinion and shaping international policies through its captivating narratives. Movies serve as platforms for discussions and political analysis, sparking conversations that can drive societal transformation. Filmmakers and actors act as ambassadors with significant sway, using their works to facilitate cultural exchange and international conversations. Cinema has become a platform for new ideas and concepts, driving integration through International Film Festivals. The role of cinema in today's world is incredibly significant. It serves as a diplomatic tool and a compelling medium to communicate ideas through storytelling, influencing international relationships. Beyond its audience, cinema has a far-reaching impact on global leaders, policymakers, and communities worldwide. It acts as an envoy, spreading messages of peace, empathy, and solidarity through engaging stories that mirror the complexities of human life. There is no doubt that cinema now transcends entertainment in contemporary society. Nations are recognising the power of cinema as a tool to promote their agendas and perspectives on the world stage, underscoring its importance in diplomacy. (The writer is former additional DG, DFF and Festival Director, IFFI; Inputs by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan. Views are personal)



# 'I'm supposed to be dead'

## TRUMP REFLECTS ON ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

Donald Trump has said he is "supposed to be dead" after the assassination attempt on him at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania, calling the incident a "surreal experience".

to Milwaukee for the Republican National Convention starting on Monday which will nominate him as the party's candidate for the November 5 presidential election.

year-old gunman, who also died, has been named as Thomas Matthew Crooks. Trump wore a white bandage that covered his right ear but his aides did not allow any photographs to be taken, said the Post.

right and I didn't die. Usually, you have to die to have an iconic picture." Trump told the paper he wanted to keep speaking following the shooting but the Secret Service insisted he go to the hospital.

# Biden calls for national unity, says time to 'cool down'

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

US President Joe Biden on Sunday urged citizens to unite in the hour of crisis when a failed assassination bid was made on his predecessor Donald Trump and said it was time to "cool down" political rhetoric in the country.



# Anger and anxiety loom over the Republican convention

AP ■ MILWAUKEE

Donald Trump's campaign chiefs designed the convention opening this week to feature a softer and more optimistic message, focusing on themes that would help a divisive leader expand his appeal among moderate voters and people of colour.



more somber tone during a Sunday appearance on NBC. "We've got to turn the temperature down in this country," Johnson said.

Trump's plans to lift everyday working Americans. "We have to be able to lay out a vision for where we want to take this country," he said.

Beyond voting to formally give Trump the nomination, elected delegates from across the nation will update the GOP's policy platform for the first time since 2016.

Many anti-abortion advocates strongly opposed the Trump campaign's rewriting of the platform. But after the shooting, at least one major religious conservative said he wouldn't press to reverse the committee's decision.

# 'Gunman acted alone; being probed as act of domestic terror'

PTI ■ MILWAUKEE

The gunman who shot at former president Donald Trump during an election rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday appears to have acted alone, according to the FBI, which is investigating it as a potential "domestic terrorism" act.

against incumbent Joe Biden. "The shooter may be deceased, but the investigation is very much ongoing. And, because of that, we are limited in what we say at this point," FBI Director Christopher Wray said.

# Rescuers in Nepal recover 11 bodies

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Rescuers in Nepal have recovered a total of 11 bodies from the river that two buses full of people were swept into by a landslide, officials said Monday.

# Days after NATO allies called Beijing a Ukraine war enabler, China, Russia start joint naval drills

AP ■ BEIJING

China and Russia's naval forces on Sunday kicked off a joint exercise at a military port in southern China on Sunday, official news agency Xinhua reported, days after NATO allies called Beijing a "decisive enabler" of the war in Ukraine.

Guangdong province on Sunday and is expected to last until mid-July, aimed to demonstrate the capabilities of the navies in addressing security threats and preserving peace and stability globally and regionally, state broadcaster CCTV reported Saturday, adding it would include anti-missile exercises, sea strikes and air defense.

with NATO allies last week. The sternly worded final communiqué, approved by the 32 NATO members at their summit in Washington, made clear that China is becoming a focus of the military alliance, calling Beijing a "decisive enabler" of Russia's war against Ukraine.

ministry maintained that China has a fair and objective stance on the war in Ukraine. Last week, a US Coast Guard cutter on routine patrol in the Bering Sea also came across several Chinese military ships in international waters but within the US exclusive economic zone, American officials said.

