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# Expansion for extension?



**NEW DELHI:** Thirty-six new ministers joined the government in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mega cabinet reboot on July 7. Fifteen of the 44 ministers who took oath will be part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's cabinet, a communique from Rashtrapati Bhavan shows. Apart from PM Modi, the ceremony was graced by Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla, First Lady Savita Devi Kovind among others, as President Ram Nath Kovind was facilitating the swearing-in ceremony. Several leaders who are already serving as Union Ministers were also a part of the swearing-in ceremony. The ceremony was conducted in compliance with the COVID-19 protocols. Union Ministers Harsh Vardhan, Santosh Gangwar, Thawar Chand Gehlot, Ramesh Nishank Pokhriyal, Sanjay Dhotre, Raosaheb Danve, Sadanand Gowda, Ashwini Choubey and Debasree Chaudhuri have been dropped. Union Ministers Anurag Thakur, G Kishan Reddy, Harsh Vardhan, Kiren Rijiju

and Parshottam Rupala were elevated to Cabinet rank. The new Council of Ministers has more representation in terms of caste, religion, region, and experience than several other governments in the past. 11 women Ministers (2 in Cabinet), 27 OBCs (5 in cabinet), 8 STs (3 in Cabinet), and 12 SC members (2 in cabinet) have been made a part of the new Council of Ministers. Moreover, 13 lawyers, 6 doctors, 5 engineers, 7 civil servants, and 4 former CMs have also been a made part of the new Council of Ministers. Meet predecessors, gain from those no longer in cabinet, PM Modi tells new ministers. New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the expanded council of ministers asked the new ministers to meet their predecessors and benefit from their experience. The Prime Minister also reportedly asked the ministers to be punctual and work tirelessly for people.

According to sources, PM Modi told the new ministers that they should make use of the experience of ministers who held the portfolio before them. "Especially those who are no longer part of the council, the PM praised those ministers for work in their ministries and asked the new ministers to gain from them," said the source. This has come in the middle of allegations levelled by the Congress that former Health Minister Harsh Vardhan's exit from the Council of Ministers "is an admission of COVID-19 failure" and that "he was made a fall guy". The meeting of the council of ministers went for more than two hours as the newly-inducted ministers were introduced in the first such meeting after the expansion and reshuffle of the ministry on Wednesday. According to sources, PM Modi asked the ministers to work hard for well being of people and to ensure effective implementation of schemes. **AGENCIES**

## Who Said What

**“If the Cabinet expansion was done on the basis of performance, then the PM should have been the first to go for ‘governance failure. The Finance Minister, Home Minister and Defence Minister too should have been dropped”**  
**RANDEEP SURJEWALA, Party spokesperson**

**“Wishing the new Council of Ministers well in fulfilling their duties to the people. But Indians are more affected by the seaworthiness of the ship & the direction it's sailing than by the arrangement of the chairs on the upper deck.”**  
**SHASHI THAROOR, Senior Congress Leader**

**“Rane has been inducted in the Union cabinet only to attack the Sena without fulfilling any other responsibility. For Maharashtra, this is improvement of sorts, from ‘heavy’ to ‘micro’”**  
**ARVIND SAWANT, Sena's chief spokesperson**



## 36 more joined, 7 promoted

Prime Minister Narendra Modi effected a major reshuffle and expansion of his ministry bringing Mansukh Mandaviya as Health Minister, Kiren Rijiju as Law Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan as Education Minister, and Jyotiratidya Scindia as Civil Aviation Minister. The exercise, carried out over two years after the BJP-led government came to office in its second term and amid the ongoing battle against COVID-19, saw some ministers being dropped and the induction of 15 cabinet ministers and several ministers of state. Seven ministers of state were elevated to cabinet rank. Home Minister Amit Shah is also the Minister of the newly-created Ministry of Cooperation. The Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, which was earlier with Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has been allocated to former Maharashtra Chief Minister Narayan Rane. Ashwini Vaishnaw, a former IAS Officer, has been appointed Minister of Railways, Minister of Communications,



12 union ministers including Ravi Shankar Prasad, Dr Harsh Vardhan, Prakash Javadekar and DV Sadanand Gowda, Thawarchand Gehlot, Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Babul Supriyo, Sanjay Dhotre, Rattan Lal Kataria, Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Debasree Chaudhuri resigned from their posts. Anurag Thakur, elevated to cabinet rank, was appointed Information and Broadcasting Minister and Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports. The change in the Sports Ministry, with Rijiju being shifted to Law Ministry, took place days ahead of Tokyo Olympics. Environment Ministry got a new face in Bhupender Yadav. The BJP leader was also appointed Minister of Labour and Environment. The Ministry of External Affairs got a woman minister with Meenakshi Lekhi appointed as Minister of State. She is also the junior minister of Culture. Dr Rakumar Ranjan Singh has also been appointed new MoS in External Affairs Ministry apart from that in Education. Ahead of the expansion,

## Ministers dropped

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is all set for a mega expansion and reshuffle of his Cabinet, the first in his second term that started in May 2019. Several new ministers joined. Ahead of the reshuffle, several ministers, including Union health minister Harsh Vardhan and education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal, resigned from the Cabinet. Social justice and empowerment minister Thawarchand Gehlot had also vacated his ministry as he was appointed



as the governor of Karnataka. The new list that has come to the fore seems to have been guided by several factors, including the upcoming assembly elections in five states in 2022. PM Modi had conducted an extensive review of the performance of several ministers in the run up to this exercise. So, while some ministers have been dropped, some others may be promoted. Also, reports suggest that Modi's new Cabinet will have a higher share of OBC representations, younger leaders and women ministers.

## India's power demand surges to all-time high; crosses 200-GW mark



**NEW DELHI:** Power demand in the country touched an all-time high and crossed the 200 GW mark on Wednesday amid many states witnessing high temperatures due to delayed monsoon, and easing of coronavirus-related restrictions. According to the latest power ministry data, peak power demand or the highest supply in a day touched an all-time high of 200.57 GW on Wednesday. On Tuesday, power demand was at a record high of 197.07 GW. Experts opined that high temperatures in many states due to delayed monsoon and easing of restrictions that were in place to curb coronavirus infections have led to a surge in power demand these days. Last month, peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day witnessed a growth of over 16 per cent at 191.51 GW (recorded on June

30) compared to 164.98 GW recorded in June 2020. The peak power demand was 182.45 GW in June 2019. As per the ministry's data, peak power demand had touched an all-time high of 192.16 GW on July 5, 2021. Then, the figure had surpassed the peak power demand of 191.51 GW recorded on June 30. "Today, All India peak demand met touched the all-time highest level of 197060 MW at 11:43 hrs. Looking forward to the demand touching 200000 MW in the near future," Power Minister R K Singh had said in a tweet on Tuesday. In January, Singh had tweeted that the power demand and supply surged to a new high of 1,88,452 MW at 9:42 am on January 28. "The rate at which we are going, we shall cross 2,00,000 MW very soon". **AGENCIES**

## 6-time CM Virbhadr, dies of post-Covid complications at 87

**SHIMLA:** Veteran Congress leader and six-time chief minister Virbhadr Singh passed away at 3.40 am today at IGMC after a three-month long battle with Covid illness. He was 87. The state government has declared a three day mourning as a mark of respect to the former chief minister. Virbhadr's body has been kept at his home in Holly Lodge in the lower Jakhu area of Shimla for the public to pay their last respects. The cremation will take place in Rampur on Saturday. His body will be kept in the state Congress office on Friday before being taken to Rampur in the afternoon. Virbhadr, a sitting MLA



from Arki in Solan district, had earlier recovered from Covid twice successfully. Senior Medical Superintendent, IGMC Dr Janak Raj confirmed the death of Virbhadr. A decision on his cremation taking place in Shimla or his native place Rampur is likely to be taken by the family, later. He hailed from the erstwhile royal family of Bushair.

The passing away of Virbhadr marks the end of an era where he dominated the state political scenario for almost six decades. His death has left a big vacuum in the Congress as no other leader enjoys the kind of mass appeal and popularity that he did. A six-time chief minister, Virbhadr had won nine assembly and five Lok Sabha elections, a feat few politicians can boast of. He also remained State Congress President in 1977, 1979, 1980 and 2012. He made his entry into politics after being elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1962. He remained Union Minister for Steel and also a Deputy Minister in Indira Gandhi cabinet. **AGENCIES**

## One Unit of Ropar thermal plant shuts down

**CHANDIGARH:** One unit of the state-owned Ropar thermal plant stopped generating power due to some boiler leakage issue, aggravating the power crisis in Punjab, an official of the state-owned power utility PSPCL said. A 210 MW (megawatt) unit of the Guru Gobind Singh Super Thermal Power Plant, Ropar, developed a snag on Thursday, said the official of the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) adding that it would again start pro-

ducing power by Friday. The Ropar thermal plant has an installed capacity of 840 MW. Two units of 660 MW each of the private-run Talwandi Sabo Power Limited (TSPL) at Mansa continue to remain shut while its third unit of 660 MW was generating electricity at half of its capacity, said the official. Punjab's total power generation capacity, including hydro, is nearly 7,000 MW while 7,300 MW is procured from



other sources, including central share etc. Punjab on Thursday again witnessed unscheduled

load shedding in urban and rural areas, amid scorching heat. Punjab is reeling under an unprecedented power shortage with the Opposition blaming the Congress-led government for failing to ensure round-the-clock power to people of the state. As part of the measures to deal with the power shortage, the PSPCL has already cut down power supply to the industry including rolling mills and induction furnaces till July 11. **AGENCIES**

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

- 1 Coronavirus infections are rising across most regions of the world as the delta variant spreads, clear evidence that the pandemic isn't on the wane, said WHO.**
- 2 Petrol, Diesel Prices Hiked By Up To 39 Paise; Petrol Nears Rs. 107/Litre Mark In Mumbai**
- 3 External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that people who are tested before and after international travel is a good enough basis but some countries have now introduced the issue of vaccination, stressing on the need to reach some understanding.**

## SAD promises govt jobs to kin of farmers who died during stir against farm laws

**CHANDIGARH:** Shiromani Akali Dal chief Sukhbir Singh Badal promised government jobs to the kin of farmers who died during the agitation against the Centre's farm laws if the coalition led by his party comes to power in the state. The SAD president also assured free education to children and grandchildren of the farmers who lost their lives during the protest. The SAD is contesting the 2022 Assembly polls in the state in alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). "Today, I assure Punjabis: Immediately after forming the govt in 2022, SAD-BSP

will honour the martyrs of Kisan Andolan with one govt job per family, free education to their children & grandchildren till post-graduation & health insurance cover to the entire family," said Badal in a tweet. In a video posted on his Twitter handle, Badal said for the past seven months, farmers have been camping at the Delhi borders, demanding repeal of the "black" farm laws brought by the Modi government at the Centre. He said more than 550 farmers have "laid down" their lives during this agitation. **AGENCIES**



# Capt takes Kejriwal head on over failure to provide free power to Delhi farmers

**TERMS DELHI POWER TARIFF STRUCTURE ORGANISED LOOT FOR FILLING POCKETS OF BIG DISCOMS LIKE RELIANCE**

**CHANDIGARH:** Taking his Delhi counterpart head on for failing to provide free power to the farmers in the national capital, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh slammed Arvind Kejriwal for making false promises on free power in Punjab by an eye on the 2022 Assembly polls.

The Kejriwal government has completely failed the people of Delhi on all counts, with no free power to the farmers in the villages located in the national capital and excessively high power tariffs for the industry, said Captain Amarinder, declaring that the people of Punjab have already rejected the pathetic Delhi model of governance on all counts.

The Punjab Chief Minister termed the Delhi power tariff structure a case of organized loot by the Kejriwal-led Aam



Aadmi Party (AAP) government, which was openly allowing private power distribution companies in Delhi, including the Reliance Group, to fill their pockets by collecting excessively high tariffs at the cost of the common man.

While Delhi is charging Rs. 9.80 per unit for industrial power, the Congress Government in Punjab is levying a subsidized tariff of Rs. 5 per unit to attract industry to Punjab, which has witnessed more than Rs. 85,000 crore worth of investment visible on the ground in the last 4 years. Subsidised power is currently being given

to 1,43,812 industrial units in Punjab with an annual subsidy of Rs. 2226 crore, he pointed out, slamming Kejriwal over the latter's recent

In sharp contrast to Punjab, where his government was giving free power worth Rs. 6,735 crore to 13,79,217 farmers, the AAP government in Delhi had made no effort whatsoever to extend similar support to the agricultural community there, said the Chief Minister. Pointing out that the Kejriwal government was among the first to notify one of the anti-farmer Farm Laws of the Centre in Delhi, he slammed AAP for pretending sympathy

for the farmers of Punjab.

Exposing the anti-people power tariff structure of Delhi, Captain Amarinder said the Delhi Government was befooling the people by putting a small amount into one pocket, by way of 200 units of free domestic power, and taking away a higher amount from the other pocket by way of the high tariffs being paid by the shopkeepers, industry and farmers for commercial and agriculture power. The Delhi Government was charging Rs. 11.34 per unit from small shopkeepers and other commercial establishments, which was 50% higher than what was being charged in Punjab, he said. In fact, he said, every resident of Delhi was indirectly paying much more for power than what was being paid by residents of Punjab.

Comparing the subsidies of the two states, the Chief Minister said that the Punjab Government is paying an annual power subsidy bill of 10,458 Crore while the Kejriwal government is paying Rs. 2820 Crore, when the population of Delhi was a mere 2 crore compared with Punjab's 3 crore. This translates into average power subsidy in Punjab at Rs. 3,486 per person, as against Rs. 1410 for a Delhi resident.

Further, pointed out Captain Amarinder, the Punjab government is giving subsidized power amounting to Rs 10,458 crore, which is 2.24% of its total revenues, while the Delhi Government has provided a subsidy of Rs. 2,820 crore, which is only 1.03 % of its total revenues.

The situation, said the Punjab Chief Minister, was even more damning when seen in the context of the revenue generated through sale of power to the consumers. During the year 2020-21, PSPCL sold 46,713 MW of power whereas the distribution companies in Delhi sold 27,436 MW of power. Total revenue earned through sale of power was Rs. 29,903 crore in Punjab and Rs. 20,556 crore in Delhi. As a result the average cost per unit of power in Punjab comes to Rs. 6.40 where as it is Rs. 7.49 in Delhi, he pointed out.

# Not farmers, but Con has lost their political ground: Chahar

SATISH HANDA



National President of BJP Kisan Morcha Raj Kumar Chahar Member Parliament in a press conference at Chandigarh strongly condemned farmer leaders Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Singh Chanduni holding protest dharna against three agriculture laws introduced by the government for the welfare of farmers and also increase their income. He said, such protesting farmer leaders are playing in the hands of Congress leaders like puppets since past over seven months meaninglessly which is merely an political based game by political parties in opposition including Congress against ruling BJP government in the centre as well as in the state, but the decision taken by the government will not be rolled back, Chahar said, however suggestions from the farmers as regard improvement in these laws are always welcomed. Chahar said, farmers will

not lose their agriculture land as being misguided and likely to earn handsome income after implementation of these laws, but Congress one of the oldest political party ruled over in the country for decades has already lost its political ground in past few years and squeezed to a handful of states in the country at present. He blamed farmer leaders Rakesh Tikait and Gurnam Chanduni repeating the language of Congress leaders never want that farmers should come out of their grip. Chahar said, history reveals that in spite of ruling over in the country for decades Congress did not

ing for the welfare of farmers and when Prime Minister Narendra Modi attempting to take steps for the welfare of farmers and increase their income Congress leaders are worried over finding themselves on slippery ground and providing support to farmer agitation for their self-vested interest.

