

CITY TALKS

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PUNJAB POLITICS AFTER FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT



You have strangulated city and now you want to come inside and protest: SC to farmers' group

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court lashed out at a farmers' group protesting the three agricultural laws saying they have "strangulated the entire city (Delhi) and blocked highways".

The farmers' body, Kisan Mahapanchayat, had sought permission from the Supreme Court to hold a 'Satyagrah' at Jantar Mantar, the designated protest site in the heart of Delhi. The group sought the top court's direction to the authorities to provide space to at least 200 farmers or protesters at the Jantar Mantar for organising a peaceful and non-violent 'Satyagrah'.

"You have strangulated the entire city, now you want to come inside the city. The residents around, are they happy with the protest? This business should stop," a bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and CT Ravikumar said.

The Supreme Court told the group that once they have approached the court against the three farm laws, they should



have trust in the judicial system and let the matter be decided. "If you have faith in courts, pursue that for urgent hearing instead of protesting. Are you protesting against the judicial system also? Are you protesting against the judicial system also?" the court asked. "You block highways and then say protest is peaceful. Citizens also have their rights to move around. Their properties are being damaged. You are affecting security also. You stopped defence personnel

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CHINA POWER CRISIS CAUSES SUDDEN CONTRACTION IN FACTORY ACTIVITY



POTPOURRI

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THIS KERALA MUSLIM WOMAN ARTIST MAKES PAINTINGS OF LORD KRISHNA, THEN GIFTS THEM TO TEMPLES



Aim of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 to make cities garbage-free: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U) 2.0 and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0 at Dr Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi.



In his speech, the prime minister said that the goal of 'Swachh Bharat Mission-AMRUT 2.0' is to ensure 'Garbage-Free' cities. While the next phase of Mission AMRUT will focus on 'increasing sewage and septic management, making cities water safe' and ensuring that no sewage drains in rivers.

PM Modi lauded children and youth for being mindful of maintaining cleanliness. "I am happy to note that our generation has taken the initiative to strengthen the cleanliness campaign. Toffee wrappers are no longer thrown on the ground but kept in pockets. Today, children remind elders not to spread litter," he said.

The prime minister said that India is processing about one lakh tonnes of waste every day which was less than 20 percent when the campaign started in 2014. "Today we are processing about 70 percent of daily waste. Now we have to take it to 100%," he said.

As per the statement from the Prime Minister's Office, "In line with the vision of the Prime Minister, SBM-U 2.0 and AMRUT 2.0 have been designed to realize the aspiration to make all our cities 'Garbage Free' and 'Water Secure'. These flagship Missions signify a step forward in our march towards effectively addressing the challenges of rapidly urbanizing India and will also

help contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030".

According to the press release, SBM-U and AMRUT have contributed significantly to improve the urban landscape during the last seven years. The government said that the two flagship Missions have augmented the capacity to deliver basic services of water supply and sanitation to the citizens.

"All urban local bodies have been declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) and 70% solid waste is being scientifically processed now. AMRUT has been ensuring water security by adding 1.1 crore household water tap connections and 85 lakh sewer connections, thus benefiting more than 4 crore people," the statement added.

SBM-U 2.0 envisions to make all cities 'Garbage Free' and ensure grey and black water management in all cities. The Mission will focus on source segregation of solid waste, utilizing the principles of 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management. The outlay of SBM-U 2.0 is around Rs 1.41 lakh crore. **AGENCIES**

COURT SAYS

- ❑ IF YOU HAVE FAITH IN COURTS, PURSUE THAT FOR URGENT HEARING INSTEAD OF PROTESTING. ARE YOU PROTESTING AGAINST THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM ALSO? ARE YOU PROTESTING AGAINST THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM ALSO?
- ❑ YOU BLOCK HIGHWAYS AND THEN SAY PROTEST IS PEACEFUL. CITIZENS ALSO HAVE THEIR RIGHTS TO MOVE AROUND. THEIR PROPERTIES ARE BEING DAMAGED. YOU ARE AFFECTING SECURITY ALSO. YOU STOPPED DEFENCE PERSONNEL ALSO

are not a part of the protest that is "blocking the national highways".

In July, farmers, led by two other groups - Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) - held a massive protest at Jantar Mantar amid the monsoon session of parliament.

Farmers have been protesting at Delhi's borders for over a year against the centre's three agricultural laws. Even after 11 rounds of talks, government and farmers have not yet reached a conclusion on three farm laws, which the protesters say will leave at the mercy of corporates.

Delhi had witnessed violent protests during a farmers' tractor parade on Republic Day as thousands of agitators clashed with the police. **AGENCIES**

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

- 1 Religious places in Delhi permitted to allow worshippers
- 2 Harish Chaudhary tipped to be new Punjab Affairs incharge
- 3 Taliban leaders discuss TAPI gas pipeline, mining projects

Flu's return will shape the pandemic's impact in coming months



NEW DELHI: Charting the course of the pandemic during the coming months is likely to involve a more traditional winter nuisance: the flu.

As countries from Italy to Canada lift restrictions, travel resumes and colder temperatures set in, influenza will probably start circulating as well. That's after measures to thwart COVID-19 such as masks and ventilation kept the flu at bay for the past year and a half.

Efforts have already been under way to lessen the potential strain on health systems dealing with both illnesses. A UK study released showed that it's safe for people to get Covid and flu shots at the same time, which might help increase vaccine uptake and cut down on appointments as the country rolls out booster doses.

"This is a real concern for policy makers," Neil Ferguson, the Imperial College epidemiologist whose models are used by the UK government, said at a conference in Paris. "It's highly likely we will continue to see circulation of reasonably high levels of Covid through the winter, and having seasonal flu on top could pose again significant additional burdens on health systems." Ferguson and others at the

Congress struggling to remain alive in Punjab

SATISH HANDA

Navjot Singh Sidhu's resignation from the post of party president in Punjab within few days after his appointment is a severe shock to Congress high command and proves that the former Punjab Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh had rightly said that Sidhu possesses unstable attitude similar to a misguided missile posing a threat to country's security as well as Punjab state neighbouring Pakistan due to his close relations with Imran Khan and Pakistan army general.

Sidhu's attitude had compelled Captain Amarinder to submit his resignation to Congress high command from the chair of Chief Minister, which brought severe crisis to Congress high command, party's reputation in the state as well as damaged party all over in the country. Most of the residents in Punjab are raising a question over Congress high command acting like a Private Limited Company having only three members of a family Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Wadra to take important decisions and neglected a senior Congress leader like Capt Amarinder Singh associated with the party since past about five decades.

Past Congress party scenario reveals, it has been insulting senior Congress leaders in past years also including T. Anjeya then Chief Minister Andhra Pradesh when late Rajiv Gandhi was party



HIGHLIGHTS

- ❑ DURING NEHRU AND INDIRA GANDI ERA CONGRESS WAS HAVING 42-45% SHARE IN THE VOTES HAVING VICTORY OVER 65% LOK SABHA SEATS
- ❑ IN 1957 LOK SABHA POLLS CONGRESS WAS ABLE TO GET 47.8% VOTES AND AFTER INDIRA GANDHI'S MURDER THE PARTY WAS ABLE TO GET 48.1% VOTES IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS
- ❑ BETWEEN YEARS 2000 TO 2010 CONGRESS VOTE BANK WITNESSED DROP GETTING 25-28% VOTES IN LOK SABHA POLLS AND DURING LAST LOK SABHA POLLS IT SLASHED TO ONLY 19.7% VOTES

general secretary followed by Virender Patel then Karnataka Chief Minister. Similarly, Telugu Desam party came into existence in 1982 suffering political shocks since then. Most of the senior Congress leaders having a long list either started separate political parties after leaving Congress or migrated to other political parties which include the names of H.D. Devgoda, Ramkishan Hegde, Chandrababu Naidu, V.P. Singh, Mamta Banerjee, J. Sindhia and many more.

An information reveals, during Nehru and Indira Gandhi era Congress was having 42-45% share in the votes having victory over 65%

Lok Sabha seats. In 1957 Lok Sabha polls Congress was able to get 47.8% votes and after Indira Gandhi's murder the party was able to get 48.1% votes in Lok Sabha elections. But between years 2000 to 2010 Congress vote bank witnessed drop getting 25-28% votes in Lok Sabha polls and during last Lok Sabha polls it slashed to only 19.7% votes. Not only in Punjab state, Congress is facing political storm in the party, even in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh too rift between leaders making party weak and Congress high command unable to control.

Surprisingly, when talked to several influential persons in Punjab they wanted to know under what circumstances, Congress high command, special Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Wadra neglected a senior and heavy weight Congress leader Capt Amarinder Singh former Punjab Chief Minister associated with the party since past over five decades also having good image in the state given importance to Navjot Sidhu had left BJP and joined Congress sometimes ago forced Congress high command to dance at his tune as a result Capt Amrinder Singh feeling insulted resigned from the chair of Punjab Chief Minister at the time when next Vidhan Sabha polls are approaching and now Sidhu forcing new Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi also to dance at his tune as if he is Super Chief Minister in Punjab.

Developments in Afghan will have very, very significant consequences: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI: India was not taken into confidence on various aspects of the Doha deal inked between the US and the Taliban last year and the latest developments in Afghanistan will have "very, very significant consequences" for the region and beyond, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

He said that the key concerns for India at this juncture included whether Afghanistan would have an inclusive government and that Afghan soil was not used for terrorism against other states and the rest of the world.

Speaking virtually at the annual leadership summit of the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum, Jaishankar suggested that India was in no hurry to deliberate on giving any recognition to the new dispensation in Kabul. In an interactive session with former American ambassador Frank Wisner, the External Affairs Minister said the Quad or Quadrilateral coalition comprising India, the US, Australia and Japan is not against any country and it should not be seen as some kind of "ganging up" and a negatively driven initiative.



India and the US are on the same page on many issues relating to the recent developments in Afghanistan including apprehensions about the possible use of Afghan soil for terrorism. "I think, to some degree, we would all be justified in having levels of concern and to some degree, I think the jury's still out. When I say levels of concern, you know, there were commitments which were made by the Taliban, at Doha, I mean, the US knows that best I mean, we were not taken into confidence on various aspects of that," he said. **AGENCIES**

GST collection: Punjab, Haryana among states that record double digit growth

NEW DELHI: The gross GST revenue collected in September was Rs 1.17 lakh crore that was 23 per cent higher in the same month last year. Punjab and Haryana were among the states that recorded a double digit growth in GST collection in September this year as compared to the same month last year. Punjab's share in GST collection was 17 per cent higher and that of Haryana 18 per cent higher during the period.

The average monthly gross GST collection for the second quarter of the current year has been Rs 1.15 lakh crore, which is 5 per cent higher than the average monthly collection of Rs 1.1 lakh crore in the first quarter of the year.

The rise in collections was modest when compared to 1.12 lakh crore in August (for sales in July) this year but this was the third successive month that the accrual has been above the Rs 1-lakh-crore mark.

The Union Finance Ministry said in a statement that these figures indicated that the economy is recovering at a fast pace. The growth



| GROWTH IN SEPT '21 OVER SEPT '20 | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| State | Sept '20 (in Rs) | Sept '21 (in Rs) | Increase |
| Haryana | 4,712 | 5,577 | 18 per cent |
| Punjab | 1,194 | 1,402 | 17 per cent |

The Centre had also released GST compensation of Rs 22,000 crore to states to meet their GST revenue gap.

Of the total collections, CGST is Rs 20,578 crore, SGST Rs 26,767 crore, IGST Rs 60,911 crore (including Rs 29,555 crore collected from imports) and cess is Rs 8,754 crore (including Rs 623 crore from imports).

The total revenue of Centre and the states after regular settlements in September 2021 is Rs. 49,390 crore for CGST and Rs 50,907 crore for the SGST.

ALSO READ | THE END OF THE DOING BUSINESS RANKINGS * P4 | LARGEST PEACEFUL PROTEST IN MODERN HISTORY MARKS ONE YEAR * P4

Punjab politics after formation of new government

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Residents of Punjab as well as all political parties are awaiting action and future strategy of former Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh and Punjab politics when he stated that he will not retire from politics challenging Congress high command to remain prepared for a tough fight against Congress candidate contesting in coming elections in Punjab in 2022.

It is yet a suspense if Captain will join hands with some other political powerful party in opposition: Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) or create his own independent party to contest coming polls in Punjab against Congress candidate for which however chances are less. If we look at the previous Vidhan Sabha polls in Punjab state Congress was able to get nearly 40% votes because Captain's own reputation during last polls, AAP was winner at 20 Vidhan Sabha seats getting 23.7% votes and BJP candidates were able to get hardly 9.5% votes. According to political experts, in case former



Punjab Chief Minister Captain joins hands with BJP it may become a party of third political power in Punjab politics in coming Vidhan Sabha polls. However, in such case Punjab may witness a four corners contest in coming polls in the state.

SAD is another heavy weight political party in Punjab ruled over in the state continuously for 10 years winning Vidhan Sabha polls in 2007 and 2012 in alliance with BJP

and formed government in Punjab, but lost to Congress in last poll battle in the state due to powerful Congress candidate Captain Amarinder Singh. Congress high command is aware of that it is difficult to win the race in 2022 Vidhan Sabha polls and played 'trial card' on the advice of Navjot Singh Sidhu party president in the state appointing Charanjit Singh Channi a Dalit leader as Chief Minister in the state in order to attract Dalit vote

bank in coming 2022 elections having over 30% Dalit voters in Punjab state.

There is possibility of Captain Amarinder Singh may join hands with BJP and in this regard as Haryana Home Minister a heavy weight BJP leader in Haryana state has already indicated Captain to join hand with BJP and form next government in Punjab. Sources reveal, both SAD earlier having association with BJP and AAP also holding

influence in Punjab state will not hesitate to join hands with former Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh having good reputation in the state in order to form next government in Punjab state after 2022 elections. Meanwhile, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) Supremo Mayawati has warned all Dalit voters in Punjab not to support Congress candidate in Punjab state played 'Dalit card' by appointing Charanjit Singh Channi as Chief Minister in the state for a period of only few months just to attract Dalit vote bank in order to win next elections in 2022 in favour of Congress.

Comments war after announcement of Charanjit Singh Channi as new Chief Minister in Punjab by Congress high command has started when Captain challenged for a tough fight to Congress candidate during 2022 Vidhan Sabha polls in Punjab blaming Navjot Sidhu a danger to country as well as Punjab state due to his intimate relations with Imran Khan and army General Bajwa in Pakistan, besides expressing revolt said Navjot Singh's dreams to become Punjab Chief Minister will not be fulfilled.