# China's Communist Party begins key meet to stem economic slowdown

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's GDP dipped to 4.7 per cent in the second quarter, the government said on Monday, as the ruling Communist Party began a key meeting to set a defining moment for President Xi Jinping's leadership to revive the world's second-largest economy.

COVID lockdown blues, the economy posted a five per cent growth in the first half, within the range of the official growth target fixed for the year. "The current external environment is complicated, while domestic demand remains insufficient. We still need to consolidate the foundation for economic recovery," the NBS said on Monday.

presided over a host of meetings to set the tone for the key plenum and chart the direction for the nation's future reform highlighting that "the furthering of reform must focus on refining and developing the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and advance modernisation of the country's governance system and governance capacity".

reforming the country, a political researcher from Tsinghua University, who requested anonymity, told the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post. He said the watershed third plenum would be used by the party elite to review achievements under Xi's leadership and lay down plans to hit goals set for 2035, "which will lay the groundwork for the President's grand legacy of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by 2049".

attract investments. Neil Thomas, a fellow for Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Centre for China Analysis, said Xi would use the plenum to advance his existing agenda focused on party control, technological self-reliance, financial de-risking, social welfare, and supply-side industrial policy. But the political challenges of economic pessimism could lead to some very modest 'positive surprises', he told the Post.





# WPI inflation surges to 16-month high in June

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wholesale inflation in the country surged to a 16-month high of 3.36 per cent in June on account of rise in prices of food articles, especially vegetables and manufactured items. This was the fourth consecutive month when inflation witnessed an upward journey. The wholesale price index (WPI) based inflation was 2.61 per cent in May. It was (-) 4.18 per cent in June 2023. Wholesale inflation had touched a high of 3.85 per cent in February 2023. "Positive rate of inflation in June, 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, manufacture of food products, crude petroleum & natural gas, mineral oils, other manufacturing etc," the Ministry of Commerce & Industry said in a statement on Monday. As per the data, inflation in food articles rose 10.87 per cent in June, as against 9.82 per cent in May. Inflation in vegetables was 38.76 per cent during June, up



from 32.42 per cent in May. Onion inflation was at 93.35 per cent, while potato was 66.37 per cent in the month under review. Pulses inflation rose 21.64 per cent in June. During the month, inflation in other food items like fruits stood at 10.14 per cent, cereals at 9.27 per cent, and milk at 3.37 per cent. The upmove in the WPI inflation in June 2024 was broad-based, driven by all the

volatile in July 2024 so far, on the back of supply-demand mismatches, witnessing a month-on-month rise (USD 86.6/bbl up to July 11). Higher crude oil prices might exert an upward pressure to the headline WPI inflation in the ongoing month, she added. In the fuel and power basket, inflation stood at 1.03 per cent, marginally lower than 1.35 per cent in May. However, price rise in crude petroleum & Natural gas was in double digit at 12.55 per cent during the month. In manufactured products, inflation was at 1.43 per cent in June, higher than 0.78 per cent in May. The rise in June WPI is in line with the retail inflation data for the month. Retail inflation rose to a four-month high of 5.1 per cent in June, data released last week showed. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) mainly takes into account retail inflation while framing the monetary policy.

major segments except fuel and power, ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said. Looking ahead, she said, the headline WPI inflation is expected to dip to about 2 per cent in July 2024, driven by a favourable base, as well as some cooling in global commodity prices. With regard to oil prices, she said, the average price of the Indian basket of crude oil has been quite

# India's exports rise 2.56% to USD 35.2 bn in June



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's merchandise exports in June increased 2.56 per cent to USD 35.2 billion from USD 34.32 billion in the year-ago month, according to government data released on Monday. Imports rose by about 5 per cent to USD 56.18 billion in June against USD 53.51 billion a year ago. The trade deficit, or the gap between imports and exports, during the month under review stood at USD 20.98 billion. Briefing media on the data, Commerce Secretary Sunil