Chahar said, leaders of political parties in opposition as well as protestors should understand that they are neither losing their agriculture land nor the minimum support price of their crops will reduce after implementation of new agriculture laws. He said, doors are open for farmers on all issues for the welfare of farmers other than withdrawal of three laws. Pointing at withdrawal of Section 370 being opposed by few people in Kashmir, Chahar said likewise Prime Minister Modi is trying to bring farmers out of slavery chains being opposed by a group of political parties for self-vested interest.

# Hooda-Selja dash may give birth to a new political party in Haryana



SATISH HANDA

Clash in Congress senior party leaders in Haryana presently between former Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda also leader of opposition in Haryana Vidhan Sabha and Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) President Shella a former Union Minister and Rajya Sabha member increasing day by day and Congress high command watching helplessly since past couple of months, which may give birth to a new political party in the state. Past scenario of Haryana politics reveals, there is a tradition when chief ministers in the state launched separate political parties in past years. Ch. Devi Lal launched Lok Dal and Indian National Lok Dal, Bansi Lal launched Haryana Vikas Party and Bhajan Lal launched Haryana Janhit Party in the state.

Prior to 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls in Haryana a clash was seen between Congress party leaders and Congress high command when HPCC president Dr. Ashok Tanwar had to part with HPCC president chair on the demand of few party leaders. It cannot be denied Congress in Haryana was able to win 31 Vidhan Sabha seats out of total number of 90 seats in the state due to Congress contestants from Bhupinder Singh Hooda's

lobby. Political clash between groups of Hooda supporters and HPCC President Shella has started at present in which few senior MLAs demanding from Congress high command to replace Shella. Congress high command already facing severe crisis in the party due to clashed between party leaders in Punjab, Rajasthan, Chhatisgarh and now in Haryana.

According to senior party leaders on the condition of anonymity told that Congress high command has been left merely as a family of three members Smt. Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Wadra Gandhi to take all important party decisions since Congress has now been left neither 'high' nor with any 'command' at present and such a large national party ruled over in the country for decades is now being pushed behind instead of moving ahead since past few years and most of the prominent party leaders has started leaving the party finding a bleak future in the party. According to political experts, party high command should take early action to sort out the conflict between Hooda and Shella in Haryana and Capt. Amarinder Singh and Sidhu in Punjab without further delay with the intervene of senior Congress leaders otherwise it will be too late.

# Farmers in Punjab, Haryana protest against fuel, cooking gas price rise

**CHANDIGARH:** Farmers in Punjab and Haryana on July 8 held protests at several places against the hike in fuel and cooking gas prices.

The call for the protest from 10 am till noon was given by the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is spearheading an agitation against the Centre's three farm laws.

Protesters parked their tractors and other vehicles on the roadside and shouted slogans against the Union government over the rising prices of petrol, diesel and cooking gas.

Some of them also brought empty LPG cylinders to the protesting sites as a mark of protest.

Agitating farmers also honked their vehicles for a few minutes, saying it was done to "wake up" the government from "slumber".

The farmers slammed the government for "not being able to control the prices of essential commodities".

Police personnel were de-



ployed in strength near the protest sites to maintain law and order, officials said.

Protests were held at many places in Mohali, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Moga, Rupnagar in Punjab and Sonapat, Sirsa and Gohana in Haryana.

Farmer leader Harmeet Singh Kadiyan, who led the protest in Ludhiana, slammed the BJP-led government at the Centre over the increasing prices of fuel and cooking gas.

Every day, prices of fuel are going up which is adversely affecting every section of society, he said.

In Moga, a protester said rising prices of diesel would increase the farmers' input cost.

In Haryana's Sirsa, a protesting farmer brought a camel to pull a four-wheeler as a mark of protest against the rising fuel prices. Agitating farmers said their demonstrations were peaceful. AGENCIES

# Bathinda gangster Kulbir Naruana, cousin shot dead by former guard

**BATHINDA:** A gangster-turned-social worker, Kulbir Naruana (39), was on July 7 morning shot dead allegedly by his former personal gunman Mandeep Singh Manna at his house in Naruana village here.

Naruana's cousin Chamkaur Singh too died after being shot at and run over by a car while another person was injured.

A notorious criminal, Manna was a part of the Naruana gang for the last 20 years.

Sources said Manna came to meet Naruana at his house in the morning and told him to sit in his SUV as he wanted to talk about

compromise with him. After he entered the car, Manna fired fourshots on Naruana.

As Manna tried to flee, Chamkaur rushed to stop him. Manna opened fire on him and also ran over him with his SUV. Both Naruana and Chamkaur died on the spot. Naruana aide Gurpreet Singh also sustained a bullet injury and is undergoing treatment at a private hospital. His condition is serious.

The bodies of Naruana and Chamkaur were taken to the Civil Hospital. Later, the bodies were handed over to the families after the post-mortem exami-

nation.

Bathinda SSP Bhupinderjeet Singh Virk said, "Kulbir Naruana was an 'A' category gangster in police records and he was out on bail. He had some dispute with his associate Manna who came to meet him regarding a compromise, but he fired shots on Naruana and his cousin".

He said, "After killing Naruana, Manna, who was intoxicated, fled towards the Badal road, but he was not able to drive as he had suffered a bullet injury when Naruana's associates retaliated. He was found lying on a road near Ghudda village and arrested."

# Punjab Police bust major drug supply chain with arrest of 4 Afghan nationals

**NEW TRAIL UNRAVELLED TO U.P. TEAM SENT THERE TO UNEARTH MORE DRUG LINKS, SAYS DGP**

**CHANDIGARH:** The Punjab Police on July 5 busted another major drug supply chain with the arrest of four Afghan nationals and heroin seizure of 17 kgs, worth Rs 90 crore in the international market, from a unit in South Delhi.

With this seizure, the Punjab Police has dug up another trail, leading to Uttar Pradesh, and a team has been sent there to unravel the network, DGP Dinkar Gupta disclosed.

Giving details of the arrests, the DGP said the accused have been identified as Mujahed Shinwari, a native of Nangarhar in Afghanistan; Mohammad Lal Kaker, Jannat Gul Kaker and Samiullah Afghan, trio from Kunduz region of Afghanistan. Apart from huge recovery of heroin, the police have also recovered assorted chemicals and lab equipment, used to manufacture the drug, from the Neb Sarai unit.

The arrests and seizure resulted from a lead uncovered by a Hoshiarpur Police team, led by SSP Navjot Singh Mahal, which was investigating into certain earlier FIRs registered under the NDPS Act, as part of the ongoing

war against drugs.

Divulging details on how dots were connected, the DGP said that the Hoshiarpur police, on May 18, 2021, had recovered 70 grams heroin after arresting Pushpinder Singh alias Tinku and Amit Choudhary, who revealed that they had procured the drug from Jasvir Singh Gajju of Jandiala in Amritsar and Sarabjeet Singh Sethi of Hoshiarpur. Raids were conducted at Jasvir Singh's residence, where his accomplice Jagrup Kaur was apprehended by the police party with 100gm heroin. A thorough search of the house led the police party to the recovery of 1.48 kg heroin, 500 grams gold and Rs 49.48 lakh drug money.

The police later arrested Sarabjeet Sethi from Garhshankar on July 1 and 500 gm heroin was recovered from his possession. He further revealed that he had procured the heroin from Afghan Nationals, who run a heroin manufacturing factory in Delhi and Imteyaz, who operates from Uttar Pradesh, disclosed the DGP.

Acting on leads, a police team from Hoshiarpur raided the suspected location in Delhi and busted this manufacturing unit, from where a large quantity of heroin was being supplied to Punjab and other states. Another team has been sent to UP to bust Imteyaz's module, said Gupta.

# Kitchen Appliances & mixi cluster inaugurated at Ambala

SATISH HANDA

Aseem Goel MLA Ambala; a City inaugurated long awaited Kitchen Appliances and Mixi cluster at village Manakpur adjoining the city and laid foundation stone for the building in the presence of large number of local entrepreneurs in the town. He said, amount worth Rs 1.70 crore is being spent on this project with the technical support and assistance of Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) which is likely to bring back lost identification of town known as 'Mixi Town' in past. According to entrepreneurs, Ambala City was having more than 500 units manufacturing mixis and juicers and lost its identification due to various reasons. Aseem Goel assured that every effort will be taken to make Ambala a hub for all types of kitchen appliances including mixis and juicers, which will not only bring back lost identification but all increase sources of employment for youths in the area. President of mixi industry Ambala Ajay Aggarwal



said government has assured full support and relaxations to entrepreneurs willing to set up their manufacturing units for kitchen appliances and approve CLU for all units without any difficulty and delay. Aggarwal said, declining profit margins, hostile business environment and indifferent government policies, increase in sales tax by the state government were prominent reasons when large number of manufacturing units in the town collapsed, either closed down their shutters or shifted to adjoining state Himachal Pradesh and Uttaranchal states offering attractive incentives to new industry in their states and Ambala known for manufacturing mixis and juicers not only in the country but all over in the world fallen way behind Bombay and Delhi.

# Bahadurgarh industry owners suffer Rs 20,000 cr loss in a year

SATISH HANDA

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi with copies to Chief Ministers of Haryana and Delhi, Narendra Chhikara Senior Vice President Chamber of Commerce & Industry Association has demanded immediate government action to get vacated Tikri border where large numbers of farmers groups are sitting on protest since past over seven months adversely affecting industry in the state. Due to farmers' agitation against three agriculture laws introduced by the government. He said, moreover there was slump all over in the state due to COVID-19 epidemic outbreak when government had declared lock down in the state and industry suffered a lot in this period. Chhikara said, not only industry at Bahadurgarh suffered financial loss worth Rs 20,000 crore but also out of total number of over 9,000 industrial units in the area more than 2,000 micro, small, medium industrial units became sick and closed down.

Industry owners at Bahadurgarh said that it takes nearly two hours instead of five minutes while passing through the border blocked by agitators and also sealed by the Delhi police, besides industry entrepreneurs are facing lot of inconvenience to bring raw material and send finished goods to customers. Chhikara said, out of total number of manufacturing units in the area about 2000 units has already been closed and the remaining units are working between 25 to 40% of their production capacity.

The residents of surrounding area as well as industry owners told that protesting farmers usually block the road for hours especially when some VIP passes through the road raising anti-government slogans and police watching everything helplessly. The residents of adjoining rural areas told that it is unsafe for females to come out of their houses since large number of anti-social elements are seen moving all around in the area.

Meanwhile, on the instruction of Chief Minister Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar, Chief Secretary Vijay Vardhan has directed deputy commissioners not to leave station for any personal or government work without taking permission from Divisional Commissioner of area.

# Cong culture in my blood and veins: Kumari Selja

SATISH HANDA

In view of rumours about 19 Congress MLAs in Haryana state near and dear to former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda also leader of opposition in Haryana Vidhan Saba demanding to replace Kumari Selja President Haryana Pradesh Congress Committee (HPCC) neglecting them as well as failed to form a strong party infrastructure in Haryana state and win their confidence like former HPCC president Ashok Tanwar removed from the chair on asking she refused blames and said groups among leaders, legislators and senior workers exist in every political party due to different views and there is nothing serious in this case and assured to form a strong party network in the state soon.

Refusing allegations Selja said that none of the MLA has demanded that Congress high command should replace her. She said, all Congress MLAs in Haryana state recently met Congress high command at



New Delhi regarding coming 'Panchayat' elections in the state.

In reply to a media question if like Punjab and Rajasthan Congress in Haryana state, too, facing conflict between party leaders which may leave adverse effect on coming Vidhan Sabha polls in several states as well as bi-polls in the state, Selja said, discipline exists among Congress leaders and MLAs in Haryana state. In another media question if majority of Congress MLAs are unable to

digest a 'Dalit' party president in Haryana as also seen in case of Ashok Tanwar also a 'Dalit' leader in past and if there is any conflict between Hooda and herself, Selja replied there is no such tradition about caste and creed in Congress politics in Haryana which is similar to a sea having large number of small fishes as well as big crocodiles.

She added, her relations with Hooda are like brother and sister and they are fighting

against ruling BJP-JJP alliance government in the state jointly. Selja said, she does not identify herself a 'Dalit' but a born Congress worker having Congress blood in her veins.

When questioned, if Bhupinder Singh Hooda and his supporters may form a separate party in Haryana state in case you are not removed from HPCC president chair and Congress high command is under the influence of G-23 group of Congress leaders. In reply Selja said she does not feel so and repeated that Congress is an old as well as big party similar to a sea having large number of fishes and crocodiles in it. Selja told, Congress high command is trying its best to strengthen the party very soon to recover lost reputation. She continued, Congress party is going to launch an agitation in the state against ruling BJP government in the country unable to control rising prices of all essential commodities including prices of petrol and diesel. She disclosed that a block level protest being held

on July 4, followed by district level cycle rally against rising prices on July 10 and a signature campaign outside petrol pumps all over in the state on July 15.

In reply to a last media question that Hooda and Selja are known as brother and sister in Haryana politics and it was due to her efforts Hooda became chief minister in the state in a tenure, Selja replied we are still like brother and sister jointly fighting against the erratic policies of ruling BJP-JJP government in Haryana state. "BJP leaders accuse Congress supporting agitating farmers causing lot of inconvenience to people in the state since past over seven months, caused damage to government as well as public properties and huge financial losses to trade and industry in the state blocking borders and Toll Plaza in the state. Selja said that ruling BJP government did nothing for the welfare of people in past over seven years rule as such is unable to face them and only blame Congress responsible for their failure.



