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COVID SITUATION UNDER CONTROL IN CITY, ALLOW CHHATH PUJA CELEBRATIONS: KEJRIWAL TO LG



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ANUSHKA SHARMA SHARES A PICTURE WITH VAMIKA ON ASHTAMI



HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

- 1 India resumes Covid-19 vaccine export
- 2 Petrol, diesel rates hiked again, day after record pump prices
- 3 Terrorists resorting to targeted killings in J-K to instil fear, says RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat

Body of man, wrist cut off, tied to barricade at farmers' protest site

NEW DELHI: The body of a young man - with the left wrist severed and a pool of blood on the ground - was found tied to an overturned police barricade at the farmers' protest site on the Singhu border.

"At about 5 am on October 15, a body was found hanging with hands, legs chopped (off) at the spot where farmers' protest is underway (in Kundli, Sonapat). No info on who is responsible (and) FIR lodged against an unknown person. Viral video is a matter of probe... rumours will linger," Deputy Superintendent of Police Hansraj was quoted by news agency.

Initial reports say Nihangs - a 'warrior' Sikh group - are being blamed for the brutal and sickening murder, which took place in Kundli in Haryana's Sonapat district.

A video has emerged showing a group of Nihangs standing over the man - after his wrist has been cut off and he lies bleeding on the ground, his eyes glazed over in shock and pain.

The Nihangs, some of whom are carrying spears and stand surrounding his body, can be heard demanding the man tell them his name and native village. None of the men in the video make any move to help the man or attend to the horrific wound.

Another video shows the man's body strung upside down with a rope - his left hand covered in blood - and a pool of blood on the floor.

Reports say the Nihangs beat the young man - who has yet to be identified - to death for allegedly desecrating the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikhs' holy book. They reportedly beat him to death, hung the body on the police barricade and then cut off the wrist. Sonapat Police cut down the body and took it to the Civil Hospital.

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha, the umbrella body of farmers that is among those spearheading the protest will meet at noon to discuss this incident and issue a statement.

Last year there was another incident involving Nihangs - a Punjab cop had his hand chopped off with a sword in



Patiala after he asked them to show them 'movement passes' during the Covid lockdown.

Assistant Sub-Inspector Harjeet Singh recovered after extensive surgical procedures and has since been promoted. Three other cops who sustained injuries were awarded medals.

Farmers have gathered at Singhu (on the border with Delhi) for over a year now to protest the centre's new farm laws; several farmer camps have been set up on the border over the past months.

Haryana Chief Minister ML Khattar was due to visit Sonapat this week to attend a public event.

However, after sustained protests from farmers (who have made it clear they will oppose any public appearance by any member of the ruling BJP), Khattar withdrew and sent a replacement.

Farmers' protests in Haryana have made major headlines since the agitation began, with violent clashes between protesters and police frequent. Scenes of encamped forces on both sides - divided by barricades, dug up roads and other materials used to block progress have been widely shared.

Tensions escalated in August when a top Karnal official was caught on camera ordering police to «crack their (farmers') heads». This was during a lathi charge that saw 10 farmers injured.

Lakhimpur killings condemnable but outrage selective: Sitharaman



NEW DELHI: The killing of four farmers in Lakhimpur Kheri is "absolutely condemnable", Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said but qualified her statement by stating that such condemnation should be for all such incidents that happen in India and not just in a BJP-ruled state where her Cabinet colleague's son is "probably in trouble".

Asked why the PM and senior ministers had not spoken on the killings so far and why the BJP resorted to "defensive reaction" when

questioned about such incidents, Sitharaman, who is on an official visit to the US, said: "It's nice of you to have picked that one incident which is absolutely condemnable, every one of us say that. Equally, there are instances happening elsewhere, is my concern."

Broadly echoing PM Narendra Modi's observation over selective outrage over violation of human rights, Sitharaman also attacked economist Amartya Sen, who in June had said the Modi government

was focused on taking credit for its actions, resulting in schizophrenia that led to the second Covid wave.