# Sai Life Sciences files IPO papers with Sebi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private equity major TPG Capital-backed Sai Life Sciences has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO). The company's proposed IPO comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 800 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 6.15 crore shares by a promoter, investor shareholders and other shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Under the OFS, one of the promoter entities -- Sai Quest Syn Pvt Ltd -- and investor shareholders -- TPG Asia VII SF Pte Ltd, HBM Private Equity India -- will partly offload their respective stakes. At present, Sai Quest Syn holds 5.61 per cent stake in the company, TPG owns 39.69 per cent shareholding and HBM Private Equity India has 5.5 per cent stake. Of the IPO proceeds, funds to the tune of Rs 600 crore will be used for debt payment and a portion will be used for corporate general purposes, the draft papers filed on Friday showed. The Hyderabad-based Sai Life



Sciences provides end-to-end services across the drug discovery, development, and manufacturing value chain, for small molecule new chemical entities (NCE), to global pharmaceutical innovator companies and biotechnology firms. According to a F&S report, India CRDMO market (contract research, development and manufacturing organization) was amongst the fastest growing markets in APAC over 2018-2023. This growth is expected to continue, with the Indian market projected to grow by 14 per cent between 2023 and 2028 reaching an estimated value of USD 14.1 billion in 2028. Kotak Mahindra Capital Company Ltd, IIFL Securities Ltd, Jefferies India Private Ltd and Morgan Stanley India Company Private Ltd have been appointed as merchant bankers to manage the company's IPO.

# Hindustan Zinc contributes ₹13,195 cr to exchequer in FY24

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) on Monday said it has contributed Rs 13,195 crore to the exchequer in the last financial year, representing about 46 per cent of its total revenues. In FY 2023-24, Hindustan Zinc's total contribution to the exchequer stood at Rs 13,195 crores, the Vedanta group firm said in a regulatory filing. With this, HZL's cumulative contribution to the exchequer over the past five years stood at Rs 77,803 crore. "As our businesses grow, so will these numbers. At Hindustan Zinc, we are committed to continuing to do business with a purpose in a manner that is sustainable,



transparent and creates value for all our stakeholders," Hindustan Zinc Chairperson Priya Agarwal Hebbar said. Over the past five years, that company has consistently contributed an average of approximately Rs 3,250 crore per year to Rajasthan in the form of royalties, contributions to the District Mineral Foundation (DMF), and other levies. "This substantial contribution underlines Hindustan Zinc's commitment to the state's

economic development," the company said. Over the past five years, Hindustan Zinc has consistently contributed an average of approximately Rs 3,250 crore annually to the state of Rajasthan in the form of royalties, contributions to the District Mineral Foundation (DMF), and other levies. In the past five years, the company said it has paid Rs 16,350 crore in government royalties, Rs 10,100 crore as corporate income tax, Rs 18,008 crore as corporate dividend and Rs 26,384 crore as indirect taxes. Hindustan Zinc Limited, a Vedanta Group company, is the world's second-largest integrated zinc producer and the third-largest silver producer.

# Imports from Bangladesh aggravate jute sector crisis: Stakeholders

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A body of jute suppliers have written to Union Minister Giriraj Singh, alleging that raw material imports from Bangladesh, either directly by mills or through third parties, have adversely impacted the industry and farmers. In a letter to the textile minister, the Jute Balers' Association has raised concerns over the "unregulated import of raw jute" from the neighbouring country and "low orders" for mills have led to a severe payment crisis for domestic raw jute suppliers. Indian Jute Mills Association has also raised concerns over the issue and sought intervention from the central and state governments to tide over the crisis. A meeting between the industry stakeholders and the

ministry is expected later on Monday, an official said. The balers' association, which has been serving the sector for over 115 years, outlined the critical issues threatening the industry's survival. "Despite a bumper crop year in 2023-24, where domestic supply was sufficient, mills have continued to import large quantities of raw jute from Bangladesh. In June 2024 alone, 73,000 bales, or 22 per cent of the total 3,34,000 bales, were imported," Jute Balers' Association secretary Pulak Jha said in the letter. "There is an opening stock of 3 million bales of raw jute for the jute season as of July 1, 2024, and the new crop is also around the corner. These factors caused prices to plummet below the minimum support price (MSP)," Jute Balers' Association senior