No intention of staying in Cong, but will not join BJP: Captain

NEW DELHI: Former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh said he was quitting the Congress but would not join the BJP. "I have no intention of continuing in the Congress. I will resign," said the veteran, who met National Security Adviser Ajit Doval a day after meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

CWC meeting soon, says cong leader AICC general secretary and media chief Randeep Surjewala said a Congress Working Committee meeting would be held soon and party chief Sonia Gandhi had indicated the same before leaving for Shimla recently on a short vacation.

Captain said he had flagged the security situation in Punjab where Pakistan was fomenting trouble by sending weapons through drones. "The Congress is going downhill with senior leaders completely ignored. I will leave the Congress where I have been 'utterly humiliated' and was not trusted. I will not be treated in this manner. I will not take such insults," the 79-year-old leader said.

The former CM said he was still thinking through his options and that Punjab's security was his top priority. "The 2022 elections will be



I have suggested to the Home Minister to resolve the matter at the earliest and as a long-term solution recommended a compensation package for Punjab to encourage crop diversification. With such a package, the state can pay MSP for other crops too"

very different with AAP, SAD, Congress and may be another force in the fray. But historically, Punjab has voted for one party," he observed, claiming that AAP had gained ground and the Congress had gone

down "ever since Navjot Sidhu became PCC chief." On farmers' issues, he said: "I have suggested to the Home Minister to resolve the matter at the earliest and as a long-term solution recommended a compensation package for Punjab to encourage crop diversification. With such a package, the state can pay MSP for other crops too," he said, indicating that he may emerge as the face of the farm issue resolution with BJP's support.

On the Punjab crisis, Captain warned that misgovernance would give Pakistan a chance to create further disturbances. "CM Charanjit Channi is an intelligent leader, provided Navjot Sidhu lets him function," he said, describing Sidhu a mere crowd puller "who can't take his team along." AGENCIES

Centre puts off paddy procurement from Punjab, Haryana till October 11

CHANDIGARH: The government has decided to postpone paddy procurement from Punjab and Haryana till October 11, following high moisture content in the crop because of the recent spell of heavy rainfall in the region. The procurement was to begin in Punjab from October 1.

Early variety of produce arrives in Jalandhar mandi.

Unaware of the government's decision to postpone the paddy procurement, around 10 tractor-trailers with early varieties of paddy arrived in the Dana Mandi in Jalandhar on Thursday

This year, apart from regular 78 grain markets, 26 public places have also been set up as temporary purchase centres for procurement of paddy. However, rice millers are yet to be contacted by the mandi board

Naresh Gulati, an agriculture officer, said: "This year, around 10.50 LMT paddy is



expected to arrive in the market against last year's 8.50-9 LMT. Around 4.25 lakh acres were covered under paddy this season."

In a letter to the state government, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, said because of the recent rain, the maturity of paddy had been delayed

and moisture content in the fresh arrival was beyond the permissible limit. "So to avoid any inconvenience to farmers, it has been decided that the procurement under the MSP will commence from October 11," it said. The state governments have been advised to dry the paddy that has already arrived in mandis. AGENCIES

Chautala to refill new life in INLD in the presence of 8 national leaders on Sept 25

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

Chief General Secretary Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) Abhay Chautala told media persons at Chandigarh that party supremo Om Parkash Chautala five times holding the chair of Chief Minister in Haryana in past will refill new life to INLD in the state during 'Samman Divas Rally' to be held at Jind on September 5, 2021 at the eve of 108th birth anniversary of former Deputy Prime Minister Late Ch. Devi Lal in the presence of eight national level political leaders of different political parties in the country.

Among those invited to join rally include historic ally former Prime Minister H.D. Devgoda, former Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal, former U.P. Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, former Jammu-Kashmir Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah, former



Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, former Union Minister Yashwanth Sinha, Janta dal (u) leader K.C. Tyagi going to represent Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar unable to attend this rally due to some urgent work and President national Lok dal party Jayant Choudhary.

Chautala said, all prominent political leaders to attend rally at Jind will not only



strengthen INLD network in Haryana state but also discuss and take decision for the formation of 'Third Front' on a platform to participate in coming polls in the country against ruling government. Om Parkash Chautala will address this rally first time after his release from Tihar Central jail where he was sentenced 10 year imprisonment when Congress was ruling in Haryana state allegedly recruitment of JBT teachers in the state.

5 of family found dead under mysterious circumstances

PALWAL: Five members of a family were found dead under mysterious circumstances in Aurangabad village of Palwal district.

Suspecting a case of suicide and murder, the police sent the bodies for post-mortem examination and a case of murder was registered against one of the deceased.

The victims, identified as Naresh (33), his wife Aarti, son Sanjay (8), daughter Varsha (10) and a niece Ravita (12), were found in their house. While Naresh, head of the family, was found hanging from the ceiling, other victims were found on cots in a room.

The incident came to notice of Lakhi Ram, father of Naresh, around 6 am after he failed to get any response from the room of his son sleeping inside. He told the police that as he called a neighbour, all victims were found dead inside after the door of the room was broken open.

Claiming that he did not

suspect the involvement of any outsider, he said his son might have committed suicide after strangulating others to death in their sleep. He said he was not aware of the cause of the incident as no suicide note was found from the spot.

Naresh was self-employed and running a small fast food joint in Jhansi of Uttar Pradesh. He had returned to his house last evening. His wife also hailed from Jhansi. "Naresh was of jovial nature had been sitting with his kin till 10.30 pm in the courtyard," said Bhagat Singh, a cousin, adding that the incident was shocking as no dispute or quarrel between the couple on any issue had come to his notice or other members of the family till date. Though the exact cause of the crime is yet to be ascertained, Priyam Singh, SHO, Mundkati police station, said a case of murder had been registered against the deceased Naresh on the complaint lodged by his father. AGENCIES

NEWS BRIEF

Gurdas Maan gets interim anticipatory bail

CHANDIGARH: The Punjab and Haryana HC confirmed the interim anticipatory bail granted to Punjabi singer Gurdas Maan in a case registered against him on August 26 for allegedly hurting religious feelings of the Sikh community. The Bench, at the same time, granted the investigating officer the liberty to make Maan join the probe through video-conferencing as he was down with Covid. "An no custodial interrogation of the petitioner is required, the interim bail granted on September 15 is made absolute. AGENCIES

Kejriwal is lying on Delhi model: Sukhbir Badal

CHANDIGARH: SAD president Sukhbir Singh Badal said AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was lying on the health sector achievements in Delhi while the RTI queries clearly revealed that health facilities in Delhi were the worst in the country. The SAD president was addressing media persons at a function held to induct former MP Varinder Singh Bajwa back into the party from the Congress. He announced the latter's appointment as senior vice-president in the party. Quoting information sought under the RTI, Sukhbir said the AAP government in Delhi had not added a single new hospital from 2015 to 2019. AGENCIES

Efforts on to reopen Singhu, Tikri: Khattar

CHANDIGARH: Residents of over 20 villages around the Singhu and Tikri borders adjoining Delhi met CM Manohar Lal Khattar and apprised him of the problems being faced by them due to the closed border roads.

The government, in a press statement, said Khattar told them that they were making every possible effort to reopen the borders while maintaining law and order.

Under the leadership of Nationalist Parivartan Manch president Hemant Nandal, the villagers handed over a memorandum to the CM, seek-

ing the opening of the roads at the earliest.

The CM said the state intended to open the roads by maintaining peace. Today itself, the SC has asked the SKM to be made a party in the petition for re-opening the blocked border roads, he said.

Khattar said he was also worried about the loss being caused to the traders due to the closure of the roads. He said to fix the link roads passing via vil-lages, work would be done on a priority basis by giving orders to the departments concerned. AGENCIES

Poisonous smoke released from industries made Yamunanagar & Jind districts polluted in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

Both Yamunanagar and Jind districts in Haryana state has been identified highly polluted in the state according to World Air Quality Report -2020 having air quality index (AQI) generally ranging between 200 to 400 particular matter (PM) and both these towns have been identified highly polluted among 20 top polluted towns in the world. According to AQI, PM level of a area between 0-60 micro gram (MG) is safe and not harmful for health. However PM level between 61-90 MG is usually normal, PM level between 91-120 MG is harmful for health, PM level between 121-160 MG is very harmful for health, PM level more than



161 MG is extremely harmful for health and PM level more than 400 MG is dangerous for life and may cause serious heart and respiration problems. Industrial twin city Yamunanagar- Jagadhari situated

near Yamuna and Markanda rivers have more than 2000 industrial units to manufacture plywood and metal utensil manufacturing units releasing plenty of black smoke from boilers in plywood industries

and smoke as well as poisonous chemicals from furnaces in metal industries causing severe harm to residents' health in the area who blame Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) as well as district administration responsible for neglect and not taking action against such industrial units.

Information reveals, the town Yamunanagar is facing severe pollution in spite of the fact there is Kalesar National Forest spread across 25000 acre area and Wild Life Century Forests spread in over 13000 acre area in the district. Geological data of the district having 1756 square km area which include 32.39 sq km thick forests, 89 sq km medium forests, 82.36 sq km open forests and 193.36 sq km green

area have sufficient greenery. If we have an eye over recent past scenario the forest area has been reduced by 0.64% at present as compared to year 2017 in the district.

The residents of area blame district administration as well as HSPCB officers for not taking action against industries releasing pollution in the air as well as harmful chemicals thrown in drains and rivers flowing inside the town. However, burning crop remains in agriculture fields and garbage in open in residential areas is another prominent reason for increase in pollution. Information reveals, 248 farmers in Yamunanagar district were fined amount worth Rs 6,35,000 allegedly burning crop wastes in open last year.

Pari Saikia, two others bag key global journalism award

The European Commission today announced the three winners of the 2021 'Lorenzo Natali' Media prize: Pari Saikia, for her work on the plight of the Rohingya, Maria Altamira, for her work on the labour exploitation of migrants and Srishhti Jaswal for bringing to light the hunger situation in India. For nearly three decades, the prize has recognised courageous journalism and focused on compelling, compassionate reporting that brings to light stories that matter on the global challenges impacting society.

Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta

HIGHLIGHTS

- Chandigarh's journalist Srishti Jaswal won the 2021 'Lorenzo Natali' Best Emerging Journalist award, announced today.
- She got the award for "The Global Hunger Index Reveals India's Ignored Hunger Crisis"
- Srishi, who started her career from Chandigarh and hails from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh, is an Independent journalist. She is an alumna of Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Delhi.

Urpilainen, presented the prizes to the winners at today's award ceremony: "This award of this year's Lorenzo Natali Media prize, recognizes three exceptional journalists, whose work exemplifies the courage,

integrity and dedication to global equity. As development journalists you help bring about change - whether it is tackling inequalities, protecting universal human rights, or responding to the existential

threat of climate change."

Best Emerging Journalist prize

Srishti Jaswal, writing in Stories Asia, for: "The Global Hunger Index Reveals India's Ignored Hunger Crisis"



Vesalius College in Brussels, Universidade Católica Portuguesa in Lisbon, Universidad de Navarra in Pamplona and Université Saint Joseph in Beirut. The 2021 prizewinners, selected by a grand jury from

among more than 1,100 applications from across the world.

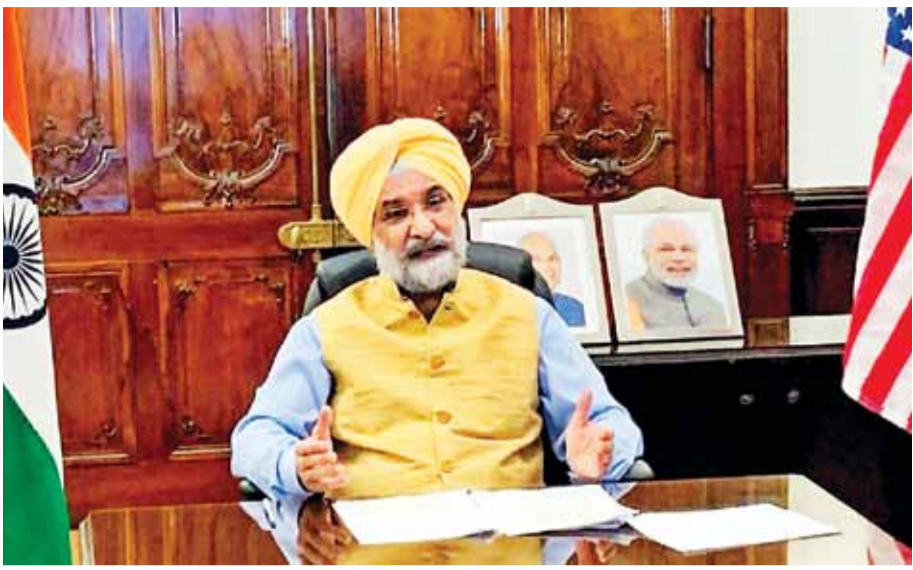
Background

Established in 1992, the European Commission's Lorenzo Natali Media Prize is awarded in memory of Lorenzo Natali, a former Commissioner for Development and Cooperation. He was a staunch defender of freedom of expression, democracy, human rights and development. The prize recognises high-quality, courageous reporting on compelling issues such as climate change, women's rights, inequality, healthcare, democracy and human rights. AGENCIES

ALSO READ | GOVT BEGINS AIR INDIA BID EVALUATION * P5 | GERMAN COMMERCIAL BANK SELECTS TCS AS STRATEGIC PARTNER FOR IT SERVICES * P5

Modi had a very successful visit to US: Ambassador Sandhu

WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a very successful visit to the US during which he held his maiden bilateral meeting with President Joe Biden and had a good candid and substantial exchange with like-minded Quad leaders at their first in-person summit, India's envoy here has said.



Remarks by India's Ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, came at a dinner event hosted by Indiaspora.

During the visit, there was an important bilateral meeting between President Biden and Prime Minister Modi, the first one since the Biden-Harris administration was inaugurated in January this year.

"So, it was not the first time they were meeting, but the bilateral meeting was very good," Sandhu said in his first public appearance after last week's visit of PM Modi.

The interaction with Vice President Kamala Harris went very well, he said.

The Quad summit hosted by Biden at the White House and attended by Modi along with their counterparts from Japan and Australia "really went off very well", he said.

"There was a good candid and substantial exchange between all the four leaders," he said, adding that there are practical areas in which the corporation is moving quite ahead.

"In fact, in vaccines, all the four countries are bringing their respective strengths together and we are on our way to producing one billion vaccines in 2022 which will be distributed over the Indo-Pacific particularly in Southeast Asia," Sandhu said.

Ensure none is left out of vaccine safety circle: PM on Mann ki Baat

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to keep following Covid protocol and ensure that no one is left out of vaccination's "circle of safety".



In his monthly "Mann Ki Baat" radio broadcast, the PM also said common people were getting connected to digital transactions through fin-tech Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and its prevalence was increasing.

