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Rate cut paused to curb inflation

RBI ALLOWS RESTRUCTURING OF SOME CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL LOANS TO REVIVE ECONOMY



MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank on Thursday kept interest rates on hold to contain elevated inflation, even as it allowed banks to restructure some corporate and individual loans as part of efforts to revive the economy that faces its first contraction in more than four decades.

It also raised the limit of loans that can be availed against gold ornaments and jewellery and announced additional liquidity measures over and above those that have already been taken to reduce the asset-liability challenges in the NBFC sector over the last 3-4 months.

After reducing the interest rate by a total of 115 basis points since February, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted

unanimously in favour of the status quo, leaving repo rate at 4 per cent, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on the three-day deliberations of the panel. The committee expects inflation to remain elevated in Q2 (July-September), ease only in the second half of 2020-21 fiscal.

The 115 basis point rate cut this year was on top of the 135 basis points reduction in an easing cycle last year. "Given

the uncertainty surrounding the inflation outlook and extremely weak state of the economy in the midst of an unprecedented shock from the ongoing pandemic, the MPC decided to keep the policy rate on hold," he said. Das said the central bank would remain "watchful for a durable reduction in inflation to use the available space to support the revival of the economy."

The committee, however,

unanimously decided to continue to keep its accommodative policy stance "as long as necessary to revive growth".

The RBI allowed banks to restructure loans of companies that were not in default for more than 30 days as on March 1, 2020. Lenders can grant loan extensions of as long as two years with or without a freeze on repayments. Banks will however need to set aside higher provisioning

RBI SAID

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for such a recast. There will be separate windows available for a restructuring of loans of Small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) and individual borrowers who have been impacted by the pandemic.

Stating that the move will help companies that have been struggling with the economic fallout of the coronavirus, Das said the resolution plan may be invoked any time within 2020 and will have to be implemented within 180 days from the date of invocation. "The underlying theme of this resolution window is the preservation of the soundness of the Indian banking sector," he said. The

central bank also announced setting up an expert committee headed by KV Kamath -- the former chairman of BRICS Bank and ICICI Bank -- for corporate and personal loan resolution plans, which will look into sector-specific financial parameters for restructurings.

The RBI also decided to broaden the scope of Priority Sector Lending (PSL) by including start-ups and enhancing borrowing limits for renewable energy sectors. The central bank would also increase the targets for lending to "small and marginal farmers" and "weaker sections" under the PSL. **AGENCIES**

Voda Idea Q1 losses mount to ₹25,460cr



THE COMPANY SAYS THAT THE FIRST QUARTER NUMBERS WERE IMPACTED BY THE NATIONWIDE LOCKDOWN DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

NEW DELHI: India's third largest telecom operator Vodafone Idea has reported a sharp rise in its losses to Rs 25,460 crore for the April-June quarter of 2020-21 due to high provisioning for statutory dues.

The losses of Vodafone Idea stood at about Rs 4,874 crore in the year-ago period. The revenue from operations came in at Rs 10,659.3 crore for the first quarter of FY2021, against Rs 11,269.9 crore in the same period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing.

The company said it has

recognised additional charge of Rs 19,440.5 crore in June quarter towards adjusted gross revenue (AGR) liabilities.

"...during this quarter, on prudence, we have recognised a charge of Rs 194.4 billion as an exceptional item towards the total estimated AGR liability, in addition to estimated recognised liability of Rs 460.0 billion as on March 31, 2020," a company statement said.

The company said that the first quarter numbers were impacted by the nationwide lockdown due to coronavirus.

Ravinder Takkar, the MD and CEO of Vodafone Idea, said, "Q1FY21 was a challenging quarter as availability of recharges due to store closure and ability of customers to recharge on account of economic slowdown were impacted."

17 die as Air India flight skids off Calicut runway



KOZHIKODE: At least 17 persons, including the pilot and co-pilot, were killed and more than 150 injured when a Vande Bharat mission flight from Dubai overshot the runway at Calicut International Airport, broke into two parts and fell into a deep gorge around 8 p.m. on Friday.

The injured passengers were shifted to hospitals in nearby Kondotty and various hospitals in Malappuram

and Kozhikode districts. The condition of many passengers at the Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital and the MIMS Hospital is said to be critical.

Rescue operations were led by the disaster management team, police and fire and rescue personnel from both Kozhikode and Malappuram districts. More than a dozen ambulances from Kozhikode were sent to the airport. An

NDRF team also reached the site to assist with the rescue operation.

The Boeing aircraft, carrying 189 passengers and six crew, attempted to land amidst heavy tailwinds and rain on the table-top runway. It failed to hold on the runway due to poor weather conditions, and skidded for more than 75 m.

The accident was similar to the fatal crash of another Air India Express aircraft that overshot the Mangalore International Airport 10 years ago, following the accident, the airport was closed and flights diverted. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has ordered a detailed inquiry into the matter.

The Indian consulates in Dubai and Sharjah have activated five helpline numbers to provide information to the family members of the Air India Express flight. **AGENCIES**

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A charter of rights for taxpayers soon

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said taxpayers are nation-builders and the government would come out with a charter of rights for them.

The minister also said the government has taken several measures towards simplification, improving transparency and moderation in rates as part of efforts to bring in ease for honest taxpayers.

"So I'm so happy that we are part of a government being led by a Prime Minister who honestly thinks the Indian taxpayer needs to be served better. And one of the announcements, which of course I made and I shall not elaborate on it now, is to give the Indian taxpayer a charter of its rights," she said. The minister was addressing a centenary celebration programme of eminent jurist Nani Palkhivala, organised by Sastra University.

There are only a few countries in the world, like Australia, the UK and US, where there is a Charter of Rights for the taxpayer, she said.

"It clearly states this obligation towards the nation as much as clearly pronouncing the rights. We are attempting that. I had announced it as a part of the Atmanirbhar campaign. We are very keen to provide to taxpayers Charter of Rights. We shall be coming with that," Sitharaman said.

The Budget had an-



nounced a taxpayers' charter, which is expected to have statutory status and it will empower citizens by ensuring time-bound services by the Income Tax Department.

Sitharaman emphasised that Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses taxpayers as "nation-builders" and an honest taxpayer helps build this country.

They help government after government to carry forward social welfare programmes which are absolutely critical for the livelihoods of the poorest of the poor, she said. The Prime Minister has made it very clear that this country has to make tax simple and easy for compliance for taxpayers, she said.

To fulfil this objective, the government has introduced faceless assessment, reduction in scrutiny and pre-filled tax form, among others.

"In September 2019, we took a major step to bring

down the corporate tax, and even then and now too India stands as one of those countries where we have the lowest of rates and also the corporate tax methodology itself has been so simplified, that there are no exemptions, there are no benefits," she said. Speaking during the virtual session, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrababu Naidu said India's judicial system has a huge capacity issue.

"As per the National Judicial Data Grid, somewhere around 3 crore cases are pending in one court or another. If you take high courts and Supreme Court, we have over 45 lakh cases that are pending..."

"Typically case takes 4-5 years for resolution and normally 40 per cent of the total disputed settlement is already spent during this period but if you take into account the time value of money, almost 100 per cent is gone. **AGENCIES**

'Rahul Modi' bags 420th rank in UPSC

NEW DELHI: Guess who has secured the 420th rank in the civil services examination 2019? A candidate named Rahul Modi. This unique combination of names of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has caught the attention of many social media users who posted their comments on the Internet.

Rahul Modi, roll number 6312980, secured the 420th rank, according to the list of qualified candidates announced by the UPSC.

Twitter was abuzz with posts on this name. Some users also shared memes.

"Can't get more bizarre than this - Rank no. 420 - Rahul Modi! Need I say more!" said Ananth Rupanagudi, who de-

scribes himself as a railway bureaucrat, on Twitter.

Another user Ankit Yadav wrote: "What a coincidence.. UPSC civil services 2019 results are out and a Candidate named RAHUL MODI secures 420 rank." IRS officer Pradeep Singh topped the list of 829 candidates who have qualified for the prestigious civil services. **AGENCIES**

Delhi wants hotels, gyms, weekly markets to reopen

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has again sent a proposal to Lt Governor Anil Bajjal to allow hotels, gymnasium and weekly markets to reopen, saying that the COVID-19 situation has been improving in the national capital, sources said on Thursday.

The government said that in accordance with the unlock guidelines issued by the Centre, it has right to take decision to allow such establishments in Delhi.

In its proposal, the AAP government said that the COVID-19 cases have been increasing in several states

and situation is frequently deteriorating, but hotels, gyms and weekly have been allowed there.

The sources said that the government also sought to know from the LG as to why Delhiites are being stopped from earning their livelihood despite the fact that the number of coronavirus cases has been decreasing in the national capital.

"The Delhi government has again sent proposals to the lieutenant governor to allow hotels, gymnasiums and weekly markets in the city," the sources also said. **AGENCIES**

NEW DELHI: Business optimism for the July-September quarter slumped to a record low due to sharp rise in COVID-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and staggered easing of restrictions, according to a report. Dun & Bradstreet Composite Business Optimism Index for the July-September quarter fell to a record low of 29.4. The index registered a decline of 40.6 per cent over the last quarter. The BOI covered about 350 senior executives in June this year.

"The spike in the number of positive COVID-19 cases, the extension of lockdown in containment zones and the staggered easing of restrictions affected the business optimism levels," said Arun



Singh, Global Chief Economist, Dun & Bradstreet. All six optimism indices — volume of sales, net profits, selling prices, new orders, inventories and employees — have registered a decline as compared

to the previous quarter, the report said.

"Our hope is that this year we will get into top 50," he said. India attracts \$22 billion FDI during COVID-19: Amitabh Kant

"The plethora of containment and non-containment zones, which are near-impossible to track in real time, and the rapid change in guidelines adopted by the various local governments have led to considerable uncertainty amongst businesses that are planning to resume their operations"

mance of the country's exports, Goyal said the current numbers of?outbound shipments are reflecting signs of significant improvement. "Music to ears for those worried about recovery": India's export has grown in July, says Piyush Goyal

"The plethora of containment and non-containment zones, which are near-impossible to track in real time, and

the rapid change in guidelines adopted by the various local governments have led to considerable uncertainty amongst businesses that are planning to resume their operations," Singh said.

While various measures have been taken to support the flow of capital to businesses, bank credit to industries continued to remain subdued, Singh said, adding that "muted credit dis-

bursements might have also affected the optimism levels".

Besides, states like West Bengal and Odisha have been severely impacted by the super cyclone 'Amphan', and floods have affected millions in Assam. Moreover, the India-China border conflicts have also added to the uncertainty in the business environment, he said. "The steep fall in the business sentiment indicates the concern amongst businesses about the delay in the full-fledged recovery of the economy," Singh noted.

Meanwhile, the Reserve Bank of India on Thursday said that the protracted spread of the COVID-19 pandemic poses "downside risk" to the domestic economy, which is expected to remain in the negative zone this fiscal. **AGENCIES**

Electric Vehicle Policy launched

GOVT WILL WAIVE REGISTRATION FEE AND ROAD TAX, AND PROVIDE INCENTIVE OF UP TO ₹1.5 LAKH FOR NEW CARS

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday launched "Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy" under which his government will waive registration fee and road tax, and provide incentive of up to Rs 1.5 lakh for new cars in the national capital.

Addressing an online media briefing, he said the policy, which aims to boost the economy, create jobs and reduce pollution level, has been notified.

The chief minister termed it a "progressive policy" of the country. Under the policy, the Delhi government will give incentive of up to Rs 30,000 for two-wheelers, autos and e-rickshaws while for cars, it will give incentive of up to Rs 1.5 lakh, he said. "After launching this policy, we expect five lakh new electric vehicle in next five



years... The Delhi government will set up dedicated "EV Cell" to implement "electric vehicle policy," Kejriwal said.

He also added the govern-

ment will also set up a "State Electric Vehicle Board".

The Delhi government will give "scrapping incentive" under the electric vehicle policy

and set up 200 charging stations in one year, Kejriwal said.

Electric vehicle makers, meanwhile, termed the 'Delhi Electric Vehicle Policy' as a step in the right direction to encourage adoption of clean energy vehicles in the capital and said it will set an example for other states to follow.

According to the Society of Manufacturers of Electric Vehicles (SMEV), this policy will provide more push to the existing EV architecture than the current FAME II scheme by the Centre.

"The customers who were unable to get subsidy under the central government's scheme due to certain restrictive norms, now have a chance to avail subsidy under this scheme," SMEV Director General Sohinder Gill said in

a statement. He further said it has also set an example of how a policy can run without using exchequer money. "Delhi policy in a way is a benchmark for other states policy to follow that are based mostly on attracting manufacturers rather than catalysing demand," Gill added. Ather Energy CEO and co-founder Tarun Mehta said, "The Delhi Government has created a policy that addresses the issues of accessibility for the end consumer. The additional subsidy makes EVs more affordable across the board and offering it to higher performance vehicles, will ensure that end consumers will actually purchase and use these vehicles."

Delhi has taken a holistic approach to the policy, taking into account charging infrastructure,

different automobile models and scrapping of old internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, he added.

Expressing similar views, Greaves Cotton Ltd MD and CEO Nagesh Basavanthalli said, "The EV Policy announced by the Delhi government is a welcome step in the right direction as it will encourage the adoption of electric vehicles in the capital and will set an example for other states to follow."

The new policy providing incentives worth Rs 30,000 on electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers, along with loan facilities on low-interest rates, will not only boost the EV adoption, but also generate employment opportunities, which is much required considering the current scenario, he added. **AGENCIES**

AAP to restructure Delhi unit



NEW DELHI: The Aam Aadmi Party has decided to restructure its Delhi unit at the assembly, district, ward, polling station and booth level, senior party leader and minister Gopal Rai said on Tuesday.

The exercise is being undertaken with an eye on the 2022 municipal polls in the city.

Rai, who is also AAP's Delhi convener, said the restructuring will start from Wednesday and will continue till August 20. He said the party will give new responsibilities to those who performed well in the assembly elections held earlier this year. "A 15-day restructuring exercise will start from Wednesday. The restructuring at district, assembly, ward, polling station and booth level also aims to strengthen the organisation," Rai told PTI. "We will review the works of our leaders at these five levels and then, the party will make a decision. Those who have done good work during the COVID-19 pandemic will also be considered for new responsibilities," the AAP leader said.

In a statement later, Rai said those who played a significant role during the corona crisis in ration and food distribution, in creating awareness about proper sanitization and ensuring social distancing are being considered for new responsibilities to build a strong volunteer organisation. He said the process will be carried out by the top leadership as well as the assembly level functionaries.

"Under this process, the assembly observers will submit a report on their assembly to the top leadership, and similarly, based on the information received from various sources, the party will decide on re-positioning the old people and giving new responsibilities to the new people," said Rai. The municipal elections will be held in 2022. In 2017, the AAP lost the MCD elections.

However, in the assembly elections this year, the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP won 62 seats and the BJP bagged eight seats in the 70-member Delhi Assembly, while the Congress drew a blank. **AGENCIES**

NEWSBRIEF

Timings of liquor shops extended

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government has extended timings for opening of liquor shops in the national capital by one hour. An official said the move will also help increase the government's revenue. According to an order issued by the excise department on Thursday, liquor shops in the city will now open from 10 am to 10 pm instead of the earlier timing of 10 am to 9 pm. "In pursuance to guidelines issued by chairperson, state executive committee, Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Government of NCT of Delhi vide order no. dated 31.07.2020, all L-6, L-7, L-8, L-9 and L-10 liquor vends are allowed to open from 10 am to 10 pm instead of 10 am to 9 pm with immediate effect till further orders," the order stated. **AGENCIES**

FIR over dead lizard in bowl of sambar

NEW DELHI: An FIR has been registered against Saravana Bhavan, a popular South Indian vegetarian restaurant chain, after a customer allegedly found a dead lizard in his bowl of sambar at its outlet in Connaught Place, Delhi police said Monday. Pankaj Agarwal, a regular visitor to the restaurant, walked into Saravana Bhavan with his two friends Saturday night and ordered dosa and sambar. As they were having the meal, Agarwal found a dead lizard in his bowl of sambar and captured it on his mobile phone. **AGENCIES**

Two held for selling prohibited drugs

NEW DELHI: Two pharmaceutical wholesalers have been arrested by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) in connection with the smuggling of prohibited drugs to Iraq. Four Iraqi nationals have already been arrested in this case. The two have been identified as Hariom Tikhiwal and Amit Aggarwal. Hariom (42) belongs to Jaipur. Amit (45) runs a wholesale pharmaceutical business with his brother Mukesh in Uttar Pradesh's Agra. **AGENCIES**

Reply sought from police, Zee News on MP's plea

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court Wednesday asked Delhi Police and Zee News to respond to a plea by Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra challenging the summons and framing of charges against her in a defamation case filed by the news channel and its editor.

Justice Vibhu Bakhru, who was conducting the hearing through video conferencing, issued notice to Delhi Police and Zee Media Corporation Ltd on Moitra's trial.

Moitra has challenged the trial court's orders of September 25, 2019 and January 10 this year by which she was summoned as accused and charges were framed against



her in the defamation case respectively.

Senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, representing Moitra, also sought a stay on the trial of the

case before the subordinate court. The high court recorded the statement of advocate Vijay Aggarwal, representing the media house, that in the pre-

ceedings were a counterblast to the defamation complaint filed by her against the Zee news editor-in-chief Sudhir Chaudhary.

Advocates Aggarwal, Mudit Jain and Yugant Sharma said Moitra has approached the high court instead of moving the Sessions court and there was a delay in filing the petition.

The offence of defamation provides a simple imprisonment which may extend up to two years. The trial court had on December 17 last year granted bail to the politician on a personal bond of Rs 20,000, after she appeared before it after summons were issued against her. **AGENCIES**

The politician said these

12-year-old raped, brutally injured

NEW DELHI: A man allegedly raped and brutally injured a 12-year-old girl in west Delhi's Paschim Vihar area on Tuesday evening. PTI reported, citing the police. The minor was found lying in a pool of blood by her neighbours.

The girl has been admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. An unidentified official at the hospital said that she suffered a skull fracture and intestinal injuries. "Two surgeries were carried out on her on Wednesday," the official said. "She was moved to the ICU [intensive care unit] and taken off the ventilator on Wednesday."

The Delhi Police told PTI that the man raped the girl on Tuesday evening when she was alone at home. The accused fled the spot after the incident and has not been identified yet. The girl's parents, who are daily wage earners, were at work.

"An FIR [first information report] under section 307 [attempt to murder] and POCSO [Protection of Children from Sexual Offences] Act has been registered and further investigation is under progress,"

Deputy Commissioner of Police A Koan was quoted as saying by PTI.

The child's neighbour, who took her to the hospital, told The Times of India that there were several wounds on her face, back and stomach.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that the incident had "shaken him to the core". "The fact that such criminals are roaming on the streets is intolerable," he wrote on Twitter.

Kejriwal also visited AIIMS to enquire after the child's health, and told reporters that he had spoken to the police. He added that the accused will get strict punishment. He also announced a sum of Rs 10 lakh for the child's family.

The Delhi Commission for Women, meanwhile, asked the police for a copy of the FIR in the case. "The girl was brutally raped and the accused tried to kill her," the panel said in a statement. "Presently, she is fighting for her life in AIIMS, Delhi. It is reported that she was attacked with blunt objects and has injuries all over her body. This is a very serious matter." **AGENCIES**

31 dengue cases in Delhi till August 1

NEW DELHI: Over 30 cases of dengue have been reported in the national capital till August 1 this year, even as the civic bodies have set up separate fever clinics to attend to patients afflicted with the vector-borne disease, authorities said on Thursday.

Besides, the corporations have also stepped up awareness campaigns as the dengue season has now coincided with the coronavirus pandemic the city is reeling under since March.

According to data shared by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), the nodal agency that tabulates data on the vector-borne diseases for the entire city, 31 cases of dengue has been recorded in Delhi till August 1.

The number of cases of malaria and chikungunya in the same period, stands at 45 and 18 respectively, it said.

In 2019, the number of dengue cases reported till August 1 was 40, while the total number of vector-borne disease reported throughout that year was 2,036, with two deaths recorded, officially, as per the data shared by the SDMC. All three diseases, ma-

laria, dengue and chikungunya are accompanied with high fever, a common symptom for COVID-19. And therefore, doctors say, people suffering from these disease might suspect they have contracted COVID-19.

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said, dengue fever clinics have been estab-



lished at polyclinics run across the six zones of the NDMC.

"Yes, people affected by dengue will have fever, but there are other symptoms too in COVID, like breathlessness, loss of sense of smell and taste. So, we are raising awareness and telling people to go to polyclinics if having simple fever, or visit our COVID test centres in case other symptoms also there," he told PTI.

North Delhi Municipal Corporation-run Hindu Rao Hospital is a dedicated COVID-19 facility, and a testing centre. **AGENCIES**

HC seeks police reply on Kalita's bail plea



NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court Wednesday sought response of the police on a plea by a member of Pinjra Tod, a women's collective, seeking bail on a case related to the communal violence in north east Delhi during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act in February.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait issued notice to the Delhi Police on the plea challenging a trial court's order which had dismissed the bail application of JNU student Devangana Kalita.

The high court listed the matter for further hearing on August 14. Kalita and another member of the group Natasha Narwal were arrested in the case in May by the Crime Branch of the Delhi police and booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code including rioting, unlawful assembly and attempt to murder.