## NEWS BRIEF

## Mukul Roy's wife dies of post COVID complications

**PARGANAS:** Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Mukul Roy's wife Krishna died in a private hospital in Chennai on July 6. She was brought to North 24 Parganas' Kancharpara at her residence on Wednesday morning. West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar condoled Krishna Roy's demise. "Heartfelt condolences @MukulR. Official Mukul Roy, Former Union Minister and MLA, WBLA on the sad demise of his wife Krishna Roy. Pray Almighty to bestow eternal peace on departed soul and strength to family and numerous friends to bear this huge loss and setback," Dhankhar tweeted. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Rajib Banerjee visited Roy's residence in Kancharpara area. Speaking to media here he said, "This is my personal loss. I visited her too when she was admitted at a hospital in Kolkata earlier." Both Mukul Roy and his son Subhrangshu had switched back to the TMC from the BJP after the West Bengal elections. **AGENCIES**

## 26-year-old woman gang-raped in Kolkata flat, robbed of Rs 15 lakh cash

**KOLKATA:** A 26-year-old woman was gangraped in her apartment in Kolkata's Garden Reach area, following which the flat was robbed of Rs 15 lakh in cash, police said on Wednesday. The incident happened on Tuesday afternoon when the woman was alone in her home, they said. Medical tests have confirmed the rape, a senior police officer said. "It is not yet clear why the woman allowed two-three unknown men to enter her flat. We are trying to find out whether she knew them. They robbed Rs 15 lakh in cash after raping her," he said. The woman lodged a complaint in the Garden Reach police station on Wednesday and the Detective Department of the Kolkata Police took over the probe. "Preliminary investigation revealed that the woman was tied up before being raped. Our forensic team has collected samples from the flat and checking the CCTV footage of the area," the officer said. **AGENCIES**

## Woman jumps in front of train with nine-month-old son

**FATEHPUR (UP):** A 30-year-old woman allegedly killed herself and her nine-month-old son by jumping in front of a moving train with the baby near Hariharanj on Wednesday, police said. Both of them died on the spot, they added. The woman, Archana Patel, was married to Umesh Kumar Patel, a junior engineer posted at the Kanspur railway station, the police said. Prima facie, it appears the mother took the step due to a family dispute, they said, adding that the bodies were sent for a post-mortem examination. **AGENCIES**

## 'Tum karo to ras-leela, hum karen to character dheela', Rajbhar takes a dig at BJP as he ties up with Owaisi

**LUCKNOW:** AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi met Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Om Prakash Rajbhar in Lucknow to reiterate their political alliance saying the issue of seat-sharing would be resolved soon. Talking to reporters, the two leaders said their Bhagidari Sankalp Morcha would form the next government in Uttar Pradesh. Rajbhar took a dig at the BJP without taking names, saying, "If they go with Mehbooba, it is ras-leela, and if I go with Owaisi, it is character dheela. The BJP has been fooling the OBCs and they stand exposed. What have they done for OBCs? We are certainly not going with the BJP." The two leaders met at a five-star hotel, before the AIMIM chief proceeded on his onward journey to Bahraich. Owaisi has already announced that he would contest 100 seats in Uttar Pradesh. Owaisi, meanwhile, took on the Congress saying if the literacy level is low among Muslims, it is the Congress that is responsible. **AGENCIES**

## 7 more women join Modi's council of ministers

**NEW DELHI:** Seven more women members, including Meenakshi Lekhi, Shobha Karandlaje, Darshana Vikram Jardosh, Lekhi, Annpurna Devi, Pratima Bhoumik, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar and Apna Dal's Anupriya Singh Patel, joined the council of ministers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 7, taking the overall female strength to 11 which is one of the highest.

As many as 15 new cabinet ministers and 28 ministers of state were sworn in, taking the strength of the council of ministers to 78.

The seven women who took oath as ministers of state were Karandlaje, Darshana Vikram Jardosh, Lekhi, Annpurna Devi, Pratima Bhoumik, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar and Apna Dal's Anupriya Singh Patel.

Among them, three are first-time MPs while Patel is making a comeback to the council of ministers as she was the Union Minister of State for Health under Prime Minister Modi earlier. Nirmala Sitharaman, Smriti Irani (both Cabinet ministers),



Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti and Renuka Singh Saruta are already part of the Union council of ministers. Debashree Chaudhuri, Minister of State for Women and Child Development, resigned this morning.

There were nine women in the first Modi government from 2014-19, including six in the cabinet. Karandlaje, 54, is a Lok Sabha member from Udupi Chikmagalur in Karnataka and

is serving her second term in the Lower House. She has previously served as a cabinet minister in the Karnataka government, holding a range of portfolios like Food and Civil Supplies, Power, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj System.

Jardosh, 60, is a Lok Sabha member from Surat in Gujarat. She is serving her third term as an MP. She has also been a Corporator of Surat Municipal

Corporation and a member of the Gujarat Social Welfare Board. Lekhi, 54, is a Lok Sabha member from New Delhi and is serving her second term as an MP. She is a Supreme Court lawyer and social worker.

Devi, 51, is a first-time Lok Sabha MP from Kodarma in Jharkhand. She has also been a four-time MLA from Jharkhand and Bihar and has served as a cabinet minister in

the Jharkhand government. She also served as Minister of State for Mines and Geology in the Bihar government at the young age of 30. Bhoumik, 52, is a first-time Lok Sabha MP for Tripura West in Tripura. She comes from a humble background, and practices farming.

Pawar, 42, is also a first-time Lok Sabha member for Dindori in Maharashtra. She served as a member of Nashik Zila Parishad and worked for eradicating malnutrition and providing clean drinking water. Before joining politics, she was a medical practitioner. Patel, 40, is a two-time Lok Sabha member from Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh. As many as 43 ministers took oath in a major cabinet expansion-cum-reshuffle exercise on Wednesday evening. These included BJP's Sarbananda Sonowal, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Ajay Bhatt, Bhupender Yadav, Shantanu Thakur and Kapil Patil, and LJP's Pashupati Paras. **AGENCIES**

## Cabinet nod to APMCs availing finance from Rs 1 lakh cr agri-infra fund



**NEW DELHI:** APMC mandis will now be eligible to avail financial support from the Rs 1 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund to expand the regulated markets' capacity and provide better facilities to farmers, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Thursday.

Tomar also asserted that the decision to further strengthen the Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) allays protesting farmers' fear that these mandis will be scrapped with the implementation of three controversial agriculture laws.

This modification in the central scheme was approved in the cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday.

Briefing media about the cabinet decision, Tomar said: "During the Budget (2021-22), we had told that APMCs will not end, rather they would be strengthened further. Keeping that in mind, the Cabinet today decided to allow APMC to utilise the Rs 1 lakh crore financing facility under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)."

Stating that there was apprehension that APMCs will be abolished, the minister reiterated that these regulated mandis will not end. "After implementation of the three farm laws, APMC will get funds from this agri-infra fund." For APMCs, interest subvention for a loan up to Rs 2 crore will be provided for each project of different infrastructure types like cold storage, sorting, grading and assaying units and silos

within the same market yard, he added.

APMC markets are set up to provide market linkages and create an ecosystem of post-harvest public infrastructure open to all farmers. Not only APMCs, Tomar said the financial facility under this fund has been extended to state agencies, national and state federations, farmer producer organisations (FPOs) as well as federation of self-help groups (SHGs). So far, individuals, organisations, cooperatives, FPOs and agri-startups and farmers organisations were eligible to avail subvention of 3 per cent per annum for loans up to Rs 2 crore, he added.

Under the AIF, a medium to long-term debt financing facility is provided for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support. Among other changes in the scheme, the minister said that currently interest subvention for a loan up to Rs 2 crore in one location is eligible under the scheme.

"In case one eligible entity puts up projects in different locations, then all such projects will be now be eligible for interest subvention for loan up to Rs 2 crore," he said.

However, for a private sector entity, there will be a limit of a maximum of 25 such projects. However, this limitation will not be applicable to state agencies, national and state federations of cooperatives, federations of FPOs and federation of SHGs, he said. **AGENCIES**

## Maha CM announces 20,000 youth training in medical field



**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has announced a pioneering program of using manpower in the healthcare, nursing and paramedical fields — who are trained in 36 related courses — in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Titled the +Chief Minister Mega Health Skill Development Program+, it was launched here today by the Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar for meeting the urgent needs of the health sector in the wake of the pandemic.

Assuring maximum funds to the health department in this regard, Thackeray noted that the smooth functioning of medical facilities called for a trained workforce that could be ensured through this program, besides also providing jobs for youth in Maharashtra.

While around Rs 35 to 40 crore would be spent on this scheme, a provision of Rs 20 crore had been made with the remaining amount being provided soon, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said, adding that this program would ensure jobs for skilled people while also eradicating unemployment.

Maharashtra Minister for Skill Development, Nawab Malik said that with the Government setting a target of training 20,000 youth under this scheme, as many as

15,366 unemployed youth were provided jobs in June 2021 through various initiatives, besides the concerned Department announcing the RPL program to certify skilled candidates working in various fields. This program is expected to certify one lakh skilled candidates and the department has taken steps to provide employment alongside training the youth, Malik added.

This training program will be implemented jointly by the Maharashtra State Skill Development Society of the Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department to accelerate the «Health for All» policy by providing trained manpower in the healthcare sector.

The Public Health and Medical Education Department will be jointly conducting this program in which the trained workforce — comprising those interested in working in the health sector — will be deployed in 348 medical colleges, government hospitals and the best private hospitals that are notified as training centers in on-the-job training system.

The first phase will witness 5000 candidates being trained, besides training also being provided to candidates in hospitals having standard basic facilities at the local level. Meanwhile, youth interested in availing of this training scheme should register on the department portal <https://www.mahaswayam.gov.in> **AGENCIES**

## India affected by ship's direction: Shashi Tharoor's tweet on Cabinet reshuffle

**NEW DELHI:** Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor took a dig at the government over the Cabinet reshuffle, saying Indians are more affected by the seaworthiness of the ship and the direction it is sailing than by the arrangement of the chairs on the upper deck.

His remarks came a day after a major Union Cabinet makeover was effected with Prime Minister Narendra Modi dropping 12 ministers, including Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, IT and Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar, and bringing in Sarbananda Sonow-



al, Narayan Rane and Jyotiraditya Scindia along with 33 other new members to his government. A part from 15 Cabinet ministers, 28 Ministers of State, comprising new faces and those elevated, were sworn in at a ceremony, which was held in the Darbar Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. "Wishing the new Council of Ministers well in fulfilling their duties to the people. But Indians are more affected by the seaworthiness of the ship &

the direction it's sailing than by the arrangement of the chairs on the upper deck," Tharoor tweeted using the hashtag "CabinetReshuffle2021". Earlier in the day, the Congress took a dig at the Cabinet expansion in a tweet from its official Twitter handle.

"Those who used to shout slogans of "Minimum Government - Maximum Governance" till yesterday, those people are today working on the model of "Maximum Government - Minimum Governance". This expansion of the cabinet is not for the country but only a means to serve the interests of their respective parties," the Congress alleged. **AGENCIES**

## Indraprastha Apollo records 6 cases of cytomegalovirus infection in a month

**NEW DELHI:** Six persons have been diagnosed with cytomegalovirus (CMV) infection at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals in Delhi within 20 to 30 days of testing positive for coronavirus, officials said on Thursday.

All these patients admitted at Apollo had severe COVID 19 pneumonia in the preceding month, received high doses of steroids and had turned Covid negative at the time of detection of CMV disease, they said.

Cytomegalovirus infection is a common herpes virus infection with a wide range of symptoms: from no symptoms to fever and fatigue (resembling infectious mononucleosis) to severe symptoms involving the eyes, brain, or other internal organs. The cytomegalovirus (CMV) disease is usually found in patients with immunocompromised status like those who suffer from HIV, low CD4 counts, or are cancer post-transplant patients on immunosuppressive medicines etc.

Suppression of immunity due to COVID-19 and steroids gives CMV a chance to attack patients. The virus otherwise exists in 80-90 per cent of the Indian population in asymptomatic form due to inherent immunity. Dr Athar Ansari,



Consultant (Department of Respiratory, Critical Care and Sleep medicine), Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, said, "In the past month, we have detected CMV disease in six patients with post COVID-19 syndrome that came with varied manifestations. Symptoms of CMV depend on which part of the body it is affecting. If it has direct involvement of lungs, the patient will have a fever, difficulty in breathing, chest pain or cough."

The patients that were admitted to Apollo after 20-30 days of testing COVID-19 positive were detected with conditions like hypoxia, inflammation in the lungs and liver, and one of them was a known case of acute myeloid leukaemia, he said. CMV colitis is a known en-

ty. Although more common in immunocompromised, it has been reported in immunocompetent patients earlier as well. CMV is an opportunistic infection that preys on low immunity, and COVID-19 is capable of severe immune suppression, the doctor added.

The reason for the activation of the CMV virus in these patients could be the COVID 19-induced immunosuppression and high dose steroid therapy, said Dr Avdhesh Bansal, Senior Consultant, Department of Respiratory, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine, Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals. CMV disease can have varied presentations and a high index of suspicion is required to make the diagnosis among COVID-19 patients with persistent symptoms not responding to treatment, he said. **PTI**

## First Zika virus case reported in Kerala

**KERALA:** In the first case of Zika virus in Kerala, a 24-year-old pregnant woman has been diagnosed with the mosquito transmitted disease, State Health Minister Veena George said on Thursday.

There are 13 other suspected cases of the virus from Thiruvananthapuram, the minister told PTI, adding the government was awaiting confirmation from the National Institute of Virology (NIV) at Pune.

Of the 19 samples sent from Thiruvananthapuram, 13 health workers, including doctors, are suspected to be positive for Zika, the minister said.

The woman, hailing from Parassalain Thiruvananthapuram district, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital here, delivered her baby on July 7. She had been admitted to the hospital on June 28 with fever, headache and red marks on her body. The tests conducted at the hospital confirmed that she was positive following which her samples were sent to NIV, Pune. The condition of the woman was satisfactory. Though she does not have any travel history outside the state, her house is on the Tamil Nadu border. A week ago, her mother had also shown similar symptoms, a government release added. The symptoms of Zika are similar to dengue including fever, skin rashes and joint pain. **AGENCIES**



## Social justice outfit members stage protest in Mumbai over Stan Swamy's death

**MUMBAI:** Members of a social justice campaign committee on Wednesday alleged the death of Elgar Parishad case accused Stan Swamy in judicial custody was an "institutional murder" and staged a protest over the issue here.

The Joint Action Committee for Social Justice - Maharashtra and Bhima Koregaon Shaurya Din Prerna Abhiyan - claimed there was a well-planned conspiracy to suppress dissenting voices.

Its members staged the protest at Dadar over the death of Swamy, a Jesuit priest and tribal rights activist.

Swamy, 84, who was in judicial custody in the Elgar



Parishad-Maoist links case and facing charges under the anti-terror act UAPA, died on Monday while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in suburban Bandra. "In a chilling and cold-

blooded manner Father Stan Swamy has been institutionally murdered by the fascist Brahminical state," the committee alleged in a press release.

"Fr Stan had been a lifelong human rights activist, a tribal leader, an academician, an intellectual and a loved Jesuit," it said.

The release, citing a report by a US-based digital forensics firm, claimed it highlights "the malicious role of the fascist BJP/RSS-ruled state in planting false evidence against the Bhima Koregaon accused".

Father Stan's death should serve as a wake-up call for the country's criminal justice system, it added. **AGENCIES**

## NCP leader Khadse appears before ED in money laundering case probe

**MUMBAI:** Former Maharashtra revenue minister and NCP leader Eknath Khadse on Thursday appeared before the Enforcement Directorate here in a money laundering case investigation, a day after his son-in-law was arrested by the federal agency.

Khadse, 68, told reporters outside the Enforcement Directorate (ED) zonal office in Ballard Estate area of south Mumbai that the probe in the case is "politically motivated".

"I will cooperate with the agency...today also I have come for the same. This is a politically motivated case and entire Maharashtra and the country is seeing this." "Inquiry has been done



five times in this case. How many times will they do it?" he said.

The agency had summoned Khadse to depose and record his statement

after it arrested his son-in-law Girish Chaudhari on Wednesday in the case that is linked to a 2016 instance of an alleged government land grab case in Pune.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader who left the BJP to join the Sharad Pawar-led party last year has been once questioned by the ED in this case in January this year. The ED case stems from a Pune police anti-corruption bureau (ACB) FIR filed against Khadse, his wife Mandakini and Chaudhari in April 2017.