functionary Om Prakash Soni told PTI. Prices of the golden fibre fell below Rs 5,000 per quintal, while the minimum support price (MSP) is Rs 5,335 per quintal for the 2024-25 season, he said. There has been a bar on the use of imported jute in

making bags for food grain packaging but the "influx of cheaper and low-grade jute from Bangladesh has exacerbated the crisis", an industry stakeholder said. "With mills facing liquidity issues, payments to suppliers are getting delayed, hindering their ability to purchase fresh jute from farmers. This has created a vicious cycle, where mills are obligated to buy MSP-linked jute, which reduces their market purchases, further depressing prices and pushing more farmers towards MSP dependency. "Already six mills are closed. The current dues are about Rs 1,400 crore of which Rs 400 crore is legacy dues from the mills," Soni said explaining the current situation. The association called for a rigorous crackdown on illegal jute imports and a reaffirmation of commitment to lawful practices. "The future of millions of livelihoods is at stake," the letter said, urging immediate government intervention to curb the menace of "unregulated imports" and address the issue of reduced orders.

# Cardiac ward inaugurated

PNS ■ NEW RAIPUR

In a significant step to help children born with congenital heart diseases from economically weaker sections of society, REC Limited, a Maharashtra CPSE under the Ministry of Power and a leading NBFC, inaugurated the "REC Gift of Life-Cardiac Ward" at the state-of-the-art Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in New Raipur. Vivek Kumar Dewangan, Chairman and Managing Director, REC Ltd inaugurated the "REC Gift of Life-Cardiac Ward" in presence of distinguished guests, hospital management, doctors, medical staff, patients and their family members, and senior officials from REC Ltd.

# Induction ceremony for 2024 freshers held

PNS ■ CHENNAI

It was a field day for first year students of Allied Health Sciences and Health Sciences Colleges when they received a warm welcome during an induction ceremony at Kattankulathur near Chennai today. N Ram, Director, The Hindu Group said learning always is a must to stay updated in one's field of study. Skills have to be constantly upgraded. He was the chief guest at the ceremony held at Dr T P Ganesan Auditorium on SRMIST premises at Kattankulathur near Chennai. They must also have good conduct and humbleness, as these are very essential while interacting with the patients, he said.



Showering praises on SRMIST, N Ram said the institution has a very robust entrance exam system designed to intake students into various courses. The entrance exam can be said to be an ideal one as it is designed taking into view all streams in school education in India. "Colleges of Allied Health Sciences and Health Sciences have over 100 courses and have an enrolment of 1500 students.

# Govt aims to cover 25% of kharif paddy area with climate-resilient seeds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to combat the growing challenges posed by climate change, the government is targeting to bring 25 per cent of the total kharif paddy area under climate-resilient seeds, a senior agriculture ministry official said on Monday. The move comes as erratic rainfall patterns have become increasingly common in recent years, threatening rice production in the country. India, the world's second-largest rice producer after China, cultivates paddy on over 410 lakh hectares during the kharif season. Speaking on the sidelines of ICAR's 96th Foundation and Technology Day celebrations, ICAR Director General



Himanshu Pathak said, "While we have achieved 75 per cent coverage of climate-resilient seeds in wheat cultivation, the adoption in paddy is still limited." Pathak revealed that ICAR has developed paddy seeds resistant to drought and lodging. These seeds were sown in 16 per cent of the total paddy area during the 2023 kharif season. "For the ongoing kharif season, we aim to increase this

coverage to 25 per cent," he added. The push for climate-resilient seeds comes at a crucial time. Research studies indicate that climate change could reduce rice yields in India by 3-5 per cent under a medium emissions scenario, and up to 31.3 per cent by 2030 under high emissions. India's estimated rice production for the 2023-24 crop year (July-June) stands at 136.7 million tonne. The top rice-producing states include West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. Pathak attributed the record wheat output of 112.9 million tonne in 2023-24 to the widespread use of climate-resistant seeds, despite weather aberrations.