They have also been booked under the stringent anti-terror law - Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in a separate case related to the communal violence, for allegedly being part of a "premeditated conspiracy" in the riots.

Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi on February 24 after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 200 injured.

In all, four cases have been registered against her, including in relation to the northeast Delhi riots earlier this year and violence in old Delhi's Daryaganj area during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December last year. Kalita has secured bail in two cases -- Daryaganj and one north east Delhi matter. **AGENCIES**

Subdued Raksha Bandhan fervour amid pandemic

NEW DELHI: Raksha Bandhan festivities in the national capital were subdued this year owing to the coronavirus pandemic, with siblings having to rely on technology to wish each other.

"Travelling was not an option this year but it's the bond that matters the most. I ordered rakhi and sweets for my brother and he sent me gifts. We had a video call with all cousins too," said Sweetsy Gaur, a city resident.

Neetu Bhatia was a bit upset as she would have celebrated Rakhi with her cousin after a long time this year, but the pandemic did not let it happen. "Some differences had cropped up between us over the last few years and we had not celebrated the festival since then. But over the last year, we resolved our differences and I had planned to surprise him by visiting him this time."

"But I could not meet him. I sent him Rakhi and sweets and wished him over phone. Hopefully we will celebrate the festival together next year," she said. With travel restrictions in place due to the pandemic and apprehensions about going out, Rahul Bhardwaj could not meet his sister who lives in a different city. **AGENCIES**

8.64 lakh register with 'Rozgar Bazaar'

NEW DELHI: Delhi Employment Minister Gopal Rai said on Friday that 8.64 lakh job aspirants have registered with the government's 'Rozgar Bazaar' job portal which has set up a "new model of employment" in the national capital. Addressing a press conference, Rai said there were currently nine lakh vacancies available on the portal, where 6,271 companies, including Flipkart, Amazon and HDFC Bank have made registrations. The minister said around 22 lakh vacancies had been posted by employers at the job portal so far, out of which 3.5 lakh were cancelled by the department during scrutiny due to doubling or other reasons. "So far, around 10 lakh vacancies have been closed by

companies after they initiated or completed the process of hiring candidates," he said. "The Delhi government's job portal has set up a new model of employment in Delhi."

Rai, who is also the labour minister, said the AAP dispensation would soon launch a poster campaign to inform more job aspirants about 'Rozgar Bazaar'. He underlined that the government was providing a common platform where job seekers and employers could meet their requirements.

The minister said there was no charge for this service and appealed to job aspirants to not pay money to those who promised to get them registered at the portal and jobs. **AGENCIES**

DU told to give scribes to visually impaired students

THE VARSITY TO REVERT WITH THE EXACT DATE OF DECLARATION OF RESULTS OF STUDENTS WHO WILL TAKE PART IN THE ONLINE OBE AND ALSO THE DATE OF PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS, WHICH WILL BE CONDUCTED AFTER OBE

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court Wednesday directed Delhi University to provide writers for visually impaired students at common service centres (CSCs) for online Open Book Examinations (OBE) for final year undergraduate courses, if they have opted for one.

The high court also said the DU will ensure that no such student is deprived of a scribe at the CSC if the varsity has been informed in advance.

The CSCs have been set up for those students who do not have infrastructure to appear for the OBE. A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Subramonium Prasad, conducting the hearing via video conferencing, directed the varsity to also provide at least two reading material or text books of each paper to the vi-



sually handicapped students and granted one week's time to the students to make the request the DU.

The bench noted that senior advocate S K Rungta, representing the National Federation of the Blind, has graciously agreed to provide assistive devices to the visually impaired students.

It further asked the varsity

to revert with the exact date of declaration of results of students who will take part in the online OBE and also the date of physical examinations, which will be conducted after OBE.

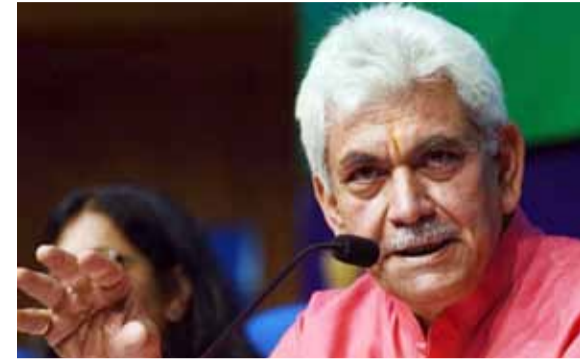
The court recorded that DU will give provisional admission to students in its postgraduate courses, subject to them clearing the entrance exam.

It also agreed with the suggestion of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for petitioner Prateek Sharma, to seek an affidavit from DU on giving provisional admission to students in PG courses.

It asked the university to also give the number of students who registered and logged in the online examination and listed the matter for further hearing on August 17. DU is scheduled to hold final year undergraduate online OBE from August 10-31 and the students who will be left out of online exams will be given an opportunity to appear in physical examinations, to be held sometime in September.

The court asked the varsity to ensure that digital certificates/ results are sent to students through e-mail so that students need not go to the college. The high court was hearing pleas by law student Prateek Sharma and National Federation of Blind seeking to set up effective mechanisms for visually impaired and specially-abled students so that educational instructions can be transmitted to them properly and teaching material is provided to them through online mode of teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the hearing, Rungta said OBE is out of question for visually impaired students without reading material. One of the professors of DU, who is looking into the issues faced by students of persons with disability (PwD) category, said visually impaired students get the material converted on their own. **AGENCIES**

Manoj Sinha is new LG of J&K



NEW DELHI: Former union minister and senior BJP leader from Uttar Pradesh, Manoj Sinha, was on Thursday appointed as Lt Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, the Rashtrapati Bhawan spokesman said.

A communique issued by the President's secretariat said that the resignation of Girish Chandra Murmu as Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir has been accepted.

The communique issued by the President's press secretary Ajay Kumar said "the President has been pleased to appoint Shri Manoj Sinha, to be the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office" in place of Murmu.

The 61-year-old Sinha was born on July 1, 1959 in Mohanpura of Ghazipur district of eastern UP and has been actively involved in working for the backward villages of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

His political career started when he was elected the president of Banaras Hindu University Students Union in 1982. He was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1996 and repeated the term in 1999.

Sinha has been a member

of the BJP national council from 1989 to 1996. He was elected to the Lower House for a third term in national politics when the BJP swept the Lok Sabha elections in 2014.

He was former Minister of State for Railways and later held an independent charge of Ministry of Communication.

Reacting to the development, former J&K chief minister Omar Abdullah said, "Last night there were one or two names that people were circulating as a done deal and this name wasn't among them. You can always trust this government to pull an unexpected name out of the hat contrary to anything the 'sources' had planted earlier."

Union minister Jitendra Singh, meanwhile, praised Sinha and said he carries with him "a rich combination of both political as well as administrative experience." "Spoke to Shri @manojsinhaji and congratulated him on being appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. He carries with him a rich combination of both political as well as administrative experience," Singh tweeted. Environment minister Prakash Javadekar also congratulated Sinha. **AGENCIES**

Ram temple construction starts

PM MODI SAYS THE 'GOLDEN CHAPTER' WILL SERVE AS A 'MODERN SYMBOL OF INDIAN CULTURE'



AYODHYA: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday formally launched the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, saying it would serve as a "modern symbol of Indian culture" and with it, the country was creating a golden chapter for itself.

Ram Janmabhoomi, the birthplace of Lord Ram as believed by Hindus, had been liberated from the cycle of "breaking and rising up again" that had been going on for centuries, Modi said, terming it a "historic" moment.

"The centuries of wait is getting over today," he said after performing the bhoomi puja for the temple here in a tightly-arranged event held amid COVID-19 pandemic.

A grand temple would be built for "our Ram Lalla", who had to live under a tent for years, the Prime Minister said, stressing that crores of people could hardly believe this was happening during their lifetime.

Modi emphasised the word "modern," and said the Ram temple would become a symbol of "our eternal faith," national

sentiments and collective will-power of crores of people.

"This temple will inspire the coming generations about faith, reverence and resolve," he said, adding that the temple would not only augment the grandeur of Ayodhya but also change the economy of the entire region. New opportunities would emerge as people

would come for a darshan of Lord Ram and Mata Janaki from around the world, the Prime Minister said.

The formal start of the temple's construction comes almost 28 years after Babri Masjid was demolished by a mob of 'kar sevaks' on December 6, 1992.

Modi's critics, however, as-

sert that he is remoulding the officially secular country of 1.3 billion as a Hindu nation at the expense of India's 200 million Muslims, and taking it an authoritarian direction.

The city of Ayodhya in northern India has long been a religious tinderbox, providing the spark for some of its worst communal violence. In 1992, a Hindu mob destroyed the Babri mosque here, which triggered riots that killed 2,000 people, most of them Muslims.

A lengthy legal battle ensued, but in November India's top court awarded the site to Hindus, allowing a temple to be built where the historic mosque once stood. The Supreme Court also ordered that Muslims be given five acres of land to build a new mosque at a nearby site. The Hindu temple will be around 235 feet wide, 300 feet long and 161 feet high, with five domes and a total area of around 84,000 square feet. The complex will have a prayer hall, lecture hall, visitors' hostel and museum. The temple is

expected to be built in about three and a half years.

Wednesday's elaborate religious ceremony, involving priests in saffron masks and bricks made of silver, was shown live on television.

Modi, 69, sharing a stage with the head of the RSS militaristic and hard-line Hindu group, compared the building of the temple to India's struggle for independence from Britain.

"The whole country is thrilled, the wait of centuries is ending," he said in a speech, after taking off a white mask that he wore as a novel coronavirus precaution.

Many Muslims saw last year's court ruling as part of a pattern by the Hindu-nationalist government aimed at sidelining the minority community.

"Usurpation of the land by an unjust, oppressive, shameful and majority-appealing judgment can't change its status," the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board said on Twitter. "No need to be heartbroken. Situations don't last forever." **AGENCIES**

DMK suspends MLA for praising Modi, BJP

CHENNAI: The DMK has suspended its MLA Ku Ka Selvam, who is apparently leaning towards the BJP, and relieved him of party posts, a day after he praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and met saffron party chief J P Nadda.

The Dravidian party also sent the legislator a show cause notice, asking him why he should not be expelled from the primary membership of the party. Reacting to his suspension, the MLA, after visiting the BJP State headquarters 'Kamalamayam,' told reporters here that he would not worry even if the party expelled him.

He also questioned the party leadership for allegedly not holding pollsto fill posts like that of district secretaries. "They have suspended me. I am not worried even if they expel me. I will continue to work for the people," Selvam said. Expressing his resentment openly, he said he had worked for the DMK for over two decades and still was not considered for the west district secretary position



in the city and demanded "intra party elections." "It was the father, then the son and now the grandson... in the place of successor politics, it is now becoming family politics," he said without explicitly naming the DMK.

Apparently, the trio he indicated are late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi, his son and incumbent chief M K Stalin and his son Udhayanidhi Stalin, the party's youth wing secretary.

Recently, DMK MLA J Anbazhagan, who was the west district secretary

here passed away due to COVID-19. "Those who are above 55, please don't be in the party (DMK)...then you will have to face the situation which I faced," the disgruntled legislator said.

Many of his supporters would join the BJP, he said and also appealed to people to sign up with the saffron party.

However, he maintained that he "is in the DMK and still wanted Stalin to condemn those who denigrated Kanda Sashti Kavacham" hymn in praise of Lord Muruga. **AGENCIES**

HC grants interim bail to Priyanka's aide

LUCKNOW: The Allahabad High Court on Friday granted anticipatory bail to Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's aide Sandeep Singh over a list of 1,000 buses the party had offered for ferrying migrant workers stranded outside the state due to the coronavirus lockdown.

The Lucknow bench of the high court said the offer had come from Priyanka Gandhi and Singh had only communicated it to the state government.

The Congress leader's private secretary was booked in May after the UP authorities said the list contained many vehicles without valid papers like insurance and fitness certificates.

The state government had claimed that some of vehicles mentioned in the list were not even buses. Trucks and two-wheelers were being passed off as buses, it said.

Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh granted anticipatory

The state government had claimed that some of vehicles mentioned in the list were not even buses. Trucks and two-wheelers were being passed off as buses

bail to Sandeep Singh till the filing of a police report in the matter after the investigation is over.

"In the event of arrest, Singh shall be released on bail on his furnishing a personal bond of Rs 1 lakh and two sureties of the same amount to the satisfaction of the concerned arresting officer," the order said. The judge, however, directed Singh to cooperate in the investigation and make himself available for interrogation if required. The court also restrained him from leaving the country without its permission. **PTI**

Veteran CPI(M) leader dies from Covid-19

KOLKATA: Veteran CPI(M) leader Shyamal Chakraborty, who was diagnosed with COVID-19, died at a hospital in Kolkata on Thursday, his party said. He was 76.

Chakraborty, an ardent trade unionist and a former Rajya Sabha member, was admitted to the hospital after he tested positive for COVID-19 on July 30.

"He was not doing well and was on ventilation. He passed away this afternoon," a senior party leader said.

Chakraborty had pneumonia and suffered two major heart attacks. Though he survived the first one, he succumbed after the second attack, a spokesperson of the hospital said in a press conference. He is survived by daughter Ushasi Chakraborty, an actor.

Chakraborty, the three-time transport minister of West Bengal from 1982 to 1996 in the Jyoti Basu government, was a member of the CPI(M)'s central committee. He was a Rajya Sabha MP from 2008 to 2014, and an MLA from 1981 to 1996.

Chakraborty was one of the longest serving presidents of the CITU's West Bengal unit, from 2003 to 2017. Baptised in politics in the early '60s, his organisational and oratory skills were first spotted by Communist stalwart Promode Das-



gupta. Dasgupta groomed Chakraborty along with Biman Bose, Anil Biswas, Subhas Chakraborty and Buddhadeb Bhattacharya as the next generation leaders of the party.

"Today the working class and the left movement in the country has lost an important voice," the CPI(M) said in a tweet. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said his death has left a deep void in Bengal politics. "Saddened at the passing away of veteran leader, former Member of Parliament and former Bengal minister Shyamal Chakraborty. My condolences to his family, friends and supporters," she said.

CPI(M) state secretary Surjya Kanta Mishra and its Legislature Party Leader Sujan Chakraborty condoled the death. "It is a great loss to the trade union movement. He was a mass leader and was respected across the political spectrum," Chakraborty said. State BJP president Dilip Ghosh also offered his condolences. **AGENCIES**

Language politics should not affect students

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu unit of the BJP has appealed to political parties opposed to the three language formula suggested in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 not to allow politics to come in the way of students' interests.

State BJP President L Murugan also asked them not to shut the doors for the students of other states from learning Tamil.

Maintaining that the political parties in the state are making false claims about Sanskrit or Hindi imposition under the NEP, Murugan said Tamil Nadu's rejection of the three-language formula might discourage the students of other states from learning Tamil as



one of their languages.

Questioning the rationale during the anti-Hindi agitations in the 1960s to the present time, Murugan on Tuesday asked, "is the situation during 1968 and 2020 the same?"

"Have not times or views changed," he said in a statement here. When Tamil Nadu boycotts a third language at a time when the students from the state are given an opportunity to learn an additional Indian language like Malayalam,

Telugu or Kannada, does not this stand create a situation where students from other states could boycott learning Tamil, the BJP leader sought to know.

"The NEP does not make it mandatory to learn Hindi or Sanskrit. Now that a conducive environment has been created under the new policy, children will be keen on learning more languages," Murugan said.

Already CBSE and matriculation schools in the state teach various languages to the students. Following dual language policy will mean that students in state government schools will be denied the opportunity to learn more languages, he claimed. **AGENCIES**

Amar Singh: The Thakur who had friends across political spectrum

NEW DELHI: Rajya Sabha MP Amar Singh, who died in a Singapore hospital on July 31 at the age of 64, skilfully navigated the intersection of politics and corporate world and then imbued it with a dash of filmy glamour as he struck a unique bond with socialist patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav to imprint his stamp on the coalition-era politics.

Born in Azamgarh, he had a humble beginning as a young member of the Congress "Chhatra Parishad" in Kolkata, where his family ran business, and then become the face of Lutyens' Delhi's politics of political machinations, as he helped the

UPA-1 government survive a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha in 2008 as the Samajwadi Party backed the Congress-led dispensation.

The Left parties had withdrawn support to the Manmohan Singh-led government over the Indo-US nuclear deal and it was with the support of the SP that it pulled through.

That Mulayam Singh Yadav was persuaded to forget his decade-long animosity towards the Congress, was credited to the wily Thakur from Uttar Pradesh.

He is believed to have played a crucial role in swinging the Samajwadi Party's support in favour of the UPA in 2008 after the Left parties withdrew their



support due to their opposition to the nuclear deal.

His connections in the industry brought generous corporate financing to SP, and he in turn became the virtual number-two in the party, much

to the dismay of Yadav's socialist acolytes of decades. The annual Saifai Mahotsav, held in Yadav's birthplace, became a national news as film stars performed during the heydays of Samajwadi Party. Amar Singh

had undergone kidney transplant in 2011 and had been keeping unwell for a long time.

Helping his family in their business in Kolkata's Bara Bazaar, he came in contact with the Congress and became a young member of the Chhatra Parishad, the student's wing of the party in West Bengal. After being close to various Congress leaders, including Veer Bahadur Singh, Amar Singh came in contact with socialist leaders during "Mandal" politics.

Yadav was then looking to make a foothold in the national politics. He found Singh, who willingly helped him navigate through the corridors of power. It was

a turning point for Singh who used his relations to help Yadav and gain his confidence. Despite opposition from several senior Samajwadi Party leaders, including Beni Prasad Verma, Mohan Singh and Ram Gopal Yadav, Amar Singh managed to remain close to senior Yadav. At one point of time, Singh was also considered close to Mulayam's son Akhilesh. But they fell apart.

When the Samajwadi Party came to power in Uttar Pradesh in 2003, Singh organised various meets of the UP government with industrialists and film personalities who also invested in the state. **AGENCIES**

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Realty sentiment hits all-time low

STAKEHOLDERS STAY PESSIMISTIC FOR SIX MONTHS EVEN AS THEY SEE SLIGHT IMPROVEMENT

NEW DELHI: The sentiments in the country's real estate sector hit an all-time low during April-June due to the COVID-19 pandemic and remain pessimistic for the next six months even as stakeholders see slight improvement, according to a survey.

According to 25th survey by property consultant Knight Frank and industry bodies Ficci and Naredco, the current sentiment index fell to 22 in April-June from 31 in the previous quarter.

"The current sentiment is recorded to be at the lowest," Knight Frank India said in a statement. The future sentiment index improved to 41 from 36 during the period under review but remained in the pessimistic zone.

"With continued economic stress and ambiguity regarding recovery, the current sentiments of the real estate stakeholders in India have been recorded at a low 22 in Q2 2020 (April-June)," Knight Frank India said. This survey, covering the April-June 2020 period, was conducted in the first two weeks of July 2020.

The survey covers key supply-side stakeholders, which



'At this juncture, the lockdown is expected to ease further by the advent of the festive season, helping to revive economic activity and propel conversion of the pent-up demand'

include developers, private equity funds, banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs). A score of 50 represents a 'neutral' view or status

quo; a score above 50 demonstrates a 'positive' sentiment; and a score below 50 indicates a 'negative' sentiment.

Knight Frank India Chair-

man and Managing Director Shishir Bajjal said, "With some of the macroeconomic indicators showing marginal improvement and with the impending festive season in the second half of the year, the stakeholders have shown improved sentiments compared to the previous quarter, albeit they have remained in the pessimistic zone."

He added that at this juncture, the lockdown is expected

to ease further by the advent of the festive season, helping to revive economic activity and propel conversion of the pent-up demand. Bajjal said the central bank and the government have announced stimulus measures that have provided much-required reprieve to the economy in these testing times.

"However, there is a need for further demand-boosting measures to improve sentiments in the economy," he said. For the real estate sector in particular, Bajjal said there is a need for measures such as additional tax benefits for buying or renting a house, added incentives for affordable housing, easing of credit availability for the sector and a one-time restructuring of developer loans to help the sector recover from this crisis.

Sanjay Dutt, MD and CEO of Tata Realty & Infrastructure Ltd and chairman of the FICCI Real Estate Committee, said, "The sentiment for residential market is expected to remain low with a desire for 'unlocking of the lockdown' and therefore, better outlook for the next quarter." **AGENCIES**

IOCL to put Rs 13,805cr to set up plant in Odisha

BHUBNESWAR: Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) will invest Rs 13,805 crore to set up a plant in Odisha's Paradip to manufacture raw materials for the textile sector, an official said on Sunday. The project is expected to be completed by 2024, he said.

The paraxylene (PX) and purified terephthalic acid (PTA) plant will be integrated with the IOCL's refinery facility in the port town of Jagatsinghpur district.

"The integrated paraxylene (PX) and purified terephthalic acid (PTA) complex plant in Paradip will be set up at an estimated investment of Rs 13,805 crore to facilitate textile sector," the official said.

The project will generate approximately five million man-days of employment over the three-year plant construction period, he said.

The petrochemicals complex will have a PX production capacity of 800,000 tonne per annum, which would be the feedstock for the manufacturing of PTA.