Noting that the festival season is approaching, Modi said when the whole country would celebrate "Maryada Purshottam" Shri Ram's victory over untruth, people should also remember the fight against Covid.

He also underlined the significance of rivers on World Rivers Day, saying they are organically related to India's ancient heritage and culture.

He called for collective efforts to keep rivers pollution-free. "As we celebrate World Rivers Day today, I urge the people across the country to mark a 'river festival' at least once a year," he added.

Referring to government steps to rejuvenate the rivers, he said "Namami Gange" project has become people's movement. "It is true that technology can help a lot in economic cleanliness. It is a matter of delight for us that even in villages, the common person is getting connected in the direction of digital transactions through fin-tech UPI and its prevalence is increasing," Modi said.

During August, 355 crore UPI transactions took place which also means that UPI was used for digital transactions more than 350 crore times, Modi said. Today, on an average, digital payments of more than Rs 6 lakh crore are happening through UPI, he said.

Cabinet approves continuation of PM POSHAN in Schools for five more years

NEW DELHI: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the continuation of 'National Scheme for PM POSHAN in Schools' for the five year period 2021-22 to 2025-26 with the financial outlay of Rs 54,061.73 crore from the Central Government and Rs 31,733.17 crore from State Governments & UT administrations.



The central government will also bear the additional cost of about Rs 45,000 crore on foodgrains. Therefore, the total scheme budget will amount to Rs 1,30,794.90 crore.

The PM POSHAN Scheme for providing one hot cooked meal in Government and Government-aided as a Centrally-Sponsored Scheme, which covers all school children studying in Classes I-VIII of Government, Government-Aided Schools. The earlier name of the scheme was 'National Scheme for Mid Day Meal in Schools' popularly known as Mid Day Meal Scheme.

The scheme covers about 11.80 crore children studying in 11.20 lakh schools across the country. During 2020-21, the Government invested more than Rs 24,400 crore in the scheme, including cost of about Rs 11,500 crore on foodgrains, according to officials. To improve its efficiency and effectiveness the scheme is proposed to be extended to students studying in pre-primary or Bal Vatikas of Government and Government-aided primary schools in addition to all the 11.80 crore children from elementary classes.

The concept of TithiBhojan will be encouraged extensively. TithiBhojan is a community participation programme in which people provide special food to children on special occasions/festivals, the officials said.

The central government is promoting the development of School Nutrition Gardens in schools to give children first-hand experience with nature and gardening. The harvest of these gardens is used in the scheme providing additional micro nutrients. School Nutrition Gardens have already been developed in more than 3 lakh schools.

Tamil Nadu farmers 15-year wait continues for farm pumps "Free Electricity"

DOMINICK RODRIGUES Chennai

Over four lakh farmers are still waiting for their free electricity connection over the past 15 years -- while also demanding diesel subsidies for their existing pumps -- among the estimated 32.44 Lakh Agricultural Households in Tamil Nadu.

The webinar hosted a panel of eminent speakers including Shanthi, Senior Engineer, Agriculture Engineering Department, Venkatesh L.R, CEO, Vesat Renewables, Ashok Kumar, MD, KCP Solar, S. Ranganathan, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association and Shankar, SICCI. The speakers covered a range of aspects pertinent to availing solar pumps with focus on the role of Govt departments and subsidies.

Over 21 lakh agriculture pumps in the state require Rs 3000 crore subsidy annually and require 8900 MW capacity -- approximately 20% of state electricity consumption -- of intermittent power supply, according to a webinar by "Citizen consumer and civic Action Group" (CAG) in association with South Indian Chamber of Commerce India (SICCI) organised part of the Climate Voices Tamil Nadu initiative.

"The TN Agriculture department has installed around 5800 standalone solar pumps from 2013-14 to 2020-21 with the help of GOI and GoTN Subsidies," Shanthi, Superintending Engineer, Agricultural Engineering Department, said while highlighting government incentives of solar for farmers under different programs and schemes such as 70% subsidy for solar pumps under the KUSUM scheme.

Solarisation of agricultural fields and installation of solar pumps will help reducing some of this stress alongside promoting distributed renewable energy (DRE) solutions in the sector, besides highlighting needs of farmers, solar developers & experts of the solar agriculture industry and identifying gaps and opportunities for solarising agriculture in Tamil Nadu, the Webinar noted.

However, with farmers having limited understanding and knowledge of these schemes, increased awareness was needed through media to amplify demand for DRE as Tamil Nadu's geographical advantages with Government schemes and initiatives make solar pumps the most economic and viable solution for farmers in the long run, she said.

Those questioning Congress decisions are anti-SC: Surjewala

NEW DELHI: The Congress hit back at G-23 leaders for questioning the decision making processes in the party and said those questioning the elevation of a Scheduled Caste leader Charanjit Channi as Punjab CM were anti-SC.



Hours after Kapil Sibal demanded a CWC meeting saying no one knew who was taking decisions in the Congress, party media chief Randeep Surjewala tweeted, "People seated in the corridors of power have been hurt. Because a Scheduled Caste leader was elevated as CM, they ask who is taking decisions in the Congress. They cannot digest the promotion of an SC. The residence of home minister Amit Shah is the epicentre of anti-SC politics."

Surjewala said Amit Shah and PM Modi wanted to take revenge on Punjab because they have so far been unable to benefit their "friends through black farm laws". "BJP's anti-farmer conspiracy will not succeed," Surjewala said.

After much weakening, Cyclone Gulab to intensify into another cyclone by October 1

NEW DELHI: The remnants of Cyclone Gulab are likely to enter the Arabian Sea on September 30 and intensify into a cyclonic storm a day later and then move towards Pakistan, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Many areas in Gujarat are likely to receive rainfall due to the remnants of Cyclone Gulab. The IMD said a low-pressure area -- a remnant of Cyclone Gulab -- was formed over south Gujarat region and adjoining Gulf of Khambhat.

"It is very likely to move west-northwestwards, emerge into northeast Arabian Sea and intensify into a depression by September 30," the IMD says. "Then it is very likely to move further west-northwestwards and intensify into a cyclonic storm during the subsequent 24 hours (October 1). Thereafter, it is likely to continue to move west-northwestwards towards Pakistan Makran coasts, moving away from the Indian coast," the IMD said. The IMD said light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy falls at a few places and extremely heavy falls at isolated places are very likely over Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat. Heavy to very heavy and extremely heavy falls at isolated places are likely over Gujarat region, Daman, Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and heavy to very heavy falls at isolated places over north Konkan. Light to moderate rainfall at most places with heavy to very heavy falls at isolated places are very likely over Saurashtra and Kutch and heavy falls at isolated places over Gujarat region and north Konkan, the IMD added.

Anand Sharma slams 'hooliganism' outside Kapil Sibal's house, urges Sonia Gandhi to take action

NEW DELHI: Senior Congress leader Anand Sharma on Thursday expressed disgust over party workers' protest outside Kapil Sibal's house after he raised questions over the functioning of the Congress, and asked AICC chief Sonia Gandhi to take strong action against those involved.



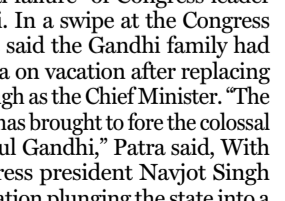
Asserting that differences of opinion and perception are integral to a democracy, Sharma, who along with Sibal is part of the "Group of 23" which last year had written to Gandhi seeking organisational overhaul of the party, said intolerance and violence are alien to the Congress values and culture.

"Shocked and disgusted to hear the news of attack and hooliganism at Kapil Sibal's house. This deplorable action brings disrepute to the party and needs to be strongly condemned," Sharma said in a series of tweets. He asserted that the Congress had a history of upholding freedom of expression. Those responsible must be identified and disciplined, Sharma said. "Urging Congress president Smt Sonia Gandhi to take cognisance and strong action," he said in a tweet.

AGENCIES

BJP slams Rahul Gandhi for Punjab crisis; says situation in border state 'worrisome'

NEW DELHI: Asserting that stability in Punjab -- a border state -- is essential for national security, the BJP hit out at the Congress over "creating political volatility" there.



BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra alleged that the Congress, which is in power in Punjab, has become synonymous with "instability", calling it a "colossal failure" of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. In a swipe at the Congress leadership, he said the Gandhi family had gone to Shimla on vacation after replacing Amarinder Singh as the Chief Minister. "The entire episode has brought to fore the colossal failure of Rahul Gandhi," Patra said. With Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu's resignation plunging the state into a fresh political crisis, Patra said the state has been plagued by a clash of ambitions. Senior Congress leaders like Manish Tewari have expressed concern over the situation in the state as Punjab's stability is important for national security, he added. He also accused the Congress of targeting journalists to "divert the attention from the Punjab crisis". Though he did not name anyone, his comments appeared to be aimed at reactions from some Congress leaders following the use of unparliamentary word by an anchor that appeared aimed at Rahul Gandhi.

AGENCIES

Tourists are Industry's + Brand Ambassadors+ amidst Covid: Maha CM

DOMINICK RODRIGUES



"World Tourism Day" was observed recently with the Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray urging for securing, conserving and elevating tourism through its numerous opportunities including treating every tourist virtually as "Brand Ambassadors" in the Covid-hit industry.

Inaugurating an updated "Maharashtra Tourism" website and mobile app while also highlighting the luxury "Deccan Odyssey" rail as one such opportunity, Thackeray suggested setting up of new tourism centers to showcase Maharashtra's unique wonders, while also assuring Government support including related development and policy decisions.

Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar echoed Thackeray's statement by also assuring required funds while observing that the State's vast tourism opportunities covering castles, seashore, adventure tourism, religious places, educational and medical tourism with Chipi Airport attracting hotel queries, Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aditya Thackeray said Maharashtra's prominent -- would benefit the tourism sector as a virtual +port of first call-- State for tourists visiting India.

Offering the Hospitality sector the status of Industry in view of the setting up of Chipi Airport attracting hotel queries, Maharashtra Tourism Minister Aditya Thackeray said Maharashtra's prominent +tourism+ face is set to emerge within the forthcoming years with related efforts paying off through the Tourism Department's decisions like: reducing permissions down to 80, and replacing 15 NOCs with 9 self-

declarations. Revenue Minister Balasah Thorat urged for creating employment opportunities for locals in the tourism focus covering the diversity from Maharashtra's Konkan to Vidarbha region. State Minister for Tourism Aditi Tatkare suggested having a dedicated Tourism officer for the development of tourism. Valsa Nayar -- Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism -- highlighted Maharashtra's tourism projects. Later, winners of Maharashtra's 'Masterchef' and photography competitions were given prizes by the Chief Minister, besides four students successfully completing the IITF (Incredible India Tourism Facilitator) Course.

The Chief Minister also announced opening of cinema halls, theatres from October 22 in the State, where permission would be given on condition of adhering to health rules and a detailed SOP being prepared in this regard will be declared soon.

Thackeray discussed this issue at a meeting attended by Task Force members including: MP Sanjay Raut, Chief Secretary Sitaram Kunte, Additional Principal Secretary Health Dr. Pradip Vyas, besides film producer Rohit Shetty, Kunal Kapur, Marakand Deshpande, Subodh Bhavne, Aadesh Bandekar and prominent theatre personalities. In another event, the Chief Minister urged for preserving the Sanskrit language -- the "Mother" of many languages -- beyond translation and repertoire while also imparting knowledge, culture and good values. He was inaugurating the Sub-Centre of Kavikulguru Kalidas Sanskrit University here in the presence Ratnagiri Guardian Minister and Transport Minister Anil Parab, and Higher and Technical Education Minister Uday Samant, besides other dignitaries.

Ram Naik welcomes Supreme Court Observations on 'Adjournment Culture'

MUMBAI: Ram Naik, former Governor of Uttar Pradesh, has welcomed the Supreme Court "observations" on granting adjournments.

The SC bench comprising Justices M.R. Shah and A.S. Bopanna, while dealing with a case of Madhya Pradesh Court which had given 10 adjournments, said on September 23. "Time has now come to change the work culture and get out of the adjournment culture so that the confidence and trust put by the litigants in justice delivery system is not shaken and the rule of law is maintained..... Repeated adjournments break the back of litigants. The courts are enjoined upon to perform their duties with the object of strengthening the confidence of the common man in the institution entrusted with the administration of justice."

Ram Naik said, "The Supreme Court itself should find out the remedy and ensure that the remedy they suggest is brought out effectively in practice by all the courts."

While the SC remarks in the case have been made because of 10 adjournments which delayed the legal process by four years, Naik said that was speaking from personal experience in a Bombay High Court case, which comprised a "Writ Petition" filed for providing resettlement and rehabilitation for project-affected persons of Tarapur Atomic Power Plant in Palghar District. He said the project concerned 1,250 families of farmers and fishermen of two project-affected villages -- Akkarpatti and Popharan -- for which the writ petition was filed in 2004 and the Court had given 38 'Orders' and 78 'Dates,' as per their computer records. "I had personally intervened and argued the case as I had helped in initiating and completing the project in the capacity of a Member of the Parliament of that area and also a Minister of Government of India. The Project has started producing atomic energy from 2004 -- but the Writ Petition has not been finally decided for the last 17 years," he said.

"After completing my 5-year term as Governor of Uttar Pradesh on 29th July 2019, I have again submitted my application for rejoining the case as an Intervener on 5th March 2020. The COVID-2019 epidemic has further delayed the hearing. I have now decided to approach the High Court for early hearing," Naik stated in a release here.

Srinivas Varkhedi said that for completing the work of "Forest Administration Development and Management Academy" (Forest Academy) at Chandrapur at the earliest, for which additional funds would be provided. Highlighting ap-

pointment of a "Director" to ensure the Forest Academy development as an autonomous body, he urged the Institute to conduct diploma to post-graduate courses on forest, wildlife, environment and climate change along with training of forest officers.

Regarding Maharashtra Forest Minister Sudhir Mungatkar's suggestion to transform the "Forest Academy" into a "Forest University," the Chief Minister urged for setting up a committee to study this, and also for forming a "Disaster Management Training Center" at the Forest Academy.

The Chief Minister also announced opening up of all religious worship places from October 7, but with strict adherence to health protocols in view of the possibility of occurrence of a third wave of COVID. Ensuring masking up, social distancing and use of sanitizer was the responsibility of the management committee of these religious worship places, he said.

The Chief Minister also called for preserving the "glorious traditions and rich and historic legacy" of Marathi theatre culture. Highlighting the setting up of an art gallery themed on Marathi theatre at the Birla Matoshree Sabhagraha in South Mumbai's Gurgaum Chowpatti seafont, Thackeray said Marathi theatre and its various "movements" ensured a learning process of societal evolution and human history for future generations through its aspects of music, commercial plays, experimental theatre, Dalit subjects, dramas on the workers' movement and other unique features.