Speaking during a conversation at Harvard Kennedy School on Tuesday, the minister said India had issues of such nature happening in different parts of the country. But many others, including Amartya Sen, raised it because "it's a state (UP) where the BJP is in power, one of my Cabinet colleague's sons is probably in trouble, and also assume that it's actu-

ally them who did it and not anybody else. Due course of justice will also have an inquiry process to establish it."

On the issue of turning defensive on such issues, Sitharaman said, "I will talk for India. I will talk for justice for the poor. I will not be mocked. And if it is mocking, I will be defensive to stand up and say 'sorry, let's talk on facts'. That's my answer for you." Sitharaman defended the three farm legislations by pointing out that they had been discussed by several parliamentary panels for over a decade.

Indicating that the government would have no rethink on the farm laws, she said, "When the farm laws were brought in the Lok Sabha, there was an elaborate discussion. It was only when it came to the Rajya Sabha, there was a lot of noise and disturbance." "The highest amount of procurement, the largest-ever payment per farmer under the minimum support price (MSP) has happened in the last seven years," she asserted. "So we have not been told what it is that they're protesting against as yet and the minister is willing to talk even today," said Sitharaman. **AGENCIES**

SIT takes Union Minister's son, 3 others to recreate sequence of events

LAKHIMPUR KHERI: The SIT probing the Lakhimpur Kheri violence took Union Minister Ajay Mishra's son and three others arrested in the case to recreate the sequence of events leading to the incident in Uttar Pradesh's Tikonia village.

Amid tight security, the accused were taken to the site of the incident on the Tikonia-Banbirpur road, around 60 km from district headquarters Lakhimpur city, police said. Eight people died in the October 3 violence and of them, four were farmers, allegedly knocked down by a vehicle carrying BJP workers. Infuriated farmers then allegedly lynched some people in the vehicles. The other dead included two BJP workers and their driver. In the incident, a journalist was also killed.

Farmers claimed that Union Minister Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra was in one of the vehicles, an allegation denied by him and his father who say they can produce evidence to prove he was at an event at that time. Ashish Mishra 'Monu' was arrested in the case on October 9 after 12 hours of questioning, and a court has accepted his police custody from October 12 to October 15. The other three -- Shekhar Bharti was arrested on October 12, and Ankit Das and Latif alias Kale were arrested on October 13. Das, Latif and Bharti are in police custody from October 14 to October 17. Investigators reached the district jail premises in the morning to take Das, Latif and Bharti into police custody. The trio were taken to the crime branch's office at the Reserve Police Lines, which is near the district jail where main accused Ashish Mishra is lodged. They were taken to Tikonia village by the special investigation team (SIT) amid heavy security for further investigations, police said. **AGENCIES**

More trust, transparency in defence sector than ever before: PM



NEW DELHI: For the first time since Independence, many major reforms were rolled out in India's defence sector and it has more transparency and trust than ever before, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday.

After dedicating seven new state-run defence firms replacing the Ordnance Factory Board, the prime minister said a single-window system had been put in place instead of stagnant policies to develop India as a major producer of defence equipment.

"Under the self-reliant India campaign, the country's goal is to make India the world's biggest military power on its own and development of modern military industry in India," Modi said.

"In the last seven years, the country has worked to carry forward this resolve with the mantra of 'Make in India'," he added.

In his video address at the event, Modi said that as India enters 75th year of Independence, projects are being completed that were stuck for a long time.

"Today, there is more transparency, trust, and technology-driven approach in the defence sector of the country than ever before. For the first time after Independence, so many major reforms are happening in our defence sector. Instead of stagnant policies, a single-window system has been put in place," Modi said.