The capacity of PTA production would be 1,200,000



'The integrated paraxylene (PX) and purified terephthalic acid (PTA) complex plant in Paradip will be set up at an estimated investment of Rs 13,805 crore to facilitate textile sector'

tonne per annum. PTA is a raw material for the production of polyester.

Speaking on the development, IOCL Chairman SM Vaideya said this plant along with the upcoming monoethylene glycol facility of 357-kilo tonne per annum capacity in Paradip would be

a ready source of feedstock for Indian Oil's upcoming 300-KTA textile yarn manufacturing project at Bhadrak in Odisha.

Indian Oil's MEG production facility is already under implementation and will become operational by the end of 2021. **AGENCIES**

NEWSBRIEF

Bata says no layoffs so far

NEW DELHI: Bata India Chairman Ashwani Windlass on Thursday said it has not laid off any employee so far, but admitted that there is not much clarity on "where the footwear major is heading" amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic. As of March, the company had 9,762 employees across functions and locations, of which 4000-4500 are on third-party contract, he said. "There is no layoff till date. Bata has friendly HR policies," Windlass told shareholders at the 87th annual general meeting of the company. "I don't think we have complete clarity about where we are heading. Intermittent lockdowns and the surging pandemic in some states is of concern for us. At the end of the current quarter, we will be better placed to analyse and calibrate our strategies," he said. The management has taken a number of measures to safeguard and reopen stores, while according top priority to employee and customer safety, company officials said. **AGENCIES**

Escorts bets on agri business division
NEW DELHI: Farm equipment and engineering major Escorts Ltd expects to do comparatively better this fiscal than last year, driven by its agri-business division despite the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, according to a senior company official. With strong demand for tractors continuing from rural markets, the company is optimistic that in spite of the supply-side constraints witnessed in the first quarter of this fiscal, it would be able to catch up in the remaining months to post better than industry sales, which is expected to rise by single digit. **PTI**

Farm sector to cushion COVID-19 impact on economy

NEW DELHI: The worst seems to be over and the agriculture sector will provide a cushion for the coronavirus-hit economy this fiscal as there are prospects of good monsoon, finance ministry said in a report on Tuesday. India is well on the path of recovery from a trough in April, ably supported by proactive Government and Central Bank policies, the Macroeconomic Report for July, released by the Economic Affairs Department said. "With India unlocking, the worst seems to be over for the economy as high-frequency indicators recovered in June 2020 from unprecedented troughs in April; however, risks on account of rising COVID-19 cases and intermittent State lockdowns remain," it said. **AGENCIES**

Mahindra Group to continue investing in successful business, says Chairman Anand Mahindra

NEW DELHI: Mahindra Group will continue to invest in successful businesses and prepare for the future by nurturing and investing in verticals that have a potential of over a billion dollar market cap, while "appropriate action" is being taken on those not lived up to their plans, its Chairman Anand Mahindra said on Friday.

Addressing the company's shareholders at the annual general meeting, Mahindra said the COVID-19 pandemic has turned lives upside down and the economy faces an uncertain future. He, however, added that it has given "us an opportunity to reboot our



thinking, to reinvent our approach and to recommit ourselves to our financial goals".

Recalling how the group navigated what it "appeared to be the worst of times" in 2002 when the share price of M&M had come down to

Rs 56, he said the group took action to turn things around with a ruthless focus on financial returns.

He added that "in 2018, we were declared to be the best-performing stock on the Nifty since 2002". **AGENCIES**

Telcos eye supportive policy framework

NEW DELHI: Telecom industry body COAI expects supportive policy framework and ecosystem to being in new technologies in India as it looks towards journey for the next 25 years in the country, a top official of the body said.

COAI's newly-appointed Director General S P Kochhar told PTI starting from scratch 25 years ago the Indian telecom sector is the second largest growing market globally after China with a huge subscriber base of over 120 crore serving them with the cheapest tariffs in the world.

"Ever since the first mobile call, made on July 31, 1995, telecom service providers have always come through in difficult situations, keeping the citizens connected, the nation's economy buzzing, governments functioning and



the networks running.

"The sector has seen phenomenal growth and has been the economic backbone of the nation by contributing 6.5 per cent to the GDP in 2019," Kochhar said.

He said 5G is going to be a game changer when India begins its journey for the next 25 years in the telecom sector and will need supportive policies for its growth.

"5G is the next generation of mobile networks, as we expect a supportive policy framework and ecosystem to bring in the

new technology. The contribution of telecom sector in GDP will remain a critical factor (as the industry aims to contribute from current 6.5 to 8 per cent) as usage increases and more subscribers are added," Kochhar said.

He said that edge computing, quantum computing, blockchain, robotics and whole lot of technologies will surely be playing a much critical role in the next 5 to 10 years which will need favourable environment in the country. He said that the government should make available complete identified spectrum in 3300-3600 MHz bands for 5G technology.

"Additional spectrum bands identified by 5G High Level Forum including 26, 28 and 40 GHz should also be identified and made available for 5G," Kochhar said. **AGENCIES**

Medical device industry suffers revenue drop

NEW DELHI: Medical technology industry has suffered around 50-85 per cent drop in revenue during April-June with a decline in surgical procedures at hospitals due to COVID-19 situation, industry body MTAI said on Wednesday.

Medical Technology Association of India (MTAI), which represents research-based medical technology companies in the country, said the government should consider reducing tax burden on medical devices in order to revive the sector.

Elaborating on the current situation, MTAI said elective procedures (surgeries) drive a large part of the demand for medical devices and the postponement has severely impacted the revenue streams of the medtech industry.

The estimated revenue downfall in the cardiology category is up to 60 per cent in the first quarter of the financial year, while in the orthopaedic industry devices segment there is a revenue fall of around 85 per cent, MTAI said in a statement.

Similarly, the ophthalmology sector has also recorded a fall up to 75 per cent in its revenues during April-June, it added. Even the critical care device segment fell to nearly half, MTAI said.

"Due to the shrinking margins of the hospitals, the channel and service dealership networks, and sub-dealers are already experiencing significant workforce downsizing," it noted.

So far the global medtech fraternity have heeded to the government's request of protecting the jobs of its workforce, even while facing significant financial blows. However, if the situation does not improve, these efforts may not be sustainable, MTAI said. "We request its immediate intervention to help the sector recover so that it can continue fulfilling its role in ensuring critical care services in the country," MTAI Chairman and Director General Pavan Choudary said. **AGENCIES**

Murugappa Group to invest Rs 700 crore in CG Power

NEW DELHI: Murugappa Group firm Tube Investments of India Ltd (TIIL) has agreed to invest Rs 700 crore in CG Power and Industrial Solutions Ltd for a 51 per cent stake, the scam-hit company said on Friday.

Tube Investments of India Ltd will be issued 64.25 crore shares at Rs 8.56 apiece aggregating to Rs 550 crore, CG Power said in a regulatory filing.

Also, TIIL will also invest Rs 150 crore in the company over the next 18 months in the form of buying warrants that can be converted into equity shares. The Rs 36,900-crore Murugappa Group, which also had an engineering arm, had made a non-binding offer to invest in CG Power. The board of CG Power at its meeting on Friday approved the investment, the filing said.

The investment is, however, subject to TIIL being declared the winner of the Swiss challenge process to be undertaken by the



lenders of CG Power by August 28. Under the Swiss challenge, other potential investors can make a counteroffer subject to the first investor (TIIL) have the right to match the counter offer.

The investment is also subject to lenders accepting one-time settlement and restructuring of debt, the filing said. The Rs 550 crore investment will give TIIL about 51 per cent equity stake in CG Power and this will rise as and when warrants are converted into equity. PTI had first reported the deal on July 1. Murugappa Group will be issued fresh equity shares and the money that it brings in would be used to meet operating and working capital expenditure. **PTI**

TV import curbs to help local industry

ICEA'S MOVE IS PART OF ITS COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISH INDIA AS A LEADING MANUFACTURING DESTINATION FOR EACH AND EVERY CATEGORY OF ELECTRONICS PRODUCTS

NEW DELHI: The government's move to put restrictions on imports of colour televisions will encourage the domestic industry as well as help build capacities for exports, according to industry body ICEA.

The India Cellular & Electronics Association (ICEA) said it has been a long-standing demand to put restrictions on the import of colour televisions (CTVs) to encourage domestic manufacturing activity.

CTVs up to Rs 600-700 crore were being imported from ASEAN countries, through zero-duty FTA, it said in a statement. "Government's move to put restrictions on imports of colour televisions, which was reported at USD 780 million in 2019-20, has surprised the industry. This



decision is clearly indicating that the government is relentlessly pursuing domestic manufacturing. It is time to herald a new journey in the Indian CTV manufacturing sector leading to acquiring global-scale manufacturing status for India," said ICEA Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo.

The government on last Thursday imposed restrictions on TV imports, a move aimed at promoting domestic manufacturing and cut inbound shipments of non-essential items from countries like China. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in a

notification has put imports of TV under a restricted category from free, which means importer of that commodity will have to seek licence from the commerce ministry's DGFT for the imports.

The curbs are imposed on TV sets of screen size ranging from up to 36 cm to over 105 cm. Liquid crystal display (LCD) television sets of screen size below 63 cm are also covered under the restrictions. "ICEA first took this up with the government very vigorously. We have sufficient manufacturing capacity in India and therefore imports

of CBU's are not necessary. We are losing precious jobs because of unabated imports. We should now as an industry and as a nation rapidly build huge capacities for exports and also build the component industry especially the open cell/display industry," said Mohindroo.

ICEA is fully focussed and committed to establishing India as a leading manufacturing destination for each and every category of electronics products which includes CTVs, it added. "ICEA is duty-bound to replicate the mammoth success witnessed in the mobile handset and components manufacturing sector in various electronics hardware verticals including CTVs," Mohindroo said.

ICEA fully understands and believes that in the post-COVID manufacturing reorientation, India can emerge to be the preferred manufacturing destination for CTVs and its major components including Open Cells which contribute nearly 70 per cent of the BOM (bill of material) cost, he said. **AGENCIES**

Nexa rolls out to become a success story from Maruti stable

MUMBAI: Brand Nexa, which has become the third largest automobile retail brand in five years since inception in July 2015, is arguably one of the best examples of how customer-centricity can create a premium brand.

Nexa, the premium retail brand from the automotive leader Maruti Suzuki, commands a little over 11 per cent of the car market volume and contributes more than 20 per cent of Maruti's annual volumes, grossing over 30,000 units per month even in this downturn. "Nexa marks the first initia-

tive by a carmaker here to go beyond selling cars by creating a new format of retail experience. In these five years Nexa, with its intelligent brand associations and unique customer experiences, has delighted over 1.1 million customers as it completed five years in July," Maruti Suzuki executive director for marketing and sales Shashank Srivastava told PTI.

Since the launch with the sole brand S-Cross, today Nexa sells five premium models of Maruti.

In October 2016, it rolled in the Baleno, the premium mini SUV, which was followed



by the Ignis, a hatchback in January 2017. In April 2017, it launched the premium sedan

Ciaz, and in August 2019 the XL6, a crossover MPV, was rolled out.

'Nexa marks the first initiative by a carmaker here to go beyond selling cars by creating a new format of retail experience'

At present, there are 370 Nexa showrooms across 200 cities. But Srivastava is cautious about expansion this fiscal given the pandemic blow to the industry.

"Today, Nexa is the third largest retail automobile channel with a market share of 10-11 per cent. At present, Nexa contributes close to 20 per cent of our overall sales.

With Nexa, we are able to attract modern urban consumers," Srivastava added.

In just four years and two months, the brand grossed up 1 million customers in September 2019 and by July 2020, added 1 lakh more customers to take the total customer family to 1.1 million.

Elaborating further, Sriv-

astava said the first step was to tap the fast evolving market wherein market research has established that driven by rising income levels, many were looking forward to a more customer-centric and a personalised experience in car-buying.

"So, to offer a personalised experience, we have set up a content management system which has helped us personalise communication to each customer depending on the digital signals in their purchase journey," he said adding nearly half of Nexa customers are under-35. **AGENCIES**

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NEWSBRIEF

IRDAI permits life insurers to issue e-policies

NEW DELHI: Amid rising cases of coronavirus and disruption in normal business activities, regulator IRDAI on Tuesday allowed life insurers to issue life insurance policies electronically. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) issued a circular exempting the life insurance companies from the requirement of issuing policy document and copy of proposal form in physical form, subject to certain conditions. This exemption will be valid for all policies issued during 2020-21, it said. The decision, according to the regulator, follows the feedback received from the life insurers expressing difficulties in printing and dispatch of policy documents and also the desirability of adopting digital means of doing business in the interests of policyholders and other stakeholders. The regulator further said there will be a mandatory 30-day free look period for all such electronic policy documents. **PTI**

Canara, UCO banks slash MCLR

MUMBAI: State-owned Canara Bank on Thursday slashed its marginal cost of fund-based lending rate (MCLR) by up to 30 basis points across various tenors. The overnight and one-month lending rates have been cut by 20 basis points (bps) to 7 per cent each. The three-month MCLR has been revised to 7.15 per cent from 7.45 per cent, Canara Bank said in a regulatory filing. The six-month MCLR has been cut to 7.40 per cent from 7.50 per cent, the bank said. The one-year MCLR has been revised to 7.45 per cent from 7.55 per cent earlier. The revised lending rates will be effective from August 7, Canara Bank said. The reduction in MCLR will bring down burden on borrowers. **AGENCIES**

RBI set to give priority to start-ups

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday decided to broaden the scope of Priority Sector Lending (PSL) by including start-ups and enhancing borrowing limits for renewable energy sectors. The central bank would also increase the targets for lending to "small and marginal farmers" and "weaker sections" under the PSL. The eligible entities get access to credit on easier terms from banks under the PSL. Banks are required to assign 40 per cent of Adjusted Net Bank Credit or Credit Equivalent Amount of Off-Balance Sheet Exposure, whichever is higher to priority sector, including agriculture and micro-enterprises, it said. **AGENCIES**

Moody's upgrades Yes Bank by a notch

NEW DELHI: Moody's Investors Service on Monday said it has upgraded Yes Bank's long-term foreign currency issuer rating by a notch to 'B3' from 'Caa1' after a Rs 15,000-crore capital raising. Despite the upgrade, Yes Bank still remains under non-investment grade. Obligations rated 'B' are considered speculative and are subject to high credit risk, while those rated 'Caa' are judged to be speculative of poor standing and are subject to very high credit risk. The outlook on Yes Bank's ratings where applicable is changed to stable from positive, Moody's said in a statement. "Moody's has also upgraded the bank's long-term foreign and local currency bank deposit ratings to B3 from Caa1, and its foreign currency senior unsecured MTN (medium-term note) programme rating to (P)B3 from (P)Caa1," it said. Giving rationale for rating action, the rating agency said Yes Bank's successful equity capital raise of Rs 15,000 crore (about USD 2 billion) has bolstered its solvency and is the main driver of the ratings upgrade. **AGENCIES**

Policy shift widens RBI-govt rift

SHIFT TO MARKET ECONOMY FROM NATIONALISED SYSTEM IS ADDING TO THE TENSIONS

MUMBAI: A shift to being a market-based economy from a nationalised system has led to simmering tensions between the Reserve Bank and the government and questions over the central bank's independence, former RBI deputy governor Viral Acharya has said.

The economist, who went back to teaching in the US after his surprise resignation from the RBI ahead of his term's end last year, said India continues to be in his heart and he would like to "give back" to the country in the future as well.

Acharya, who resigned after run-ins with the government last year, said the dip in financial savings is also another reason which can explain the disagreements between Mint Road and North Block.

It can be noted that a slew of central bank governors in recent times have flagged the issue of autonomy, and pointed to instances where there were disagreements both in rate setting — where the government wants an accommodative stance — and also regulatory aspects.

"Over discussions with former governors and deputy governors, I seem to have



"This Hindu undivided family arrangement isn't what the economy is about anymore. There are markets, private sector firms are borrowing both domestically and internationally"

found one explanation for why I think these pressures are now sort of simmering more. I think it is because we have moved from being a nationalised economy to a market economy," Acharya said during a discussion organised by Bhavan's SPJIMR. Citing former Governor Y V Reddy, Acharya said in the olden days, there was the central government, the RBI and the public sector banks made

for a "Hindu undivided family arrangement", wherein all the requirements of the stakeholders were easily handled. "This Hindu undivided family arrangement isn't what the economy is about anymore. There are markets, private sector firms are borrowing both domestically and internationally," Acharya said. Apart from the shift in the character of the economy, there is also a dip in the finan-

cial savings of the countrymen in the last decade which makes resources scarcer, he said.

"Growth is slowing, the fiscal (math) is becoming over-stretched rather than consolidating, and the household savings rates are coming down," he explained.

"This is creating pressures in the same arrangement that we had before because the government needs to borrow, reduce its bills in one way or the other and everyone wants to turn to the central bank to accommodate whatever policies it can so that in one way or the other," Acharya said.

Acharya said in his newly launched book on financial stability, he has given nearly half a dozen specific examples of "fiscal dominance" to illustrate that pressures are "very pervasive and across board".

It can be noted that at the peak of difference between the government and the RBI, which started with the former invoking a never-used law to give directions to the latter, Acharya had made the "wrath of the markets" speech, warning that the markets will punish if the government interferes in the central bank. **AGENCIES**

Reserve Bank extends debt restructuring for MSMEs

MUMBAI: In view of the continued need to support the viable MSME entities on account of the fallout of COVID-19, the Reserve Bank on Thursday extended the one-time debt restructuring for small businesses by another three months to March 2021.

Besides, the central bank has also relaxed some of the existing provisions for availing this scheme by the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

With COVID-19 continuing to disrupt normal functioning and cash flows, the stress in the MSME sector has got accentuated, warranting further support, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said while announcing the central bank's bi-monthly monetary policy outcome.

"Accordingly, it has been decided that stressed MSME borrowers will be made eligible for restructuring their debt under the existing framework, provided their accounts with the concerned lender were classified as standard as on March 1, 2020. This restructuring will have to be implemented by March 31, 2021," he said. As per the existing scheme, the borrower account had to be standard



as on January 1, 2020.

Asset classification of borrowers classified as standard may be retained as such, whereas the accounts which may have slipped into NPA category between March 2, 2020 and date of implementation may be upgraded as "standard asset", as on the date of implementation of the restructuring plan.

However, the RBI asked banks to maintain additional provision of 5 per cent over and above the provision already held by them for accounts restructured under these guidelines.

The RBI has also retained the aggregate exposure limit of the existing guidelines. As

a result, the exposure limit also including non-fund based facilities of banks and NBFCs to the borrower should not exceed Rs 25 crore as on March 1, 2020. The MSME sector plays an important role in the growth of the Indian economy as it contributes over 28 per cent of the GDP, more than 40 per cent of exports, while creating employment for about 11 crore people.

Commenting on the scheme, PwC Partner Kuntal Sur said it is a good move by the RBI and would help MSMEs impacted by COVID-19 to get time and space to service debt when cash flows are under pressure due to uncertainty. **AGENCIES**

Extension of moratorium could pose risk to lenders

MUMBAI: Extension of moratorium and one-time restructuring of loan could pose challenges to lenders, and also impact their financial stability if the quantum is large, rating agency IcrA said in a report on Wednesday.

The six-month moratorium given by RBI ends on August 31 and the note from IcrA comes on the eve of RBI's credit policy review, where the regulator also announces changes on the regulatory front.

Many voices have been seeking continuation of some relief in repayments because of the lackluster economic conditions. Asset quality risks due to the relief given by RBI continue to be elevated for all financiers even as lenders have reported a reduction in quantum of assets under moratorium, IcrA said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said the government is in discussion with RBI on a restructuring, amid reports that it may be a sector specific relief that may



be in works. "Both one-time restructuring and extension of moratorium could pose challenges to lenders not only in implementing the same but also on their financial stability if the quantum is large," the rating agency said.

"As the lenders may continue to have discretion on extending the moratorium, a one-time sector specific restructuring may also create implementation challenges, given the inter-linkages with various sections of the economy," it added.

IcrA's sector head for financial sector Anil Gupta said a higher share loans under moratorium for a prolonged

period or loans restructured by a lender would reflect incipient stress in the asset quality and will be credit negative for the lenders unless such losses are sufficiently offset by timely capital raise.

The agency estimated the median loans under moratorium to be around 25-30 per cent compared to a broad band of 10-50 per cent of total loan books with many of the borrowers being common under Phase 1 and 2. In general, the moratorium levels across banks are lower than those of non banking financial companies (NBFCs) with private banks having even relatively lower levels. **AGENCIES**

Easy liquidity policies help NBFCs: RBI

MUMBAI: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday defended the easy liquidity stance of the central bank, asserting that the private sector entities have benefited out of the policy.

Das said the measures, which got adopted with deep rate cuts, have also ensured faster transmission of the policy rates into the actual lending by banks, in turn helping the economy. At present, the overall excess liquidity is at over Rs 5 lakh crore.

There has been a criticism that the excess liquidity framework helps lower the cost of borrowing for the government as the yields on bonds go down. Among others, former deputy governor Viral Acharya had recently advocated keeping the system in small liquidity deficit.

"I thought it necessary to point out some of these aspects which are known, which are obviously available in the public domain, but I often hear questions being raised in the public space," Das said while read-



ing out his policy statement on Thursday.