PM POSHAN scheme needs more budget

The approval of the PM POSHAN scheme by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs until 2025-26 comes at a critical time when real income declines and the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the ability of families to ensure good nutrition. The findings in Phase I of the NFHS-5 for 22 States and Union Territories in December 2020 were shocking: childhood stunting rose in 13 States, there was high prevalence of anaemia among children and women, and wasting was a serious concern in 12 States. The slippage over the previous survey period exposes the worsening scourge of malnutrition, threatening to deprive millions of children of a fully productive adult life. It will take a serious effort to address this hidden crisis, backed by strong budgetary commitment. The centrally supported hot meal programme in Government and Government-aided schools, covering 11.8 crore children, will be supplemented with nutritional elements in identified aspirational districts and areas with high anaemia. The Government must demonstrate that Saksham Anganwadi-Mission POSHAN 2.0, which amalgamates the POSHAN Abhiyan and schemes covering anganwadis, crèches and adolescent girls, is fiscally stronger than its erstwhile component parts. There must be a meaningful increase in the current Budget estimate over the combined past outlay for the subsumed individual schemes. On nutritional planning, the renewed plan should introduce a greater diversity of diets that compensates for micronutrient and protein deficiency. Strong supplementation of nutrition at school, in the community, and at childcare centres is critical at a time when criticism of food inflation has met with a tone-deaf response, and pandemic-induced income declines have depressed essential consumption.

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION, INDIA HAS ROLLED OUT TO PROVIDE A DIGITAL HEALTH ID TO EVERY CITIZEN.

- ACCESS TO HEALTH RECORDS**
The ID will facilitate access to personal health records, which can be linked and viewed with the help of a mobile application, especially by doctors anywhere in the country.
- BOOST HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**
The Covid pandemic woefully exposed the inadequacies of India's health infrastructure, particularly during the destructive second wave in April-May this year. The entire medical edifice almost crumbled as lakhs of cases and thousands of deaths were reported every day.
- A DIGITAL PUSH FROM GOVT**
Even as the third wave looms large, the government's digital push is welcome, but technology alone can't bring about revolutionary changes in the health sector.
- WORK NEEDS TO BE DONE**
Much work needs to be done to achieve the lofty goal of setting up one medical college and hospital in every district of the country.
- TECH-BASED PUBLIC SERVICES**
It's also important to bridge the digital divide that is preventing millions of people from making the most of technology-based public services.

LETTERBOX

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R. NAGARAJ EXPLAINS HOW THE INDEX IS PLAGUED WITH PROBLEMS AND DESERVES TO BE SCRAPPED

The end of the doing business rankings

On September 16, the World Bank Group scrapped its flagship publication, the 'Doing Business' report. This report publishes the influential annual ranking of countries on the Ease of Doing Business (EDB) index. The Group acted on its commissioned study to examine the ethical issues flagged in preparing the 2018 and 2020 editions of the EDB index. The allegation surrounding Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, is the proximate reason for scrapping the publication. As Chief Executive Officer of the World Bank in 2018, Ms. Georgieva is accused of having exerted pressure on the internal team working on the Doing Business report to falsely boost China's rank by doctoring the underlying data. Similarly, tensions were also reportedly brought to bear in the case of Saudi Arabia's rank, among others.

The World Bank's decision has wide ramifications, as the index serves varied purposes. Many countries showcase improved ranking to signal market-friendly policies to attract foreign investments. National leaders often set EDB rank targets. This helps them measure domestic policies against global "best practices" and browbeat domestic critics. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for instance, wanted his administration to ensure that India breaks into the top 50 ranks of the EDB index. Some countries seem to use their political heft to improve their rank, polish their international image and sway public



opinion (as appears to be China's case). The EDB index ranks countries by the simplicity of rules framed for setting up and conducting businesses. Peruvian economist Hernando De Soto's theory underpins the index. The theory claims that secure property rights with minimal state interventions are a precondition for a free market to flourish. Management consultants and corporate lawyers collect the information for the index on time required for regulatory compliance — as per the statute (de jure) and not as practised (de facto) — from select cities and larger firms.

Advanced countries usually hold the index's top ranks. India ranked low, around 130-140, till 2014. However, it zoomed to the 63rd position in 2019-20 (see table). Showcasing the accomplishment, India has claimed success of the 'Make in India' campaign. The flagship initiative, launched in 2014, sought to raise the manufacturing sector's share in GDP to 25% (from 16-17%) and create 100 million additional jobs by 2022 (later revised to 2025).

The success is absent on the ground, however (see table). The annual growth rate in GDP manufacturing (at constant prices) fell from 13.1% in 2015-16 to (-) 2.4% in 2019-20. Net FDI inflow to GDP ratio has fluctuated around 1.5%. The fixed investment to GDP ratio (at current prices) fell from 30.1% in 2014-15 to 26.9% in 2019-20. Why is there such a disconnect between the stellar rise in EDB index rank and economic outcomes?

The theory underlying the EDB index could be suspect, the measurement and data could be faulty, or both. For example, China's phenomenal economic success, especially its agricultural performance (after the reforms in 1978), is perhaps the most unmistakable evidence demonstrating that lack of clarity of property rights may not be the binding constraint in a market economy. What matters is economic incentives. Measuring regulatory functions underlying the index could be tricky and subjective and possibly politically motivated as well, as the controversies surrounding the index seem to suggest.

Instances of data manipulation brought to light by the independent investigating agency seems to vindicate such a view.

The EDB index also seems vulnerable to a tweaking of the underlying method. For instance, India's improved ranking was reportedly an outcome of such an effort. When the index was re-estimated with unchanging procedures, the needle hardly moved. Similarly, Chile's rank on the EDB index sharply rose when the conservative government was in power and went down when the socialists were ruling despite no changes in policies and procedures. This was reportedly the result of the fine-tuning of the methodology and had profound political implications. Former World Bank Chief Economist, and later Nobel Laureate, Paul Romer, publicly apologised to Chile's socialist President for World Bank's less-than-professional conduct in preparing the index.

Weakening labour regulations Closer home, India has weaponised the mandate to improve the rank in the EDB index to whittle down labour laws and their enforcement and bring them close to the free-market ideal of 'hire and fire'. Most States have emulated Maharashtra's lead of administrative fiat, which renders labour laws toothless by dismantling official labour inspection systems and allowing employers to file self-regulation reports.

R. Nagaraj is with the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. Views are personal.

Largest Peaceful Protest in Modern History Marks One Year

FW BUREAU
New Delhi

As we celebrate International Peace Day today, the ongoing farmers' protest in India is a telling example of how non-violence can be a powerful tool against oppression and intimidation. A year ago, on September 17th 2020, hundreds of farmers (or kisan, as they are known in Punjabi) laid siege to railway tracks in the northern state of Punjab against the new farm laws passed by the Indian government that month which would negatively impact small-scale farmers. Men, women, youth, and children came out in droves to sit on the tracks and make their voices heard. As the state came to a standstill with no movement of trade owing to the suspension of rail traffic, local media and the state government took notice of the agitation that was brewing on the tracks.

What began as a seemingly small protest confined to the state of Punjab last September, has transformed into a full-fledged revolution, one whose hallmark is resilience, perseverance, focus and most of all, peace. Amidst brutal attacks by the police to clamp down on these dissenting voices, the farmers have kept their word and commitment to non-violence. Avowed in the beginning that they will not resort to any violence, the farmers continue to fight government resistance and atrocities through mahapanchayats (a gathering of local leaders from several neighbouring areas), discourses on farming, langars (community kitchens) and lots of compassion. When visuals of peacefully protesting farmers being beaten up by the police beam across the world, one thing stands out: their patience and courage to not fight back with physical violence.

"It is not that we can't retaliate, we don't want to. Farmers are the most peace loving community and we want everyone to see how oppressive the government is to attack hapless, defenceless farmers." — Joginder Singh Ugrahan, President of Bharatiya Kisan Union Punjab is an agrarian state where farming has been practiced by families for generations, so it was imperative that the voice of dissent spread across like wildfire. We soon had singers, actors, educationists, defence personnel, intellectuals joining the stir, crying in unison "Farmers first". Those



protesting argue that the new farm laws will decimate farmer's livelihood, leaving them at the mercy of large corporations. They fear dilution of the government's minimum support price for crops and procurement regime and a potential takeover of the market by corporate bodies.

In November 2020, as the farmers saw their pleas falling on deaf ears, they decided to encircle the Indian capital, New Delhi, resolute in their stand that they are not coming back until the laws are rolled back. As they headed from Punjab towards the capital, they were confronted with stiff opposition from the police in Haryana, a state they were to cross to reach Delhi, where they were targeted with water cannons, multi-layered barricading and baton charges. Yet, they marched on, this time joined by farmers from Haryana. As Haryana agriculturists threw its might behind its Punjab counterparts, the morcha (march or rally) snowballed into a movement which is now touted as the largest peaceful protest in modern history. The credit for not disrupting law and order and carrying the protest forward in a peaceful manner goes to the farmer leadership as well as the farmers who have understood and registered the significance of keeping it peaceful. It has helped them sway public sentiment in their favour, thwarting the designs of government-friendly media to paint them as anti-nationals and terrorists.

On September 26th 2021, the farmers' protest on the borders of Delhi completed

10 months. Over these 10 months, the farmers, of which there are a few hundred thousand, are living on the roads, agitating against the bills. And it is by no means an easy feat. From one of the coldest winters in a few decades to the wettest monsoon, they are enduring it all with their willpower and faith in their cause carrying them ahead. What they call home now, as they wait for the Indian government to register their presence, will put any establishment worth its empathy to shame. Tractor trolleys and tents are their makeshift homes. Adding to their woes is the emotional duress they are going through. Away from their families, they are living on the roads waging a battle against an oppressive and callous government as well as vagaries of weather.

Women too have emerged as a reckoning force in the protest, asserting their presence in an inspiring way.

We especially celebrate their participation in this revolution as many of them come from deeply traditional and patriarchal families, especially in Haryana (a state in the north) which is notorious for its skewed sex ratio. The stir has provided them with a robust platform to air their voices and opinions. Women farmers have stepped out of the four walls of their home to become part of this movement. They also bring a sense of compassion and calm with their constant presence at the protest sites, taking on the role of foster mothers for the youth. What is also heartening is that for many of these

women it is the first time they have left their domestic life behind and are experiencing more of the world. Their families too are boosting their confidence, some of them even teaching them how to ride a tractor. Things like these, however small, are indicators of social movement-cultural changes brewing at the grassroots. It is also important to acknowledge that while the women are going the extra mile for the cause, they are also fighting difficult living conditions at the protest sites. And smilingly. Lack of sufficient toilets and sanitation facilities are some of the issues they grapple with on a daily basis. "We have adjusted to it though not easy. A small price to pay when our presence is being noticed and we are being heard," says Sudesh Kumari, a farmer from Haryana who also made it to the Time Magazine in a long form article on women's role in the protest.

The journey, however, has not been a smooth ride for the farmers. They continue to be slandered by govt-friendly media as terrorists and anti-nationalists. Vilification campaigns run amok on news channels and social media, targeting the leaders and attributing nefarious designs to them. Farmers, however, are making good use of social media to counter these narratives. They have formed their own IT cell which keeps a watchful eye on salacious reports. The IT cell, which is managed by youth who have roots in farming but are employed in the corporate sector, shares content which throws light on the truth. They say the social media army of the government is out to get anyone who raises their voice against the power that be.

There is always a way out though. We can't let those sitting in power muffle our voices. About time we realised our strengths and staked claim on what is rightfully ours. — Baljeet Singh, Kisan Ekta Morcha

The farmers, in their fight to challenge the new farm laws, have also given hope to so many others in India who have been dissenting against the constant violations of democratic rights and freedom of speech, to practice one's religion, victimising minorities. They have also sent out a strong message of conserving the unity and diversity of India as its hallmark.

The author is a Goldin Fellow 2021. Originally written for Goldin Institute, a US-based non-profit.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Book overviews 300 years of Indian botanical art

Drawing on the vast original works held in the collections of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (UK), a new book brings together botanical art of Indian origin spanning a period of 300 years.

Published by Roli Books, "Indian Botanical Art: An Illustrated History", is authored by British botanist-author Martyn Rix.

Focussing on the 18th and 19th centuries, it showcases the richness and variety of art commissioned from "talented, mostly unknown, Indian artists who made a substantial contribution to the documentation of the flora of the Indian sub-continent".

"When Joseph Hooker (noted British botanist and explorer) visited India around 1850, he met many of the East India Company botanists and admired the skill of their artists and the beauty of their collection of paintings. This led him to accumulate his own collection and add to it whenever he could, thus contributing to the great collection of paintings that are now preserved at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew," wrote Rix in the preface of the book.

"Hooker's collection ...and acquisitions from other private sources, mean that Kew's collection is unrivalled in scope. Examples from the collection, which has remained almost unseen until now, form the basis of

It showcases the richness and variety of art commissioned from 'talented, mostly unknown, Indian artists who made a substantial contribution to the documentation of the flora of the Indian subcontinent'

the book," he added. Founded in 1840, the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, London is a thriving research centre for botanical science with one of the largest collections of plants and fungi, both living and dried, in



Indian Botanical Art: An Illustrated History
By Martyn Rix
Roli Books
224 pages; Rs 1,495

the world. Besides the stunning Indian botanical art from the Kew Gardens archives, the book also includes works from a new generation of botanical artists in India, including the likes of Hemlata Pradhan, Nirupa Rao and Jaggu Prasad.

"In recent years there has been a renaissance of botanical painting throughout India, with artists such as Hemlata Pradhan in Kalimpong, Nirupa Rao in Bangalore and Jaggu Prasad in Rajasthan, exhibiting around the world, and teaching botanical painting to a new generation,

who are influenced by both Indian traditions and the modern European flower painting. Their work here demonstrates how the traditions begun in the 18th century continue to excite interest even today," writes Rix in the book.