The agency claimed that alleged irregularities in the land deal caused a loss of Rs 61.25 crore to the exchequer "by fraudulently entering into a sale deed". **AGENCIES**



## GST Council must act to help revive economy

Entering its fifth year, India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) system reported a blip in revenue collections for June, breaking an eight-month streak of over Rs1-lakh crore in tax receipts. GST revenues tanked to a tad less than Rs93,000 crore last month — the lowest in 10 months — after a record Rs1.41-lakh crore in April and a relatively tepid Rs1.02-lakh crore in May. Generally, the June revenue reflects transactions that occurred in May. With the second wave of the pandemic in full flourish and States enforcing rigorous restrictions on most activities in May, the numbers are not really surprising. However, as May GST compliance dates for smaller taxpayers were extended till early July, some of this revenue also reflects April's sales. Thus, the actual GST income attributable to May's economic activity would be lower than June's gross GST kitty. Despite the slowdown in May-June, GST collections in the Q1 of 2021-22 have been healthier than pre-pandemic levels, confirming that this year's restrictions driven by States have inflicted less economic costs than the national lockdown at a few hours' notice, in 2020. While the second wave setbacks have shaken up business and consumer sentiment, average monthly revenues of over Rs1-lakh crore — which Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has termed the 'new normal' for GST — could perhaps sustain through the year, if there is no dramatic resurgence of the pandemic and vaccinations are ramped up as promised. This should give some fiscal breathing room for the Centre and States, but neither can afford to sit back. Structural corrections in the GST regime and the inclusion of petroleum and electricity may take longer, but there is enough that needs immediate attention. The GST Council must be reconvened soon to take up ideas to prod the economy's rebound. Act now or it will be too late.



ARGENTINA MATAVEL PICCIN EXPLORES HOW INDIA TOUCHES A DEMOGRAPHIC MILESTONE BUT ROADBLOCKS REMAIN

## Challenging negative social norms



In these troubled times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Population Day on July 11 brings some positive news — India has entered a demographic sweet spot that will continue for another two to three decades. Half of India's population is under 29 years of age, which means that in this period, a greater proportion of young people will drive India's economic growth and social progress. So, they must not only be healthy, knowledgeable and skilled but must also be provided with the rights and choices to develop to their fullest potential, including, and especially, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission (Starrs et al, 2018) in looking at how to improve SRHR in populations formulated a comprehensive definition of SRHR that encompasses a broader range of issues. These include SRHR and issues such as violence, stigma and respect for bodily autonomy, which greatly impact the psychological, emotional and social well-being of individuals.

### Developmental goals

India's population growth is now stabilising. The decline in overall fertility notwithstanding, the population will continue to grow because of the effect of 'population momentum'. It is like a Jumbo Jet that has started to descend but will take some distance to stop. The Total Fertility Rate (TFR), presently at 2.2 children, will soon reach replacement level (2.1). However, the TFR remains higher than the national average of 2.2 children among women who live in rural areas, have little formal education and are in the lowest income quintile — a majority of them live in the poorer States.

Changing social norms is one of the biggest challenges for India to address the needs of the next generation. For example, India's population stabilisation strategy must be adjusted keeping in mind the rights of women and girls. Women must have a greater say in choosing their family size. Prescriptive or coercive methods, such as one- or two-child norms, have rarely worked well anywhere for long. It

goes without saying that for women and girls, the empowerment to make choices leads to better health outcomes, such as knowing how to prevent unintended pregnancy or giving birth with the help of a skilled birth attendant.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed weaknesses in healthcare systems and has led to serious gaps and challenges in the provision of information and services on sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Even before the pandemic, pervasive negative social norms, health system barriers and gender inequality hindered universal access to SRHR as envisioned under the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). On World Population Day this year, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India recognises that even if health systems are understandably strained, the provision of these services cannot wait. Any further delays will curtail the health and well-being of women and girls, the consequences of which can last a lifetime.

In the last two decades, India has made substantial gains with SRH indicators. Progressive policies for maternal health have resulted in improved rates of institutional delivery and a decline in maternal mortality

ratio (MMR) from 327 in 1999-2001 to 113 per 100,000 live births in 2016-18, as per Sample Registration System (SRS) data.

There have also been significant shifts in family planning in the past decade, and data from the National Health Family Survey 5 for the year 2019-20 (NFHS-5) show how contraceptive prevalence has improved in most States. We ought to celebrate India's success, as it significantly contributes to global progress.

The current government, with programmes such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), has made some efforts to challenge existing social norms and has underlined that investments in social causes must go alongside economic progress. All sections of society must embrace this call for positive change, each doing their part, from the individual to the institution level. The UNFPA is keen to take India's success models and strengthen the South-South Collaboration further.

### Poor indicators

But success is hard-earned and never assured. There are many challenges on the path to 2030, the goalpost for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two million adolescent girls (15-19 years) each year had a pregnancy, and

of these, nearly 63% were unwanted or unintended (Guttmacher Institute, 2021). This points to inadequate information and access to SRH services for this age group. In girls aged 15-19 years, 22.2% had an unmet need for contraception, according to NFHS-4.

Girls are still marrying too young — 26.8% of women aged 20-24 years are married before they turn 18, often having their first child within the first year of marriage. Far too many girls and women face gender-based violence and harmful practices that are socially sanctioned. All of these practices are rooted in social norms, beliefs and practices that deny women their bodily autonomy.

India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries, becoming the third-worst performer in South Asia in The World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report (2021). Time to achieve the ambitious targets of the SDGs is running out. India must hence choose its priorities carefully. Our analysis seems to suggest that placing youth, women and girls at the centre of policymaking and services could trigger a positive ripple effect. If young people, and adolescent girls in particular, have access to education, relevant skills, information and services to make healthy choices, including related to SRH, are empowered to exercise their rights, and have access to opportunities for employment, then India will be on a clear path to achieve its goals.

What research and practical experience show is that when women can make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health, and when they have access to services to support their choices, societies are healthier and more productive. A woman who has control over her body gains not only in terms of autonomy but also through advances in health, education, income and safety. She is more likely to thrive, and so is her family. The UNFPA calls upon stakeholders to help build a new set of social norms to drive this mission.

The author is Representative, UNFPA India and Country Director, UNFPA Bhutan. Views are personal.

## FIVE OBSERVATIONS

### NARENDRA MODI'S CABINET REBOOT

- 1 MODI'S STYLE**  
Narendra Modi has rearranged his cabinet, but the changes give no indication of a meaningful sharing of power. Within the trappings of a parliamentary democracy.
- 2 A CAPABILITY CHECK**  
It is however true that Dr Harsh Vardhan did little to suggest he was capable of leading a coherent strategy or effort against the Coronavirus, particularly in the second wave.
- 3 CABINET OVER CORONA**  
Instead, of trying to increase the supply of oxygen, life-saving drugs and quick fixes on medical infrastructure, Modi singled out Opposition states like Maharashtra and Rajasthan.
- 4 A LINE IN THE SAND**  
Modi has clinically drawn a line in the sand and responded to public anger over the ghastly handling. While the Prime Minister's Office was a huge part of Covid decision-making.
- 5 COVID MISMANAGEMENT**  
The foreign press has been fiercely attacking the Modi Government on Covid mismanagement and the alleged attempts to restrict the freedoms offered by a democracy.



AAGAM JAIN ON WHY THE GUIDELINES LAID DOWN BY THE SUPREME COURT REQUIRE ROBUST SYSTEMS.

## A long road for migrant workers



The Supreme Court on June 29 pronounced its judgment in the migrant labourers case. The case was initiated last year after the national lockdown was announced on March 24. Thousands of landless labourers had started walking towards their home States due to the loss of employment and income. The Supreme Court took cognisance of the matter on May 26 that year and acknowledged the plight of the workers in light of the strict lockdown.

The court has laid down numerous guidelines to provide relief to workers and efficiently tackle the problem till the threat of COVID-19 subsides. Two of the most important components to protect the migrants during this time were the food and travel arrangements insisted on by the court. In the orders pronounced in May this year, it laid down that dry ration be provided to migrants who want to return to their homes. Further, the court said that identity proof should not be insisted upon by the governments since the labourers might not be able to furnish it. Secondly, the court called upon the State governments to arrange transportation for workers who need to return to their homes. These guidelines by the court are crucial to ensure the safety of workers.

The Supreme Court fixed July 31 as the deadline for the States to implement the

'One nation One Ration Card' scheme. Under this scheme, the States are to complete the registration of migrant workers in order to provide dry ration to them. But it is unlikely that a standardised system can be developed within the deadline prescribed by the court.

Apart from dry ration, the top court also directed the State governments to run community kitchens for migrant workers. However, there arise administrative problems in implementing these measures. First, migrant workers keep moving in search of employment and it is difficult to

cover them all under the scheme. Second, many States do not have the necessary infrastructure to run and maintain community kitchens on such a large scale.

### Important directives

Under the National Food Security Act, migrant workers are issued ration cards and they are entitled to dry ration under various government programmes, such as the Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme, during the pandemic. In the order passed on June 29, the court affirmed the Right to Food under Article 21 of the Constitution. In

furtherance of this, the court asked the States to formulate their own schemes and issue food grains to migrants. This is an indispensable step to keep more than a fourth of the population of the country safe and healthy during the pandemic.

However, there are no normative data that would allow the States to identify eligible migrants. The court took cognisance of the issue and directed the Ministry of Labour and Employment to ensure that the National Database for Unorganised Workers is updated by July 31. Finally, the top court recognised the need for direct cash benefit transfer to workers in the unorganised sector. But it did not issue any guidelines for the same as the workers need to be covered by the States themselves.

The Supreme Court has given a purposive declaration in the case but the bulk of the judgment seems declaratory rather than mandatory. In order to efficaciously implement the orders of the court, the State governments need to work with the Centre closely. With the third wave of COVID-19 infections looming, it is imperative to ensure that government machinery works to its full potential and robust systems are developed to withstand the challenges.

Aagam Jain is a II-year student at National Law School of India University, Bengaluru. Views are personal.

## BOOKS: REVIEW

## The tale of Indian Army's brave mission in Africa

Some of the little-known details of 'Operation Khukri' — the Indian Army's peacekeeping mission in the jungles of Africa — will be told in a first-hand account by author Major General Rajpal Punia, slated to release on July 15.

Operation Khukri: The untold story of Indian Army's bravest peacekeeping mission abroad, published by Penguin Random House India (PRHI), is the story of the Indian Army's successful rescue mission of over 200 India peacekeepers who were sent to Sierra Leone in year 2000 by United Nations to help the government there in tackling Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group. July 13 marks the 21st anniversary of the operation. The book is co-written by Major General Punia and his daughter Damini Punia. Punia, who was then the CO of

the 58th Gorkha Rifles, orchestrated the operation, survived the ambush of the RUF in a prolonged jungle warfare twice, and returned with all 233 soldiers.

"Operation Khukri is a story of survival, courage and immense love for the motherland. The book Operation Khukri is symbolic of my duty towards the soldiers who I led into battle in a far-off land against an unknown enemy," Punia, who was decorated with the Yudh Seva Medal in 2002, told PTI.

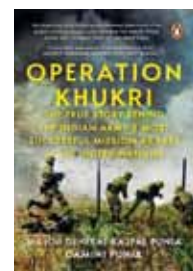
"It will give you an insight into how a soldier's life unfolds, how children long for their fathers, how 233 soldiers faced death without food for close to three months and ultimately chose to die fighting than of hunger," he added. In 2000, Sierra Leone, in West Africa, ravaged by years of civil war saw an intervention by the UN, and the two companies of the Indian Army

It will give you an insight into how a soldier's life unfolds, how children long for their fathers, how 233 soldiers faced death without food for close to three months and ultimately chose to die fighting than of hunger

were deployed in Kailahun as part of a UN peacekeeping mission.

Soon, the peaceful mission turned into a war-like stand-off between Punia's company and the RUF rebels in Kailahun, with the Indian peacekeepers cordoned off for 75 days without supplies.

"The only way home, they were told by the RUF, was by laying



Operation Khukri By Major General Rajpal Punia & Damini Punia; Penguin Random House; 304 pages; Rs399

down their weapons," reads the book. According to Damini, the book is indeed a restructuring of Punia's memories and an "attempt to highlight the courage and valour of every soldier donning the olive-green uniform in India".

"It is truly unfortunate that people are not aware of an operation that transpired a year after the Kargil War, an operation where soldiers chose death over cowardice, dignity over two meals and honour over freedom," she writes in the introduction. The book, a maiden attempt by the father-daughter duo as authors, is dedicated to Havildar Krishan Kumar, Sena Medal (posthumous), the only gallant warrior India lost in the operation.

Maj. Gen. Rajpal Punia who led

the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, West Africa, from the front, cowrote it with his daughter Damini. Punia, Chief of Staff HQ Delhi, was then the CO of the 58th Gorkha Rifles, sent to Sierra Leone to help the local government disarm the notorious rebels who had captured 223 UN peacekeepers. The book brings to fore the historical rescue operation.

In 2002, he was awarded the prestigious Yudh Seva Medal by the President of India. For Gurveen Chadha, Senior Commissioning Editor, Penguin Random House, Operation Khukri is the true account of one of the most daring missions of the Indian Army on foreign soil, yet most people are unaware of it even though it transpired months after the Kargil War.

"That is what attracted me to the story first and foremost. And as the man spearheading the operations, there could be no one better to put the story together than Maj. Gen. Punia. The courage and tenacity displayed by him and his soldiers is testimony to why the Indian Armed Forces are regarded as one of the best in the world," says her daughter.

**THE FINANCIAL WORLD**

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## NEWSBRIEF

**Bharti Airtel deploys additional 28.2 MHz spectrum in UP**

**NEW DELHI:** Share price of Bharti Airtel edged lower by more than one per cent on Tuesday, June 29, a day after the telecom operator announced that it added an additional 28.2 MHz spectrum in Uttar Pradesh, in order to boost the network capacity for offering high-speed data services. On Tuesday, Bharti Airtel opened on the BSE at Rs 531.20, inching to an intra-day high of Rs 532.25 and an intra-day low of Rs 524, throughout the trading session today. According to news agency PTI, the telecom operator said that it is ready for 5G technology. With the latest spectrum addition, Bharti Airtel claims that it now has the largest spectrum bank of 72.2 MHz in the country's most populated state. **AGENCIES**

**Reliance Jio, Google collaborate in Cloud Partnership to boost 5G plans in India**

**NEW DELHI:** Alphabet Inc's Google is forging a cloud partnership with India's Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, helping the country's biggest wireless carrier with tech solutions for its enterprise and consumer offerings as it plans to launch 5G services. The tie-up lends Jio the expertise of a global tech giant as it expands digital services to small and medium businesses as well as hundreds of millions of individual customers. And it gives Google the unmatched scale of Reliance whose new-age businesses range from telecoms to e-commerce. Jio is part of tycoon billionaire Mukesh Ambani's oil-to-retail conglomerate Reliance Industries. "It's a broad partnership, it involves multiple pieces of Alphabet working together," Thomas Kurian, Chief Executive Officer at Google Cloud, told Reuters in an interview ahead of Reliance's annual shareholders meeting on Thursday. **AGENCIES**

**Saudi Aramco Chief Yasir Al-Rumayyan to join Reliance Industries' Board**

**MUMBAI:** Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani said on Thursday that Saudi Aramco Chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan will join the RIL board as an independent director. "Continued engagement and resolve from both sides, even during this pandemic, is a testimony of strong relationship between Saudi Aramco and Reliance. I expect our partnership to be formalised in an expeditious manner this year," said Ambani at RIL's 44th annual general meeting held virtually. In August 2019, he had announced commencement of talks for selling 20 per cent stake in RIL's O2C business to Aramco, the biggest oil exporter in the world. The non-binding letter of intent signed between the two had put the value of business at 75 billion dollars. Ambani said Saudi Aramco chief's presence on RIL board is the beginning of 'internationalisation of Reliance.' **AGENCIES**

## Billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani's in a new face-off

**NEW DELHI:** Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani's \$10 billion entry into renewable energy could drive solar tariffs further to the ground and ignite bidding wars with fellow billionaire Gautam Adani, industry analysts say.