After Independence, there was need to upgrade ordnance factories, adopt new-age technologies, but it didn't get much attention, he said. The prime minister said that 41 Ordnance factories are being converted into seven corporate entities, as a measure to improve our self-reliance and defence preparedness. **AGENCIES**

Aryan Khan, now 'undertrial n956', moved to Mumbai jail's barracks

MUMBAI: Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan has been designated Undertrial Number N956 after being shifted to the barracks at Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail where he has been kept since his arrest in the drugs-on-cruise case earlier this month.

Aryan Khan was shifted to a common cell after testing negative for COVID-19, the jail superintendent had said yesterday. Along with Aryan Khan, five other men who were arrested in the case too have been shifted out of the quarantine barrack in the jail, the official said.

"Aryan Khan and five others shifted to the common cell from quarantine barrack in the jail after their Covid report came negative," Nitin Waychal, superintendent of Arthur Road Jail said.

Aryan Khan, 23, was sent to the Arthur Road Jail after being placed under judicial custody. A Mumbai court reserved the order on his bail plea yesterday- the third since his arrest almost two weeks ago.

The Narcotics Control Bureau or NCB has alleged that Aryan Khan - named Accused No. 1 - sourced drugs and was in touch with "some persons



abroad who appear to be a part of an International Drug Network for illicit procurement of drugs."

"WhatsApp chats reveal the accused was in touch with a foreign national for bulk quantity of hard drugs," the anti-drug agency said, adding that the probe so far has revealed his role in the conspiracy.

All those arrested "are inextricably connected with each other" and "it is not possible to dissect the role, involvement of one accused from that of the other", said the NCB. "The ingredients of conspiracy are clear and evident," said the agency, adding that "one of the applicants cannot be considered in isolation".

Aryan Khan's defence team has denied the allegation, saying that he was "not even on the cruise" raided by anti-drugs officers, had no cash to buy drugs, and didn't have drugs on him.

Amit Desai, representing Shah Rukh Khan's son, said the NCB's raid started when he had not even checked into the cruise and that he had neither used drugs nor was anything found on him.

"The allegation of illicit trafficking is inherently absurd. This boy who has nothing, he was not even on the vessel. It is an absurd and false allegation," he said. **AGENCIES**

'Will follow what Gandhis decide'

DOLLY CHOPRA
New Delhi

Even as party leaders stated that Sidhu had been ordered to boost the party organisation in Punjab, PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu said he had expressed his concerns to the party and would abide by any decision made by the Gandhis.

After a 90-minute meeting, AICC general secretary in-charge of Punjab affairs Harish Rawat said: "Sidhu clearly said today that any decision by the Gandhis would be acceptable to him and he would follow it."

"The party's orders to Sidhu are clear - to strengthen the party and the organisation in the state." Sidhu met AICC general secretary KC Venugopal and Rawat at the AICC headquarters and reiterated his concerns about Punjab. Venugopal later said the party would formally clear the air on Sidhu in 12 to 16 hours. There are indications that Sidhu will be asked to continue and some issues raised by him may be addressed. "I have conveyed my concerns to the party. I have full faith in Congress president Sonia



Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi. Whatever decision they take will be in the best interest of the Congress and of Punjab," Sidhu said after the meeting. Responding to queries on his resignation, he replied: "I have always considered the Gandhis supreme and have followed their directions."

Rawat said: "He will give you some good news soon." Rawat will brief Sonia on the discussions before the party clarifies matters within a day. Asked about whether the party would address Sidhu's concerns on which he appeared steadfast, Rawat replied: "He has said he trusts the leadership to do what's best for Punjab."

Global Hunger Index: India slips to 101st rank; behind Pak, B'desh and Nepal

NEW DELHI: India has slipped to 101st position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021 of 116 countries, from its 2020 position of 94th and is behind its neighbours Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Eighteen countries, including China, Brazil and Kuwait, shared the top rank with GHI score of less than five, the website of the Global Hunger Index that tracks hunger and malnutrition said. The report, prepared jointly by Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide and German organisation Welt Hunger Hilfe, termed the level of hunger in India "alarming".