# Automobile retail sales up 9% in April-June: FADA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile retail sales increased 9 per cent year-on-year in June quarter FY25 with all segments, barring tractors, reporting growth, dealers' body FADA said on Monday. Overall retail sales rose to 61,91,225 units in the April-June period from 56,59,060 units in the same quarter of FY24. Passenger vehicle retails increased 2.53 per cent to 9,20,047 units as against 8,97,361 units a year ago. "Despite strong bookings and customer flow, high competition, excess supply and discounting presented challenges for sustained growth in the PV segment," FADA President Manish Raj Singhania said in a statement. Dealers reported significant impacts from elections, extreme heat and market liquidity issues, he noted. The extreme heat led to 18 per cent drop in showroom walk-ins in May, with inventory levels reaching an all-time high of 62-67 days by the end of June, Singhania said. "Despite improved product availability and substantial discounts aimed at stimulating demand, market sentiment remains subdued due to the extreme heat and delayed monsoons, resulting in 15 per cent fewer walk-ins," he added. Two-wheeler retails stood at 45,54,255 units in April-June, up 12.56 per cent as compared with 40,46,169 units in the year-ago period. "The recovery in the two-wheeler segment is



promising, largely due to the emerging performance in rural areas, although these are early trends," Singhania said. The segment also faced significant challenges from extreme heat and the election period, resulting in 13 per cent reduction in walk-ins in the showrooms during May and June, he stated. Three-wheeler sales rose 11.36 per cent to 2,72,691 units in the first quarter from 2,44,878 units in the same period last fiscal. Commercial vehicle retail sales witnessed marginal increase at 2,46,513 units as against 2,44,834 units earlier. "Commercial vehicle segment experienced a slowdown due to the elections and a pause in infrastructure projects. In April, elections dampened sentiment, causing delays in expansion plans. Additionally, limited financing options and regional challenges, such as water scarcity, further impacted performance," Singhania said. Tractor retail sales declined 12.44 per cent to 1,97,719 units from 2,25,818 units a year ago.

# Next round of talks for proposed trade, investments agreement between India, EU likely in September

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and the 27-nation European Union (EU) are expected to hold the next round of talks for the proposed free trade agreement, which aims at boosting commerce and investments, in September, an official said. Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce Darpan Jain said that the eighth round of talks was concluded on June 28. He said that discussions were held on all 21 chapters in the meeting and progress was made in number of areas such as government procurement, digital trade, technical barriers to trade,

goods, and market access. "We plan to hold more inter-sessional meetings in July and August and we intend to have another round (of talks) in the last week of September," Jain told reporters here. On June 17, 2022, India and the EU formally resumed negotiations on the proposed agreement, after a gap of over eight years. They are negotiating Trade and Investment Agreement, and a pact on Geographical Indications (GI). India had started negotiations for a trade pact with the EU in 2007, but the talks stalled in 2013 as both sides failed to reach an agreement on key issues, including customs duties on

automobiles and spirits and the movement of professionals. The trade agreement with the EU would help India further expand and diversify its exports of goods and services, including securing the value chains. India's merchandise exports to EU member countries have increased to USD 75.92 billion in 2023-24 from USD 74.83 billion in 2022-23. Imports also rose to USD 59.38 billion in 2023-24 from USD 61 billion in 2022-23. The EU accounts for over 17 per cent of India's total exports and about 8.8 per cent of the country's total imports. Talking about the proposed

trade pact with the UK, another official said that with the new government taking charge in Britain, the two countries will take forward the negotiations. The official said the new government in the UK will look into the agreement. The India-UK talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles. Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently and said he stood ready to conclude an FTA that worked for both sides.

The two leaders agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK FTA. There are pending issues in both the goods and services sectors. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for

more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance). The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT). There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which include goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights. The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23. The Labour Party's election manifesto for the recent polls also committed to clinching the deal.