India's two richest men are vying to be at the forefront of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambition to ramp up green energy capacity in the world's second-most populous country more than four-fold to 450 gigawatts (GW) by 2030.

They have mostly avoided operating in each other's space, and the renewable energy push by Ambani's flagship Reliance Industries and the Adani group of companies will be the highest profile faceoff between them.

Ambani, 64, built up his family-owned petrochemicals and textiles business into a sprawling empire including telecoms and retail. Adani, 59, is a self-made billionaire who has focused on electricity generation, transmission and distribution and the operation of ports and airports.

The two billionaires—and Modi—are all from the western



Indian state of Gujarat.

Ambani announced last month he will build 100 GW in solar energy capacity over the next nine years.

He said his group would spend \$10 billion over the next three years in building solar manufacturing units, a battery factory for energy storage, a fuel cell factory, and a unit to produce green hydrogen.

Three days later, Adani announced that his green energy venture would add 5 GW every year this decade, from a current level of about 3.5 GW.

Analysts say there is suffi-

cient space for multiple companies to grow as a part of India's ambitious green energy target, but tariffs could fall further as companies try to outdo each other in aggressive bidding wars to win projects.

Solar tariffs in India are already among the lowest in the world, having fallen below 2 Indian rupees (\$0.0269) per kilowatt hour in auctions conducted in Gujarat.

"I would expect by 2030 that they (solar tariffs) will probably touch 1 rupee per kilowatt hour," said Tim Buckley, director of energy finance

studies at the Institute of Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Reliance has a track record of disrupting rival businesses.

With cheap smartphones and data plans, its telecom venture Jio has in five years dethroned market leaders Vodafone Idea and Bharti Airtel to become the largest telecom operator in India.

**COAL POWER MAY DECLINE**

Both Ambani and Adani have built businesses based on fossil fuels. Reliance runs the world's biggest refining complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat while Adani is India's largest private sector operator of coal-fired thermal stations and the country's largest coal trader.

India is the world's third biggest emitter of greenhouse gases. Coal-based power generation could drop dramatically as the major players go green, analysts say.

Rishab Shrestha, senior analyst at consultancy Wood Mackenzie said he expects India's coal generation share to drop to 50% in early 2030s from over 70% currently. **AGENCIES**

## Working women, Gen Z vulnerable to Covid turbulence: LinkedIn

**NEW DELHI:** India's hiring rate recovered moderately from 10 per cent in April to 35 per cent in May, but working women and young professionals still remain vulnerable to economic turbulence and burnout is a reality, according to LinkedIn, the global professional networking platform.

Releasing new data on Tuesday, LinkedIn said working women are four times less confident than their male counterparts about getting a job. And the average time taken for new graduates to find jobs has increased from two to over three months.

As India slowly recovers from the second Covid wave, the workforce is beset with economic uncertainty, coupled with low confidence and optimism levels about their professional future, according to LinkedIn data.

Commenting on how 'remote work' (working from home) is here to stay, LinkedIn stated that it offered "a glimmer of hope to new graduates, women professionals, and the future workforce." A little more than seven in 10 companies in India are keen on moving to a completely remote setup. The proportion of entry-level



jobs labelled as 'remote' has increased by nine times between 2020 and 2021. The demand for IT talent continues to surge. Application developers, software engineers and SAP specialists are the top three most in-demand professionals today. Knowledge of SQL and JavaScript is the most sought-after skillset on LinkedIn.

Even as digital transformation continues to shape the industrial landscape, sectors such as finance, corporate services and manufacturing have seen a growth in hiring, thanks to the resumption of economic activity, the LinkedIn data showed. More than nine in 10 companies in India, however, are merging roles and looking to fill open roles internally.

A worrying aspect of the LinkedIn report is the finding that India's workforce has slowly but surely arrived at the brink of a collective burnout. This sentiment reflects strongly across the rising demand for flexibility in India as every second job-seeker prioritises location, hours and work-life balance when looking for a job today. India's overall workforce confidence has declined after peaking in early March, according to the report.

The aftermath of the second Covid-19 wave has left professionals in India — particularly Gen Z and working women — increasingly vulnerable to the economic uncertainty in the job market, the LinkedIn study revealed. **AGENCIES**

## 9 in 10 Indians feel digital wallets have made shopping easier

**BENGALURU:** As online shopping grows multifold amid the pandemic in the country, nine in 10 Indians strongly believe that digital wallets have made shopping easier and a vast majority (98 per cent) of those surveyed have shopped at an online-only retailer in the past 12 months, a new global report showed on Wednesday.

The survey by from global payment's provider Blackhawk Network found, which mined the views of 13,000 global shoppers, also found that 69 per cent of respondents will shop more frequently at retailers that accept digital payments.

India has emerged as a forerunner in mobile commerce adoption in comparison to its global counterparts.

Over 54 per cent of the respondents said they will spend more money if they can use digital payment methods. The findings showed that 93 per cent of Indian respondents prefer using digital wallets regularly as compared to their global counterparts' average of 55 per cent.

"The pandemic has intensified the demand for digital wallets as contactless payment is reckoned as the new normal. India being a very high cash-driven market, the digital payment industry is still very nascent, yet fast-evolving," said Theresa McEndree, global



head of marketing, Blackhawk Network.

"As we start to hit more of a stride in our economic recovery, the winners will be the merchants that cater to the everyday digital payment preferences of today's shopper," McEndree said in a statement.

The Indian consumers are increasingly embracing innovative ways of transacting using their mobile devices.

Compared to other countries, India leads by a margin when it comes to frequent usage of all given digital payment methods — PayPal, digital wallets, peer-to-peer apps, and barcodes or QR codes.

Contactless payment innovations like QR codes are keeping Indian businesses moving. QR codes, or barcodes on a mobile

device, were being used more frequently at grocery stores and online-only retailers.

"On average, the likelihood of scanning a QR in India is greater than in any other country. Twenty per cent of Indian respondents used a QR code or barcode for the first time during the pandemic, and 69 per cent report using them more frequently," the survey noted.

In India, usage of peer-to-peer payment apps is almost as common as online-only retailers (49 per cent) as it is at grocery stores (44 per cent) and department stores (41 per cent).

India, however, ranked lowest (13 per cent) among all countries in choosing 'secure checkout process' as the most important factor when making a payment. **AGENCIES**

## Flipkart eliminates single-use plastic packaging throughout supply chain

**BENGALURU (KARNATAKA):** E-commerce marketplace Flipkart said it has eliminated all single-use plastic packaging used across fulfillment centres in India, delivering on its public commitment to move to plastic-free packaging by 2021.

This has been achieved across more than 70 facilities where Flipkart has introduced sustainable

alternatives like eco-friendly paper shreds, replaced poly pouches with recycled paper bags, replaced bubble wraps with carton waste shredded material and 2 ply roll.

Flipkart said it is now actively working with seller partners who fulfil customer orders directly from their locations to educate them and enable them to move towards alternative materials.

Hemant Badri, Senior Vice-President and Head of Supply Chain at Flipkart, said the company places great emphasis on sustainable and responsible business practices.

"Moving towards 100 per cent single-use plastic elimination is one of the significant steps we have taken towards fulfilling our commitment to creating a sustainable ecosystem," he said. **AGENCIES**

## Samsung expects record \$11 billion profit in Q2 on robust chip biz

**SEOUL:** Samsung Electronics on Wednesday expected market estimate-beating second quarter earnings as its semiconductor business apparently offset a tepid performance from its mobile business.

In its earnings guidance, the South Korean tech giant estimated its operating profit at 12.5 trillion won (\$11 billion) for the April-June period, up 53.4 percent from a year ago. Its second-quarter operating income estimate beat the market consensus of 11.2 trillion won in a survey by Yonhap Infomax, the financial arm of Yonhap News Agency that surveyed 15 local brokerage houses last month.

Samsung projected its second-quarter sales at 63 trillion won, up 19 percent from a year earlier. The figure is also above the market consensus of 61.3 trillion won. Should the preliminary earnings results stand,



it will announce the detailed earnings later this month. Analysts here believe Samsung's semiconductor business led the company's second-quarter performance. They earlier predicted Samsung's chip business would post more than 6.5 trillion won in operating profit for the second quarter, nearly double from the first quarter. "With the expanded growth of memory chip prices, losses from its Austin fab should be reduced compared with the first quarter," said Lee Jae-yun, an analyst at Yuanta Securities. Samsung suffered a monthlong shutdown of its chip fabrication plant in Austin, Texas, after a severe snowstorm caused power and water outages in February. It went back to full operations in April, but the company reported more than 300 billion won in losses. **AGENCIES**

## Amazon announces Prime Day sale on July 26-27 in India



**NEW DELHI:** Amazon announced that it is all set for its annual Prime Day event in India on July 26 and 27 that will deliver deals and savings across categories, including smartphones, consumer electronics, TVs, appliances, etc.

It will also include Amazon devices, fashion and beauty products, home and kitchen, furniture, everyday essentials and more to Prime members, along with new launches, entertainment benefits and much more.

Through the two-day event, the company will continue its efforts to empower and support lakhs of Small and Medium Businesses (SMBs) to bounce back from the economic disruption owing to the second wave of Covid-19.

"We dedicate this Prime Day to lakhs of SMB sellers on Amazon.in. We are humbled by their resilience, and grateful for the opportunity to support their rebound during these hard times," Amit Agarwal, SVP & Country Manager, Amazon India, said in a statement.

"We are also excited to offer our Prime members a unique opportunity to discover joy with two days of the best deals and savings, hundreds of new product launches, blockbuster entertainment and more, all from the safety and convenience of their homes," Agarwal added.

Prime members can shop from millions of unique products offered by SMBs and avail offers. **AGENCIES**

## Airtel Xstream Fiber launches 'Secure Internet' at Rs 99/month

**NEW DELHI:** To help users stay away from cyber threats while working online, Airtel Xstream Fiber launched a highly relevant online service—'Secure Internet'—that blocks malware (including viruses), high-risk websites and apps in real-time.

The online service is available for all Airtel Xstream Fiber customers, for a monthly subscription of Rs 99.

The company said that it can block these activities in real-time by leveraging Airtel's network security apparatus for all devices connected to the Airtel Xstream Fiber, through Wi-Fi.

"We, at Airtel, are obsessed with making digital experiences for our customers better



and safer through innovation. Work and children's studies have all gone online with the pandemic," Shashwat Sharma, Chief Marketing Officer, Bharti Airtel, said in a statement.

"Along with the speed and reliability of broadband, security is now a key requirement for customers. Secure Internet is an easy to activate and highly

effective solution for making the internet, safer for our customers," Sharma added.

'Secure Internet' offers multiple security modes for varying customer needs, from remote working to online classes.

With its Child Safe and Study Modes, customers can block websites and applications with unwanted, adult/graphic content not suitable for children.

India saw a 300 per cent spike in cyber-attacks during 2020 as per data compiled by CERT-In.

Around 59 per cent of Indian adults have been a victim of cybercrime in the past 12 months, according to the sixth annual Norton Cyber Safety Insights report. **AGENCIES**

## Sumitomo Group to buy Fullerton India for \$2.5 bn

**MUMBAI:** Diversified Japanese conglomerate Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group inked an agreement with Singapore-based Fullerton Financial Services Holdings to acquire its non-banking arm Fullerton India Credit Company in a reported \$2.5-billion deal. Fullerton Financial Services is a fully owned subsidiary of Singaporean investment giant Temasek Holdings.

The Japanese acquirer did not disclose the deal value in the public statement, but market sources said Sumitomo will pay around \$2 billion for the 74.9% stake it is buying in the first leg of the two-legged deal, and another \$500 million-plus for the remaining stake to take the ownership to 100%.

Fullerton India Credit Company started India operations in 2007 and has since grown

across 600 towns and over 58,000 villages with 629 branches and employs over 13,000.

At the current exchange rate, the deal value is about Rs 18,550 crore. Fullerton India Credit Company is a non-banking lender and is wholly owned by Fullerton Holdings.

It started India operations in 2007 and has since grown across 600 towns and over 58,000 villages with 629 branches and employs over 13,000 and serves 2.3 million retail and small business borrowers.

The two-legged deal involves Sumitomo buying 74.9% in the Mumbai-based Fullerton India Credit Company — subject to regulatory approvals — and later the remaining stake, Sumitomo and Fullerton said in a joint statement. **AGENCIES**

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL), a non-deposit taking housing finance company, into wholesale and retail funding, has announced the issue of secured, rated, listed, redeemable, non-convertible debentures of the face value of Rs. 1,000 each ("Secured NCDs").

The Tranche I Issue, which opens on July 12, 2021 and closes on July 23, 2021, has a base issue size of Rs. 200 crore with an option to retain oversubscription up to Rs 800 crore, aggregating up to Rs.

1,000 crore. The NCDs are proposed to be listed on BSE and NSE.

Highlighting the role of technology in reshaping the lending scenario, Jairam Sridharan, CEO, Piramal Retail Finance, said that a healthy traction is being witnessed across product categories and the company is adding new products in every quarter, besides its seven businesses including retail lending, housing, digital loans, used car and two-wheeler loans.

Rajesh Laddha, CFO, Piramal Group, said that the company's revenues and net profit had witnessed grown CAGR of 22% in



the last 33 years with a strengthened balance sheet, raised long-term capital on Pharma etc. "We have strengthened our equity and debt front over the last two years," he said, adding that the

company has been able to pay back the shareholders an amount of US \$ 1 billion over the last 10 years.

Describing the company's core strengths as: totally-owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises Limited, strong balance sheet, diversified funding services, new age stack to help in delivering solutions, Laddha said the company had anticipated the pandemic in 2020 by making a one-time processing of Rs 1,900 crores, though AUM and Revenues had been flat.

PCHFL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Piramal Enterprises Lim-

ited ("PEL"), which is the flagship company of the Piramal Group, registered as a non-deposit taking housing finance company with the National Housing Bank (NHB).

Piramal began its financial services in 2010 with the setup of Piramal Finance Ltd (PFL) and built a lending platform to serve the needs of corporate and individual customers. While its retail housing finance highlights housing loans for retail customers and other retail lending products, the company has also entered into business partnerships with fintech's and other

consumer focused entities of strategic significance to optimize its vision of multi-product digital lending.

The company has pivoted its business strategy from focusing on large ticket affluent home loans to the prime segment of affordable housing loans and mass affluent housing loans. Its retail housing portfolio has grown from Rs 1,32,618 lakh in Fiscal 2018 (constituting 4% of our loan book) to Rs 4,43,127 lakh as of Fiscal 2021 (constituting 13.7% of our loan book) in a short span of three years.. **AGENCIES**



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# GST revenue slips below Rs 1 lakh cr in June, hits 10-mth low of Rs 92,849 crore

**NEW DELHI:** GST collection slipped below Rs 1 lakh crore in June for the first time in eight months as the second wave of the Covid pandemic and the resultant lockdowns hit businesses and the economy.