In 2020, India was ranked 94th out of 107 countries. Now with 116 countries in the fray,



it has dropped to 101st rank. India's GHI score has also decelerated—from 38.8 in 2000 to the range of 28.8 - 27.5 between 2012 and 2021.

The GHI score is calculated on four indicators—undernourishment; child wasting (the share of children under the age of five who are wasted

People have been severely hit by Covid-19 and by pandemic related restrictions in India, the country with highest child wasting rate worldwide"

who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition); child stunting (children under the age of five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition) and child

mortality (the mortality rate of children under the age of five). The share of wasting among children in India rose from 17.1 per cent between 1998-2002 to 17.3 per cent between 2016-2020, according to the report.

"People have been severely hit by Covid-19 and by pandemic related restrictions in India, the country with highest child wasting rate worldwide," the report said. Neighbouring countries like Nepal (76), Bangladesh (76), Myanmar (71) and Pakistan (92) are also in the 'alarming' hunger category, but have fared better at feeding its citizens than India, according to the report.

However, India has shown improvement in other indi-

cators such as the under-5 mortality rate, prevalence of stunting among children and prevalence of undernourishment owing to inadequate food, the report said. According to the report, the fight against hunger is dangerously off track. Based on the current GHI projections, the world as a whole—and 47 countries in particular—will fail to achieve a low level of hunger by 2030.

Food security is under assault on multiple fronts, it said, adding that worsening conflict, weather extremes associated with global climate change, and the economic and health challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic are all driving hunger.

"Inequality—between regions, countries, districts, and communities—is pervasive and, (if) left unchecked, will keep the world from achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) mandate to 'leave no one behind,'" the report said.

Further, the report noted that it is difficult to be optimistic in 2021 because the forces now driving hunger are overpowering good intentions and lofty goals.

Among the most powerful and toxic of these forces are conflict, climate change, and Covid-19—three Cs that threaten to wipe out any progress that has been made against hunger in recent years, it added. **AGENCIES**

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NEWSBRIEF

'Duplicate Kejriwal': Gwalior chaat seller has an uncanny resemblance to Delhi CM

CHANIDGRAH: You have to see it to believe it. This chaat stall owner in Gwalior has an uncanny resemblance to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. A video of the Kejriwal doppelganger was shared on YouTube and it has gone viral. The video was shared by food blogger Karan Dua, also known by his handle 'Dil Se Foodie'. 'Gupta Chaat' is the name of the stall located at Gwalior's Phool Bagh area in front of Moti Mahal. The owner of the stall, in the video clip, is heard saying many people have told him that he looks like Arvind Kejriwal. In fact, people had commented on this observation in his earlier videos as well. Food blogger Karan Dua joked that if he wore a muffler in winters, he would resemble the political leader even more. YouTube users couldn't help but comment on the viral video. "Wow it's miracle," wrote one user while another said, "Kejriwal should meet him at least once."

AGENCIES

Panel okays Covaxin emergency use in kids

NEW DELHI: The subject expert committee of the national drug regulator cleared Covaxin Covid-19 shot for emergency use in children aged 2 to 18 years, giving India the first approved vaccine for use in kids as young as 2 years. The recommendations have been forwarded to the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for final approval. Previously, the DCGI had cleared Ahmedabad-based Zydus Cadila's ZyCoV-D for emergency use in people aged 12 years and above. The clearance to vaccinate children between 2 to 18 years comes at a time when schools are reopening amid fears of the disease impacting children.