"Transmission of the rate cuts by the MPC would not have been possible to the extent achieved so far without creating comfortable liquidity conditions," he added.

He said large amounts of liquidity were infused in and out of the system through injections and absorptions through the liquidity adjustment facility and added that easing of financial conditions has enhanced monetary policy transmission and also effectiveness of the Monetary Policy Committee's actions.

"It is worthwhile to see who is benefiting from RBI's ac-

ture in April-June, he said. "In particular, market financing conditions for NBFCs, which had become challenging, have largely stabilised in the wake of targeted policy measures," he added.

Although non-food bank credit has slowed to 5.6 per cent (as on July 17), credit to NBFCs grew at 25.7 per cent in June, loans to services at 10.7 per cent, and to housing at 12.5 per cent, Das said adding that monetary transmission has also improved considerably.

The weighted average lending rate (WALR) on fresh rupee loans sanctioned by banks declined by 1.62 per cent between February 2019 and June 2020 (as against policy cuts of 2.50 per cent), of which 0.91 per cent transmission was witnessed during March-June 2020, Das said.

Abundant liquidity has also supported other segments of the financial market, particularly, the mutual funds which have "stabilised" since the Franklin Templeton episode earlier this year, Das said. **AGENCIES**

Jagdishan succeeds Puri's at HDFC Bank

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank has confirmed the name of Sashidhar Jagdishan to succeed Aditya Puri as the chief executive and managing director of HDFC Bank, two sources said on Tuesday.

Jagdishan, currently working as the 'change agent' of the largest private sector lender and head of finance, has been with the bank since 1996, and the appointment will put an end to one of the most keenly watched successions in the banking industry.



Puri is widely credited with building the bank from scratch and leading it for the last 25 years to be the second largest by assets and also the

most valued lender by investors. Puri retires on October 20. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which was given a list of candidates in an order of priority, conveyed its approval to Jagdishan's name late last evening, the sources said.

The bank will eventually inform the exchanges about the RBI nod. According to a media report earlier this year, the bank had selected the names of internal candidates Sashidhar Jagdishan and Kaizad Bharucha, and

Citi's Sunil Garg as probable candidates.

The bank said it has given three names in order of their preference. Puri had recently assuaged shareholder concerns at his last annual general meeting as the MD and CEO, saying succession has been taken care of. "He (the successor) has been with us for 25 years... my successor was always in place, at least in my mind," Puri told shareholders at the lender's virtual AGM. **AGENCIES**

PNB offers loan facility to weavers

NEW DELHI: State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Thursday announced the launch of a scheme to facilitate cash credit or loans to weavers against their credit requirements.

Under the PNB Weaver Mudra Scheme (PNBWMS), the bank has launched a credit card plan under which loans up to Rs 2 lakh to weavers will be granted as per the scheme of the Ministry of Textiles.

The scheme aims to provide adequate and timely assistance to weavers by way of

cash credit or loan by way of loan or cash credit for their credit requirements such as investments and working capital flexibly and cost-effectively in both rural and urban areas, the bank said in a statement.

"With the introduction of MUDRA loan under the PM Mudra Yojana, the Ministry of Textiles wanted options for working capital needs of weavers under 'Shishu' and 'Kishore' Category along with the issue of MUDRA card hence the PNBWMS," it said.

The scheme is launched on

the eve of "National Handloom Day".

"Prepared after a detailed discussion with the Ministry of Textile, the new product specifically seeks to finance working capital needs of weavers (up to Rs 50,000 to be categorised under Shishu and for above Rs 50,000 and up to Rs 5 lakh to be categorised under Kishore category), where the Government of India has agreed to extend financial assistance in respect of margin money subsidy, interest subsidy and credit guarantee fees," it said. **PTI**

GST collection in West Bengal stabilises

THE COLLECTION OF THE GROSS GST (CENTRAL GST, STATE GST, INTEGRATED GST AND CESS) FROM CENTRALLY-ADMINISTERED ASSESSEES IN WEST BENGAL STOOD AT RS 1,212.44 CRORE IN JULY, WHILE THE INDIRECT TAX REVENUES IN APRIL AND MAY THIS YEAR WERE AT RS 345 CRORE AND RS 745 CRORE RESPECTIVELY

KOLKATA: The GST collection in West Bengal is improving with growing economic activities in the state and the revenue from the indirect tax at Rs 1,212.44 crore in July was higher than that of the previous months, an official said on Friday.

The Goods and Services Tax collection is getting stabilised because companies have started making deferred payments which the authorities had allowed till September this year in view of the coronavirus crisis, he said.

"The collection of the gross GST (Central GST, State GST, Integrated GST and cess) from centrally-administered assessees in West Bengal stood at Rs 1,212.44 crore in July, while the indirect tax revenues in April and May this year were at Rs 345 crore and Rs 745 crore respectively," the official said. The revenue is increasing as the economic



activities are growing in the state with ease of the lockdown restrictions, he said.

However, the GST collection in July was down by around 10 per cent year-on-year as the revenue in the corresponding month of 2019 was at Rs 1,348.57 crore, he said. Compared to Rs 1,416.38 crore mopped up in June last year, the collection of GST in West Bengal had dropped to Rs 1,367.50 crore in the same month of

2020.

The Odisha Goods and Services Tax collection, meanwhile, has increased by 13.04 per cent year-on-year to Rs 794.02 crore in July, despite slowdown in the economy due to the coronavirus crisis, an official said.

The State GST (SGST) collection was Rs 702.44 crore in the year-ago month. "Amid lockdown and sub-optimal functioning of many sectors in the economy due to the pan-

dem, Odisha has witnessed a positive growth in OGST collection for the first time during the current financial year in July," Commercial Tax and GST Commissioner SK Lohani said.

The negative growth rates of the SGST collection were recorded in April, May and June this year, he said.

According to him, the positive growth rate in July was achieved primarily due to regular persuasion and continuous monitoring by the field officers of the commercial tax organisation.

"The Commissionerate of CT and GST has extended its supports to the industries and traders. Better performance of the mining sector has also helped improve revenue collection," Lohani said after reviewing the GST data on Saturday.

The movement of commercial vehicles, which is an important indicator of the restoration of normalcy in

business activities, is showing an encouraging trend, the official said.

The average daily interstate waybills generated in the first week of March in the current calendar year was 20,790, which dipped to 1,559 in the corresponding period of April due to the lockdown.

The figure improved significantly to 16,598 in the last week of July, the official said. The average daily intra-state waybills generated in the last week of July was 20,893, up from 5,671 in the first week of April, he said. The revenue collection from non-GST items such as petroleum products has also improved in July.

The gross GST collection in the April-July period of the current fiscal was at Rs 7,540 crore, down by 28 per cent year-on-year, the official said.

The gross figure of the indirect tax includes Central GST, Integrated GST, State GST and cess. **AGENCIES**

Curbing Covid-19 spread may end economic woes

The output of the eight core industries hints at tentative signs that the pandemic-hit economic contraction may have begun to bottom out. The government's provisional figures show that while overall production at the infrastructure industries extended their year-on-year decline to a fourth straight month in June, shrinking 15 per cent, the pace at which activity contracted slowed for a second consecutive month following April's 37 per cent plunge. The sector-wise performance also affirms that the gradual reopening since June appears to have helped tease back some smattering of demand in the economy. Of the seven industries that extended their contractions, only coal shrank at a faster pace (-15.5 per cent) than in May, when production had dipped 14 per cent. Refinery products, the largest weight on the index contributing 28 per cent, shrank 8.9 per cent marking an improvement from the 21.3 per cent contraction seen the previous month. The lifting of restrictions on inter and intra-State movement of persons and goods revived both vehicular movement and, consequently, demand for auto fuels. With personal modes of mobility preferred given the fear of infection, petroproduct consumption grew 11 per cent month-on-month in June. With the IMD forecasting above average rainfall in August and September as well, the outlook for the agriculture-reliant rural economy is far more promising than for most other sectors. To be sure, the economy is still a fair distance from a sustained turnaround with other data flagging the risks to a recovery. The significant shortfall in GST collection point to the difficulties the central and State governments are facing in garnering crucially needed revenue. This has already swelled the fiscal deficit at the end of the Q1 to 83 per cent of the full year's target. With the new infections curve showing no signs of plateauing as yet, policymakers have the unenviable task of stemming the Covid-19 tide without dampening economic momentum.

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

ON MANOJ SINHA TAKING CHARGE AS NEW LG OF JAMMU & KASHMIR

- BEST CHOICE IN THE PRESENT LOT**
Sinha is a senior BJP politician, a former minister, a leader rooted in the politics of Uttar Pradesh, and reportedly enjoys PM Narendra Modi's confidence. All this makes him the best choice for the post.
- IMPASSE IN KASHMIR IS POLITICAL**
The fact that a political figure has been sent to J&K is a positive sign, for the impasse in Kashmir is fundamentally political. He is likely to understand and resolve the issues in the UT more efficiently.
- OUT-OF-THE-BOX SOLUTIONS NEEDED**
Politicians often have deftness, agility, interpersonal skills, the ability to reconcile contradictions, and look for out-of-the-box solutions that bureaucrats lack as they are trained to follow processes and rules.
- INVOLVE ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS**
But being a politician alone is not enough. Sinha needs to understand the nuances of Kashmiri politics and society, the security scenario, and establish a cordial relations with all stakeholders.
- CREATE DEMOCRATIC ENVIRONMENT**
He must reach out to mainstream political leaders and bring them back into the political process and create a more democratic environment for civil society to function. Pollings should resume soon.

LETTERBOX

Readers' feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to fwletters@gmail.com. We will publish them on this page.

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MADAN B LOKUR SLAMS UNCHECKED PREVENTIVE DETENTION AND DIFFICULTY IN ACCESSING INFORMATION

Violating rights in the Valley

A few human rights concerns have emerged in the Kashmir Valley over the last one year since the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. Till the time of writing, the national portal of India website india.gov.in continued to show this Article as a part of the Constitution! What is the truth?

Unchecked preventive detention — whether in the form of house arrest (admitted or denied) or preventive detention in jail in the Valley or outside the erstwhile State — is a matter of grave concern. So is the difficulty in accessing information whether through normal channels of communication or through electronic means such as the Internet.

The concept of house arrest is not specifically mentioned in the criminal manual but the state is empowered to declare a building or house as a sub-jail. Through such declarations, residential accommodations of some political leaders have been converted into sub-jails. The resident of a sub-jail is automatically and undeniably under detention and what is commonly known as house arrest.

When a residential accommodation is declared a sub-jail, the state virtually acquires and takes over the property for its own purposes. The owner of the property is entitled to rent or compensation for the use and occupation of the property. So, in a sense, a person under house arrest without receiving compensation is doubly jeopardised. Compulsory takeover of property even for a limited period has been an issue of great concern in Mizoram where vast tracts of land were taken over by the armed forces to quell an insurgency. Many of these landowners have petitioned for compensation, though with little effect. Residents of the Valley will perhaps face the same problem as the Mizos.

A variation of house arrest was employed during the Emergency when a few tourist resorts close to Delhi were declared as sub-jails and prominent political leaders incarcerated therein, without taking over their property. In a sense, therefore, some Emergency steps have now been adopted to quell dissent.

Preventive detention under the Public Safety Act (PSA) has caused immense hardship to a very large number of persons. Preventive detention is based on a prognosis of future events on the basis of past conduct. Like all preventive detention laws, the PSA is draconian but our Constitution provides important procedural safeguards that must be followed by the state or else the detention order will be quashed. Among them is the fundamental right to be communicated, as soon as may be, the grounds on which the order has been made and the earliest opportunity of making a representation against the order. Decisions of the Supreme Court hold that if there



is an unexplained delay of even one or two days in dealing with the representation, the order of preventive detention is vitiated. A challenge to an order of preventive detention can be mounted on these and other procedural grounds. The law regulating the PSA is no different. Many preventive detention orders have been challenged through habeas corpus petitions but unfortunately many of them are still pending in the concerned High Court. This did not happen even during the Emergency. What is the truth behind the delay?

And now a new theory has been advanced by the state. In the case of one political leader, it was stated in an affidavit in the Supreme Court that he had not been preventively detained or kept under house arrest, which means that his residence was not declared a sub-jail. In other words, he was a free person. In that event why was his house swarming with policemen and why was he not free to move around? What is the truth?

A Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court held in the case of A.K. Roy v. Union of India (1981) that, "Laws of preventive detention cannot, by the back-door, introduce procedural measures of a punitive kind... The normal rule has to be that the detenu will be kept in detention in a place which is within the environs of his or her ordinary place of residence. If a person ordinarily resides in Delhi to keep him in detention in a far of place like Madras or Calcutta is a punitive measure by itself which, in matters of preventive detention at any rate, is not to be encouraged... Whatever smacks of punishment must be scrupulously avoided in matters of preventive detention." Although the PSA permits a detenu being detained outside the erstwhile State, such detention should ordinarily not be resorted to for a variety of reasons. But unfortunately the view of the Supreme Court has been followed more in the breach in the case of

several PSA detenues. One gets the impression that resort to preventive detention is actually as a measure of punishment or conviction without a trial.

There are several other reasons why the incarceration of hundreds of persons in the erstwhile State is a gross human rights violation. What makes the situation worse is that a very large number of children have had to suffer what is euphemistically called detention for their own good. The welfare and best interests of a child can hardly be decided in a police station without the involvement of the parents of the child.

Taking a step back

Access to information might not yet be a fundamental right but it is certainly a human right. For the last one year, the residents of the Valley have been deprived of the benefit of 4G Internet. This has had an adverse impact on various aspects of daily life. For students, the joy of learning has become an imposition with 2G Internet. Medical professionals have difficulty in advising and counselling their patients. The right to health is an essential component of the right to life and this has been denied to a large number of patients. Businessmen have suffered, the economy in the Valley has taken a hit and it appears that the powers that be are in no mood to relent. The Supreme Court has twice intervened but with no tangible effect. Orders concerning the Internet were required to be reviewed under the rules by a committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary. The committee has been downgraded and is now headed by the Home Secretary. In other words, rather than a step forward towards access to information, a small step back has been taken.

While it may be that uncontrolled access to Internet could pose a security risk through misuse by terrorists and militants, today's technology is so far advanced that it is possible to block access even in a limited way. For example, thousands of child pornography sites have been successfully blocked in different parts of the world, including India. Therefore, where there is a will to checkmate militants and terrorists through the effective use of technology, it is possible to do so, but taking a short cut by permitting download only by 2G possibly does more harm to a greater number of people than is necessary and is disproportionate.

It is time to introspect and make the human rights of all our citizens an inclusive subject of free and frank discussion. If we keep beating about the bush, its leaves will eventually fall. What happens then?

Justice (ret'd.) Madan B. Lokur is a former Supreme Court judge. Views expressed are his own



JATIN DESAI CALLS FOR RELEASE OF IMPRISONED FISHERMEN IN BOTH INDIA AND PAKISTAN

Straying into troubled waters

Along the coastal areas of Porbandar, Mangrol, Veraval in Gujarat and the Union Territory of Diu on India's western coast are hundreds of families whose lives have been torn asunder, the men of their households missing with only stray hopes of their return, women and children struggling to make ends meet and see another sunrise. The men are currently in jail in Pakistan, their families barely aware of their health and welfare. Their only 'crime' was that they were doing their work in the waters between India and Pakistan. These are fishermen who inadvertently crossed the invisible line in the water between the countries. As fishermen do not get ample fish on the Gujarat side, they have no option but to go farther and farther out into the sea. As they fish in mid-sea, they end up in waters controlled by Pakistan and are arrested for inadvertently entering into that country.

India and Pakistan exchanged lists of prisoners on July 1 as per which 270 Indian fishermen and 54 civilian prisoners are in Pakistan's prisons. India has 97 Pakistani fishermen and 265 civilian prisoners in its jails. In more friendly or less antagonistic circumstances, they would have been released after a formal procedure to check that they were really fishermen and not spies, but, in these times of suspicion, the value of their lives lies at the altar of bilateral relations. Consequently, their families suffer. On average, these men would have spent one-and-a-half years in prisons. Uncertainty hangs over them like the proverbial Damocles's



sword, given that in their prison cells, they have little knowledge of when they will be released and repatriated.

This is not a new problem; it has dragged on for years together, without a resolution in sight. To address this issue, in 2008, India and Pakistan had formed a judicial committee consisting of four retired judges from each country. The committee used to visit prisons of the other country specifically to meet the prisoners, examine consular access, status of their cases, delay in release and repatriation, their health condition, and so on. It unanimously suggested release

and repatriation of fishermen and a few women prisoners. The governments of both countries praised their work but did not implement the recommendations. The last meeting was held in October 2013. Five years later, there was a move to revive the panel. India nominated its four members but Pakistan did not. It is yet to take a step in that direction. Islamabad must do so urgently and call a meeting, given that the last meeting was held in India.

Returning their boats

Further, when fishermen are arrested,

their boats are also confiscated. Their release means little till they get back possession of their boats from the other country. Both the countries should release those boats which can sail with some repair work. It is also time that the two countries now consider adopting a 'no-arrest policy' in the case of fishermen.

In the coastal villages of both the countries, when men are imprisoned in the other country, women bear the brunt of the load, while somehow holding their families together. The pain is the same on both sides of the border. There are many examples across villages where the children of the arrested fishermen have lost their childhoods. As the COVID-19 pandemic wreaks havoc in both countries, there are growing concerns for the health of the arrested fishermen among their families. There is hardly any communication between the two except for some stray letters which are delayed. The families have no definite way to know that their loved ones are safe from the virus. For the arrested fishermen, it is an issue of survival. For India and Pakistan celebrating their Independence Days this month, it should become a humanitarian issue and an appropriate occasion to release and repatriate fishermen. Let the fishermen too have their freedoms back.

Jatin Desai is with the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy. Views expressed are his own

BOOKS: REVIEW

Key to remain healthy and competitive lies in mind

The key to stay fit and competitive lies in the mind, writes Shayamal Vallabhjee in "Breathe, Believe, Balance — A Guide to Self-discovery and Healing" (Pan) that is aimed at both high performance sportspersons and individuals looking to lead a healthier and more fulfilling life. And, to make it easier, Vallabhjee — a South African sports scientist with a Masters in Psychology — includes "9 Realizations" as a step-by-step approach to achieving your goals.

In 2003, Vallabhjee was hired to work with the Indian team at the Cricket World Cup in his native South Africa as its technical analyst, responsible for studying the opposition, analyzing pitch conditions, and mapping data points that showed trends in performance. India made it to the

finals but lost to Australia. He then trained the Indian tennis team that was preparing for the 2008 Beijing. He spent six years on the ATP Tour with professional tennis players and after the 2012 London Olympics, set up a business in India that grew to be a multi-million dollar brick and mortar physiotherapy and physical rehabilitation business.

There is no single reason why some athletes become superhumans, or for that matter, why the average individual also cannot become so, Vallabhjee points out.

"It is an intricate, dynamic balance between multiple domains that allows a chosen few to rise to the pinnacle of their potential. My thirst for knowledge sent me down the rabbit hole in search of the ideal balance. I did not find a single secret or formula. Instead,

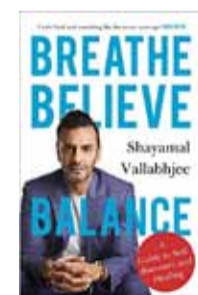
It is an intricate, dynamic balance between multiple domains that allows a chosen few to rise to the pinnacle of their potential.

I was able to identify three broad principles that we must keep in mind during this journey," Vallabhjee writes.

What is this magic trio?

It's the importance of mindfulness in balance, an appreciation of the fluidity of dynamic balance, and the essential role of the fulcrum (point of support) in achieving the balance.

"With these three principles as our north star, we can all find



Breathe Believe Balance: A Guide to Self-discovery and Healing
By Shayamal Vallabhjee
Publisher: Pan
Pages: 304
Price: Rs 218

the balance that works best for us," the author states.

Yoga is often called the art of balance, which shows in a trained yogi's fluid and graceful movements.

"Conversely, imbalance often brings with it a feeling of great difficulty — a lack of ease. We may feel like we are slogging our way through mud: physically, mentally, or spiritually. Nothing seems to come easy. Even the smallest of things exhaust us. Ease and effort are often the most reliable indicators of the presence or absence of balance," the book states.

Thus, a recurring theme of the

book is the importance of taking personal inventory: of our thoughts and emotions, of our body, of our relationships, and of the many dimensions of our lives.

"Imbalance can manifest subtly at first in our minds and then in our bodies. One of the reasons to practise mindfulness is that it allows us to be more alert to these subtle signs. When properly fine-tuned, both our minds and bodies are marvellous instruments. With mindfulness we can see the early signs of imbalance and take corrective steps," the author points out.

Of major significance is the ability to be emotionally mindful. "When we are aware of our own thoughts and feelings, and those of others, we are better equipped to make clear and grounded decisions about the words we speak and the actions we take. This quality of emotional intelligence is increasingly being recognized in the business world and elsewhere as a key factor in performance, success, and happiness.