At Rs 92,849 crore, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection is the lowest in 10 months since August 2020, when it was Rs 86,449 crore, official numbers released Tuesday showed.

The GST collections in June 2021 are primarily for supplies made in May — a month when most states were under different levels of lockdown, reducing business activity.

With significant relaxations in lockdown and business supplies picking up, the collections should see a definite uptick in the coming months, experts said. The gross GST revenue collected in the month of June 2021 is Rs 92,849 crore, of which Central GST is Rs 16,424 crore, State GST is Rs 20,397 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 49,079 crore (including Rs 25,762 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is Rs 6,949 crore (including Rs 809 crore collected on import of goods), the finance ministry said.



**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The GST collection for June 2021 is related to the business transactions made during May 2021. During May 2021, most of the states/UTs were under either complete or partial lockdown due to COVID.
- This will buffer the revenue situation of the Centre and the states, which should support a ramping up of expenditure going ahead.

The mop-up in June 2021 is 2 per cent higher than Rs 90,917 crore collected in June 2020. GST collection had remained above the Rs 1 lakh crore mark

for eight months in a row and was Rs 1.02 lakh crore in May. However, the collection in June 2021 dropped below Rs 1 lakh crore.

2021 is related to the business transactions made during May 2021. During May 2021, most of the states/UTs were under either complete or partial lockdown due to COVID," the ministry added. It said that e-way bill generation data for the month of June suggests that uptick in revenue is expected in the coming months.

The e-way bills generated during June 2021 has gone up to 5.5 crore, indicating recovery of trade and business, up from 3.99 crore in May. As many as 5.88 crore e-way bill were generated in April.

"With reduction in caseload and easing of lockdowns, the e-way bills generated during June 2021 are 5.5 crore which indicates recovery of trade and business...it is expected that while the GST revenues have dipped during the month of June, the revenues will see an increase again from July 2021 onwards," the ministry added.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said despite declining to a 10-month low, the June 2021 GST collections provided a positive surprise. "Overall, the GST collections

in Q1 FY2022 are nearly twice as high as Q1 FY2021, highlighting the narrower impact of the state-wise restrictions necessitated by the second wave of Covid-19 in India, as compared to the stringent nationwide lockdown last year. This will buffer the revenue situation of the Centre and the states, which should support a ramping up of expenditure going ahead," Nayar added.

Deloitte India Senior Director M S Mani said while the collections are lower than Rs 1 lakh crore which had become the norm for the past few months, considering the fact that it relates to transactions in May 2021 which was badly impacted by the pandemic, it would be considered as a very satisfactory collection.

EY Tax Partner Abhishek Jain said the collections are for the supplies made in the month of May, where several parts of the country were under the lockdown, so this dip is on the expected lines. With significant relaxations in lockdown and business supplies picking up, the collections should see a definite uptick in the coming months." **AGENCIES**

# Cabinet approves Rs 23,123 crore Covid response package

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Cabinet, which had its first meeting after it was revamped with the induction of 43 ministers, approved a new scheme titled "India COVID-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package: Phase-II" worth 23,123 crore for 2021-22, a move which has come amid the growing possibilities of a third wave hitting the country by August.

It is aimed at accelerating health system preparedness for immediate responsiveness towards early prevention, detection and management of the pandemic.

This is the first major decision taken by the newly reshuffled Union Cabinet, which also includes a new Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.

Mandaviya, who replaced Mr Harshvardhan, said that under the new package, the Centre would provide 15,000 crore and states 8,000 crore and the plan would be implemented jointly by them across all the 736 districts of the country to improve medical infrastructure at primary and district health centres.

He was speaking to media persons after the cabinet



meeting. Around 2.4 lakh normal medical beds and 20,000 ICU beds would be created of which 20 per cent would be specially earmarked for children, he said.

The health minister further said that storage facilities for oxygen and medicines would also be created at district level under the plan.

The plan aims to accelerate health system preparedness for immediate responsiveness for early prevention, detection and

management of Coronavirus pandemic with the focus on infrastructure development including for paediatric care and with measurable outcomes, he said.

Mandaviya informed that this is the second phase of the Emergency Response and Health System Preparedness Package as the Central government had given 15,000 crore earlier for setting up Covid-dedicated hospitals and health centres across the country. **AGENCIES**

# Chinese hackers target SBI users via phishing, gift scams



**NEW DELHI:** In fresh trouble for the State Bank of India (SBI), hackers of Chinese origin are targeting bank users with phishing scams, asking them to update their KYC using a particular website link and offering gifts worth Rs 50 lakh from the bank via a WhatsApp message, cybersecurity researchers warned on Wednesday.

The research wing of New Delhi-based think tank CyberPeace Foundation, along with Autobot Infosec Pvt Ltd, studied two such incidents on the name of SBI that were faced by some smartphone users.

"All the domain names associated with the campaign have the registrant country as China," the research team said. In the first case of the text message requesting KYC verification, the landing page that appears resemble with the official SBI online page.

On clicking the "Continue to Log in" button, it redirects the user to a full-kyc.php page, asking confidential information like username, Password and a captcha in order to login to the online banking.

"Following this, it asks for an OTP sent to the user's mobile number. As soon as the OTP is entered, it redirects the user to another page that asks the users to enter

some confidential information again like account holder name, mobile number, date of birth. After entering the data, it redirects the user to an OTP page," the researchers informed.

The research team came to a conclusion that the campaign is pretended to be launched from State Bank of India but hosted on the third-party domain instead of the official website www.onlinesbi.com, which makes it more suspicious.

The overall layout of the web page used in the campaign is kept similar to the official SBI netbanking site to lure the users. The SBI was yet to react to the report.

In the second case of luring users to win attractive free gifts, the team found that the WhatsApp message also redirected the user to a link. "On the landing page, a congratulations message appears with an attractive photo of State Bank of India and asks users to participate in a quick survey to get a free gift of Rs 50 lakh from the State bank of India," the researchers informed.

At the bottom of the page, a section appears which seems to be a Facebook comment section where many users have commented about how the offer is beneficial. **AGENCIES**

# Housing sales dips 23 pc in April-June; up 83 per cent year-on-year in 7 cities

**NEW DELHI:** Housing sales declined 23 per cent in April-June across seven cities compared with the previous quarter due to the second wave of the COVID pandemic, but witnessed an 83 per cent rise on an annual basis, according to JLL India.

In its latest report, real estate consultant JLL India said that sales of residential properties stood at 19,635 units during April-June period of this calendar year.

Sales of residential properties stood at 25,583 units in the January-March quarter of 2021, and at 10,753 units during April-June period of last year.

JLL India tracks Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune. Mumbai includes Mumbai city, Mumbai suburbs, Thane city and Navi Mumbai.

On a quarter-on-quarter comparison, sales in Bengaluru rose to 47 per cent 3,500 units during April-June 2021, from 2,382 units in the previous quarter. Chennai witnessed a drop of 81 per cent to 600 units from 3,200 units.

Housing sales in Delhi-NCR fell 55 per cent to 2,440 units from 5,448 units.



In Hyderabad, sales declined to 3,157 units from 3,709 units. Housing sales in Kolkata were down 56 per cent to 578 units from 1,320 units.

In Mumbai sales rose marginally to 5,821 units from 5,779 units, while Pune saw a 6 per cent fall in demand to 3,539 units from 3,745 units.

According to the data, in April-June 2020, housing sales in Bengaluru stood at 1,977 units, Chennai 460 units, Delhi-NCR 2,250 units, Hyderabad 1,207 units, Kolkata 481 units, Mumbai 3,527 units and Pune 851 units.

Sales of 45,218 residential units were recorded in the first half (H1), 2021, as against 38,204 units in H1 2020, an

increase of 18 per cent year-on-year.

"The sustained levels of residential sales present clear signs of demand and buyer confidence coming back to the market. The need for secured tangible assets and aspirations to own larger homes as remote working becomes the new norm is driving sales of residential properties across the country," JLL India said.

Prices in a majority of India's residential markets have remained stagnant in the past few years. In Q2 2021, prices remained largely stagnant when compared to the previous quarter, across all the seven markets under review, it said. **AGENCIES**

# Bring Petrol, Diesel under GST to reduce fuel rates: Trade Body

**NEW DELHI:** The Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI) asked the government to bring petrol and diesel under the ambit of GST to bring down the fuel rates, a day after prices of petrol in Delhi crossed the Rs 100 a litre-mark. It also urged the central government to withdraw the increased excise duty that was introduced last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Crude oil was the cheapest in the last 16 years in 2020-21. During corona, between March and May, 2020, when crude oil became cheaper, the central government increased the excise duty on petrol by Rs 13/litre and diesel by Rs 16/litre," a statement from the CTI said.

It noted that the dealer price of petrol in Delhi is Rs 40.62/litre, central excise duty on it is Rs 32.90/litre, VAT is Rs 23.13/litre, while dealer commission is Rs 3.60/litre, that is, the tax being levied on per litre of petrol is Rs 56.03.

Similarly, the dealer price of diesel is Rs 42.39/litre, excise duty is Rs 31.80/litre, VAT is Rs 12.85/litre while dealer commission is Rs 2.53/



litre, making the tax levied on diesel Rs 44.65/litre.

CTI chairman Brijesh Goyal said the traders body had recommended bringing petrol and diesel in the "maximum luxury slab of 28 per cent of GST", and levy Central GST (CGST) and State (GST) of Rs 18 per litre each on petrol. "Due to this, the price of petrol including dealer commission is 80.22, and petrol will be cheaper by about Rs 20/litre.

Similarly, if Rs 15 worth of CGST and SGST each is levied on diesel, the price of diesel including dealer commission will be Rs 74.92 and diesel will become cheaper by about Rs 15/litre," Goyal said. **AGENCIES**

# India's software service industry may reach \$1 trillion by 2030: Report

**NEW DELHI:** India's software-as-a-service industry could reach \$1 trillion in value and create nearly half million new jobs by 2030 as businesses around the world accelerate digitization and automation, according to a new study.

There are more than a thousand funded startups and 10 unicorns in the country's SaaS sector, generating as much as \$3 billion in annual subscription revenues, according to a report released on Wednesday by SaaSBoomi, a community of

industry founders and builders, alongside consultancy McKinsey & Co and the country's software industry trade group, Nasscom. The number of unicorns could increase 10-fold by 2030, reaching \$1 trillion in value, they predicted.

The industry, which currently employs 40,000 workers, could generate annual revenues of as much as \$70 billion by 2030 and win as much as 6 per cent of the global market, which is forecast to be worth \$1.3 trillion by 2030, the re-



port added. Nearly four decades after the rise of India's IT services industry, technology entrepre-

neurs have created thousands of startups that offer niche software solutions, ranging from billing to customer sup-

port, as a subscription service via the cloud. Many of the firms, like Chargebee Inc., have gone global and some like Freshworks Inc. are heading toward public share offerings. However, many startups face challenges in accessing capital during their early stages and attracting skilled talent to grow. The industry may need to boost funding at three to four times the current level to reach their potential over the next 10 years, said the report. **AGENCIES**

# Britain's Cairn gets French court order to seize 20 Indian properties in Paris

**NEW DELHI:** In a setback to India, Britain's Cairn Energy Plc has secured a French court order to seize some 20 government properties in Paris to recover a part of the USD 1.7 billion due from New Delhi following an arbitration panel overturning levy of retrospective taxes.

The centrally located properties mostly comprise flats, valued at more than EUR 20 million, used by the Indian government establishment in France, three people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The French court, Tribunal judiciaire de Paris, on June 11 agreed to Cairn's application to freeze (through judicial mortgages) the residential real estate owned by the Government of India in central Paris, they said, adding that the legal formal-

ties for this were completed on Wednesday evening.

While Cairn is unlikely to evict the Indian officials residing in those properties, the government cannot sell them after the court order.

A three-member international arbitration tribunal that consisted of one judge appointed by India, had in December last year unanimously overturned levy of taxes on Cairn retroactively and ordered refund of shares sold, dividend confiscated and tax refunds withheld to recover such demand.

With the Indian government refusing to honour the award, Cairn has moved in multiple overseas jurisdictions to enforce the award by seizing Indian assets.

Last month, Cairn brought a lawsuit in the US District Court



for the Southern District of New York pleading that Air India is controlled by the Indian government so much that they are 'alter egos' and the airline should be held liable for the arbitration award.

Similar lawsuits are likely to be brought in other countries,

primarily with high-value assets. The arbitration award has been registered in countries such as the US, the UK, Canada, Singapore, the Mauritius, France and the Netherlands.

Cairn has identified USD 70 billion of Indian assets overseas for the potential seizure to collect award, which now totals to USD 1.72 billion after including interest and penalty.

"Our strong preference remains an agreed, amicable settlement with the Government of India to draw this matter to a close, and to that end we have submitted a detailed series of proposals to them since February this year"

While the finance ministry did not immediately offer comments on the matter, a Cairn spokesperson said: "Our strong preference remains an agreed, amicable settlement with the

Government of India to draw this matter to a close, and to that end we have submitted a detailed series of proposals to them since February this year."

"However, in the absence of such a settlement, Cairn must take all necessary legal actions to protect the interests of its international shareholders," the spokesperson said without elaborating.

Sources said the French court order affects some 20 centrally located properties, belonging to the Indian government, as part of a guarantee of the debt owed to Cairn.

"This is the necessary preparatory step to taking ownership of the properties and ensures that the proceeds of any sales would be due to Cairn," one of the persons said. Last month, Cairn filed a

petition with the courts in the Southern District of New York, seeking judicial confirmation that Air India, the national carrier, can be classed as the alter ego of the Indian state and thereby jointly liable for the arbitral award.