The book brings together and shows for the first time ever striking botanical art of Indian origin spanning a period of three hundred years, focussing in particular on the 18th and 19th centuries. Drawn mostly from original works held in the collections of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, some of the paintings have never been published before. They showcase not only the wealth of the Indian sub-continent flora but the richness and variety of artworks, commissioned from mostly unknown Indian artists, who made a substantial contribution to the documentation of plants of economic, ornamental and cultural importance. **AGENCIES**

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NEWSBRIEF

Sebi confirms ban on 5 persons in Zee Entertainment insider trading case

NEW DELHI: Market Regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) confirmed its earlier directive passed against five persons wherein they were barred from the securities market for indulging in insider trading in the scrip of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Limited. "Bijal Shah, Gopal Ritolia, Jatin Chawla, Gopati Devi Ritolia and Daljit Chawla are restrained from buying, selling or dealing in securities, either directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever until further orders," SEBI said in its 43-page confirmatory order. However, they have been allowed to buy and sell units of mutual funds. The regulator said a detailed investigation in the matter is in progress which may bring out additional roles of omission or commission, of these five persons, if any, in detail. The market regulator will pass a separate order after giving an opportunity of hearing to the other entities who are not covered in the interim order but against whom the interim order has been passed. The latest direction comes after the watchdog, through an interim in August, barred 15 entities, including these five individuals, from the securities markets for indulging in insider trading in the shares of Zee. The regulator had found that a group of connected or related entities had taken long position in the shares in the cash and derivatives segments. Following the announcement of first quarter results of FY 2020, the entities had squared off the long positions and generated huge profits. **AGENCIES**

Reliance backs Saudi ARAMCO chairman as independent director

BENGALURU: Reliance Industries Ltd said Saudi Aramco Chairman Yasir Al-Rumayyan met all regulatory criteria for his appointment as an independent director, pending a shareholder approval on the decision. Last week, shareholder California State Teachers' Retirement Fund had decided to vote against the move based on US Proxy advisory research firm Glass Lewis' recommendation. The voting process on the appointment, made on July 19 for a period of three years, will end on October 19. Al-Rumayyan's inclusion to the board was widely seen as part of a process to formalise a deal to sell 20% stake in the Indian conglomerate's oil-to-chemical business to the world's top oil exporting company for \$15 billion in 2019. However, Reliance said his appointment has no connection with the transaction, adding that Saudi Aramco will be a part of the deal-related process to spin off the oil-to-chemicals business into a separate unit. The deal is expected to be completed soon after a delay last year due to pandemic-led hit to oil prices and demand. Al-Rumayyan, chairman of Aramco's board, has been the governor of the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia since 2015. **AGENCIES**

Govt begins Air India bid evaluation

THE STAKE SALE PROCESS, WHICH BEGUN IN JANUARY 2020, FACED DELAYS DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. IN APRIL 2021, THE GOVERNMENT ASKED POTENTIAL BIDDERS TO PUT IN FINANCIAL BIDS

NEW DELHI: The government has begun evaluation of financial bids received from Tata Group and SpiceJet founder for the acquisition of Air India, sources said.

With this, the privatisation process of the national flag carrier has moved to the next phase as the government looks to expeditiously conclude the deal.

The financial bids are being evaluated against an undisclosed reserve price and the bid offering the highest price above that benchmark would be accepted.

If successful, this will mark the return of Air India to Tata fold after 67 years.

The Tata Group founded Air India as Tata Airlines in October 1932. The government nationalised the airline in 1953.



Tatas operated a premier full-service carrier, Vistara, in partnership with Singapore Airlines. It wasn't immediately known if the group put in the bid on its own or through budget carrier AirAsia India.

Singapore Airlines was said to be not keen on participating in the privatisation programme as it would only add to Vistara's and its own financial troubles.

The government is seeking to sell 100 per cent of its stake in the state-owned national airline, including Air India's 100 per cent shareholding in AI Express Ltd and 50 per cent in Air India SATS Airport

Services Private Ltd.

The stake sale process, which begun in January 2020, faced delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In April 2021, the government asked potential bidders to put in financial bids. The last day for placing financial bids was September 15.

Tata Group was among the multiple entities that had put in an initial expression of interest (EOI) in December 2020 for buying the Maharaja.

With previous attempts since 2017 failing to get any significant interest and after receiving feedback from potential investors, the government

in October last year sweetened the EOI clause relating to the transfer of Air India's debt to the new investor, giving bidders flexibility to decide on the quantum of humongous debt they want to absorb.

As per the Air India EOI floated by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) in January 2020, of the airline's total debt of Rs 60,074 crore as of March 31, 2019, the buyer would be required to absorb Rs 23,286.5 crore. The rest would be transferred to Air India Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a special purpose vehicle.

Air India has been in losses ever since its merger with domestic operator Indian Airlines in 2007.

The airline, which was formed by the Tatas as a mail carrier in 1932, will give the successful bidder control of 4,400 domestic and 1,800 international landing and parking slots at domestic airports, as well as 900 slots at airports overseas.

Besides, the bidder would get 100 per cent of the low-cost arm Air India Express and 50 per cent of AISATS, which provides cargo and ground handling services at major Indian airports. **AGENCIES**

China power crisis causes sudden contraction in factory activity

NEW DELHI: China's factory activity has shrunk unexpectedly amid curbs on electricity use and rising prices for commodities and parts, raising more concerns about the state of the world's second biggest economy, The Guardian reported.

A closely watched survey released on Thursday showed that China's factory activity contracted in September for the first time since the pandemic took a grip in February 2020.

The figures showed that output fell thanks to a marked slowdown in high-energy consuming industries, such as plants that process metals and oil products. Sub-indices also highlighted a fall in new orders, employment and new export orders, the report said.

The sudden contraction in factory activity will further weigh on an economy already facing serious problems in its bloated property sector, chiefly in the form of the struggling behemoth Evergrande. Analysts had expected the manufacturing purchasing manager's index



(PMI) to remain steady at 50.1 in September, but the official result showed the index at 49.6. The 50-point mark separates growth from contraction.

China's economy rapidly recovered from a pandemic-induced slump last year. Although the non-manufacturing PMI provided a welcome bright spot for September, momentum has broadly weakened in recent months, with its sprawling

manufacturing sector hit by rising costs, production bottlenecks and electricity rationing.

Economies throughout the world are grappling with production issues due to supply chain disruptions. The UK car production fell 27 per cent in August because of a shortage of semiconductors, and data on Thursday showed Japan's industrial output falling for a second straight month in August. **AGENCIES**

German Commercial bank selects TCS as strategic partner for IT services

NEW DELHI: Leading IT major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has been selected by a German commercial bank - NORDBANK, as its strategic partner for its IT transformation, according to a regulatory filing by the company to the stock exchanges.

The leading German bank targets a new business model by 2024, and also aims to build a leaner and astute operating model. As part of the five-year partnership, Tata Consultancy Services will work with the bank to transform and simplify its application estate across multiple businesses, including wholesale and retail banking, financial markets, through application consolidation as well as automa-



tion, according to the statement.

TCS will help the German commercial bank adopt modern technologies to automate the manual processes in the application management domain and to strengthen the operational resilience. The global IT services organisation will also build new features to support the bank's transformation goals by leverag-

ing its knowledge of local banking norms.

"After a thorough process, we selected TCS as the partner for this journey as they demonstrated deep market and financial domain expertise, global delivery capability augmented with strong German delivery, customer focus and strong transformation capabilities," said Tobias Meiler, CIO, NORDBANK.

September 28, shares of Tata Consultancy Services opened on the BSE at Rs 3,854, inching to an intra day high of Rs 3,854 and an intra day low of Rs 3,754.60, in the trading session so far. Shares of TCS were last trading 2.04 per cent lower at Rs 3,758.75 on the BSE. **AGENCIES**

Vishwaraj Sugar draws up Rs 400 cr Greenfield sugar plant expansion plan

DOMINICK RODRIGUES
Mumbai

'Greenfield' developments are continuing on the rise in India, where Vishwaraj Sugar Industries (VSI) -- an integrated sugar company producing sugar, power and ethanol -- has recently chalked out Rs 400-crore expansion plans for setting up a greenfield sugar factory along with an expansion in its existing distillery facility at Belgaum district in Karnataka.

VSI Executive Director Mukesh Kumar told media here "We are setting up a Rs 250-crore greenfield sugar plant along with a distillery having 100 KLPD capacity exclusively for ethanol production. Also, we plan to expand our existing distillery capacity by 150 KLPD at an estimated cost of Rs 150 crores."

"These projects will be funded through both equity and debt,



and the expanded facilities are expected to operate at full capacity over the next couple of years," he said, adding that the company manufactures Distillery products like Rectified Spirit, Anhydrous Ethanol and from molasses and Sugar Syrup.

Belgaum District in the State of Karnataka is designated as one of the "High Recovery Zones" for sugar production by the Government of India.

Kumar said that with de-regularization of sugar, the company developed a robust marketing and sales team and the company's turnover is expected to double in the next 5 years after the proposed projects

go on stream. The company has reduced its dependence on sugar and in the year ending March 2021, sugar sales accounted for 66% of the total revenue, he said while pointing out that ethanol revenue is expected to go from 30-35% to 50 percentage terms going forward following the government's initiative.

"Sugar and ethanol prices are expected to remain firm. Sugar prices have firmed up due to market forces in the local market and prices will remain higher in the international market due to failure of crops in Brazil," he said.

Meanwhile, sugar makers are in a "sweet" spot as producers witnessed a significant reversal in their fortunes helped by exports and the government's boost to promote ethanol production. This is expected to help the sector tide over the sugar surplus situation to a large extent, he added.

Piramal group acquires DHFL for Rs 34,250 crore

NEW DELHI: Piramal Enterprises announced that it completed the acquisition of Dewan Housing Finance Corporation (DHFL) for a total consideration of Rs 34,250 crore. As part of the deal, Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL) will merge with DHFL, according to a regulatory filing by the global business conglomerate to the stock exchanges.

Piramal Group paid Rs 38,000 crore to the aggregators of DHFL - which includes Rs 34,250 crore to be paid by Piramal Capital and Housing Finance in cash and non-convertible debentures (NCDs), and Rs 3,800 crore from the cash balance available with the DHFL.

The new entity will retain the name - Piramal Capital and Housing Finance Limited (PCHFL), according to



Piramal Group's statement. The company will focus on affordable financing and will serve more than one million lifetime customers, with a presence in 24 states.

The DHFL insolvency resolution is the first successful resolution under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) in the financial services sector and is the largest in terms of value. 94 per cent of the creditors had voted in favor of Piramal's resolution

plan, as per the statement.

"The combined entity will have 301 branches, 2,338 employees and over 1 million lifetime customers. We will be a dominant player in the fast growing affordable housing segment. Over the last two years we have successfully built our next-gen technology platform, advanced analytics engine and AI/ML capabilities," said Anand Piramal, Executive Director, Piramal Group. **AGENCIES**

Toyota Kirloskar to discontinue Yaris in India



NEW DELHI: Toyota Kirloskar has announced that it has discontinued the Yaris in India as part of its strategy to cater to "ever-evolving needs of the customer" through enhanced technologies and product offerings. "Toyota Kirloskar Motor announces the discontinuation of Yaris in India with effect from September 27, 2021," Toyota Kirloskar said in a statement on Monday.

Toyota Kirloskar has given an assurance that services and spares will be provided to existing customers, for now. "Toyota will continue to seamlessly cater to all Yaris customers' needs through our dealer service outlets across the country, along with the promise of availability of Toyota genuine spare parts for minimum next 10 years on this discontinued model."

Moreover, Toyota Kirloskar has emphasized that customers would continue to enjoy the company's other products. "We would like to continue to serve such customers with other current offerings and preparations are underway to launch new Toyota models in the coming year 2022." Toyota Kirloskar said.

A rebadged version of the Ciaz is expected to join Toyota's line-up in India soon. Like the Baleno and Vitora Brezza, the Ciaz will be sold with a Toyota badge and will most likely be christened as Belta.

The Toyota Yaris, launched in 2018 at a price of 9-14 lakh, was seen as Honda City's competitor. **AGENCIES**

Zee Entertainment's investors move company law tribunal seeking to hold shareholders meet

NEW DELHI: Zee Entertainment Enterprises said its top shareholders had approached National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) asking the media and entertainment company to hold an extraordinary general meeting (EGM).

Invesco Developing Markets Fund and OFI Global China Fund LLC, which together hold a 17.88 per cent stake in Zee, filed a petition with the NCLT's Mumbai bench, the company said in a filing to the exchange.

The investors had earlier this month asked Zee to remove Chief Executive Officer



Punit Goenka and two directors from the board and to appoint independent directors.

Meanwhile, Zee last week signed a merger deal with Sony Group Corp's India unit to create the country's largest broadcaster, with Goenka set

to become the merged entity's managing director and chief executive officer.

Zee, in a separate filing, disclosed that Invesco and OFI had requested the company to conduct an EGM in a letter dated September 23. In the letter, Invesco and OFI had said Zee's disclosure of the Sony deal was "symptomatic of the erratic manner in which important and serious decisions have been handled at the company," a section of media had reported Invesco and OFI did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment. **AGENCIES**

Vedantu gets \$100 million funding, becomes India's fifth Edtech to enter unicorn club

NEWDELHI: Online tutoring platform Vedantu said that it has raised \$100 million in Series E round led by Singapore-based impact investing fund ABC World Asia. With the funding, Vedantu has now entered into the country's unicorn club with a «valuation of \$1 billion».

The Bengaluru-headquartered company is the fifth EdTech (educational technology) platform to achieve this feat after Byju's, Unacademy, Eruditus and upGrad. In startup terms, a unicorn is a company which is valued above \$1 billion.

«Series E» implies that a company has, at a given point, gone through many funding rounds. Vedantu said the funding round also saw strong participation from existing investors

- Coatue, Tiger Global, GGV Capital, Westbridge among others. It added that this «underscores its status as the largest K-12 (from kindergarten to the 12th grade) LIVE online tutoring company in India.»

The online platform said it «has continued to be a pioneer in India's K-12 tutoring space with several first-time innovations that include WAVE, its proprietary LIVE teaching platform, and the 2-teacher model.»

Vamsi Krishna, CEO, and Co-Founder, Vedantu said, «Back in 2014, when we held our first LIVE class, nobody believed this would work. It is super satisfying to see this format becoming mainstream and Vedantu leading the way in innovative online delivery experiences. We will



continue to innovate to reach as many students as possible and create 10x better experiences and outcomes for every child at Vedantu.»

Sugandhi Matta, Chief Impact Officer, ABC World Asia,

said, «Vedantu embodies our investment themes of providing better access to quality education and using digital technology to improve lives and livelihoods. With EdTech experiencing meteoric growth in India, Vedantu

as the pioneer and category creator in LIVE online tutoring is driving the tectonic Vedantu also said that the «latest funding round will close over the next few weeks, with more investors joining in subsequent tranches.» The Rainmaker Group acted as the exclusive financial advisor to Vedantu on their fundraising, the EdTech platform further mentioned.