ALSO READ | BIGGEST BLAST IN BEIRUT'S HISTORY * P9 | MAHATHIR FORMS NEW PARTY IN FIGHTBACK ATTEMPT * P9

NEWSBRIEF

Share of external financing of fiscal deficit soars

MUMBAI: The share of external financing has jumped to 4.5 per cent in Q1 FY21 from 1.6 per cent in the same quarter last fiscal, which in terms of the quantum has skyrocketed by 325 per cent Y-o-Y, says a report analysing the fiscal numbers of the government. The government has run 83 per cent of its borrowing target as of June, according to official numbers released on July 31, due to the impact of the pandemic that crippled the economy. **AGENCIES**

Gujarat sets new policy seeks to woo industries

AHMEDABAD: The Gujarat government on Friday announced its new industrial policy which aims to boost job creation and manufacturing and create an "innovation-driven ecosystem" in the state. Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, while announcing the new policy, said the companies which want to shift their operations from China and other countries in the wake of coronavirus pandemic were welcome to set up base in Gujarat. The policy envisions a spend of Rs 8,000 crore annually on industrial development. "Gujarat stands first in terms of number of Industrial Entrepreneurship Memorandums, with 51 per cent share of IEMs filed in India in terms of value in 2019," the chief minister said. "Our aim is to do better with the launch of the new industrial policy," Rupani, who completed four years in office on Friday, added. **AGENCIES**

Government works on strategic sectors list

NEW DELHI: The government will soon come out with a new public sector enterprises policy that will define strategic sectors which will not have more than four PSUs, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday. As part of the "Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" package, the finance minister in May had announced that there will be a maximum of four public sector companies in strategic sectors, and state-owned firms in other segments will eventually be privatised. "We are working on it... it should go to Cabinet soon," she said in interaction with media when asked about the strategic sector list. **AGENCIES**

Downside risk to economy from Covid-19

DOMESTIC ECONOMY MAY REMAIN IN THE NEGATIVE ZONE IN THE CURRENT FISCAL: RBI

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India on Thursday sounded a note of caution saying that protracted spread of the COVID-19 pandemic poses "downside risk" to the domestic economy which is expected to remain in the negative zone in the current fiscal.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das, while unveiling the bi-monthly monetary policy, also said that early containment of the pandemic could impart an "upside" to the economic growth outlook. Regarding growth outlook, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) noted that the recovery of the rural economy is expected to be robust, buoyed by the progress in kharif sowing. Manufacturing firms expect domestic demand to recover gradually from the second quarter and to sustain through the first quarter of the fiscal 2021-22. On the other hand, consumer confidence turned



"... real GDP growth in the first half of the year is estimated to remain in the contraction zone. For the year 2020-21 as a whole, real GDP growth is also estimated to be negative"

more pessimistic in July relative to the preceding round of the Reserve Bank's survey, Das said. External demand is expected to remain anaemic under the weight of the global recession and contraction in global trade.

"... real GDP growth in the first half of the year is estimated to remain in the

contraction zone. For the year 2020-21 as a whole, real GDP growth is also estimated to be negative," Das said.

An early containment of the COVID-19 pandemic may impart an upside to the outlook. A more protracted spread of the pandemic, deviations from the forecast of a normal monsoon and global

financial market volatility are the key downside risks, he noted.

The governor also said that in the MPC's assessment, global economic activity has remained fragile and in retrenchment in the first half of 2020. "A renewed surge in COVID-19 infections in major economies in July has subdued some early signs of revival that had appeared in May and June," he said.

In a separate development, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said, "Jugaad, tweaks and tricks" will not fully solve the present day problems and India needs to "rethink and redesign the whole economy" in the post-COVID-19 world. Without naming China, he said a huge opportunity has presented itself because of the rebalancing of supply chains and India can find success if it works on the infrastructure front.

Chandrasekaran, who heads the over USD 110 billion Tata group founded in 1868, said every pandemic presents a big opportunity of change for the better, and reminded that the Spanish

flu pandemic in 1920s saw communities coming together to gain independence.

"The challenges ahead are daunting. I do not doubt that. But a century ago, a political revolution emerged from the ashes of a devastating pandemic. The lesson from a century ago is this — the worst crisis contains within it an opportunity for profound change. And today, if we're brave, we too can imagine a new way of living," he said, delivering the 26th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture.

He said COVID-19 can be a catalyst towards the adoption of digital technologies in health and education and drive change in a way that even venture capital funds have not achieved despite pouring billions in investments.

Chandrasekaran said the "new India" he imagines can be a leader in research and development, science and technology, artificial intelligence and advanced manufacturing, courtesy its human capital, but requires the right investments, starting with the fundamentals. **AGENCIES**

11 states, UTs didn't distribute free foodgrains in July



NEW DELHI: As many as 11 Union territories and states, including Punjab and West Bengal, did not distribute free foodgrains in July under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Friday. As a result, free foodgrains have been able to reach only about 62 per cent of the total 81 crore beneficiaries during last month through ration shops, he said urging the states to speed up the distribution.

The lower distribution rate in July was also because several states follow a bimonthly, trimonthly or once-in-six-months plan for supply of grains in one go, he added. Free foodgrains are being distributed under the PMGKAY since April this year to beneficiaries identified under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) to tide over the economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. About 5 kg grains per beneficiary and 1 kg chana per beneficiary family are given under the scheme, which was initially launched for three months but was later extended till November.

"In the first three months, states and Union territories had distributed foodgrains to about 95 per cent beneficiaries under the PMGKAY. But, the distribution in July reached 62 per cent," Paswan said at a virtual press conference. Foodgrains were distributed to 49.87 crore beneficiaries against the total of 81 crore. About 24.94 lakh tonnes of grains were distributed to them in July, he said.

Paswan also said 11 states and Union territories, including Punjab, West Bengal, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Nagaland, Mizoram, Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar, did not undertake distribution July. Around nine states completed 90 per cent distribution and five states did 80 per cent distribution of free foodgrains during last month, he added. Stating that foodgrain distribution is still under way, Paswan said that in August so far, states have been able to distribute about 72,711 tonnes via ration shops to about 1.45 crore beneficiaries under the PMGKAY. "Several states are distributing in one go either bimonthly, trimonthly or once in six months. Much of the distribution should take place in the current month," he added.

"Several states are distributing in one go either bimonthly, trimonthly or once in six months. Much of the distribution should take place in the current month"

On the status of grain distribution in flood-hit states, the minister said the distribution has affected Assam and Bihar where grains were distributed in July to only 21 per cent and 52 per cent beneficiaries, respectively, under the PMGKAY. Raising concern over the doorstep delivery of foodgrains in Delhi, Paswan said such facilities are good to those beneficiaries who are living in the national capital. **AGENCIES**

India will be key pillar of global economic recovery

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Jitendra Singh has said India will be an important pillar of the post-coronavirus global economic recovery and that the road map for winning the battle against the pandemic lies in countries restarting the economy and strengthening cooperative federalism.

Addressing an event, he said that India has set the tone for global collaboration to deal with the pandemic under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Singh said that extraordinary foreign outreach of the prime minister the last six years has greatly helped in forging such an international coalition against the pandemic.

He was speaking after inaugurating an international workshop on "COVID-19 -- good governance practices in a pandemic", jointly organised by Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), Ministry of External Affairs, National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, said that team



work, compassion and statesmanship have defined India's governance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and it withstood the governance challenge with a robust digital framework.

He said that it was Prime Minister Modi who gave a wake-up call to the world to fight this challenge by implementing an early nationwide lockdown despite a few cases of infection in India.

Singh said that the foresight and vision of the prime minister helped India to fight the pandemic in an effective manner and the same was emulated by many other countries.

Dwelling on the theme of mutual international coop-

eration, the minister said that Modi was not only instrumental in creating a COVID-19 emergency fund with a commitment of USD 10 million, but also addressed the pandemic issue at SAARC, NAM, G-20 and other platforms, besides engaging with the heads of government and states on individual basis, according to an official statement.

Singh said that a package of over Rs 20 lakh crore under Atmanirbhar Bharat announced by the prime minister is around 10 per cent of India's GDP and was one of the highest in the world to overcome the challenges of the pandemic, it said. **AGENCIES**

New investment scheme for manmade fibre segment

NEW DELHI: The government is set to launch the Focused Product Investment Scheme to attract funding in the manmade fibre segment, in an effort to boost India's share in the global textiles market, a top official said on Thursday.

Speaking at the Invest India Exclusive Investment Forum (Japan Edition) through video conferencing, Textile Secretary Ravi Capoor said the proposed scheme aims to promote both greenfield as well as brownfield investments in the manmade fibre segment.

Under greenfield investment, a company builds its new facilities, whereas brownfield funding takes place when a firm purchases or leases an existing facility.

The Centre is in the advanced stage of finalising setting up of integrated mega textiles parks, which are proposed to be established near ports in the country, Capoor said. Efforts are also underway to position India as one of the major producers of technical textile as the country's share is poor in the World's USD 250-billion market



involving the segment, the textile secretary said.

Technical textiles include textiles made for automotive applications, medical textiles, geotextiles, agrotiles, and protective clothing, among others. Capoor also said the textile ministry wants to set up at least two textiles machinery manufacturing parks in the country and is looking forward to a major investment from Japan in the segment.

The manmade fibre segment comprises 70 per cent of the global textiles trade. The size of India's textiles industry is close to USD 150 billion, of which USD 40 billion is exported. The textiles sector is the largest employer in the country after agriculture, with a direct and indirect manpower of nearly 10 crore. **AGENCIES**

Exclusive R&D policy set for pharma

HYDERABAD: Observing that scientists who achieve breakthrough innovations should also be rewarded, Secretary of Department of Pharmaceuticals, PD Vaghela on Wednesday said the Centre will soon come up with an exclusive policy for Research and Development in the sector. Vaghela said the government is planning to set up three National Centres of Excellences (CoE) for drugs, medical devices in the country while the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) here will house one CoE for drug discovery. "We should be ready that our scientists also become millionaires. If they (scientists) can invent

good products and do some research, why not? That is happening in Europe and the US. Why not in India? Even if a scientist in a government institute invent something good and it is converted into a commercial product, we should reward him," Vaghela said. He was speaking at the 77th Foundation day of CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology here through video conference. "We are working (on the R&D policy). Our R&D policy is more on this... so our department has taken the initiative through industry academia interaction for framing this policy and we are likely to finalise it shortly," the official said. According to Vaghela, Indi-

an pharmaceutical industry is the third largest in the world by volume and 14th in terms of value even as it contributes 3.5 per cent of the total medicines exported globally. The total size of pharma and related industry including medical devices in the country was at USD 51 billion in 2019-20, of which 75 per cent is contributed by pharmaceutical products alone, he said. Noting that India faces three challenges in the pharma and medical devices sectors, the official said 86 per cent of the total requirement of medical devices including surgical, cardiac stents and electronic gadgets are currently being imported due to cost advantage. **AGENCIES**

Japanese industrial township in Assam soon

NEW DELHI: India is planning to set up the 13th Japanese industrial township in Assam, a move aimed at promoting domestic manufacturing and strengthening economic ties between the two countries, a top government official said on Thursday.

Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) Gurusprasad Mohapatra said they are working on a Geographic Information System-enabled data base of industrial areas and clusters across the country.

"In terms of infrastructure, India has 12 Japanese industrial townships across nine states, a 13th is being

planned in Assam. These are integrated industrial parks with ready to move in infrastructure facilities, with world-class infrastructure, plug and play factories, pre-approved licences and investment incentives exclusively for Japanese companies," he said. The secretary was speaking at the Invest India Exclusive Investment Forum - Japan Edition, through video conference.

He also said a fast track system is being worked out with the objective to identify and solve problems faced by Japanese companies and investors with their operations in India in an effective and time bound manner.



India, Mohapatra said, is removing regulatory compliances like zero liquid discharge to encourage investments in sectors like semiconductors.

"In this regard, we are holding a high level meeting on August 13 to review and discuss the way forward on India's zero level discharge policy,"

he added.

The secretary hoped that by April 2021, an investment clearance cell to provide facilitation and support to business on one stop digital platform would be launched.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech proposed to set up an investment clearance cell for entrepreneurs to provide pre-investment advisory, information related to land banks and facilitate clearances.

Speaking at the event, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said both the nations are looking to have trusted partners from authentic investors. **AGENCIES**

New scheme to assist street vendors who don't have I-cards

NEW DELHI: Street vendors, who don't have identity cards or certificate of vending, will now be able to avail benefits under the PM SVANidhi scheme as the Centre on Friday launched the 'Letter of Recommendation module' through which they can get loans of up to Rs 10,000. According to a statement, Union Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra launched the facility and said an eligible vendor can request for a Letter of Recommendation (LoR) with an urban local body.

Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme, vendors can avail a working capital loan of up to Rs 10,000 which is repayable in monthly instalments in the tenure of one year. Mishra said after getting the LoR, a vendor can apply for the loan under the scheme.

According to the ministry, the LoR module is designed to give access to street vendors who do not have identity cards and certificates of vending and are not in the surveyed list for availing benefits under the scheme. PM SVANidhi

was launched by the HUA Ministry on June 1 for providing affordable working capital loan to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been adversely affected due to the pandemic-induced lockdown.

According to the statement, to apply for the LoR from the urban local body through online module on the PM SVANidhi portal, a vendor needs to possess any one of these documents — proof of availing one-time assistance provided by certain states during the period of lockdown, membership details with



the vendors' associations, or any other documents to

prove that he is a vendor. "Also, a vendor can also

'A vendor can request ULB (urban local body) through a simple application on white paper to conduct local enquiry to ascertain the genuineness of the claim as vendor. ULBs will have to dispose of the request for issue of LoR within a period of 15 days'

request ULB (urban local body) through a simple application on white paper to conduct local enquiry to ascertain the genuineness of the claim as vendor. ULBs will have to dispose of the request for issue of LoR within a period of 15

days," HUA said in the statement.

It stated that the vendors possessing LoR will be issued certificate of vending or identity card within a period of 30 days, adding that this provision will help in extending

reach of the scheme to the maximum number of beneficiaries.

It also stated that since commencement of online submission of loan applications on PM SVANidhi portal on July 2, more than 4.45 lakh applications have been received and over 82,000 have been sanctioned in different states and union territories. This scheme targets to benefit over 50 lakh street vendors who had been vending on or before March 24 this year in urban areas, including those from surrounding peri-urban/ rural areas. **AGENCIES**

ALSO READ | AMBITIOUS PLAN SET FOR FIFA WORLD CUP * P10 | DELHI MAY SEE TWO TEAMS IN NEXT I-LEAGUE * P10

NEWSBRIEF

Rothschild expects to close more deals in second half

NEW DELHI: Even as there is no end in sight for the coronavirus pandemic, which scuppered deal-making activities in the first half of the year, global investment bank Rothschild & Co is bullish on India deal street as it's already working on a pipeline of deals worth billions of dollars. Domestic deal activity managed to remain in the green during the first half, thanks to the unprecedented stake sale by Reliance Industries in Jio Platforms, between April and June, worth nearly USD 15 billion (about Rs 1.12 lakh crore) through 11 deals. This helped the overall deal making grow 14.5 per cent to USD 43.8 billion (about Rs 3.28 lakh crore) in the first half of 2020, according to numbers collated by Mergermarkets.

AGENCIES

Sebi's subsidiary may supervise investment advisers

NEW DELHI: Amid growing number of registered investment advisers, markets regulator Sebi on Thursday said a wholly-owned subsidiary of a stock exchange can administer and supervise such advisers. Besides, the regulator put in place the criteria for grant of recognition to a stock exchange's subsidiary and its responsibilities. "Considering the growing number of registered Investment Advisers (IAs)...it is decided to recognize a wholly-owned subsidiary of the stock exchange (stock exchange subsidiary) to administer and supervise IAs registered with Sebi," the regulator said in a circular. Under IA Regulations, Sebi can recognise any body or body corporate for the purpose of regulating IAs. AGENCIES

Sensex, Nifty end flat on muted global cues

MUMBAI: Domestic equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty ended flat on Friday as muted cues from global markets and spiking COVID-19 cases in the country kept investors on the edge. After touching a low of 37,787.38 during the day, the BSE Sensex settled just 15.12 points or 0.04% higher at 38,040.57. Similarly, the NSE Nifty rose 13.90 points or 0.12% to finish at 11,214.05. Asian Paints was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring over 4%, followed by Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank and Maruti. On the other hand, Titan, HCL Tech, Infosys, Sun Pharma and M&M were among the laggards. AGENCIES

IFSC guidelines revised

ELIGIBILITY, SHAREHOLDING LIMIT FOR CLEARING CORP REVISED AT INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRE

NEW DELHI: Markets regulator Sebi on Friday amended international financial services centre (IFSC) guidelines pertaining to eligibility criteria and shareholding limit for clearing corporations that wish to operate in such centres.

The decision, aimed at streamlining the operations of IFSC, has been taken after consultation with stakeholders, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

Under the norms, any Indian recognised stock exchange or clearing corporation, or any recognised stock exchange or clearing corporation of a foreign jurisdiction, will form a subsidiary to provide the services of clearing corporation in IFSC wherein at least 51 per cent stake is held by such exchange or clearing corporation, Sebi said.

The remaining share capital may be acquired or held by any other person, whether Indian or of foreign jurisdiction. Besides, such person will not at any time, directly or



"Any other stock exchange, depository, bank, insurance company of Indian or foreign jurisdiction have been allowed to acquire 15 per cent stake in such clearing corporation operating in an IFSC"

indirectly, either individually or together with persons acting in concert, acquire or hold more than 5 per cent stake in a clearing corporation in IFSC, subject to applicable laws.

Sebi further said any other stock exchange, depository, bank, insurance company of Indian or foreign jurisdiction have been allowed to acquire 15 per cent stake in such clear-

ing corporation operating in an IFSC.

Among others, public financial institutions of Indian jurisdiction, foreign commodity derivatives exchange and bilateral or multilateral financial institutions approved by the central government "may acquire or hold, either directly or indirectly, either individually or together with persons acting in concert, up to 15 per cent of the paid up equity share capital of a such clearing corporation with prior approval of the board."

To give effect to this, Sebi has amended IFSC guidelines. Last month, the regulator had revised eligibility criteria and shareholding limit for stock exchanges desirous of operating in IFSC. The country's only IFSC is in GIFT City near Ahmedabad in Gujarat.

Sebi has also amended disclosure norms pertaining to intimation of record date to stock exchanges.

Under the norms, listed companies will intimate the record date for corporate events, including dividend

declaration, bonus share and rights issue, to stock exchanges. A company is required to inform all stock exchanges where it is listed or where stock derivatives are available on its stock or where its stock form part of an index on which derivatives are available.

The record date is for the purpose of declaration of dividend; issue of right or bonus shares; issue of shares for conversion of debentures or any other convertible security; shares arising out of rights attached to debentures or any other convertible security and corporate actions like mergers, de-mergers, splits and bonus shares. To give effect to this, Sebi has amended LODR (Listing and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, the regulator said in a notification on Wednesday. Record date, in market parlance refers to a particular date fixed by issuing company when an investor must own shares to be eligible to receive corporate dividends or bonus shares among others. AGENCIES

Emami posts Q1 net profit of ₹26.95 cr



NEW DELHI: FMCG firm Emami reported a net consolidated net profit of Rs 26.95 crore for the first quarter ended on June 30, 2018 led by growth in revenue and volume. The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 0.89 crore during the April-June period a-year ago, the company said in a BSE filing.

According to a PTI report: Emami's total income stood at Rs 616.34 crore during the quarter under review. It was at Rs 545.62 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal.

"We started the year FY19 with 19 per cent growth in the first quarter. Both volume and revenue registered a handsome recovery compared to the GST impacted corresponding quarter of last year,"

Mohan Goenka, Director, Emami was quoted by PTI as saying.

Meanwhile, Emami said that its revenue for the quarter under review were not comparable due to implementation of GST.

"Reported revenue in Q1FY19 is not comparable with Q1FY18 due to changes in accounting treatment of indirect taxes post the implementation of GST from July 1, 2017," the company said.

Total expenses of the Kolkata-based firm was at Rs 490.86 crore.

Emami, in a statement, said its domestic business grew by 21 percent with major brands like Navratna, Pain Management Range, 7 Oils in One, Male Grooming range and Healthcare posting strong volume-led growth. AGENCIES

TCPL profit up 82% at ₹346cr

NEW DELHI: Tata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) on Tuesday reported 81.78 percent rise in net profit at Rs 345.55 crore for June quarter helped by increase in demand in some categories.

According to a PTI report: The company posted a net profit of Rs 190.09 crore in April-June a year ago, said TCPL, earlier known as Tata Global Beverages Ltd, in a BSE filing.

Revenue from operations was up 13.44 percent to Rs 2,713.91 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 2,392.36 crore in the corresponding period of the last fiscal.

For the quarter, revenue from operations is higher by 13 percent as compared to corresponding quarter of the previous year led by volume and value growth in branded businesses both in India and international market, TCPL said in an earning statement.

The company has acquired 50 percent stake of PepsiCo India in NourishCo Beverages Ltd, making it a wholly-owned subsidiary with effect from May 18, 2020 and hence TCPL has shown a gain of Rs 84 crore.

Exceptional item for the current quarter represents gain of Rs 84 crore on conversion of a joint venture into a subsidiary and costs



relating to the business integration of foods business Rs 21 crore, it said.

Its total expenses were at Rs 2,310.44 crore as against Rs 2,117.69 crore, up 9.10 percent.

We have recorded good revenue and profit growth in Q1 due to increased demand in some categories, strong marketing campaigns and adopting new routes to reach the end consumer effectively, Sunil D'Souza, Managing Director & CEO, TCPL said.