Air India has time till mid-July to file a plea contesting the Cairn lawsuit, sources said. The Government of India, which participated in the arbitration proceeding over four years, has not accepted the award and has filed a 'setting aside' petition in a court in the Netherlands - the seat of the arbitration. In May, the finance ministry said that the tribunal "improperly exercised jurisdiction over a national tax dispute that the Republic of India never offered and/or agreed to arbitrate". **AGENCIES**

# TCS June quarter results: Net Profit records 29% jump, stands at Rs 9,008 crore

**NEW DELHI:** Tata Consultancy Service (TCS), the country's largest information technology service provider reported a net profit of Rs 9,008 crore for the period ending June 30, 2021 (Q1 of the current fiscal), which witnessed a 28.5 per cent quarterly growth owing to rise in demand for digital services. The IT behemoth recorded a revenue of Rs 45,411 crore for the period ending June 30, 2021, which was up by 3.9 per cent over the previous quarter, when it was Rs 43,705 crore. The company declared its results for the first quarter of the current financial year on Thursday and announced that during its board meeting, the directors have declared an interim dividend of Rs 7 per equity share of rupee one each of the company. **AGENCIES**



NEWSBRIEF

Oil leaps to multi-year high after OPEC+ talks collapse

LONDON: Oil prices surged to multi-year highs on July 6 including US crude hitting its highest since 2014 after OPEC+ producers fell out over plans to raise supply in the face of rising global demand. Brent crude climbed 62 cents, or 0.8%, to \$77.78 a barrel by 0748 GMT, a level not seen since October 2018. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures traded up \$1.75, or 2.3%, at \$76.91, the highest since November 2014. Talks collapsed among ministers from OPEC+, which groups producers from the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) with Russia and others. No date for resuming negotiations was agreed after the talks were carried over for a third day after disagreements last week. AGENCIES

Mankind Pharma gets DRDO nod to manufacture, market Covid drug 2-DG

NEW DELHI: Drug firm Mankind Pharma said it has received licence from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to manufacture and market oral 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG), used for the treatment of Covid-19. 2-DG was developed by the Defence Research and Development Establishment (DRDE), Gwalior. The clinical trials were conducted by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of DRDO, in association with Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Mankind Pharma said in a statement. The company will manufacture the product at its facilities in Visakhapatnam and Himachal Pradesh, it added. The office of the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) on May 1 had permitted the emergency use of 2-DG as an adjunct treatment for moderate to severe COVID-19 patients, Mankind Pharma said. The drug is found to help the hospitalised Covid-19 patients recover faster and is also known to reduce the supplemental oxygen dependency among the Covid-19 patients, it added. "Our objective behind this agreement is to ensure maximum reach of this medication to the deserving Indian patients suffering from the deadly pandemic," the company said. AGENCIES

Ministry of Co-operation will provide separate administrative, legal, policy framework: FM



NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Ministry of Co-operation will provide a separate administrative, legal, and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement. "The Modi government has created a separate 'Ministry of Co-operation'. This new ministry will provide a separate administrative, legal, and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement in India in order to realize the vision of #SahkarSeSamridhi,"

tweeted Nirmala Sitharaman. The Narendra Modi government has created a separate 'Ministry of Co-operation' to realise the vision of 'Sahkar se Samridhi'. The move aims to strengthen the co-operative movement in the country and deepen cooperatives as a true people-based movement reaching the grassroots.

This ministry will provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movement. The cooperative-based economic

Nirmala Sitharaman shares India's response to Covid-19 with G-20 panel

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday attended a meeting of the G20 High-Level Independent Panel (HLIP) and shared India's preparedness and response to Covid-19 while highlighting the slew of measures undertaken to support the economy during the pandemic. The meeting, held virtually, was also attended by Singapore Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam, former US treasury secretary Lawrence H Summers and World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the finance minister tweeted. The meeting discussed the panel's work which will be presented during the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) meeting to be held later this month. "FM Smt. @nsitharaman shared India's #preparedness and #response to #COVID19 and highlighted the slew of measures undertaken by the Government in strengthening the #healthsystem and supporting the #Indianeconomy in the fight against the pandemic," the ministry said in a tweet.

development model is very relevant to the country where each member works with a spirit of responsibility.

The ministry will work to streamline processes for 'ease of doing business' for cooperatives and enable the development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS). The Central Govern-

ment has signalled its deep commitment to community-based developmental partnership. The creation of a separate Ministry for Cooperation also fulfils the budget announcement made by the Union Finance Minister, the sources said. The decision is also being seen as a step to empower farmers. AGENCIES

Cooking gas rates hiked by Rs 25

NEW DELHI: LPG Cylinder Price: Non-subsidised liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) prices have been increased by Rs 25.50 on July 1, 2021. From July 1, the price of non-subsidised LPG will be Rs 834.50 per cylinder (14.2 kilograms) each in Delhi and Mumbai. The price of LPG cylinder is the highest in Chennai, at Rs 850.50. With the latest price hike, LPG prices have gone up by Rs 140 per 14.2-kg cylinder in the last six months.

Indian Oil, the country's largest fuel retailer, supplies LPG cylinders under the brand Indane. Here are the current prices of Indane non-subsidised LPG in the four metros:

The price of a 19 kg commercial cylinder has been increased by Rs 76.

The hike in the LPG comes at a time when petrol and diesel rates are at record highs across the country. Petrol prices have already crossed the Rs 100 mark in Mumbai and are inching towards the 3-figure mark in the other metro cities.

Meanwhile, the Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices

City	Price In Rupees Per 14.2 KG Cylinder		
	With Effect From July 1	June 1	May 1
Delhi	834.50	809	809
Kolkata	835.50	835	835
Mumbai	834.50	809	809
Chennai	850.50	825	825

(Source: iocl.com)



have been increased by Rs 2,354/kd and the new price in Delhi is Rs 68,262/kL.

The government subsidises 12 cylinders of 14.2 kilograms each per household every year. Customers have to make any additional purchases of LPG cylinders

at the market price. The amount of the subsidy provided by the government on the annual quota of 12 refills varies from month to month and is determined broadly by factors such as foreign exchange rates and crude oil prices. AGENCIES

Rupee slumps 17 paise to 74.79 against US dollar in early trade

MUMBAI: The rupee depreciated 17 paise to 74.79 against the US dollar in opening trade on Thursday, following a strong dollar overseas and subdued sentiment in the domestic equities.

However, lower crude prices and fresh foreign fund inflows restricted the rupee's fall, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened weak at 74.75 against the dollar, then fell further to 74.79 in the morning session, registering a fall of 17 paise over its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee had settled at 74.62 against the US dollar.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, surged 0.11 per cent at 92.74. On the domestic equity market front, BSE Sensex was trading 74.49 points or 0.14 per cent lower at 52,980.27, while the broader NSE Nifty slipped 31.70 points to 15,847.95. Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in the capital market on Wednesday as they bought shares worth Rs 532.94 crore, as per exchange data. AGENCIES

Global food prices decline for the first time in 12 months: Report

NEW DELHI: The global food commodity prices fell in June for the first time in 12 months amid the COVID-19 crisis, according to a benchmark United Nations report released on Thursday, July 8. The decline last month marked the very first drop in the price index after recording 12 consecutive monthly hikes. The food and agriculture organisation (FAO) price index averaged 124.6 points in June, down 2.5 per cent from May 2021, yet 33.9 per cent higher than its level in the corresponding period last year, according to the UN report.

The food and agriculture organisation is a specialised agency of the United Nations which worked for defeating hunger and improving nutrition and food security on a global level. Its food price index tracks the alterations in the international rates of the most globally traded food commodities.

The fall in prices recorded in



June 2021 reflects the decline in the rates of cereals, vegetable oils, and dairy products (moderately).

Going by the individual commodities, the FAO vegetable oil price index slipped 9.8 per cent in June, marking a four-month low, which reflects lower international prices of soy, palm, and sunflower oils.

The international wheat prices fell slightly by 0.8 per cent last month with a favoured global outlook supported by better production prospects, while the FAO dairy price index fell by one per cent to 119.9 points in June.

Additionally, the FAO meat price index rose by 2.1 per cent over the month to June, continuing the hike for the ninth consecutive month and placing the index about 15.6 per cent above its value in the corresponding month last year, according to the UN report.

Meanwhile, India's retail inflation data for June is expected on Monday, July 12, and according to a recent poll conducted by news agency Reuters, the CPI inflation probably accelerated to a seven-month high, due to rising food and fuel prices. AGENCIES

Govt brings Department of Public Enterprises under Finance Ministry

NEW DELHI: The government has brought Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) under the Finance Ministry in a bid to facilitate its ambitious disinvestment programme.

Earlier, DPE was part of Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises.

"Ministry of Finance (Vitta Mantralaya), after the sub-heading (v) Department of Financial Services (Vittiya Sewayan Vibhag), following sub-heading shall be inserted, namely:-(vi) Department of Public Enterprises (Lok Udyam Vibhag)" as per the Cabinet Secretariat notification dated July 6, 2021.

The gazette notification is-



sued said these rules may be called the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Three Hundred and Sixty First Amendment Rules, 2021. "They shall come into force at once," the notification said. With the addition, this will be the sixth department under the Finance Ministry. Therejig comes ahead of Cabinet expansion slated later in the day.

Finance Minister Nirmala

Sitharaman in her Budget 2021-22 had announced a big-ticket privatisation agenda, including privatisation of two public sector banks and one general insurance company.

As part of the divestment strategy for the financial sector, the government has decided to go for a mega initial public offering (IPO) of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and residual stake sale in IDBI Bank during the financial year beginning April. The government has budgeted Rs 1.75 lakh crore from stake sale in public sector companies and financial institutions during 2021-22. AGENCIES

Zomato's Rs 9,375 cr IPO to open on July 14

NEW DELHI: Ant Group-backed food ordering platform Zomato said it plans to raise Rs 9,375 crore through its initial share sale that will open for subscription from July 14 to 16.

The price band for the issue has been fixed at Rs 72 to 76 per share.

The total IPO size is Rs 9,375 crore, comprising a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 9,000 crore and an offer-for-sale to the tune of Rs 375 crore by Info Edge (India) Ltd, Zomato said. Asked about the valuation of the company post IPO, Zomato CFO Akshant Goyal told PTI that based on a fully-diluted basis, it will be Rs 64,365 crore.

Earlier this week, Zomato had received markets regulator Sebi's go-ahead for the initial public offer (IPO). Going by the draft papers, proceeds from the fresh issue would be used towards funding organic and inorganic growth initiatives and general corporate purposes.

The online food delivery segment has seen sig-



nificant growth in the last few years with Zomato and Swiggy competing head-on to grab market share.

Zomato's FY20 revenue had jumped over two-fold to USD 394 million (around Rs 2,960 crore) from the previous fiscal, while its earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) loss was around Rs 2,200 crore.

In February, Zomato had raised USD 250 million (over Rs 1,800 crore) in funding from Tiger Global, Kora and others, valuing the online food ordering platform at USD 5.4 billion (around Rs 40,000 crore).

Kotak Mahindra Capital Company, Morgan Stanley India Company Pvt Ltd and Credit Suisse Securities (India) Pvt Ltd are the global coordinators and book-running lead managers to the issue. AGENCIES

Fitch slashes India's growth forecast to 10%

NEW DELHI: Fitch Ratings cut India's growth forecast to 10% for the current fiscal, from 12.8% estimated earlier, due to slowing recovery post second wave of Covid, and said rapid vaccination could support a sustainable revival in business and consumer confidence.

In a report, the global rating agency said the challenges for banking sector posed by the coronavirus pandemic have increased due to a virulent second wave in the first quarter of the financial year ending March 2022 (FY22).

Fitch believes that rapid vaccination could support a sustainable revival in business and consumer confidence; however, without it, economic recovery would remain vulnerable to further waves and lockdowns.

It said localised lockdowns during the second wave kept economic activity from stalling to levels similar to those during 2020, but disruption in several key business centres has slowed the recovery and dented Fitch's expectations of a rebound to pre-pandemic levels by FY22. India's economy contracted 24.4% in June quarter of 2020. AGENCIES

Humour, anger, shock: Netizens react to petrol price crossing Rs 100/litre

NEW DELHI: As the price of petrol crossed an all-time high of Rs 100 per litre in Delhi and several other cities on Wednesday, netizens flooded the microblogging site Twitter with varied reactions - some coping with the unfortunate news with humour and others just expressing plain, simple shock.

Hashtags like #petroldiesel-pricehike and #petrol100notout are being used in large numbers since the fuel prices were increased in line with firming international oil trends.

Humour seems to be the key to coping with the news as memes and jokes started doing the rounds soon after the price hike.

Sharing a picture of a bicycle that has been made to look like a motorcycle using cardboard, a Twitter user said this was the kind of bike that Indians would



be able to ride following the fuel price hike.

"Desi bike...after petrol, diesel price hike," the user tweeted.

Taking a dig at Narendra Modi's 2014 poll pitch of "achhe din aayenge" (good days would come), a Twitter user

shared a caricature depicting a man saying, "Kaash woh bure din he wapas atay" (I wish the bad days could return).

A photograph of a petrol bill from 1963 when petrol cost 72 paise per litre has emerged as a favourite among the Twitterati.

Reposting the image of the cash memo, a social media user wrote, "Petrol cash bill on 02/02/1963... 1 litre = 0.72. If I had #Timemachine I'll go back and fill my vehicles." According to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers, petrol price was increased by 35 paise per litre and diesel by 23 paise a litre. In Delhi, petrol now costs Rs 100.21 a litre and diesel is priced at Rs 89.53 per litre.

Delhi is the last of the metro cities to see petrol rising above the Rs 100-a-litre mark. Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune already have prices above that mark.

Kolkata also saw petrol prices climbing over Rs 100 per litre on Wednesday.

According to a social media user, the fuel prices were being jacked up so frequently that waking up to a price hike had

become a way of life.

"No stoppage to hike in price for diesel and petrol. Every morning wake up with this news. Feels like it is no more a news now. Now only elections can relieve us middle class people(sic)," the user wrote.

For others, the unprecedented hike in fuel prices simply reinforced their disappointment and anger at the current dispensation.

"Masterstroke by Modi government. Petrol in Delhi crossed ?100 and Modi is celebrating the occasion by expanding his cabinet...," a Twitter user posted.

"Situation of inflation in Delhi and other parts of India is really worrisome. These are times when the government should be with people of India, helping them...but instead they are asking people to pay Rs 100 a litre," another user wrote. AGENCIES

Fitch Ratings cuts India growth forecast to 10 per cent for FY22

NEW DELHI: Fitch Ratings cut India's growth forecast to 10 per cent for the current fiscal, from 12.8 per cent estimated earlier, due to slowing recovery post-second wave of Covid-19, and said rapid vaccination could support a sustainable revival in business and consumer confidence.

In a report, the global rating agency said the challenges for banking sector posed by the coronavirus pandemic have increased due to a virulent second wave in the first quarter of the financial year ending March 2022 (FY22).

"Fitch Ratings revised down India's real GDP for FY22 by 280bp to 10 per cent, underlining our belief that renewed

restrictions have slowed recovery efforts and left banks with a moderately worse outlook for business and revenue generation in FY22," it said.

Fitch believes that rapid vaccination could support a sustainable revival in business and consumer confidence; however, without it, economic recovery would remain vulnerable to further waves and lockdowns.

It said localised lockdowns during the second wave kept economic activity from stalling to levels similar to those during 2020, but disruption in several key business centres has slowed the recovery and dented Fitch's expectations of a rebound to pre-pandemic lev-



els by FY22. India's economy contracted 24.4 per cent in June quarter of 2020.

Fitch views India's rebound potential to be better than most comparable 'BBB-' peers because it does not

expect a structurally weaker real GDP growth outlook. However, there is a risk that India's medium-term growth could suffer if the business and consumer activity were to experience scarring from the

Covid-19 pandemic. The agency estimates India's medium term growth potential at about 6.5 per cent.

Stating that vaccination is key for business revival and relief measures would only provide interim support, Fitch said the low vaccination rate makes India vulnerable to further waves of the pandemic.

"Only 4.7 per cent of its 1.37 billion population was fully vaccinated as of July 5, 2021... This poses risks to the prospects of a meaningful and sustainable economic recovery," it added. Indian economy contracted by 7.3 per cent in fiscal 2020-21 as the country battled the first wave of Covid, as against a 4 per cent growth in 2019-20.

GDP growth in current fiscal was estimated to be in double digits initially, but a severe second wave of pandemic has led to various agencies cut growth projections.

RBI too earlier this month cut India's growth forecast to 9.5 per cent for this fiscal, from 10.5 per cent estimated earlier. While S&P Global Ratings lowered its growth estimate to 9.5 per cent, another US-based rating agency Moody's has projected a 9.3 per cent growth in the current fiscal ending March 2022. For 2021 calendar year, Moody's has cut growth estimate sharply to 9.6 per cent.