Vedantu currently offers tutoring courses to young students (3 to 18-year old), preparation for competitive exams such as IIT-JEE, NEET, Commerce, CBSE, ICSE, and state exams such as Maharashtra boards. SuperKids is its newest offering which offers extracurricular classes like English speaking, reading, and coding courses. **AGENCIES**

Bharat Petroleum Corporation plans to invest Rs 1 lakh cr towards diversification

NEW DELHI: State-owned Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL), in which the government aims to sell its majority share during the current financial year, plans to pump in Rs 1 lakh crore during the next five years by diversifying in clean fuel, strengthening its petrochemical capacity as well as bolstering its gas business.

Speaking to media persons, BPCL chairman A K Singh said that the major investment will help the company in firming up its future roadmap which will have space for both conventional fuels as well as the fast emerging electric vehicles segment.



BPCL will also look to convert greater volumes of crude oil into petrochemicals, Singh informed further.

BPCL, which is the country's second-biggest fuel retailer and third-largest refiner, is also planning to set up a 1,000 mw infrastructure for

renewable power generation, mainly through acquisitions, the chairman said.

Biofuels as well as hydrogen production are also other key segments where the company plans to invest in the near future.

Mr Singh said that BPCL plans to convert around 7,000 of its petrol pumps into energy stations by offering multipurpose options like refueling petrol, diesel, CNG and even charging facilities for electric vehicles. He said that Rs 30,000 crore would be spent on improving refining capacities and augmenting petrochemical capacities, while another Rs 20,000 crore will be invested in gas proliferation. **AGENCIES**

Govt makes aadhaar authentication mandatory to claim GST refunds

NEW DELHI: The government has made Aadhaar authentication of taxpayers mandatory for claiming GST refund. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has amended GST rules bringing in various anti-evasion measures, including disbursement of GST refunds only in the bank account, which is linked with same PAN on which Goods and Services Tax (GST) registration has been obtained.

The notification also states that from January 1, 2022, businesses who have defaulted in filing summary return and paying monthly GST will not be able to file GSTR-1 sales return of the succeeding month. The notification follows the decisions taken at the meeting of the GST Council in Lucknow on September 17.

AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said, "To arrest tax evasion, the government has made Aadhaar authentication for proprietor, partner, karta, Managing Director, whole time Director, and authorised signatory compulsory before filing an application for



revocation and cancellation registration and refund application." EY Tax Partner Abhishek Jain said with the objective of preventing revenue leakage, the government has made Aadhaar authentication mandatory for a taxpayer to be able to claim refunds.

"The move will help in reducing cases of fraudulent refunds as only the verified taxpayers will obtain the refunds now," Jain added. With regard to

taxpayers not being able to file their GSTR-1 if they have not filed their GSTR-3B of the previous month, Jain said this is a well thought restriction and a necessary control check to eliminate the cases where taxpayers although report their supply invoices in GSTR-1 (due to constant follow ups from recipients' side) but they do not submit their corresponding GSTR-3B return through which tax is actually paid to the government.

Deadline to seed aadhaar with UAN extended till Nov 30

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has extended till November 30th the deadline for the seeding of the Aadhaar number along with the Universal Account Number (UAN) and its verification. Justice Prathiba M Singh said that till then, the employers shall be permitted to deposit the provident funds in respect of employees for whom seeding has not taken place and no coercive measures shall be taken against them.

"Until and unless the issue of whether mandatory seeding is legally valid or not is determined, as per Aadhaar judgement, there cannot be any exclusion of benefits to employees under the Act, due to failure to authenticate or verify with Aadhaar," the judge said in her order dated September 17. "Insofar as those persons for whom the Aadhaar number seeding is yet to take place are concerned, the date for completing the seeding and verification shall stand extended till November 30, 2021. "In the meantime, employers shall be permitted to deposit the provident funds in respect of employees for whom seeding has not taken place and no coercive measures shall be taken against them for non-seeding of Aadhaar numbers with UANs," the order said.

"Compliant taxpayers would appreciate this move as till now their input tax credit was also at risk in case vendors do not file their GSTR-3B even though such invoice is appearing in GSTR-2A," Jain added.

Currently, the law restricts filing of return for outward supplies or GSTR-1 in case a

business fails to file GSTR-3B of preceding two months. While businesses file GSTR-1 of a particular month by the 11th day of the subsequent month, GSTR-3B, through which businesses pay taxes, is filed in a staggered manner between 20th-24th day of the succeeding month. **AGENCIES**

ED attaches Rs 578 crore worth UK assets of Wadhawan brothers

NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) said it has attached assets worth Rs 578 crore of a UK-based company owned by former DHFL promoters Kapil Wadhawan and his brother Dheeraj in connection with the UPPCL money laundering probe against them and others.

The attached properties "are in the form of investment made by the Wadhawans through WGC-UK in United Kingdom-based companies" and a provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The value of the assets GBP (British pounds) 57 million or Rs 578 crore, it said in a statement.

The Wadhawan siblings are at present in jail in connection with the Yes Bank alleged loan fraud money laundering case. The latest ED case against the Wadhawans is based on an FIR filed by Lucknow Police against some officials of Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Ltd (UPPCL) for "illegal investment" of general provident fund (GPF) and central provident fund (CPF) of the employees of the power com-



pany into Dewan Housing Finance Limited (DHFL) "in violation" of the government notification and directives. "DHFL in connivance with UPPCL officials had illegally received Rs 4,122.70 crore of GPF and CPF funds of UPPCL's employees in fixed deposit in DHFL." "Out of this total investment, Rs 2,267.90 crore of principal amount of provident fund (GPF+CPF) of UPPCL is still outstanding to be paid by DHFL," the ED claimed.

These "illegal investments" had been received by the DHFL during the period when DHFL was engaged into disbursement of high-value loans to its promoter

related companies. "All such unsecured loans had been sanctioned as per the directions of the chairman of DHFL, Kapil Wadhawan and many of such loans have turned into NPA," the agency alleged. Many of these loans, it said, have been siphoned off without utilising them for the purpose they were sanctioned for. "The proceeds of crime, amounting to more than Rs 1,000 crore, generated in this case has been siphoned off to UK by the Wadhawans by seven levels of layering and laundering through more than 30 beneficially owned/controlled Indian companies," it said. **AGENCIES**

NEWS BRIEF

DHFL Corruption Case: HC refuses bail to Yes Bank Founder Rana Kapoor's wife, daughters

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court refused to grant bail to Yes Bank founder Rana Kapoor's wife and two daughters in a corruption and cheating case involving private sector lender Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd (DHFL). A single bench of Justice Bharati Dhanraj rejected the bail applications filed by Kapoor's wife Bindu and daughters Roshini and Radha. The three had approached the HC last week, challenging a special CBI court order of September 18 which refused them bail while noting that they had, prima facie, caused a loss of Rs 4,000 crore to the Yes Bank through illegal acts. The lower court had remanded them in 14-day judicial custody and said they did not deserve any sympathy for being women. The three are currently lodged at the Byculla women's prison in Mumbai. **AGENCIES**

LIC seeks to appoint chief financial officer before mega IPO by end of fiscal: Report

NEW DELHI: State-backed Life Insurance Corp of India (LIC) is seeking to appoint a chief financial officer, according to a notification on its website, ahead of an initial public offering slated before the end of the fiscal year. The move to hire a CFO follows a decision to re-designate LIC's top job to chief executive officer from chairman earlier this year. LIC is currently under going a valuation exercise for an IPO that could be India's biggest ever as the government seeks to raise around Rs 90,000 crore by selling five per cent-10 per cent stake in the company by the end of the fiscal year that runs through March. Recently, government appointed ten investment banks including Goldman Sachs, Citigroup and SBI Capital Market to handle the offering. **AGENCIES**

NPCI partners with YES Bank to launch Rupay 'on-the-go'

NEW DELHI: The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) partnered with private lender YES Bank to launch the RuPay On-the-Go contactless payments solutions - a first-of-its-kind facility for customers. The RuPay contactless solution will enable customers to make small and large value transactions from accessories that they wear everyday, according to a statement shared by NPCI.

This means that the card operates as a wearable payment solution that is likely to change the contactless payments space. It will eliminate the need to carry a physical card and will enable instantaneous payments with a simple 'tap, pay, go' mechanism.

RuPay 'On The Go'

With the RuPay On-the-Go facility, customers can make payments as a part of their fashion accessory. It is something that they can "wear" every day, and makewallet-free transactions. The interoperable, open-loop solution for customers is a quick and secure service,

equipped with smart, super technology.

Customers can use the service at RuPay contactless-enabled PoS (point of sale) at the retail outlets and can pay up to Rs 5,000, without the need to enter the PAN number.

For making payments more than Rs 5,000, customers need to tap the accessory and then enter PIN, according to NPCI. Additionally, for the on-line transactions, the BHIM YES PAY app offers a virtual RuPay card to the customers that can be utilised for the digital as well as e-commerce transactions.

"The RuPay On-the-Go smart accessories, such as keychains with tap-and-pay functionality, will enable customers to make digital payments securely, more easily and in style. As the volume of digital transactions continues its upward trend, tech solutions that allow people to make contactless payments - through smart objects that blend in with their style," said Ms Anita Pai, COO, YES Bank. **AGENCIES**

Ministerial panels set up to review GST exempt list, rate merger, identify evasion sources

NEW DELHI: The Finance Ministry has set up two committees of state finance ministers which would rework rate slabs, review GST exempt items and identify potential evasion sources.

Four years after the roll out of the national Goods and Services Tax (GST), which replaced the complex indirect tax structure, the Centre and states have started work on moving towards a "simpler rate structure in GST" by reviewing the current rate slabs, including special rates and merger of rate slabs.

The Group of Ministers (GoM) on rate rationalisation would also review items under inverted duty structure to help minimise refund payout, and review the supply of goods and services exempt under GST with an objective to expand the tax base and eliminate breaking of input tax credit (ITC) chain.

The 7-member panel, which would submit a report in two months, would be headed by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai and include West Bengal Finance Minister Amit Mitra, Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tarkishore Prasad.



Under GST a four-rate structure that exempts or imposes a low rate of tax 5 per cent on essential items and top rate of 28 per cent on cars is levied. The other slabs of tax are 12 and 18 per cent. Besides, a cess is imposed on the highest slab of 28 per cent on luxury, demerit and sin goods.

There have been demands for merging the 12 and 18 per cent slab as also take out certain items from the exempt category to balance the impact of slab rationalisation on revenue.

With regard to inverted duty structure, the GST Council has already corrected the rate anomaly in case of mobile handset, footwear and textiles. The min-

isterial panel would now look at representations of inverted duty structure and recommend suitable rates to eliminate any such cases where final goods attract a lower GST than the tax levied on its inputs. The GoM on GST system reforms would identify potential sources of evasion and suggest changes in business processes and IT systems to plug revenue leakage.

The eight-member panel, headed by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, would include Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Palanivel Thiaga Rajan and Chhattisgarh Finance Minister T S Singh Deo. **AGENCIES**

HDFC bank issues over 4 lakh credit cards since lifting of ban

NEW DELHI: HDFC Bank issued more than four lakh credit cards since the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) lifted the ban on issuing new ones. The country's largest private lender also announced the relaunch of three cards - HDFC Bank's Millennia, MoneyBack+ credit card as well as Freedom credit card with several new features and benefits for cardholders.

The new card variants will be available to customers by next month, said HDFC bank. The existing Freedom and Millennia card holders will be able to reap the new benefits and will also be notified by the bank.

The record issuance of new credit cards registered by the bank since September 21, 2021, according to a statement by HDFC Bank.

"We are now pushing the pedal not only to acquire new customers, but also to enhance offerings of our existing cards. Our strategy to re-invent, create and co-create has been crafted based on the analysis of



customers' buying behaviour, the categories they spend on and the spend patterns," said Mr Parag Rao, Group Head - Payments, Consumer Finance, Digital Banking & IT, HDFC Bank.

"The months that we have spent reading and sharpening our strategy are now bearing fruit. We are now ready to unveil best in class offerings and experience to our customers, just in time for festive season," added Rao.

Earlier in August this year, the central bank lifted the eight-month long ban on HDFC Bank from issuing new credit cards. **AGENCIES**

Sensex tanks 410 points, Nifty ends below 17,750 on weak global trends

MUMBAI: Equity benchmark Sensex tumbled by 410 points or 0.68 per cent due to heavy selling in IT, financials and telecom stocks in line with weak global trends as US bond yields rebounded.

After plunging over 1,032 points during the session, the 30-share BSE barometer pared some losses to end 410.28 points or 0.68 per cent lower at 59,667.60.

The broader Nifty of the National Stock Exchange declined by 106.50 points or 0.60 per cent to close at 17,748.60, dragged down by Bharti Airtel and Tech Mahindra. As many 32 of Nifty constituents declined while 18 advanced.



Bharti Airtel was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding nearly 4 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv,

HCL Tech and Infosys. However, gains in Reliance Industries, Kotak Bank and PowerGrid restricted the losses in the index. NTPC, Sun

Pharma, Titan, and Dr Reddy's were also among the gainers.

"Following negative global cues and profit-booking in IT and realty sectors, the domestic market hit rough weather, however, it witnessed a rebound towards the closing," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

A rise in US bond yields and crude oil price along with the Chinese energy crisis acted as key headwinds to the ongoing rally in the global market, he added.

A power shortage in some parts of China led to temporary closure of factories under a measure to meet energy use

targets. Analysts feared that the shut down could have global impact, including on supplies needed for manufacturing throughout Asia ahead of the year-end shopping season.

Vikas Jain, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities said, "Domestic markets opened flat to negative as US stocks ended mostly lower, weighed down by weakness in tech, while government bond yields rose to the highest level in nearly three months after durable goods orders topped forecasts." The 10-year US Treasury yield climbed 3 basis points to 1.49%, the highest since June. **AGENCIES**

IndusInd Bank, Vistara to launch co-branded Credit Card



NEW DELHI: IndusInd Bank has partnered with full-service airline Vistara to launch a co-branded credit card, the private lender stated in a release. The Club Vistara IndusInd Bank Explorer credit card provides comes with a complimentary 'Gold' class membership to Club Vistara (CV), the frequent flyer programme of the airline under which flyers can earn points on every flight, IndusInd Bank said. IndusInd Bank also said that the offers complimentary access to over 600 airport lounges, zero foreign currency mark-up, milestone rewards as well as dining and entertainment related benefits.

Here are the other top benefits of the credit card:

- Five complimentary business class tickets on achieving spend milestone every year.
- Re-scheduling fee waiver on direct booking of Vistara flights.
- Bespoke concierge services at the cardholder's disposal.
- Waiver on fuel surcharge

at any petrol pump across India.

- Lifetime waiver on late payment charges, cash withdrawal charges as well as over limit fee.
- Personal air accident insurance cover of up to Rs 2.5 crore.
- Insurance against loss or delayed baggage, loss of passport, ticket as well as missed connection.