The integration of our foods and beverages businesses in India is progressing well and will unlock significant synergy benefits, he said.

Birlasoft profit rises 35% to Rs 56 crore

NEW DELHI: Birlasoft, a part of the USD 2 billion diversified C K Birla Group, on Wednesday reported nearly 35 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 56.3 crore for the June 2020 quarter.

The company posted a profit of Rs 41.8 crore for April-June 2019, Birlasoft said in a regulatory filing.

Revenue from operations grew 17.7 per cent to Rs 914.6 crore in the period under review from Rs 777.2 crore in the year-ago period.

"Our Q1 results were better than what we had expected at

the beginning of this pandemic quarter. Our healthy deal wins of USD 179.7 million and good pipeline across verticals and horizontals, coupled with strong cash collections is a testimony to the trust shown in us," Birlasoft Managing Director and CEO Dharmender Kapoor said.

He said one of the major reasons for the rise in net profit was the drop in other income. "Our other income has gone



down because we moved our cash and money onto more safer instruments and because of that the impact is coming up," Kapoor added.

Kapoor said he was cautiously optimistic as there is still a lot of uncertainty amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Clients aren't back in offices and are working from home and this uncertainty will probably remain for this quarter as well...But it is clear that the worst is behind us because the kind of wins we had this quarter. This was probably the second best quarter for us in the last six quarters, which is very encouraging," he said.

The company signed deals worth USD 179.7 million in total contract value (TCV) during the quarter.

In dollar terms, the company's net profit grew 24.3 per cent to USD 7.5 million, while revenue was up 8.5 per cent to USD 121.2 million in June 2020 quarter from the year-ago period. AGENCIES

HCL Infosystems Q1 loss narrows

NEW DELHI: IT firm HCL Infosystems on Thursday reported narrowing of its loss to Rs 36.86 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2020.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 39.97 crore in the year-ago period, HCL Infosystems said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations decreased to Rs 105.69 crore in the quarter under review from Rs 576.96 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

The parent company's management is pursuing strategies including scale down of loss-making businesses, sale of certain non-core properties and reduction in outstanding debts, it said.

Distribution business revenue in the June 2020 quarter was about Rs 70 crore, while that from system integration and solutions business stood at about Rs 36 crore. "During the

quarter, we continued to focus on initiatives to reduce the company's debt and business losses by optimising our businesses.

"Accordingly, we have been scaling down our Consumer and Enterprise Distribution businesses, which has resulted in the decline in revenues in the quarter," HCL Infosystems Chairman Nikhil Sinha said.

The board of directors has approved the merger of HCL Learning Ltd and Digilife Distribution and Marketing Services Ltd (DDMS), wholly-owned subsidiaries of the company, with HCL Infosystems.

"The proposed merger is for the purpose of simplifying the group structure. As part of the ongoing rationalisation of the business, the learning business and the distribution business are being scaled down," it said. AGENCIES

Ajay Tyagi gets extension as SEBI chief

NEW DELHI: Ajay Tyagi was on Wednesday given an 18-month extension, till February 2022, as the chairman of markets regulator SEBI, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved extension of Tyagi's term for 18 months, with effect from September 1 2020 up to February 28, 2020, it said. Tyagi, a 1984 batch IAS (retired) officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre, was appointed as the SEBI chairman in March 2017 for three years.

He was in March this year given a six-month extension till August. In another development, Sebi has again extended the deadline to apply for 147 senior level posts by three months till October 31 due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. On March 7, the



regulator had invited applications for these positions as part of its plan to beef up the headcount for faster and more effective execution of its job.

The deadline for applying for the said posts was March 23. It was later extended to April 30, thereafter till May 31 and again till July 31.

engineering, research and official language streams) will be informed in due course, it added. The phase I and phase II examinations were earlier scheduled for July 4 and August 3, respectively.

A total of 147 vacancies were notified for Officer Grade A (Assistant Manager) by the markets watchdog to hire legal as well as IT experts, researchers, and other officials for general administration. Applications were invited for 80 posts of Assistant Manager for general stream, 34 posts for research stream and 22 vacancies for Information Technology department.

In addition, it invited applications for engineering and official language streams. To apply for general stream, the incumbent needs to have a master's degree in any discipline or bachelor's degree in law or engineering. AGENCIES

Sebi plans to set up virtual museum of securities market

THE MUSEUM WILL PROVIDE THE BEST IN CLASS ENGAGEMENT WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY, DISPENSING THE KNOWLEDGE AND CONTENT OF SECURITIES MARKET IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: Regulator Sebi is planning to set up a virtual museum of securities market to highlight achievements and milestones in the Indian capital market. In a notice, Sebi has invited Expression of Interest (EoI) from agencies to develop the virtual museum.

The museum is intended to be a visual online organised collection of history of evolution, achievements and milestones in the Indian securities market over the decades in terms of market infrastructure, regulation and enforcement, among others, Sebi said.

The achievements will be

told through photos, videos, articles, media clippings, interactive display like quiz, paintings, drawings, diagrams, graphs, newspaper articles, transcripts of interviews and numerical databases, among others.

Information pertaining to history of securities laws as well as establishment of stock exchanges in India and history of institutions important to securities market, including UTI and Forward Market Commission (FMC), would be used as content for the proposed museum, it said.

In addition, trading prac-



tices, rules, regulations prior to and after establishment of

Sebi or FMC, commodity trading during period of various

dynasties' rulers and landmark judgements for securities market, among others, would be exhibited in the museum.

Besides, information related to developments on account of events such as world war, independence of India and economic liberalisation would be exhibited through audio/video/images/articles/art works on the virtual museum.

Sebi said the proposed museum should become a unique resource for knowledge of Indian securities market—a must visit place for any student, researcher, investor and market

participant having interest in securities market.

"The museum would provide the best in class engagement with the latest technology, dispensing the knowledge and content of securities market in India," the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said. It will have its own digital platform and website for online visitors in order to provide them maximum possible experience and interest like in physical museum.

The virtual museum will engage the audience with creative content through various means like video, audio, chat

bot, voice assistants, virtual reality, analytics, interactive and animated elements.

Latest technologies—analytics, virtual reality or augmented reality, artificial intelligence and machine to machine communication—would be used to provide best possible showcase and experience.

Apart from English, the online platform should be able to develop and deliver content in Hindi and other Indian languages. Interested agencies are required to send their applications to the capital markets watchdog by August 24. AGENCIES

ALSO READ | NEW PRODUCTS OUT TO FIGHT COVID-19 * P11 | BSNL 2G MOBILE SERVICES REACH VIJAYNAGAR CIRCLE OF ARUNACHAL * P11

NEWSBRIEF

Mountain lovers wed above the clouds

HALGURD MOUNTAIN: Avid mountaineers Salar and Soma met while trekking in Iraqi Kurdistan, so it was only natural they would get married amid its majestic peaks, some 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) above sea level. After a ceremony above the clouds, they spent their wedding night in a tent then embarked on a honeymoon ascent of Mount Halgurd, Iraq's second highest mountain at 3,607 metres. Salar Chomany, 34, has traversed the remote region's dramatic ridges and valleys for 12 years and turned his passion into his profession, working as a guide for energy companies exploring the region near the Iranian border. **AGENCIES**

Mauritius declares emergency as ship spills fuel

JOHANNESBURG: The Indian Ocean island of Mauritius declared a "state of environmental emergency" late Friday after a Japanese-owned ship that ran aground offshore days ago began spilling tons of fuel. Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth announced the development as satellite images showed a dark slick spreading in the turquoise waters near environmental areas that the government called "very sensitive." **AGENCIES**

Kabul may free 400 Taliban prisoners

KABUL: A traditional council met on Friday in Afghanistan's capital to decide whether to release a final 400 Taliban prisoners, the last hurdle to starting negotiations between Kabul's political leadership and the Taliban under a peace deal with the U.S. The negotiations are a critical step toward lasting peace in Afghanistan. The talks will decide what a peaceful Afghanistan might look like, what constitutional changes will be made, how the rights of women and minorities will be protected and the fate of the tens of thousands of heavily armed men on both sides of the conflict. **AGENCIES**

Biggest blast in Beirut's history

LEBANESE AUTHORITIES INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY OF 'EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE' IN PORT BLAST

BEIRUT: Lebanon's President said on Friday its investigation into the biggest blast in Beirut's history would examine whether it was caused by a bomb or other external interference, as residents sought to rebuild shattered homes and lives.

Rescuers sifted rubble in a race to find anyone still alive after Tuesday's port explosion that killed 154 people, injured 5,000, destroyed a swathe of the Mediterranean city and sent seismic shockwaves around the region.

"The cause has not been determined yet. There is a possibility of external interference through a rocket or bomb or other act," President Michel Aoun told local media.

Aoun, who had previously said explosive material was stored unsafely for years at the port, said the investigation would also weigh if the blast was due to negligence or an accident. Twenty people had been detained so far, he added. One source said an initial probe blamed negligence.

While the United States has said it did not rule out an attack, Israel, which has fought



several wars with Lebanon, has denied any role. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said the cause was unclear, but compared the blast to a 2005 bombing that killed former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri.

Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon's powerful Shi'ite group Hezbollah, denied what he said were "pre-conceived" comments both domestically and abroad that

the Iran-backed group had arms stored at the port.

He called for a fair investigation and strict accountability for anyone responsible without any political cover.

"Even if a plane struck, or if it was an intentional act, if it turns out this nitrate had been at the port for years in this way, it means part of the case is absolutely negligence and corruption," he said.

At Beirut's Mohammad Al-

Amin mosque, next to Hariri's grave, chief cleric Amin Al Kurdi told worshippers in a Friday sermon that Lebanese leaders bore responsibility.

"Who is the criminal, who is the killer behind the Beirut explosion?" he said. "Only God can protect, not the corrupt ... The army only protects the leaders." Security forces fired tear gas at a crowd in Beirut on Thursday, as anger boiled over at the ruling

elite, who have presided over an economic collapse. The small crowd, some hurling stones, marked a return to the kind of protests that had become a feature of life as Lebanese watched their savings evaporate and currency disintegrate, while government decision-making floundered. "There is no way we can rebuild this house. Where is the state?" said Tony Abdou, an unemployed 60-year-old.

His family home is in Gemmayze, a district a few hundred metres from the warehouses where 2,750 tonnes of ammonium nitrate were stored for years near a densely populated area. A security source and local media previously said the fire that caused the blast was ignited by welding work.

Volunteers swept up debris from the streets of Beirut, which still bears scars from a 1975-1990 civil war. "Do we actually have a government here?" said taxi driver Nassim Abiaad, 66, whose cab was crushed by wreckage as he was about to get in. "There is no way to make money anymore." **AGENCIES**

Hostage taker surrenders outside French bank



LE HAVRE: A gunman who took six people hostage in a bank in northern France on Thursday surrendered to elite police after a six-hour operation to free his captives.

The hostage-taker, a 34-year-old with a history of mental illness, emerged slowly from the building wearing a balaclava and with his hands turned palms-up, before officers with their weapons raised moved in and handcuffed him.

All the hostages were unharmed, though in shock, said Denis Jacob of the Alternative police trade union.

Bomb squad officers acted after the man told officers there were explosives in a bag. He had been armed with a handgun, a national police representative told Reuters.

The man initially took six people hostage. Five were subsequently released and the sixth taken to safety after the man was arrested, according to Mr. Jacob.

The hostage-taker was believed to have Islamist sympathies, two police union officials said, but there was no official confirmation of this.

Militant attacks have shaken France in recent years, with four police officers killed in an October 2019 knife rampage in Paris and 130 people killed by coordinated bombings and shootings in the capital in November 2015.

Yves Lefebvre, head of another police union, SGP

"We know that he has been radicalised and suffers a serious psychiatric illness. Another source, a senior police official, said that during the incident the man spoke in support of the Palestinian cause"

Unit, said the hostage-taker in Le Havre, a town of around 170,000 people on the English Channel, was known to law enforcement authorities and on a security service watch list.

"We know that he has been radicalised and suffers a serious psychiatric illness," he said. Another source, a senior police official, said that during the incident the man spoke in support of the Palestinian cause. He walked out of the bank with what appeared to be a green-coloured flag draped around his shoulders.

Police had cordoned off the area around the bank on Boulevard de Strasbourg, a wide thoroughfare in the centre of Le Havre. When the fifth hostage was freed, a man in a pink shirt could be seen in Reuters television footage being led away from the bank by a police officer in full protective gear. **AGENCIES**

Pak Parliament okays FATF-related bill

THE TALKS STARTED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, CONTINUED ALMOST THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT AND LASTED TILL A DELAYED START OF THE JOINT SITTING ON THURSDAY EVENING.



ISLAMABAD: Amidst vociferous protests from Pakistan's religious parties, the Parliament has approved a third Bill related to the tough conditions set by the global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog FATF.

The legislation is part of the efforts by Pakistan to move from the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list to the white list. The FATF put Pakistan on

the grey list in June 2018 and asked Islamabad to implement a plan of action by the end of 2019 but the deadline was extended later due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The Mutual Legal Assistance (Criminal Matter) Bill, 2020 — which calls for exchange of information and

criminals with countries — was passed late Thursday evening in a joint sitting of Parliament after a hectic two-day consultation with the two major Opposition parties — Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The Bill was passed after

the government agreed to include over two dozen Opposition-proposed amendments with a majority vote amidst noisy protest by the religious and nationalist parties, the Dawn News reported.

The draft legislation was approved in the presence of Opposition Leader and PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif and PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. The talks started on Wednesday evening, continued almost throughout the night and lasted till a delayed start of the joint sitting on Thursday evening.

As soon as Interior Minister retired Brig Ijaz Shah moved the motion to take up the Bill for consideration, members belonging to Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkmAP), National Party and independent members

from the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas stood up and started raising slogans against it. The House witnessed unruly scenes as the government and opposition exchanged barbs soon after the Bill was passed, accusing each other of corruption.

The Senate chairman was forced to abruptly prorogue the session after both the treasury and the opposition members refused to follow his directives to maintain decorum of the House, the Dawn reported. The draft legislation is the third FATF-related Bill passed by Pakistan Parliament.

The Senate on July 30 unanimously approved the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Amendment Bill, 2020, and the Anti-Terrorism Act Amendment Bill, 2020. **AGENCIES**

Mahathir forms party in fightback attempt

PUTRAJAYA: Two-time former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced on Friday that he is forming a new ethnic Malay party more than two months after he was sacked from his previous party during a political struggle with his successor.

Mahathir, 95, quit as Prime Minister in protest in late February after fellow party member Muhyiddin Yassin withdrew their Bersatu party from the ruling coalition, triggering its collapse less than two years after a historic victory in 2018 national polls.

Muhyiddin was sworn in as new Prime Minister in March with a new government supported by ex-Prime Minister Najib Razak's corruption-tainted party that was ousted in 2018.

Mahathir, who was sacked from Bersatu along with his son and three other senior members, said Muhyiddin had hijacked the party and helped revive what he called a kleptocratic government. He accused Muhyiddin of using money to buy support in Bersatu, causing it to stray from its goal of fighting graft. Mahathir said he believes many grassroots members are unhappy and still support him.

We feel that we must continue our fight and that is why we are forming a new party," Mahathir said at a news conference. He didn't reveal the name of the party but said its main agenda will be similar to Bersatu's original struggle to eradicate corruption and kleptocracy.

Mahathir said the new party will be independent and not align with the Opposition coalition led by Anwar Ibrahim, who was initially slated to succeed him in their previous government. **AGENCIES**



Africa's Covid-19 cases top 1 million

JOHANNESBURG: Africa's confirmed cases of COVID-19 have surpassed 1 million, a Reuters tally showed on Thursday, as the disease began to spread rapidly through a continent whose relative isolation has so far spared it the worst of the pandemic.

The continent recorded 1,003,056 cases, of which 21,983 have died and 676,395 recovered. South Africa — which is the world's fifth worst-hit nation and makes up more than half of sub-Saharan Africa's case load — has recorded 538,184 cases since its first case on March 5, the health ministry said on Thursday.

Low levels of testing in many countries mean Africa's infection rates are likely to be higher than reported, experts said. In South Africa, a study showed some 17,000 deaths above the normal rate, or a 60% excess, between early May and mid-July, suggesting more people are dying of COVID-19 than official figures reflect. South African mortuaries that are running out of space and cof-



ins have resorted to storing bodies in refrigerated shipping containers.

Already creaking public health services are overwhelmed and there are shortages of beds, protective gear and nurses. COVID-19 patients have sometimes had to be treated alongside others.

A nurse at a hospital in South Africa's biggest township of Soweto, who declined to be named because she was not authorised to speak to the media, said patients were sometimes left lying next to a corpse for hours because there weren't enough staff to remove it. More than a third of staff

caught the virus on duty.

South Africa's experiences are a precursor for what is likely to happen across the continent, the World Health Organization's top emergencies expert Mike Ryan warned last month. But few African nations have health services as advanced as South Africa's.

"The fact that South Africa is more connected than other African countries may have influenced the timing, but in the end it will reach — has reached — all African countries," said Cheryl Cohen, epidemiologist at the National Institute for Communicable Diseases. **AGENCIES**

Israel attacks Syria after squad tried to bomb border fence

JERUSALEM: Israeli aircraft attacked targets in Syria on Monday, the military said, describing the strikes as retaliation for an attempted bombing of the border fence by an enemy squad.

Tensions have risen along Israel's northern front since a fighter with the Iranian-backed Lebanese movement Hezbollah was killed in an apparent Israeli air strike in Syria two weeks ago. Monday's strikes hit Syrian observation posts, intelligence collection systems, anti-aircraft batteries and command-and-control bases, an Israeli military statement said. Syrian state media said Israeli helicopters fired at Syrian checkpoints in al-Qunaitra, on the Golan Heights, causing material losses. There was no immediate word of any casualties.

The Israeli military said it was responding to an attempt by a group of four people to plant explosives on a patrolled



fence along the Golan armistice line between Israel and Syria. An Israeli military armoured personnel carrier (APC) manoeuvres near a sign in the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights near the Israel-Syria frontier August 3, 2020.

In that incident, reported by Israel early on Monday, the military fired on the squad. Surveillance video showed the group engulfed in an explosion. An Israeli military spokesman referred to them as "former terrorists," suggesting they

had been killed. The military spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Conricus, said it was too soon to say if the squad belonged to any organization, but that Israel held "the Syrian regime accountable". There was no comment from Syria on the fence incident.

The overnight encounter occurred at the same spot where until two years ago, Israel had operated a field hospital to treat Syrians who had been wounded in the Syrian civil war, Conricus told reporters. **AGENCIES**

Canada's last fully intact Arctic ice shelf collapses

TORONTO: The last fully intact ice shelf in the Canadian Arctic has collapsed, losing more than 40% of its area in just two days at the end of July, researchers said on Thursday.

The Milne Ice Shelf is at the fringe of Ellesmere Island, in the sparsely populated northern Canadian territory of Nunavut. "Above normal air temperatures, offshore winds and open water in front of the ice shelf are all part of the recipe for ice shelf break up," the Canadian Ice Service said on Twitter when it announced the loss on Sunday. "Entire cities are that size.

These are big pieces of ice," said Luke Copland, a glaciologist at the University of Ottawa who was part of the research team studying the Milne Ice Shelf.

The shelf's area shrank by about 80 square kilometers. By comparison, the island of Manhattan in New York covers roughly 60 square kilometers. "This was the largest remaining intact ice shelf, and it's disintegrated, basically," Mr. Copland said.

The Arctic has been warming at twice the global rate for the last 30 years, due to a

process known as Arctic amplification. But this year, temperatures in the polar region have been intense. The polar sea ice hit its lowest extent for July in 40 years. Record heat and wildfires have scorched Siberian Russia.

Summer in the Canadian Arctic this year in particular has been 5 degrees Celsius above the 30-year average, Mr. Copland said.

That has threatened smaller ice caps, which can melt quickly because they do not have the bulk that larger glaciers have to stay cold. As a glacier disappears, more



"You feel like you're on a sinking island chasing these features, and these are large features. It's not as if it's a little tiny patch of ice you find in your garden"

bedrock is exposed, which then heats up and accelerates the melting process.

"The very small ones, we're losing them dramatically," he said, citing researchers' reviews of satellite imagery. "You feel like you're on a sinking island chasing these features, and these are large features. It's not as if it's a

little tiny patch of ice you find in your garden."

The ice shelf collapse on Ellesmere Island also meant the loss of the northern hemisphere's last known epishef lake, a geographic feature in which a body of freshwater is dammed by the ice shelf and floats atop ocean water. A research camp, including

instruments for measuring water flow through the ice shelf, was lost when the shelf collapsed. "It is lucky we were not on the ice shelf when this happened," said researcher Derek Mueller of Carleton University in Ottawa, in an Aug. 2 blog post.