Last month, World Bank slashed its GDP growth fore-

cast for current fiscal ending March 2022 to 8.3 per cent, from 10.1 per cent estimated in April, saying economic recovery is being hampered by the devastating second wave of coronavirus infections.

Domestic rating agency ICRA too had projected economic growth at 8.5 per cent for this financial year, while British brokerage firm Barclays had last month cut India's growth forecast to 9.2 per cent.

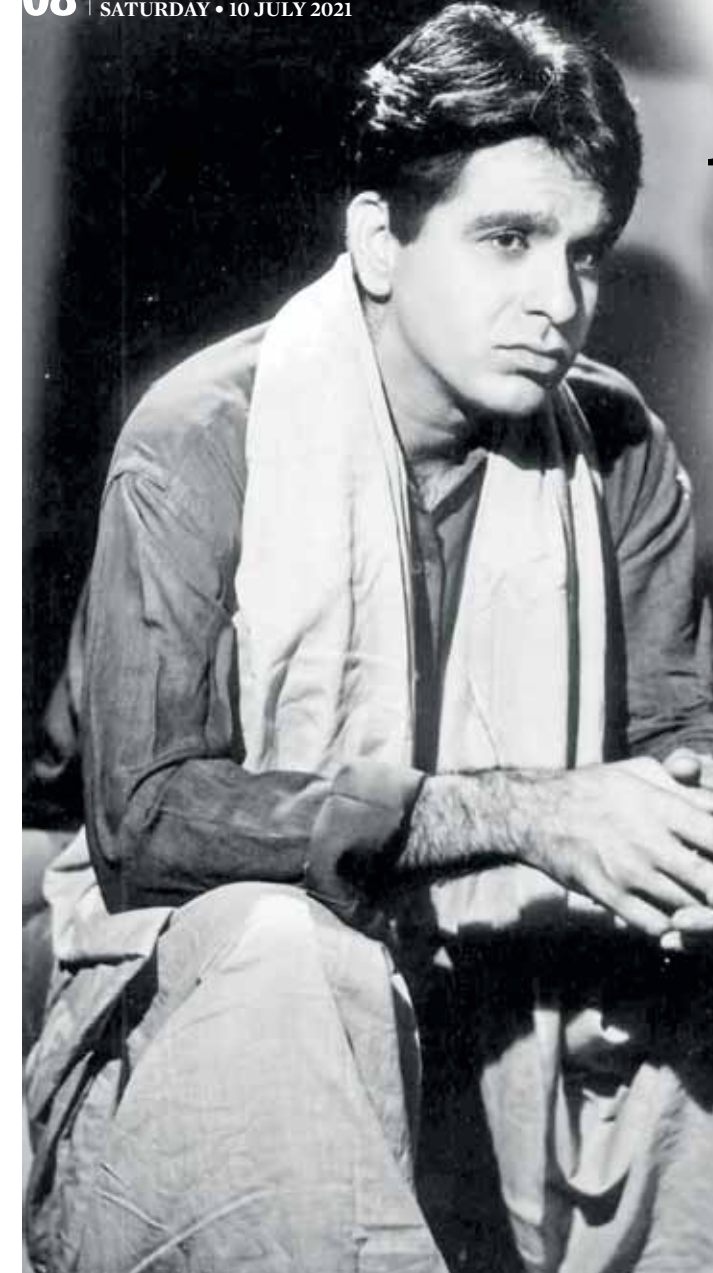
Fitch in its report on Indian banks further said that regulatory relief measures have postponed underlying asset-quality issues for now, but banks' medium-term performance will be dented without a

meaningful economic recovery.

"The operating environment remains challenging for the banks with limited opportunities for business and revenue growth. Problems could escalate in the event that successive Covid-19 waves and lockdowns prevent a meaningful economic recovery considering that India's full vaccination rate is still quite low," it said.

Fitch expects banks' exposure to stressed MSME and retail borrowers to rise further with the increasing relief outlay, and is likely to compel banks - especially state-owned ones - to slow regular lending in the absence of adequate core capital cushions and weak contingency buffers. AGENCIES





# An era ends with DILIP KUMAR'S death



DOLLY CHOPRA

Dilip Kumar was buried on July 7 evening with state honours at Juhu Kabrastan, Santacruz, Mumbai. Many celebs from the film industry paid tributes at his house during the day. Dilip Kumar was easily the finest performer Indian cinema has seen. Satyajit Ray had described him as the ultimate method actor. David Lean had offered him a role in the Lawrence of Arabia. Guru Dutt wanted him to play the lead in his *Pyasa*. His portrayal of Prince Salim in the mega-blockbuster *Mughal-e-Azam* showed him as a real blue-blooded royal. Many actors emulated the thespian and the long list includes Rajendra Kumar, Manoj Kumar, Dharmendra, Sanjay Khan, Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan. The well-known video firm Al Mansoor brought out a video cassette in the early eighties where they demonstrated how Amitabh Bachchan who was at the peak of his popularity delivered some of his dialogues a la Dilip Kumar. Amitabh too has acknowledged that Dilip Kumar born as Mohammad Yusuf Khan was the unrivalled actor India has had.

After watching Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Devdas*, the veteran artist who had won many accolades for his performance in the Bimal Roy film of the same title complimented Shah Rukh Khan. In fact, Dilip Kumar said that if he would have had a son, he would have been like Shah Rukh Khan. Dilip Kumar was part of the triumvirate comprising Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand and the trio became synonymous with life as it unfolded yet firmly. He enjoyed his food and never missed an opportunity to go to the Karim's near Jama Masjid to have burra kabab and korma. Dilip Kumar had opted for the Naushad-Shakeel Badayuni combination to provide music and write lyrics consciously. Hailing from Peshawar, the thespian was aware that if he had to appeal to the North Indian Hindi and Urdu speaking audiences, he should ensure that the lyrics and the music had the flavour



after India became a free nation. Dilip Kumar was the actor, Raj Kapoor the showman and Dev Anand, the flamboyant romantic. While Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand never worked together, Dilip Kumar did a film with each one of them—*Mehboob Khan's Andaz* with Raj Kapoor and *SS Vasan's Insaniyat* with Dev Anand. Dilip Kumar had a great charisma about him, speaking gently of some of these states. Dilip Kumar received the Padma Vibhushan, the Padma Bhushan and the Dada Saheb Phalke award. He also received Pakistan's highest civilian honour, the Nishan-e-Imtiaz. Dilip Kumar won several cinematic awards and was the first ever winner of the Filmfare Best Actor prize. He won eight Filmfare Best Actor awards, a record he shares with Shah Rukh Khan.

## Vikrant Massey talks about fading star culture

**MUMBAI:** Actor Vikrant Massey has opened up about the fading star culture in Hindi cinema. He agrees that OTT has played an important part in it but there are other factors, too. Talking about the web-space playing an integral part in the erosion of star culture, Vikrant said: "I don't think it's (just) because of OTT. I think it is because of society in general. The new generation we see today, they don't idol worship like probably people 20 years ago used to do. Cinema culture was a hit but people are so busy with their own lives. The newer generation have digitisation and technology at their disposal." He added: "My nieces are eight and nine. They don't watch Indian content. They are sitting and watching Korean content, so the world has shrunk because of digitisation. We are far more exposed to international content." "OTT has definitely played an important part but also I think there are far more important things that people are busy with, like the pandemic, and everybody has something in their lives, especially the newer generations," he explained. "They don't do idol worship as much. All these things are interlinked," said the actor, whose latest film is "Haseen Dilruba", which was released on Netflix.



## Organisers to ban Olympic spectators as Tokyo declares coronavirus emergency: Report

**TOKYO:** Olympic organisers are set to ban all spectators from the Games, the Asahi daily said on Thursday, as Japan prepared to declare a state of emergency for Tokyo that will run through its hosting of the event to curb a new wave of coronavirus infections. Organisers were set to formally reach the decision on the spectators during five-way talks between key parties to be held on Thursday evening, the newspaper said, citing people involved in the Games. The move is the latest blow to the troubled Olympics, already delayed by a year because of the pandemic and plagued by a series of setbacks, including massive budget overruns. Medical experts have said for weeks that having no spectators at the Games would be the least risky option amid widespread public concern that the influx of thousands of athletes and officials will fuel a fresh wave of infections. Organisers have already banned overseas spectators and have for now set a cap on domestic viewers at 50% of capacity, up to 10,000 people.



**TOKYO INFECTIONS RISE**  
Japan has not experienced the kind of explosive COVID-19 outbreaks seen in many other countries but has had more than 810,000 cases and 14,900 deaths. A slow vaccine rollout has meant only a quarter of Japan's population has had at least one COVID-19 vaccination shot. The imposition of a new state of emergency in Tokyo comes after new daily infections in the capital rose to 920 on Wednesday, the highest level since mid-May.

## Global Covid deaths hit 4 million amid rush to vaccinate

**WASHINGTON:** The global death toll from Covid eclipsed 4 million on July 8 as the crisis increasingly becomes a race between the vaccine and the highly contagious delta variant. The tally of lives lost over the past year and a half, as compiled from official sources by Johns Hopkins University, is about equal to the number of people killed in battle in all of the world's wars since 1982, according to estimates from the Peace Research Institute, Oslo. The toll is three times the number of people killed in traffic accidents around the globe every year. It is about equal to the population of Los Angeles or the nation of Georgia. It is equivalent to more than half of Hong Kong or close to 50 per cent of New York City. Even then, it is widely believed to be an undercount because of overlooked cases or deliberate concealment. With the advent of the vaccine, deaths per day have plummeted to around 7,900, after topping out at over 18,000 a day in January. But in recent weeks, the mutant delta version of the virus first identified in India has set off alarms around the world, spreading rapidly even in vaccination success stories like the US, Britain and Israel.

## 36 US states file lawsuit against Google

**WASHINGTON:** As many as 36 US states and Washington DC have filed a lawsuit against Google, alleging that the search engine giant's control over its Android app store violates antitrust laws. The lawsuit alleges that through a series of exclusionary contracts and other anticompetitive conduct in the Google Play Store, Google has deprived Android device users of robust competition that could lead to greater choice and innovation, as well as significantly lower prices for mobile apps. New York Attorney General James and the coalition — co-led by the attorneys general of Utah, North Carolina, and Tennessee — also accuse Google of requiring app developers selling in-app digital content through apps purchased via Google's Play Store to use Google Billing as a middleman, forcing app consumers to pay Google's commission — up to 30 per cent — indefinitely. "Google has served as the gatekeeper of the internet for many years, but, more recently, it has also become the gatekeeper of our digital devices — resulting in all of us paying more for the software we use every day," James alleged. "Once again, we are seeing Google use its dominance to illegally quash competition and profit to the tune of billions. Through its illegal conduct, the company has ensured that hundreds of millions of Android users turn to Google, and only Google, for the millions of applications they may choose to download to their phones and tablets," she said. "Worse yet, Google is squeezing the lifeblood out of millions of small businesses that are only seeking to compete. We are filing this lawsuit to end Google's illegal monopoly power and finally give voice to millions of consumers and business owners," James said.



## Marine Electrical Industry undergoing Sea change in pandemic

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

The electrical industry is undergoing a sea change amidst the global pandemic with the marine sector leading this growth in India, even as military incursions by neighboring countries like China witness the country ratcheting up its defence initiatives to meet the threat along its borders. Defence spending is on the "cusp" of revival and with India transforming from a "buying" navy to a "building" navy, its "India Navy Indigenization Plan" (INIP) is targeting expansion of its existing 138-strong fleet through addition of 128 new ships in 10 years from orders for over 34 ships with Indian shipyards to address a market worth Rs 800 crores in the marine electrical sector. India's naval military is increasing its might through: Project 75I for acquiring 6 new submarines, 16 ASW Corvettes order placed with CSL and GRSE, 7 frigates of 17A-class to MDSL and GRSE till 2022, 1 Destroyer 15B and 4 survey vessels order to GRSE. The increasing orderbook of shipyards highlight strong growth visibility in the marine segments and this strong pipeline of new ship-building order activity is likely to continue, according to Vinay Uchil, Chairman and Executive Director, Marine Electricals (India) Limited — which is a dedicated defence player in the electricals market with Rs. 301.55 crore orderbook from the Marine Segment. Estimating Indian defence spend — following the Chinese aggression — to increase by 15-20% annually, he said that the country's manufacturing related equipment at home would ensure lower cost than importing — thus giving a much



Vice Admiral G S Pabby visiting the Stall of Marine Electricals with Mr. Vinay Uchil-Chairman & Executive Director



Vice-Admiral G S Pabby presenting a « Plaque» to Mr. Vinay Uchil-Chairman & Executive Director at the plant of Marine Electricals.

like communications, housing, steel, cement and chemicals, besides both Greenfield and Brownfield expansion. Uchil said that the shipping sector's electrical requirements comprise: shock-graded motors and light fittings, specialized rectifiers and converters, internal communication systems, integrated maritime LAN systems, valve control and tank gauging systems, fire and flood detection systems, switchboards and electrical equipment, vessel management systems, integral bridge control systems, navigation communications systems, dynamic positioning systems, integrated platform management systems. He said that the company's efforts — in meeting the critical needs of the marine segment — included a three-percent spend on Research and Development from its turnover which stood at Rs 2,513 crores for FY-20-21, besides EBITDA at 10% and PAT at 4%. Established in 1978, Marine Electricals is an integrated technical services provider in the fields of electrical, power electronics, automation and information and communication technology solutions. Marine Electricals's operations in the marine segment include: naval vessels, offshore platforms, cargo vessels, pas-

enger vessels and submarines. While the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard are its two major clients, the company undertakes complete electrical and electronic installation of all type of warships and commercial vessels, Uchil added. Over the years, the company had carved a niche for itself as a +Sophisticated, Tailor made, Solution provider+ powered by In-house Product designs, Manufacturing, Installation & Commissioning and After Sales Services, he noted. "We are global vendors to GE Power Conversion for supplying 'low' and 'medium' switchgear for electrical propulsion solutions to Commercial Marine, Naval and Oil & Gas sector, besides supplying power distribution equipments and navigation radars to Goa Shipyard in its building of two 'Frigates' — in collaboration with Russia — for the Indian Navy," Uchil said, adding "We are also supplying power distribution equipment for two Diving Support Vessels being built by the Hindustan Shipyard." Highlighting the company servicing global needs, Uchil said "Besides India, our strengths are also in supplying the Middle East (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar) and for the 'small cruise market' in Europe (Portugal and Greece). To a question about the size of the Indian and global marine electrical market, Uchil said the Indian market presently highlighted around 750 crores business, that would increase dramatically with newer projects being announced in the future. However, India's global presence for commercial ships witnessed barely 2% of the total shipbuilding market that is dominated by Korea, China and Japan, he said. Highlighting the drivers for this industry's growth in India, Uchil said "We see a large growth coming from the government focus on inland navigation and coastal shipping, that will provide a massive boost to cargo and commercial shipping business. We are already seeing some companies building a series of small cargo vessels to meet their transportation requirements, besides the Government emphasis on reducing 'carbon footprint' witnessing introduction of +electrically-propelled+ marine vessels that will increase our scope of supply and offering," he said.

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