Soumitra Sen, Head - Consumer Bank, IndusInd Bank said, "Millennials seek a solution that offers them a combination of seamless consumer experience, best-in-class rewards, as well as world class safety standards. This all new card proposition fulfils each of those requirements, thereby providing customers with a hassle-free travel experience." Vinod Kannan, Chief Commercial Officer, Vistara, "We are hopeful that our customers will see great value in the Club Vistara IndusInd Bank Explorer Credit Card and enjoy its benefits as they travel around the globe with us." **AGENCIES**

Banks to remain shut for 21 days in October

CHANDIGARH: As the festival season is around the corner, the month of October will see the banks closed for a total of 14 days due to various holidays.

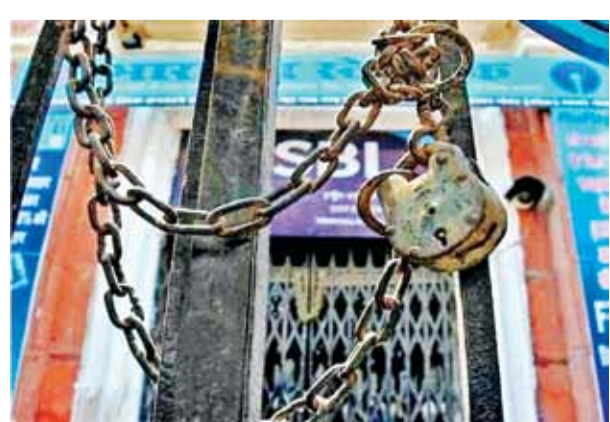
According to a list of bank holidays by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), apart from the 14 days off in October, if you consider the weekends for which banks would have to be closed then that is another seven days added to the list, which brings the tally to 21 days.

However, it is not a major cause for concern as these holidays are spread out. They are spread out in the sense that they only take place on certain days for certain dates, save for a couple of days. The rest of the holidays are not uniformly

applicable for the most part. So, how many holidays your local lenders will see depends on your geography.

Here is the full list of holidays for the month of October 2021, as per RBI mandate: (Counting from October 1 onwards)

1. October 1 - Half Yearly Closing of Bank Accounts (Gangtok)
2. October 2 - Mahatma Gandhi Jayanti (All States)
3. October 3 - Sunday
4. October 6 - Mahalaya Amavasye (Agartala, Bengaluru, Kolkata)
5. October 7 - Mera Chaoren Houba of Lainingthou Sanamahi (Imphal)
6. October 9 - 2nd Saturday



7. October 10 - Sunday
8. October 12 - Durga Puja (Maha Saptami) / (Agartala, Kolkata)
9. October 13 - Durga Puja

- (Maha Ashtami) / (Agartala, Bhubaneswar, Gangtok, Guwahati, Imphal, Kolkata, Patna, Ranchi)
10. October 14 - Durga Puja /

- (Ahmedabad, Belapur, Bhopal, Chennai, Dehradun, Hyderabad, Imphal, Jammu, Kanpur, Kochi, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, New Delhi, Raipur, Ranchi, Srinagar, Thiruvananthapuram)

11. October 15 - Durga Puja / Dasara / Dusshera (Vijaya Dashmi) / (All Banks except those in Imphal and Shimla)
12. October 16 - Durga Puja (Dasain) / (Gangtok)
13. October 17 - Sunday
14. October 18 - Kati Bihu (Guwahati)
15. October 19 - Id-E-Milad / Eid-e-Miladunabi / Milad-i-Sherif (Prophet Mohammad's Birthday) / Baravafat

16. October 20 - Maharishi Valmiki's Birthday / Lakshmi Puja / Id-E-Milad (Agartala, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Shimla)
17. October 22 - Friday following Eid-i-Milad-ul-Nabi (Jammu, Srinagar)
18. October 23 - 4th Saturday
19. October 24 - Sunday
20. October 26 - Accession Day (Jammu, Srinagar)
21. October 31 - Sunday **AGENCIES**

ECONOMY & POLICY

NEWSBRIEF UK Royal Mint's 1st Goddess Lakshmi gold bar on sale

LONDON: The UK Royal Mint's first bullion bar range featuring Goddess Lakshmi as a celebration of Diwali went on sale. The "Lakshmi" bar, a 20 gm gold bar with the Hindu Goddess of Wealth engraved intricately into the precious metal, was designed by Royal Mint designer Emma Noble and follows a close collaboration with the Shree Swaminarayan Temple in Cardiff on its intricate design. The bar, retailing at 1,080 pounds, is described by the Royal Mint as reflective of its ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion and an expansion of diverse cultural celebrations in the country. "With gold being a traditional and auspicious gift during the Diwali festival, we wanted to develop a product that incorporates both beauty and tradition, but with a modern twist," said Andrew Dickey, Divisional Director for Precious Metals at the Royal Mint. **AGENCIES**

ECGC targets to get listed by end of FY23

NEWDELHI: Export credit insurer ECGC Ltd -- owned by the Indian government -- is targeting to list its shares on the bourses by the end of 2022-23, said a top company official. ECGC promotes exports by providing credit insurance services to exporters against non-payment risks by the overseas buyers due to commercial and political reasons. It also provides insurance covers to banks against risks in export credit lending to the exporter borrowers. The ECGC's products support around 30 per cent of India's merchandise exports. The Central government announced its decision to list the company while approving capital infusion of Rs 4,400 crore into ECGC -- formerly Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India -- over a period of five years. **AGENCIES**

Indian digital payments at record high, says Nirmala Sitharaman

NEW DELHI: India is better than most of the world in the adoption of Fintech or automated financial services.

"India's adoption rate is 87 per cent as against the global average rate of 64 per cent, which establishes the fact that India is a prime destination for digital payments and activities," said Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. Digital payments have seen a tremendous growth from Rs 2 lakh crore worth of digital transactions in 2019 to Rs 4 lakh crore in 2020. January to August 2021 saw further momentum, clocking Rs 6 lakh crore worth of digital transactions.

The number of individual transactions was 355 crore, "showing energetic participation from users, industry and the government in the digital ecosystem", said the finance minister.

The minister was speaking at "The Global FinTech Fest", organised by Fintech Convergence Council (FCC) and Payments Council of India (PCI) along with National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).



The minister said the UN principles on digital payments have come at the right time and will serve as an important resource to all stakeholders in delivering digital payments based on the principles of trust, consent, privacy, transparency and choice for the end user. **AGENCIES**

Govt to borrow Rs 5.03 lakh crore in second half of current fiscal to fund revenue gap

NEW DELHI: The government will borrow Rs 5.03 lakh crore in the second half of the current fiscal to fund the revenue gap for reviving the pandemic-hit economy, the finance ministry said.

During the first half, the government has raised Rs 7.02 lakh crore by issuing bonds, the ministry said in a statement. "Out of gross market borrowing of Rs 12.05 lakh crore projected for FY 2021-22 in the Union Budget, Rs 7.24 lakh crore (60 per cent) was planned to be borrowed in first half (H1). "The effective borrowing in H1 of FY 2021-22 was Rs 7.02 lakh crore. The Government now plans to borrow the balance Rs 5.03 lakh crore in second half year (H2) of FY 2021-22," it said.

The H2 projection also factors requirements for release of balance amount to states on account of back-to-back loan facility in-lieu of GST compensation during the year, it added. According to the Budget for 2021-22, the government's gross borrowing was estimated at Rs 12.05 lakh crore, while net borrowing was pegged at Rs 9.37 lakh crore in the financial year beginning April 1.

Gross borrowing includes repayments of past loans. Repayment for past loans in the next financial year has been pegged at Rs 2.80 lakh crore. The government raises money from the market to fund its fiscal deficit through dated securities and treasury bills. The Budget has pegged fiscal deficit at 6.8 per cent for the next fiscal, down from 9.5 per cent of the GDP in the current financial year. **AGENCIES**

Cabinet okays Rs 4,400 crore fund infusion in Export Credit Guarantee Corporation

NEW DELHI: Government will infuse Rs 4,400 crore in Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) and the entity will also be listed through an initial public offer (IPO). The Union Cabinet cleared the proposal on Wednesday to this effect.

Speaking to media persons after the Cabinet meeting, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said that ECGC's listing may take place next year. Out of the total Rs 4,400 crore, an amount of Rs 500 crore will be provided to the company on immediate basis, he informed while elaborating on fund infusion in the state-owned entity.

ECGC is governed by the Commerce Ministry and it provides export credit insurance support to exporters.

Fund infusion in ECGC will help the entity to spread its coverage, especially towards labour-intensive sectors. The company is market leader in the credit insurance segment in the country with more than 80 per cent market share.

The money to be put into



ECGC will provide greater legitimacy to the company while giving insurance cover to exporters. In fact Goyal estimated that it will be able to provide export insurance worth Rs 88,000 crore after this fund infusion.

Apart from this, the Union Cabinet also cleared the continuation of the National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) scheme and a provision of Rs 1,650 crore grant-in-aid for it up to a period of five years.

The fund infusion in this entity will help exploit the potential of exports in key focus areas, the minister said. **AGENCIES**

Expect over 7% growth for India this decade: CEA

NEW DELHI: Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) KV Subramanian said India will clock over 7 per cent annual growth during this decade on the back of strong economic fundamentals.

During the current fiscal, he said, growth would be in double-digits and it could moderate to 6.5 - 7 per cent in the next financial year.

The Economic Survey 2020-21, released in January this year, had projected GDP growth of 11 per cent during the current financial year ending March 2022.

The survey had said growth will be supported by supply-side push from reforms and easing of regulations, infrastructural investments, boost to manufacturing sector through the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, recovery of pent-up demand, increase in discretionary consumption subsequent to rollout of vaccines and pick up in credit.

"When you look at the data itself actually, the V shaped recovery and quarterly growth patterns actually established that the fundamentals of the economy are strong...the kind of reforms

that we've done on it, and the supply side measures that we've taken will enable strong growth not only this year but going forward as well," he said.

Growth will be aided by various structural reforms, including labour and farm laws, undertaken by the government, he said while addressing a virtual event organised by the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF).

"This decade will be India's decade of inclusive growth. In FY23, we expect growth to be between 6.5 to 7 per cent, and then accelerating

further as the impact of these reforms are seen. On average, I expect growth to be greater than 7 per cent in this decade for India," he said.

He also pointed out that the government is putting a lot of emphasis on capital expenditure as it has a multiplier effect.

The Union Budget for 2021-22 has provided a capital outlay of Rs 5.54 lakh crore, an increase of 34.5 per cent over the Budget Estimate of 2020-21.

The Budget estimate of capital expenditure for FY2020-21 was Rs 4.12 lakh crore. **AGENCIES**

Union government's survey shows the effect of Covid on job growth

NEW DELHI: The Union government survey on job growth affirmed the negative effect of the Covid pandemic-induced lockdowns on the country's trade sector.

The quarterly Employment Survey (April-June 2021) of establishments employing more than 10 workers in nine select sectors conducted by Union Labour Ministry's Labour Bureau and released on Monday says the employment in trade came down by 25 per cent and in accommodation and restaurant the decline was by 13 per cent.

The benchmark for comparison in the survey on job status of the sectors is 2013-14. NDA-2.0 led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed power in 2014.

The nine selected sectors are manufacturing, construction, trade, transport, education, health, accommodation & restaurant, IT/BPO and financial services, account-

ing for a majority of the total employment in the non-farm establishments.

Sharing the findings on the pandemic induced employment retrenchment/decline, Union Labour Minister Bhupender Yadav said that it was found that the impact was evident in 27 per cent of the establishments.

"However, 81 per cent of the workers received full wages during the lockdown period (March 25-June 30, 2020)," Yadav said while releasing the survey.

The survey depicts most impressive growth of 152 per cent in the IT/BPO sector; followed growth rates in health with 77 per cent; education with 39 per cent; manufacturing with 22 per cent; transport with 68 per cent; and construction with 42 per cent.

Estimated total employment in the nine selected sectors from the first round of QES is

3 crores and 8 lakhs - a growth rate of 29 per cent over 2013-14. "Evidence-based policy making and statistics based execution is the major focus of Government," Union Labour Minister Yadav said.

Data on all aspects of labour is crucial. "Evidence-based policy making and statistics based execution is the major focus of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he added.

Other highlight of the survey is that nearly 90 per cent of the establishments have been estimated to work with fewer than 100 workers, the corresponding figure during Economic Census (EC) 6 being 95 per cent.

Nearly 35 per cent of the IT/BPO establishments worked with at least 100 workers, including about 13.8 percent engaging 500 workers or more. In the health sector, 18 per cent of the establishments had 100 or more workers. **AGENCIES**

Petrol, diesel prices hiked; more to come as crude nears USD 80/barrel



NEW DELHI: Petrol price was hiked by 20 paise per litre and diesel by 25 paise as international oil prices neared USD 80 per barrel mark for the first time in three years. The price of petrol was hiked to Rs 101.39 a litre in Delhi from Rs 101.19 and to Rs 107.47 per litre in Mumbai, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Diesel rates went to Rs 89.57 a litre in Delhi and Rs 97.21 in Mumbai.

Prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes.

This is the first price increase in petrol in more than two months and the fourth in case of diesel.

The increase followed international oil prices rising for the fifth consecutive day and global benchmark Brent heading for USD 80 per barrel.

Tuesday was the first increase in petrol price since state-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) on September 24 resumed daily price revisions, ending the pause in rates that had been effected since September 5.

In four price increases since September 24, diesel rates have gone up by 95 paise per litre. This negates three-fourths of the Rs 1.25 a litre cut in prices that happened between July 18 and September 5.

Before this, diesel price was last increased on July 15. The last increase in petrol rate was on July 17.

International crude oil prices have reached a nearly three-year high as global output disruptions have forced

India's external debt rises 2.1% to \$570 billion

NEW DELHI: India's external debt rose modestly by 2.1% year-on-year to \$570 billion as of March-end 2021, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the finance ministry.

External debt to GDP ratio rose marginally to 21.1% from 20.6% as at end-March 2020.

Reserves to external debt ratio, however, increased to 101.2% from 85.6% during the same period, thereby consolidating the country's position as a net creditor to the world, as per the status report on India's external debt released by the ministry.

The sovereign debt at \$107.2 billion rose higher by 6.2% over its level a year ago, mainly because of an increase in external assistance more than compensating the fall in FPI investment in government securities (G-Secs), it said. The augmented external assistance reflected larger disbursement of COVID-19 loans from multilateral agencies during 2020-21.

The non-sovereign debt, on the other hand, grew 1.2% on a yearly basis to \$462.8 billion. Commercial borrowings, NRI



deposits and short-term trade credit account for 95% of the non-sovereign debt. While NRI deposits grew 8.7% to \$141.9 billion, commercial borrowings at \$197.0 billion and short-term trade credit at \$97.3 billion shrank by 0.4%.