Ellesmere also lost its two St. Patrick Bay ice caps this summer. "We saw them going, like someone with terminal cancer. It was only a matter of time," said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) in Boulder, Colorado. **AGENCIES**

ALSO READ | FALSELY IMPLICATED, RHEA CHAKRABORTY TELLS SC * P12 | ACTRESS KUMKUM DIES AT 86 * P12

NEWSBRIEF

60 plus Arun Lal can't coach Bengal

NEW DELHI: BCCI's Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for state associations bar 60-plus individuals from taking part in the training camp, potentially affecting Arun Lal and Australian Dav Whatmore, who are coaches of Bengal and Baroda respectively. Whatmore, 66, was appointed in April while Lal, 65, guided Bengal to the Ranji Trophy final in March. "Individuals who are over the age of 60 years, viz support staff, umpires, ground staff and those individuals with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, weakened immunity, should be considered vulnerable and are believed to have higher risk of severe COVID-19," read one of the guidelines from BCCI's 100-page SOP, which is in possession of PTI. **PTI**

'Young players should learn right techniques'

BENGALURU: Former India captain Bharat Chetri believes learning the right technique at an early age is the key to success and urged the youngsters to work on their basics in their growing up years. "As a former player, you understand how important it is to have the right technique to be able to be successful in this sport," said the former goalkeeper, who won a silver and a bronze at the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games respectively in 2010. "I was a Goalkeeper and it was really important for us to have learned the basics to excel." **AGENCIES**

'Finding new ways of engaging with fans key to success'

NEW DELHI: World Athletics Vice President Geoff Gardner on Saturday said finding new ways of presenting events while engaging with younger fans will play a critical role in the sport's success going ahead. Gardner was speaking on the concluding day of the two-day online seminar for announcers and event presentation managers in the modern era, conducted by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) jointly with South Asian Athletics Federation (SAAF), Oceania Athletics Association and Europe Athletics. "We have to acknowledge the steps taken to innovate in keeping with the changing demands of fans and spectators." **AGENCIES**

Gomathi appeals against doping ban

NEW DELHI: Indian athlete Gomathi Marimuthu has challenged the four-year ban handed to her for failing a dope test, at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Gomathi's gold medal at the 2019 Doha Asian championship in the 800m event had been taken away and she was banned for four years by the Athletics Integrity Unit after her 'B' sample also returned positive for anabolic steroid nandrolone. "An appeal has been filed with CAS as per procedures. We have appealed against the four-year ban and the fine of 1,000 British Pounds imposed on me," she told PTI. The Tamil Nadu athlete had tested positive for the anabolic steroid nandrolone at the 2019 Asian track championships in Qatar in April. **AGENCIES**

Ambitious plan for FIFA World Cup

SPORTS MINISTRY TO FORM FIVE ZONAL TALENT HUNT PANELS TO HUNT TALENT ACROSS THE COUNTRY

NEW DELHI: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju has said the government is riding on "mainstay" football to make India a sporting powerhouse and announced the formation of five zonal committees to hunt talent across the country.

Mr. Rijiju said the talent hunt initiative, to be funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Khelo India Programme in partnership with the All India Football Federation, will be the "most aggressive exercise" ever done. The committees will be formed in the next few months.

"We will form five talent scouting committees in the next few months, one for each zone — north, south, east, west and northeast — under Khelo India Programme of SAI in partnership with AIFF," Mr. Rijiju said during a virtual programme organised by Football Delhi to mark the 36th birthday of India captain Sunil Chhetri. "We cannot go with the usual approach, we have



to go deeper in a professional way. It will be the most aggressive exercise we had ever done. We have to find out talented children below 12 years from every nook and corner of the country whether it is north-east, the tribal areas of central India, coastal areas, south or north," he added.

He said the talent hunt exercise was conceptualised with an aim for India to be able to qualify for the World Cup and

the Olympics in the next 10-15 years. "We have to start now with children below 12 if we want to qualify for Olympics and World Cup in 10-15 years. I am confident that we can do this. In the government's plan to make India a sporting powerhouse, football will have to be the mainstay. It cannot be left behind, it's the world's most popular game.

"We will pick people who know football like the former

"We will form five talent scouting committees in the next few months, one for each zone — north, south, east, west and northeast — under Khelo India Programme of SAI in partnership with AIFF"

players. Of course, the AIFF will guide us. Moreover, this government effort will be over and above those whatever effort being already done and is done by the AIFF."

Mr. Rijiju said the ministry was also thinking about giving financial assistance to state governments and the federation to organise local leagues to give the platform for talent scouting at the grassroot — panchayat and municipality — level.

AIFF president Praful Patel, who also took part in the virtual programme, said a talent scouting programme which began before India hosted the FIFA U-17 World Cup in 2017, is still continuing but

welcomed the minister's plan for a "comprehensive" scheme. "A more aggressive and comprehensive programme right to the last village of the country with SAI's financial support is welcome. I am very happy to hear this from the minister," he said.

Mr. Patel also made a suggestion to Mr. Rijiju to make at least one SAI Centre in each zone a dominant football facility. "You may not make all SAI centres football facilities but one in each zone can be mainly football facility. You can have other sports also but that facility should have all aspects that football needs like training infrastructure, mental conditioning etc." **AGENCIES**

India to host 2021 ICC T20 World Cup



NEW DELHI: India on Friday retained the right to host the 2021 T20 World Cup while Australia will conduct this year's postponed edition in 2022, the ICC announced after its board meeting, straightening out a schedule that went topsy-turvy due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year's edition had to be postponed because of the raging pandemic, which has severely impacted all sports calendars globally.

"The International Cricket Council (ICC) today confirmed that the T20 World Cup 2020 that was postponed due to COVID-19 will be held in Australia in 2022. India will host the T20 World Cup 2021 as planned," the ICC stated in a press release. The global body also confirmed that next year's women's ODI World Cup in New Zealand has been postponed until February-March 2022 because of the impact the pandemic has had on cricket globally.

ICC Chief Executive Manu Sawhney said: "We now have absolute clarity on the future of ICC events enabling all of our Members to focus on the rescheduling of lost international and domestic cricket." "We will now proceed as planned with the Men's T20 World Cup 2021 in India and host the 2022 edition in Australia."

The format of the 2021 T20 World Cup will remain as it was for 2020 and all teams that qualified for that event will now participate in India in 2021. A new qualification process will be started for the 2022 edition in Australia.

That India will host the 2021 edition and Australian edition will be pushed to 2022 was reported by PTI on May 7.

"BCCI were never keen to host the 2022 event which would have meant that they had to host back to back ICC events including the 50-over World Cup in 2023. That wasn't a viable option," an ICC Board member told PTI on conditions of anonymity. However, it was a big setback for the women's game with the much-awaited World Cup being pushed by a year.

Sawhney said the decision would "give players from every competing nation, the best opportunity to be ready for the world's biggest stage and there is still a global qualifier to complete to decide the final three teams." **AGENCIES**

Odisha's HPC for hockey to induct 30 boys: Minister

BHUBANESWAR: The High Performance Centre (HPC) for hockey in Odisha is set to induct 30 boys in the coming months in its bid to take the sport to the elite level, state's Sports Minister Tushar Kanti Behera said on Friday.

It was decided following a promising start to the girls program at the Naval Tata Hockey Academy Odisha.

The HPC is an ambitious program to take hockey from its existing 10 grass-roots centres and three regional development centres (Bhubaneswar, Panposh and Sundergarh) to elite level over the next 3 to 5 years.

"We are seeing positive results in the girls program and are confident that the HPC will be able to provide similar focus and professional training to the boys too. They all are young, skilful and have a natural flair for hockey," Behera said. "We will evaluate the players individually at the HPC, and match their skills with appropriate training at the world-class facilities here in Bhubaneswar."

"Training early at a synthetic turf vis-a-vis grass pitches will benefit these



players immensely," the minister said.

The state's Department of Sports and Youth Services also plans to set up a number of synthetic turfs in identified locations at Sundergarh. "These are very constructive times for hockey in the state and for the youth of the state."

"Most of these young talents from Odisha are inspired by their heroes in the sport who hail from in and around their region, including hockey legend Dilip Tirkey, Lazarus Barla, Birendra Lakra, Amit Rohidas to name a few," Behera said. The HPC at the Naval Tata Hockey Academy Odisha was launched by Odisha government in partnership with Tata Steel and Tata Trusts. **AGENCIES**

Players to be tested every fifth day during IPL

NEW DELHI: Indian players and support staff will have to return negative for COVID-19 at least five times before they start training in the UAE and subsequently will be tested every fifth day during the IPL, according to a draft prepared by the BCCI.

A BCCI official told PTI that all Indian players and support staff will have to undergo two COVID-19 RT-PCR tests, 24 hours apart, a week before joining the 14-day quarantine period with their respective teams in India.

If any individual tests positive, he will go into a 14-day quarantine. After the quarantine, he will be required to undergo two more COVID-19 RT-PCR tests within a space of 24 hours and if they come negative, that person will be cleared to fly to UAE for the IPL beginning November 19.

Following their arrival in the UAE, the players and support staff will have to return at least three negative tests during a week's quarantine and if they are negative, they can enter the bio-bubble and start training.

"There could be minor changes to this protocol de-



"There could be minor changes to this protocol depending on the feedback from the teams but there will not be any compromise on players and team officials' safety"

pending on the feedback from the teams but there will not be any compromise on players and team officials' safety," the official said.

During the first week in the UAE, the players and team officials will not be allowed to meet each other in the hotel and they can only do so after they test negative thrice, following which they will be cleared to enter the tournament bio-bubble and

start training.

What happens to foreign players who fly in directly to the UAE? "All overseas players and support staff also need to undergo two COVID-19 RT-PCR tests before flying in to the UAE and can only fly if the tests are negative."

If not, then the same 14-day quarantine period and two negative tests to be able to fly to the UAE," said the official. **AGENCIES**

Women team not to take part in squash tilt

CHENNAI: India has pulled out of the Women's World Team Squash Championship scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from December 15 to 20 due to "lack of preparation time" and "uncertainties" about travelling amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

SRFI secretary general and former national coach Cyrus Poncha said the decision was taken after consulting with the top players.

"Due to uncertainties regarding guidelines for the safe travel of our athletes and staff for national & international tournaments (yet to be obtained from the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) & Sports Authority of India (SAI)), coupled with lack of preparation time and match readiness of athletes, and after consulting our top players, the SRFI has decided



to withdraw from the championship," he said in a press release.

The WSF and Squash Rackets Federation of India (SRFI) have been constantly monitoring the scenario arising out of the global health crisis.

Considering the August 15 deadline, the SRFI had requested the WSF for an extension for registration which was not given, the release said. **AGENCIES**

"The SRFI is also waiting for guidelines from the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) & Sports Authority of India (SAI) for international participation with top priority being safety and security of the players and staff for any international event," it said.

The coronavirus case count continues to rise in the country with Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai -- all major squash centres -- badly hit by the virus, making resumption of training difficult.

"As the situation develops and improves, SRFI in consultation with the Sports Ministry and SAI will take necessary steps for resuming sport in the country in compliance with the SOPs that would be brought out along with any further development required for squash," the governing body said. **AGENCIES**

Delhi may see two teams in next I-League

NEW DELHI: All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Praful Patel has said Delhi could see two I-League teams in the upcoming season.

AIFF recently invited bids from non-I-League cities, including Delhi, Ranchi, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bhopal, Lucknow and Ahmedabad, to take part in the 2020-21 season.

The previous season of the league saw 11 clubs, including AIFF's developmental outfit Indian Arrows, take part in the competition.

However, reigning champions Mohun Bagan have merged with ATK and will play in the Indian Super League (ISL) from the upcoming season.

"Clubs from Delhi will be a reality soon in Hero I-league and there may be two teams from Delhi. I am personally looking into this aspect and



no doubt Delhi football deserves a big focus being the capital city," Patel said during a programme organised by Football Delhi to mark the 36th birthday of India captain Sunil Chhetri.

He also highlighted the progress the AIFF has made over the last decade while emphasising on the need to "professionalise the sport".

"We have come a long way. Globally FIFA now acknowledges that Indian football has

"Clubs from Delhi will be a reality soon in Hero I-league and there may be two teams from Delhi. I am personally looking into this aspect and no doubt Delhi football deserves a big focus being the capital city"

to be supported and strengthened for the sport to grow in the region. FIFA and AFC have made it clear that football has to be commercially viable and it has to support the overall ecosystem around it," he said.

"That is why it is important to professionalise the sport. The Hero I-League was the first

step towards that. Now, the Hero ISL has taken it further and made more additions to Indian football," Patel added.

Chhetri said he received the "best birthday gift" when Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju announced the formation of five zonal committees to hunt talent across the country.

"I am really honoured to have my birthday celebrated as Delhi Football Day. It is like a dream, when you start playing, you never dream that your birthday will be made so special and for that I am really thankful to Football Delhi."

"Sports Minister Shri Kiren Rijiju making a commitment here to locate every football talent in India and if every talent is identified and nurtured well then half of the problem of Indian football is solved. It is the best birthday gift I can ask for," Chhetri said. **AGENCIES**

Wheelchair cricketers urge BCCI to acknowledge their efforts

NEW DELHI: Not all cricketers, who wear the India jersey, are privileged. Especially, if they are disabled players, waiting for the BCCI to take them under its wings.

India's wicket-keeper batsman Nirmal Singh Dhillon, who hails from Moga in Punjab, is making ends meet by selling milk while fast bowler Santosh Ranjagane repairs two-wheelers at a workshop in Kolhapur, Maharashtra.

Then there is batsman Poshan Dhruv, who works at a welding shop in a village in Raipur.

With Covid-19-forced lockdown shutting all businesses in March, he was forced to work as a farm labour for a meagre daily earning of Rs 150.

They are all proud India cricketers, having played a key role in national team's recent success but are struggling because they are yet to come under the BCCI.

As per the reforms mandated by the Supreme Court-appointed Lodha Committee, the BCCI was supposed to create a committee for the development of physically challenged cricketers in In-



"There has been no communication with regards to policy formation for disabled cricketers. Sourav Ganguly had promised help"

dia but the cricket board is yet to fulfil its constitutional obligation.

BCCI President Sourav Ganguly had also discussed the issue with the CEO of Wheelchair Cricket India Association some time back, according to Somjeet Singh, the captain of the Indian wheelchair team.

"There has been no communication with regards to policy formation for disabled cricketers. Sourav Ganguly had promised help. He did not have much idea about wheelchair cricket in India and he was surprised that we play at such a good level," Somjeet told PTI. The 24-year-old Somjeet,

himself a paraplegic (suffering complete paralysis of the lower half of the body due to damage to spinal cord), played a key role in forming, first the UP wheelchair cricket association and then the national association with Squadron Leader Abhai Pratap Singh, who was an ex-Air Force fighter pilot and on wheelchair himself.

The cricketers feel that the way BCCI lifted the profile of women's game in India, the parent body can help them too.

In the absence of a BCCI-recognised body, many associations have mushroomed at

the state level, forcing wheelchair cricketers to shell out money from their own pockets to pursue the sport.

"When we went to Nepal we were asked to pay Rs 15,000 for the trip. It really broke my heart. Then I got attached with the association with which captain Somjeet is involved. They are taking care of us since then," said Santosh, who is living of from some help provided by the Maharashtra government. He gets a pension of Rs 1000 from the state government and his father and brother help him by giving him grocery. **AGENCIES**

New products to fight Covid-19

WHILE GLENMARK UNVEILS HIGHER STRENGTH OF FABIFLU, LUPIN INTRODUCES FAVIPRAVIR IN THE COUNTRY

NEW DELHI: Drug firm Glenmark Pharmaceuticals on Thursday said it will launch a 400 mg version of oral antiviral drug FabiFlu for the treatment of mild and moderate COVID-19 in India. Currently, the drug is available in 200 mg dosage.

The company, however, did not disclose the price at which it will be selling the drug.

The higher strength will improve compliance for patients by effectively reducing the number of tablets required per day, Glenmark said in a statement.

With the new 400 mg version, patients will now have a more relaxed dosage regimen, with 9 tablets required on Day 1 (4.5 in the morning and 4.5 in the evening), and thereafter 2 tablets twice a day from Day 2 till the end of the course, it added.

Glenmark is the first com-

pany in India to have received regulator Drugs Controller General of India's approval for the 400 mg dosage form, the statement said.

"The 200 mg dosage of FabiFlu was developed in line with global formulations of the drug Favipiravir, which had similar strength. The 400 mg version is a result of Glenmark's own R&D (research and development) efforts to improve treatment experience for patients in India," said Monika Tandon, vice-president and head of clinical development, global specialty/branded portfolio at Glenmark Pharmaceuticals.

The company has also commenced a post-marketing surveillance study on FabiFlu to closely monitor the efficacy and safety of the drug in a large pool of patients prescribed with the oral antiviral Favipiravir, the statement said. Drug major Lu-



pin, meanwhile, has announced the launch of its Favipiravir drug under the brand name "Covihalt" for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 symptoms at Rs 49 per tablet in India.

Favipiravir has received authorisation from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use, Lupin said

in a regulatory filing. Its Covihalt dosage strength has been developed keeping in mind convenience of administration, it stated, adding that the drug is available as 200 mg tablets in the form of a strip of 10 tablets, and priced at Rs 49 per tablet.

Lupin President - India Region Formulations (IRF) Rajeev Sibal said the company believes that it can leverage its expertise in managing widespread community diseases like tuberculosis to proactively reach patients across India and ensure access to Covihalt through its strong distribution network and field force.

On August 4, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries had launched Favipiravir under the brand name "FluGuard" for the treatment of mild to moderate cases of COVID-19, at Rs 35 per tablet in India. FMCG major Marico on Thursday announced the launch of Protect range of surface disinfectant sprays, strengthening its portfolio into the fast-growing segment of safety and hygiene after COVID-19. Besides, Marico has also announced to partner with housing finance company HDFC and cab aggregator Ola

to help them continue to offer safe services. Ola will provide The Protect range to the driver-partners and it will be used by them to disinfect commonly used surfaces like seat, inner panel, handles, etc before every ride.

While HDFC will use it to safeguard their customers and employees in offices across India. Marico chief marketing officer Koshy George said, "During these difficult times, higher hygiene standards and enhanced cleanliness protocols are top priorities for consumers." "As much as people are apprehensive of stepping out, employers too, are concerned about the safety of their employees. We are thus happy to partner Ola and HDFC in their endeavour to provide employees, customers and driver-partners a safe and sanitised environment," he said. **AGENCIES**

Google to bring Pixel 4a to India in October



NEW DELHI: Tech giant Google on Monday said it will introduce its latest Pixel 4a smartphone in the Indian market in October this year.

The company will, however, not bring its new 5G-enabled Pixel 5 and Pixel 4a (5G) to India and Singapore markets. In October last year, Google had skipped the launch of Pixel 4 and 4XL in India. "Last year, Pixel 3a gave people a chance to get the helpful features of Pixel at a more affordable price. This year, Pixel 4a—which launches in India in October—will continue to bring features like the incredible camera and feature drops that make your phone better over time," Google said in a blogpost.

While pricing of the device will be announced closer to the launch, Google said it will be available at a "more affordable price". Google said the two new 5G Pixel phones (Pixel 4a (5G) and Pixel 5), coming this fall, will not be available in India or Singapore "based on a variety of factors including local market trends and product features". "We remain deeply committed to our current Pixel phones and look forward to bringing future Pixel devices to these countries," it added. In May last year, Google had introduced Pixel 3a and 3a XL in the country at Rs 39,999 onwards as part of its strategy to make available more affordable devices in its smartphone line up.

The Pixel 4 and 4XL introduced globally last year in October were priced USD 799 (about Rs 57,000) onwards. Pixel 4a (5G) and Pixel 5 will be available in the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Japan, Taiwan and Australia with prices starting at USD 499. The premium smartphone market (Rs 30,000 and above) in India, which is among the biggest smartphone markets globally, is witnessing strong growth and is dominated by players like OnePlus, Samsung and Apple. **PTI**

New Renault models drive into rural market

NEW DELHI: French automaker Renault aims to drive in new models and focus on sales initiatives, especially in rural areas, as it looks to strengthen its position in India, which continues to remain one of the top ten markets for it globally, according to a top company executive.

The company recently introduced automated manual transmission (AMT) trims for entry level Kwid and new entrant Triber, in addition to the manual transmission variants. The company is now gearing up to further bolster its product portfolio. "We will soon launch Duster with an all-new turbo engine (petrol), making it the most powerful SUV in its segment," Renault India Operations Country Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Venkatram Mamillapalle told PTI in an interview.

Furthermore, the company is readying an all-new product for India market, he added.

"True to our product strategy, Renault's new offering will be a disruptor that will cater to the evolving customer expectations, while establishing the expertise of India's design, technical and manufacturing prowess on the global map," Mamillapalle noted. India is one of the key markets



"We have some of the most popular global products in our portfolio, led by Kwid, which is one of the top cars for the group globally"

for Groupe Renault and has been part of the top ten global markets on a cumulative sales basis for the last few years.

"We have some of the most popular global products in our portfolio, led by Kwid, which is one of the top cars for the group globally," he added. Having introduced Triber recently and with Kwid still receiving a robust response, Renault saw its sales surge 75.5 per cent in July to 6,422

units as compared with 3,660 units in July 2019.

Robust response to AMT versions of Kwid and Triber have also helped the company shore up additional volumes. Elaborating on the company's mid-to-long term strategic plan to strengthen rural markets for growth, Mamillapalle said last year the company initiated an activity which targeted 330 rural towns across the country.

"This is a new avenue that we are aggressively pursuing with an innovative and comprehensive strategy. We have also initiated a special project - VISTAAR to amplify and grow our presence in rural India and our dealership teams have recruited specialised sales consultants to reach out to rural markets," he added. **AGENCIES**

Dedicated 24x7 TV channel for Assam

NEW DELHI: A 24-hour Doordarshan channel dedicated to Assam was launched by Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar on Tuesday, who called it a "gift to the people of the state".

Doordarshan Assam is part of a never-before focus on Northeast under the current government, a statement from the ministry said.

Highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of turning Northeast into

India's growth engine, Javadekar said that the region has immense natural and human resource potential, and the connectivity has been improving steadily.

"The channel is a gift to the people of Assam and it will cater to all sections of the population of Assam and will be immensely popular," Javadekar said via a video conference.

Javadekar said that it is important that all states have their own Doordarshan chan-

nel. The channels of other states are available on DD Free Dish, he said.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who joined the video conference from Assam, called it a significant day for the people of the state. Sonowal said the channel will "boost the growth of Assam in all spheres of human activities, while at the same time help percolate the initiatives and programmes of the government to grassroots." **AGENCIES**

Amazon India launches warehouse in Ludhiana

NEW DELHI: With just days to go before its 'Prime Day' sale, Amazon India has announced the expansion of its warehouse network with the launch of a new specialised fulfilment center (FC) for large appliances and furniture in Ludhiana, Punjab.

The new warehouse has a storage capacity of nearly 3 lakh cubic feet and is located in Doraha, Ludhiana, the company said in a statement. With the new launch, Amazon India will have two warehouses with more than 4.5 lakh cubic feet of storage space in Ludhiana, Punjab, it added.

"The launch of the new spe-



cialised fulfilment center will allow Amazon.in to offer its fulfilment by Amazon (FBA) service to thousands of small

and medium businesses in the state and empower them to gain access to and service customers across the country," Amazon

India said. The latest move would also enable faster delivery of products to customers with a wider product selection this Prime Day on August 6-7, 2020, it stated.

Amazon India offers over 4,500 products in the large appliances category including air conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines and TVs from brands such as LG, Samsung, Whirlpool, Bosch, IFB and Haier. "During Prime Day 2020, members will have access to over 300 new product launches and thousands of deals on large appliances and furniture." **AGENCIES**

NEWSBRIEF

All-new version of Thar is ready

NEW DELHI: Automaker Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) on Wednesday said it will launch the new version of its SUV Thar on August 15. The all-new Thar will be a quantum leap in terms of technology, comfort and safety features compared to the previous generation without compromising on the vehicle's core promise -- off-road capability and its iconic design, M&M said in a statement. "This will not only attract the die-hard Thar enthusiasts, but also appeal to all those people who have always wanted to own an iconic vehicle with all the bells and whistles of a contemporary SUV," it added. **AGENCIES**

Limited sports edition of Fortuner SUV

NEW DELHI: Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) on Thursday launched a limited edition sporty version of its popular SUV Fortuner priced up to Rs 36.88 lakh (ex-showroom). TKM has leveraged the heritage of Toyota Racing Development (TRD) to bring a sporty appeal to limited edition Sporty New Fortuner TRD, the company said in a statement. The limited edition is available in both 4x2 and 4x4 automatic transmission (diesel) variants. Bookings are open from Thursday across the Toyota dealerships in the country, it added. While the 4x2 automatic transmission (AT) diesel variant is priced at Rs 34.98 lakh, the 4x4 (AT) diesel is tagged at Rs 36.88 lakh, the company said. **AGENCIES**

Audi India opens bookings for SUV RS Q8

NEW DELHI: German luxury car maker Audi on Thursday announced opening of bookings in India for its all-new sport utility vehicle (SUV) Audi RS Q8. The Audi RS Q8 can be booked with an initial amount of Rs 15 lakh, Audi India said in a statement. "Our fourth product launch for this year, the Audi RS Q8 is an epitome of performance and aggressive styling. With its twin-turbo V8 petrol engine, the Audi RS Q8 combines the power of an RS model with the elegance of a premium coupe and the flexibility of an SUV," Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon said in the statement. **AGENCIES**

IHCL unveils I-ZEST digital solutions

MUMBAI: Tata Group hospitality arm Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on Tuesday announced the launch of I-ZEST (Zero-Touch Service Transformation), a suite of digital solutions across its hotels under its brands -- Taj, Vivanta and SeleQtions.

I-ZEST's digital features will further ensure social distancing for both guests and associates, while maintaining secure and seamless services, IHCL said in a statement. The digital initiatives come on the back of the company's foray into food delivery service from its iconic restaurants via a dedicated mobile app. "Harnessing the power of digital has become even more crucial in times like this. We are leveraging technologies in a meaningful way to ensure minimal contact while offering the sincere care, warmth and guest-centric service that we are synonymous with, with the same zest and dedication as always," IHCL Senior Vice President and Head of Digital and IT Vinay Deshpande said. **AGENCIES**

Jubilant FoodWorks launches ready-to-cook sauces, pastes



NEW DELHI: Jubilant FoodWorks Ltd, which operates Domino's Pizza and Dunkin' Donuts outlets in India, on Thursday announced its entry in FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) segment with a range of ready-to-cook sauces, gravies and pastes.

Jubilant FoodWorks, through its new brand "Chef-

Boss", has launched a range of sauces and pastes, and will initially be exclusively available for consumers across e-commerce portals.

In a regulatory filing, Jubilant FoodWorks said it is entering "into the Rs 500 crore ready-to-cook segment with the launch of a new brand, "ChefBoss". The "ChefBoss"

range of sauces and pastes includes eight different products across two types of cuisines (Indian and Chinese)".

The company said online sale of products will shortly start with Amazon (National), Flipkart Supermart (NCR, Mumbai and Bengaluru) and Milkbasket (NCR). Jubilant FoodWorks said it plans to expand product availability by adding more e-commerce platforms as well as retailing through supermarkets and hypermarkets in the near future.

Shyam S Bhartia, chairman, and Hari S Bhartia, co-chairman, Jubilant FoodWorks, said, "We are delighted to enter the Indian FMCG segment with "ChefBoss". This brand is based on our sound understanding of the Indian consumers' taste preferences and our commitment to provide the best quality products." **AGENCIES**

Tata Motors introduces subscription model for compact SUV Nexon EV



NEW DELHI: Tata Motors on Thursday said it has launched a subscription model for electric version of its compact SUV Nexon.

Designed to make electric vehicles (EVs) more accessible to a rapidly growing base of future-conscious citizens, the company is making available its flagship Nexon at an all-inclusive fixed rental starting at Rs 41,900 per month, Tata Motors said in a statement.

Customers can select the tenure of their subscription from a minimum period of 18 months, 24 and 36 months, it added. For 18 month tenure, a customer will have to pay Rs 47,900 monthly subscription fee, for 24 months Rs 44,900 and for 36 months Rs 41,900 per month.

Tata Motors has tied up with leasing firm Orix Auto Infrastructure Services to offer the service in five major cities

BSNL 2G mobile services reach Vijaynagar circle of Arunachal

ITANAGAR: The people of inaccessible Vijaynagar administrative circle in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, have a reason to smile, as the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) has recently launched its mobile 2G services in the area through satellite network.

The 4,400 people of the remote circle located close to the Indo-Myanmar border, who are deprived of surface communication as of date, now would be able to communicate with people from the rest of the world with the launch of

the telecommunication facility on Saturday.

To reach the isolated region of Vijaynagar, it takes around six to 8 days on foot through dense forests from the nearest Miao town which is around 157 km away.

Taking to twitter, Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday congratulated the people of the circle for the development.

"Vijaynagar is a beautiful place in #Arunachal. I am delighted to know that this remote border town near Indo-Myanmar border is now con-

nected with mobile connectivity. I thank @BSNLCorporate & local administration for their hard work in providing mobile services in remote areas," Khandu tweeted.

Vijaynagar consists of 16 villages with a population of around 4,400 people.

Though chopper is not an object of interest for the people of the area, a vehicle and telecommunication facility are things of curiosity for them.

The villagers depend on wetland and jhoom cultivation for their livelihood. The



basic requirement of groceries is met by a few local shops

which bring goods mostly on foot. For other essential

requirements the people depend on the military helicopter which carries out sorties in the circle, depending upon the weather conditions.

During monsoon, even a kilogram of salt costs around Rs 800. The region is surrounded on three sides by Myanmar and the other side by the Namdapha National Park. Even as the state government has been putting in all efforts to connect the remote administrative circle with Miao under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, the ambitious 157.56 km-long

road project has, however, been delayed due to realignment and diversion of the road to avoid the Namdapha National Park.

"Erecting the mobile tower in the area was not at all an easy task," BSNL sub-divisional engineer (SDE) Karma Tsering said. "The state government and Indian Air Force extended the necessary help and logistic support to transport the mobile and satellite equipment which had to be airlifted amidst the Covid-19 pandemic," Tsering said in a statement. **AGENCIES**

You will forever be my crush:

Namit Das to Sushmita Sen



“I HAVE BEEN WANTING TO DO THIS FOR A LONGTIME. BUT I JUST HAVEN'T HAD THE COURAGE NOR THE RIGHT WORDS TO EXPRESS THIS. LET ME JUST SAY, THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD WHOSE BEAUTY ISN'T LIMITED TO PHYSICAL PERCEPTION”

Actor Namit Das cannot stop gushing about Sushmita Sen. Namit worked with Sushmita in the recent web series ‘Aarya’, and is clearly floored by the former beauty queen.

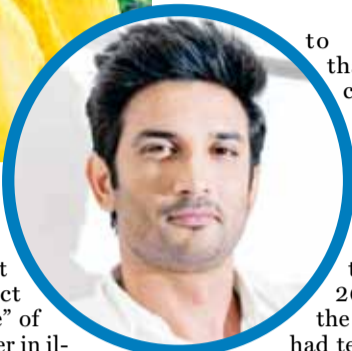
“I have been wanting to do this for a longtime. But I just haven't had the courage nor the right words to express this. Let me just say, there are some people in this world whose beauty isn't limited to physical perception. It's more of an energy. A powerful force that helps you become more beautiful. That's Sushmita Sen for you,” he wrote on Instagram.

“I have had the privilege to share her aura during our show ‘Aarya’. You are truly beautiful Miss Sen. You absorb everything around you. All the gazes, All those men shifting around you, All the people everyone disappear into beautiful silhouettes when your radiant self shines on set. I have seen that. I have been that shadow. A huge respectful bow to the queen that you are. You will forever be my crush from ‘Main hoon na’ & my dream girl ‘Miss Universe’. Thank you for ‘Aarya’. Thank you for all these million things you do to make people comfortable around you. Thank you for

being ‘you,’ he concluded. “Aarya” marked Sushmita's return to showbiz after a gap of half a decade. She was last seen in the 2015 Bengali art film, ‘Nirbaak’. Namit, who started his journey on television with the show ‘Pancham’, became a household name with his act in the TV series ‘Sumit Sambhal Lega’. His recent outings are the OTT shows ‘Aarya’ and ‘Mafia’.

has been in deep trauma due to the death of the actor and moreover getting rape and death threats. “Petitioner has also received various death and rape threats and she is in deep trauma due to the loss of deceased, which is multiplied further due to the media sensitivity of the case,” it said, adding that she has also filed a complaint at Santa Cruz police station against the rape and death threats. She said, “It is pertinent

FALSELY IMPLICATED: Rhea Chakraborty to SC



to mention that the deceased and petitioner were in a live-in relationship since a year up till June 8, 2020 when the petitioner had temporarily shifted to her own residence in Mumbai.”

Her plea said, “Deceased was suffering from depression for some time and was also on anti-depressants and he committed suicide on the morning of June 14, 2020 at his Bandra residence by hanging himself. ‘Unnatural death report’ was filed by Bandra police station at Mumbai and causes leading to taing of such drastic steps are being examined.”

Rhea said that she was summoned by the Bandra police on various occasions and her statement was also recorded under section 175 of CrpC and she understands that the probe of Mumbai police is still going on as some of the forensic reports are still awaited. She said that Section 177 of CrPC mandates that every offence shall be inquired into and shall be tried by the magistrate within whose local jurisdiction it was committed. Rhea said that even there is an iota of truth in the case registered by Rajput's father, the jurisdiction to probe the

offence would still lie with the Bandra Police Station. “However, in the present case, after recording the FIR, the investigation has been mechanically commenced wholly without jurisdiction by sending report to the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate 3, Patna Sadar, instead of sending the FIR to the jurisdictional ACMM, Bandra, Mumbai and Bandra Police station,” the plea said. She said that it becomes abundantly clear that the commencement of investigation in Patna is erroneous in absence of any cause of action having arisen thereto in Patna. The entire cause of action as alleged in the FIR had arisen at Bandra in Mumbai, her plea said. “It would be just and expedient, if the transfer of the case is directed from Patna to Mumbai. No prejudice would be caused to the respondents (father of the Sushant and Bihar police), if the direction sought herein is issued by this court,” the transfer plea said.

AGENCIES

THE BOLLYWOOD ACTRESS TELLS THE APEX COURT THAT SHE WAS LIVING WITH SUSHANT TILL JUNE 8

Bollywood actress Rhea Chakraborty has alleged before the Supreme Court that actor Sushant Singh Rajput's father has used his “influence” in roping her in the FIR lodged at Patna in Bihar accusing her of abetment of suicide of his son. Rajput, aged 34, was found hanging from the ceiling of his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai on June 14 and since then the Mumbai police has been probing the case keeping in mind various angles.

The allegations in the FIR lodged at Patna against Rhea “reflect the influence” of Rajput's father in illegally roping her in the case, said the petition filed by her on Wednesday seeking transfer of the FIR from Patna to Mumbai, “The Petitioner is an actress and is into acting since 2012. In the peculiar facts and circumstances of the present case, the Petitioner has been falsely implicated in the present case filed at the instance of Krishna Kishore Singh-father of the deceased...,” the plea said. Rhea in her plea admitted that she was in a live-in relationship with Rajput and

I'm not here for fame Radhika Apte

Actress Radhika Apte says she does not want to get stuck in something convenient or be satisfied, and she is not chasing fame. “I'm not here for fame. I do like the perks sometimes, but I don't take success and failure seriously,” Radhika said.

“Because these are temporary and all very relative. You can't take either seriously, but you can't just ignore them. They are very important aspects in your journey -- you need appreciation, you need to pat your back many a time, you have to love the appreciation as well and you have to also learn from your failure and not get dejected. So, (I have) a balanced approach,” she added.

Radhika entered the industry with a small role in the 2005 release ‘Vaah! Life Ho Toh Aisi!’, and went on to do films like ‘Shor In The City’, ‘Kabali’, ‘Phobia’, ‘Badlapur’ and the short film ‘Ahalya’.

The actress is credited for breaking the stereotypical image of the Bollywood heroine with her roles in ‘Phobia’, ‘Badlapur’, ‘Manjhi: The Mountain Man’, ‘Lust Stories’, ‘Sacred Games’, ‘Pad Man’ and ‘Ghoul’. After spending so many years in the industry, the actress feels she has evolved. “I think you evolve (constantly). With so much work, you learn things, you sharpen your skills and you learn what not to do. So, it is a constant process. It doesn't mean you don't make mistakes but you make new ones. What I would like to do is just challenge my work constantly, not get satisfied and stuck in something convenient,” she said.

AGENCIES

Rakul Preet Singh misses being goofy and elegant on the sets

Actress Rakul Preet Singh wants to go back to work as she misses being goofy on the sets.

Rakul took to her Instagram stories, where she shared two clips of herself from her photo-shoots. In the first video, Rakul is seen wearing a black lacy dress paired with black boots and a bag.

On the clip, she wrote: “Miss being goofy on set”. In the other video, the actress is seen posing in a stunning midnight blue ruffled long gown. She completed her look with a messy bun and a beautiful diamond neck piece. “And then miss being poised and elegant,” she wrote on the second clip.

Coming up for Rakul Preet is a rom-com co-starring Arjun Kapoor. She will also be seen in Kamal Haasan's ambitious upcoming film ‘Indian 2’, which co-stars Kajal Aggarwal and Siddharth.

AGENCIES

Future history books will need a new chapter just for 2020 Urvashi Rautela

Looking ahead in time, actress and former beauty queen Urvashi Rautela feels history books in the future will need to dedicate an entire chapter to the year 2020.

From forest fires to the COVID-19 pandemic and now a blast in Beirut, the year has seen one disaster after the other.

“Future history books will need one chapter just for the year 2020,” said Urvashi.

She is devastated by the recent explosion in Beirut. “My thoughts and prayers are with Beirut, Lebanon. I am heartbroken by the loss of life in this tragic event. Solidarity to all those affected and those working tirelessly to help. I can't even imagine the predicament of the people witnessing this out there. So many lives (have been) lost, thousands of people (are) injured,” she said.

Urvashi has friends in Lebanon and is upset that she can't reach them. “My friend Yara is a Lebanese singer and Cynthia Samuel is Miss Universe Lebanon. They both are close friends and it's quite sad that they both live in Lebanon and I can't reach them,” she said. On the professional front, Urvashi Rautela was seen in the film ‘Virgin Bhanupriya’ which also featured Gautam Gulati, Archana Puran Singh, and Delnaaz Irani among others.

AGENCIES

Punjabi music industry limping back amid pandemic

With the Punjabi music industry facing major cash flow challenges with live performances and recordings being hit the most by the coronavirus pandemic, the industry—with longer delays being even more devastating—is limping back with ways to monetize music consumption.

For Punjabi music video director Navi Lubana, the ban on mass gatherings and live streaming is unlikely to be reversed until 2021. So it's time to go back to business amid health protocols to engage the fans digitally. He launched his 25th directorial four-and-a-half minute song ‘Giddha’ featuring Canada-based Elly Mangat and Afsana Khan on July 18 that attracted nearly 3.3 million live viewers.

“The Punjabi music and film industry is facing insolvency. Job losses have been reported on a mass scale

with small-time artistes and part-time shooting crew the worst hit,” he said. “The ‘Giddha’ song was recorded in a day with the minimum crew in a heritage property in Ropar. The present norms are limited only to indoor shooting and the scenes are to be adjusted within the new circumstances,” he said.

In the pre-Covid days, the crew strength was usually 75 to 100. “Now we have to limit less than 50.” Lubana, 29, earlier directed songs featuring singers like Shehnaz Gill and Sultan.

Chandigarh-based Punjabi film critic Sapan Manchanda told IANS

that the industry with an annual turnover of Rs 300-Rs 400 crore was the worst hit by the pandemic. Contrary to the single-track videos, he said films were very badly hit. “On an average 40-45 Punjabi films are produced in a year. The working schedule of a Punjabi film is from March to December owing to foggy weather in the plains in the winter. This year only two films were released in March and after that there was no release. There was no shooting of a film,” he said.

“With cinema halls shut, the coronavirus has threatened the box office numbers of upcoming releases that were shot before the pandemic with a budget



that can go up to Rs 5 crore,” he said. Music venues have been closed since mid-March, and the government has not allowed the return of live performances.

Trade insiders say at least 70 per cent of the technical crew in the Punjabi film industry are daily wagers, and they have been badly affected. To help the industry tide over the grim period of zero revenue during the lockdown, Punjab Chief Minister Ama-

inder Singh on July 23 approved detailed guidelines for shooting of films and music videos during Unlock 2.0, with a restriction of 50 people at the shooting venue.

Singer Ranjit Bawa and actors Gippy Grewal and Gurbhag Singh have thanked the Chief Minister for accepting their request.

“No film has so far announced its shooting schedule. But a few music video directors have come forward

with the fresh state guidelines and started shooting songs,” a trade insider told IANS.

Upbeat over the government's decision, energetic Lubana, who started his career in showbiz by walking on a ramp while studying at California State University, said he has plans to direct two music videos this month at locations across Punjab.

He said in the absence of Punjabi films output, fans are playing song videos.

State Special Chief Secretary (Home) Satish Chandra said the state has issued comprehensive guidelines granting permission to shoot films and music videos, subject to certain conditions.

The guidelines stipulate that the duration of shooting should be restricted to the minimum possible time and not more than 50 people should be present.

Shooting would commence only after all persons involved are thermally scanned and cleared.

AGENCIES

‘Mother India’, ‘Naya Daur’ Actress Kumkum Dies At 86

Veteran actor Kumkum, who featured in over 100 Hindi films and popular songs such as ‘Kabhi aar, Kabhi paar’ and ‘Mere Mehbob Qayamat Hogi’, passed away on Tuesday. She was 86. Kumkum, whose real name was Zaibunissa, died at around 11.30 am at her Bandra residence due to age-related issues, her sister-in-law Shenaz told PTI. “Her last rites took place at Mazgaon cemetery,” she added. Kumkum hailed from Hussainabad in Sheikhpura district, Bihar.



Her most memorable film appearances include ‘Mr X in Bombay’, ‘Mother India’, ‘Kohinoor’, ‘Ujala’, and ‘Naya Daur’. She also starred in the first Bhojpuri film ‘Ganga Maiyya Tohe Piyari Chadhaibo’ in 1963. But her popularity rests mostly on the songs that were picturised on her be it ‘Madhuban Mein Radhika Nache Re’ from ‘Kohinoor’ (1960); ‘Kabhi Aar Kabhi Paar’ from ‘Aar Paar’ (1954) or ‘Yeh Hai Bombay Meri Jaan’ from 1956's ‘CID’. She was discovered by actor-director Guru Dutt in the 1950s, who cast her in ‘Aar Paar’ song for which she earned a small role in Dutt's ‘Pyaasa’.

AGENCIES