At March-end 2021, long-term debt (with original maturity of above one year) was at \$468.9 billion, recording an increase of \$17.3 billion over the year-ago level. US dollar-denominated debt remained the largest component of India's external debt, with a share of 52.1% as of March-end 2021, followed by Indian

rupee (33.3%), yen (5.8%), SDR (4.4%) and the euro (3.5%).

"Over the years, policy on external debt has enabled the private sector to access foreign debt in a calibrated manner. As at end-March 2021, the level of non-sovereign debt was more than four times that of sovereign debt, compared to half as at end-March 1991," it said. Given its relative size, typically in a normal year, it is the relative rise in non-sovereign debt that influences the dynamics of India's external debt, thereby supplementing domestic savings to fund larger investments as the economy expands, it said. **AGENCIES**

Income Tax Dept to accept pending settlement cases till Sept 30

NEW DELHI: Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has directed the income tax department to accept all pending tax settlement cases applications till September 30, 2021.

In an order dated September 28, CBDT directed the Commissioner Income Tax to admit all such pending applications to settle the cases.

Taxpayers will now be able to file their applications before the interim board till September 30.

Through an amendment in the Finance Act via the Union Budget of 2021-22, the Income Tax Act 1961 was amended, which led to ceasing of operations of the Income Tax Settlement Commission (ITSC) from Febru-



ary 1, 2021 onwards.

It was also directed that no applications for dues settlement could be filed on or after February 1, 2021. Therefore to settle all such applications which were pending as on January 31, 2021, the govern-

ment had set up the Interim Board for Settlement (IBS).

However after receiving numerous applications and representations from taxpayers from across the country, mainly from those who were at advanced stages of filing their settlement applications but could not do so due to cessation of ITSC, CBDT has given extension till September 30, 2021 to file their applications before the interim board.

The relief to such tax payers has been however given on the condition that they were eligible to file applications for settlement of their dues on January 31, 2021 and that all their required proceedings are pending as on the date of filing for the same. **AGENCIES**

Goldman Sachs cuts China's growth forecast to 7.8% amid power shortages

NEWDELHI: Goldman Sachs has cut China's growth forecast to 7.8 per cent this year from the previously estimated 8.2 per cent as the world's second largest economy faces "yet another growth shock" in the form of constraints on energy consumption. The country is already battling to save Evergrande amid fears that Chinese property behemoth could turn out into a "Lehman moment" for the global markets and economy.

Goldman Sachs has lowered the year-on-year forecasts for China's economy to 4.8 per cent in the third quarter and 3.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2021 compared to 5.1 per cent and 4.1 per cent respectively for the third and fourth quarters of the previous financial year.

On a quarter-on-quarter basis, the Wall Street banking giant has slashed its forecast for China to 0 per cent in the third quarter from a previous forecast of 1.3 per cent, and 6 per cent in the fourth quarter from the earlier estimated 8.5 per cent.

In September last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping said the country was aiming to achieve peak carbon emissions by 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060. In line with the President's 'green' vision and to meet energy use targets for 2021, the national and local governments in China have curtailed the production of coal and other carbon-heavy processes, and imposed strict emission targets. China has pledged to cut energy intensity, a measure



of the energy used per unit of economic growth, by as much as 3 per cent in 2021 alone.

The tough new environmental regulations have left energy shortages in their wake. Some of the

country's largest industries such as property developers and technology companies have been compelled to curb and even halt all production. As much as 44 per cent of China's industrial activity may have been affected by the new environmental norms, Goldman Sachs reckons, adding industrial output cuts caused by power outages cause "significant downside pressures" on growth.

Even families are starting at a limited supply of electricity, with some provinces going to the extent of encouraging their residents to rely more on natural sunlight and less on A/Cs and other power-guzzling equipment.

China is already grappling with the Evergrande disaster and the resultant slowdown in property sales

and construction activity. The Evergrande Group, which was the world's largest property developer until recently, is now buckling under liabilities exceeding \$300 billion. Many fear that the company may default on countless creditors and property owners, in an eerie reminder of the infamous collapse of U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers at the height of the financial crisis in 2008.

"Considerable uncertainty remains with respect to the fourth quarter, with both upside and downside risks relating principally to the government's approach to managing the Evergrande stresses, the strictness of environmental target enforcement and the degree of policy easing," Goldman Sach has concluded in its report. **AGENCIES**

Randeep Hooda to play gangster in new Netflix crime-thriller series

Actor Randeep Hooda is set to star as a gangster in an upcoming crime-thriller series, which will release on streamer Netflix. According to a source close to the project, the untitled show will be directed by Balwinder Singh Januja, known for writing the screenplays of films like "Saand Ki Aankh" and "Mubarakan".

"It is a crime-thriller series set in Punjab between two time lines 1991 and 2005. It is not inspired by any particular incident or event. We have Randeep Hooda on board. He will be seen as a gangster. It is quite an interesting role and we are happy to have him lead the show," the source said.

The team will commence shooting for the upcoming show from Saturday in Punjab. "We will most likely wrap up the shoot this year and the show will release next year on Netflix," the source said, adding that the second season will be set in Canada.

The show will be the second collaboration between Hooda and Januja after their upcoming film "Tera Kya Hoga Lovely".

Also starring Ileana D'Cruz, the movie talks about India's unrelenting obsession with fair skin.

The film is set in the backdrop of Haryana and chronicles the story of a dusky girl tamed by prejudices and biases held by the society against dark skin. It is backed by Sony Pictures Films India. **AGENCIES**

Trailer for 'Honsla Rakh' starring Diljit Dosanjh, Shehnaaz Gill and Sonam Bajwa out now



The trailer for Punjabi 'Honsla Rakh' was released. The movie is a comedy starring Diljit Dosanjh, Shehnaaz Kaur Gill, and Sonam Bajwa in lead roles.

Meanwhile, Shehnaaz has not posted anything on social media since actor Sidharth Shukla passed away on September 2.

Even on a big day when the trailer of her first upcoming movie with actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh was released, Shehnaaz posted

nothing on social media. Shehnaaz, who has always been bubbly and excited about life and everything around her, is perhaps taking time to cope with Sidharth Shukla's death and thus staying away from social media. 'Honsla Rakh' marks Shehnaaz Gill's first film after her stint on 'Bigg Boss' season 13.

The last post on her Instagram is dated September 1, a day before Sidharth Shukla's death.

However, support has poured in for Shehnaaz as 'Honsla Rakh' poster and trailer were revealed.

In the poster, Shehnaaz is seen smiling at actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh. The trailer of the movie was out on Monday at 1 pm.

The poster, released earlier, apart from Shehnaaz and Diljit, also features Sonam Bajwa. While Diljit is holding a baby and is drinking milk from a bottle, Shehnaaz is holding toys and looking at Diljit. Sonam, on the other hand, is holding baby food in her hand. **AGENCIES**

Cricket Australia to announce indefinite postponement of one-off Test against Afghanistan: Official

MELBOURNE: Cricket Australia will formally announce indefinite postponement of the one-off Test against Afghanistan this week after making it clear that it won't engage with the South Asian nation if the ruling Taliban do not lift the ban on the women's game.

According to the Australian Associated Press, Cricket Tasmania (CT) chief executive Dominic Baker told radio station Triple M that a formal announcement in this regard is expected soon.

"It will be formally postponed indefinitely this week. It's not acceptable that they don't allow female sport. If they want to play competitive male sport, particularly in the cricket sphere, they're going to have to rethink what they do," said Baker.

Taliban has stated that women's cricket will not continue in the country.

Baker said Cricket Australia will keep the chances of hosting the Test later, if situation improves in Afghanistan.

"We'll give you an opportunity to work on how female cricket becomes a part of your program," he said. The one-off Test was originally scheduled in 2020 but was postponed to November 27 this year because of Covid-19.

The Australian Cricketers



We'll give you an opportunity to work on how female cricket becomes a part of your program"

Association (ACA) had supported CA's decision to put the game on hold.

"What is happening now in Afghanistan is a human rights issue that transcends the game of cricket.

"And while we would love to see players such as Rashid Khan play against Australia, hosting this Test Match cannot be considered if that same opportunity to play the game is denied to Roya Samim and her team-mates," it said. **AGENCIES**

Taliban-controlled CAA writes to DGCA to resume commercial flights between India and Afghanistan

NEW DELHI: The Taliban-controlled Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has written to Indian aviation regulator DGCA to resume commercial flights between the countries.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is yet to take a decision in the matter.

The last commercial flight between India and Afghanistan was operated by Air India on Kabul-Delhi route on August 15, the day Kabul fell to the Taliban. Afghanistan airspace was declared "uncontrolled" by the CAA on August 16.

In a letter dated September 7, 2021, CAA's Acting Minister Alhaj Hameedullah Akhonzada requested the DGCA to permit commercial flights of Ariana Afghan airline and Kam Air between India and Afghanistan.

Akhonzada stated in his letter: "As you are well informed that recently the Kabul airport was damaged and (left) dysfunctional by American troops before their withdrawal." With the help of technical assistance by



Qatar, the airport became operational once again and a NOTAM (notice to airmen) in this regard was issued on September 6, he noted.

"The intention of this letter is to keep the smooth passenger movement between two countries based on signed MoU and our national carriers (Ariana Afghan airline and Kam Air) aim to commence their scheduled flights," he said. Therefore, Afghanistan CAA requests you to facilitate their commercial flights, Akhonzada noted.

"The civil aviation of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan avails its highest assurance," he added. As a neighbour of Afghanistan, India is naturally concerned about the recent changes in that country and their implications for the region, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla had said on September 20.

He demanded that Afghan territory should not be used for sheltering, training, planning or financing terrorist acts. **AGENCIES**

Ex-French President Sarkozy gets 1-year jail term for illegal campaign financing

PARIS: French ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy was convicted and sentenced to a year of house arrest for illegal campaign financing of his unsuccessful 2012 reelection bid.

The court will allow him to serve the sentence at home by wearing an electronic monitoring bracelet. Sarkozy, France's president from 2007 to 2012, had vigorously denied wrongdoing during the trial in May and June. He can appeal the decision, which would suspend the sentence.

Sarkozy wasn't present at the Paris court for the ruling. He was accused of having spent almost twice the maximum legal amount of 22.5 million euros (\$27.5 million) on the reelection bid that he lost to Socialist Francois Hollande. The court stated that Sarkozy "knew" the legal limit was at stake and "voluntarily" failed to supervise additional expenses. Prosecutors had requested a six-month prison term, as well as a six-month suspended sentence and a fine of 3,750 euros (\$4,354). Thursday's verdict comes after Sarkozy, 66, was found guilty on March



1 of corruption and influence peddling in another case. He was given a year in prison, and two years suspended, in that case but is free pending appeal.

In the campaign financing case, prosecutors concluded that Sarkozy knew weeks before the 2012 election that his expenses - which are strictly limited under French law - were getting close to the legal maximum. They accused him of having ignored two notes from his accountants warning about the money issue.

Prosecutors argued Sarkozy is "the only person responsible for his campaign financing" and that he chose to exceed the limit by organizing many rallies, including giant ones. **AGENCIES**

This Kerala Muslim woman artist makes paintings of Lord Krishna, then gifts them to temples

KOZHIKODE: She has made hundreds of paintings of Lord Krishna in the past six years but her faith has not allowed her to keep any of them at her house.

She has been gifting the portraits of little Krishna to the famed Guruvayur Sri Krishna Temple in Thrissur without fail in these years but tradition and customs have not allowed her to go inside the shrine or present it in front of the sanctum sanctorum.

As non-Hindus are not allowed inside the ancient temple, she would either place her painting near the hundi in front of the portal or hand it over to shrine staff on Vishu and Janmashtami days every year.

But, all these have never drained the spirit and longing of this devout Muslim woman, hailing from a conservative family in Koyilandy in this north Kerala district, to draw the paintings of the Hindu deity.

Setting aside the stiff objection from her relatives and community members, Jasna Salim, a 28-year old homemaker, has done over 500 paintings of little Lord Krishna, which have a large number of takers in and outside the state. And, now, the untrained painter said her happiness knew no bounds as she could directly present a painting of her at a Hindu temple after they formally requested it.

Ulanadu Sree Krishna Swamy temple, located near



Pandalam in Pathanamthitta district, on Sunday ritually accepted her painting, depicting little Krishna with a butter pot, after inviting her there.

"It was really a dream come true for me. It was for the first time in my life that I was going inside a temple and seeing the idol of a deity standing in front of the sanctum sanctorum," Salim told PTI.

Though once she had been to a family temple near her home here during a festival, she did not go near the sanctum sanctorum or see the deity.

"It was really a soulful experience...the temple authorities explained the rituals to me. I opened the painting standing in front of the sanctum sanctorum and showed it to the deity. The priest adorned the painting with a tulusi garland," the woman said.

A mother of two, Salim said she had been approached by the temple authorities after seeing a picture dedicated to the Guruvayur temple by her during the last Janmashtami.

The management informed the painter recently that a Pune-based devotee group wanted to offer a little Krishna painting to the village temple and they wanted Salim to draw it.

As there is no ban on non-Hindus to go inside the village shrine, the Muslim artist could visit the temple in person and present her artwork to the deity.

Interestingly, all her paintings, whether done on canvas or glass, are of only one theme - infant Krishna with his butter pot. The artist said she could draw only little Lord Krishna with such perfection and she failed to do other themes with such grace.

"I do not know the reason...I am actually an accidental artist and have no professional training...I started painting all of a sudden six years ago when I was pregnant and was under bed rest after an accident. I can paint only Lord Krishna with perfection," Salim said. When she drew the first painting of the Hindu deity, her husband advised her to destroy it as it might irk her conservative parents and other relatives.

But, Salim said her con-

sciousness did not allow her to do it and so she gifted that to a Namboothiri family living nearby. The family, who had kept that painting in their pooja room, later claimed that many of their wishes had been fulfilled after that.

"The story of the Muslim woman painting Lord Krishna has spread fast in the area and several people have started approaching me for painting. Many others also claimed that their unfulfilled wishes have been fulfilled after placing it at home. I do not know anything about it," she said.

Now, even celebrities are placing orders to get little Krishna paintings from this young artist. Not just from Kerala, but she is getting orders from neighbouring states like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also.

She paints at least five to six pictures a month and charges up to Rs 5,000 as per its size.

"My husband, who is working in Dubai, has been very supportive since the beginning. Majority of his friends are from the Hindu community. Now, my parents have also no objection as they know that I won't deviate from my faith and do anything against my religious principles," the Muslim artist said.

The parents only wanted her not to keep the Krishna paintings at home, which she abides by strictly. **AGENCIES**

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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