AGENCIES

Delhi Govt's campaign to curb pollution to start on October 18



NEW DELHI: Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai said 2,500 civil defence volunteers will work as "Paryavaran Marshals" and also hand out pamphlets carrying information regarding Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's three appeals to the public. To help fight pollution in Delhi, Kejriwal had appealed people to actively participate in "Red Light On, Vehicle Off" campaign and also avoid using their car at least for one day in a week. He had also appealed to Delhiites to report any case of violation of pollution norms on the Green Delhi App. The minister further said that the main aim of this campaign is to cut down on vehicular pollution. He said the campaign will continue for a month till November 18. The civil defence volunteers will be deployed in two shifts of 8 am to 2 pm and 2 pm to 8 pm. He said that Delhi government will do whatever it can to keep the levels of pollution considerably low in the city. "As per a PCRA (Petroleum Conservation Research Association) report switching off engines on red lights can reduce pollution by about 13-20 per cent and can save around Rs 2,500 crore annually. Last year this campaign was a success so we appeal the public to make it a success again this year," Rai said.

AGENCIES

Major crossings where 20 volunteers each will be deployed include ITO, Bhagwandas crossing on Tilak Marg, Tolstoy crossing on Barakhamba Road, Chandgi Ram Akhara crossing, near Moti Bagh Metro, Peeragarhi Chowk, Prithviraj Road crossing, Rajesh Pilot Marg, Madhuban Chowk, Pitampura metro crossing and Karkari Mor. He said these civil defence volunteers will be deployed under the city government's "Red Light On, Vehicle Off" campaign starting October 18 for effective implementation of the drive to curb vehicular pollution. The campaign will be prominently carried out at 100 traffic intersections spread across 13 police districts in the City, he said, adding that a mock drill of the campaign will be conducted. Rai said that the decision was taken after a joint meeting with the Delhi Police, civil defence officials, environment department officials and SDMs on Thursday. "In the meeting it was decided that this campaign to check pollution will be carried out on 100 crossings in 13 police districts. At 90 crossings, batches of 10 civil defence volunteers each will be deployed. However, at another 10 major intersections, batches of 20 civil defence volunteers each will be engaged," Rai said. Major crossings where 20 volunteers each will be deployed include ITO, Bhagwandas crossing on Tilak Marg, Tolstoy crossing on Barakhamba Road, Chandgi Ram Akhara crossing, near Moti Bagh Metro, Peeragarhi Chowk, Prithviraj Road crossing, Rajesh Pilot Marg, Madhuban Chowk,

AGENCIES

Covid situation under control in City, allow Chhath Puja celebrations: Kejriwal to LG

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urged Lieutenant Governor (LG) Anil Bajjal to call a meeting of the DDMA as soon as possible to allow Chhath Puja celebrations as the COVID-19 situation in the national capital is under control. The development comes amid a sharp attack on the Kejriwal government and protests by the Delhi BJP against the Chhath ban.



Earlier, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had written to Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, urging for clarity over Chhath celebrations in view of Covid and issuance of guidelines to celebrate the festival.

In an order on September 30, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) prohibited Chhath celebrations at public places, including at riverbanks, waterbodies and temples, in view of the threat posed by COVID-19.

In his letter to the LG, Kejriwal said the Covid situation in

Delhi has been under control for the last three months and he believes that the permission to celebrate Chhath should be given with suitable protocols in view of the pandemic.

"I have urged Hon'ble LG to allow Chhath puja celebrations in Delhi. Corona is now in control and many other states have allowed it," he wrote on Twitter while sharing his letter to Bajjal on the platform.

Neighbouring states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan have also given permission for Chhath celebrations with reasonable restrictions for health and safety, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said in his letter to the LG, adding, "I urge you to kindly call a meeting of the DDMA as soon as possible and grant permission for Chhath puja celebrations." Earlier, the chief minister had

said Chhath celebrations were prohibited at public places in view of the health and safety of people amid the pandemic. He had also slammed the protests by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as "dirty politics" over a sensitive issue. Delhi BJP MP Manoj Tiwari, who has started a "Chhath Rath Yatra" of the city's Purvanchali-dominated areas against the Chhath ban, wrote to Kejriwal on Wednesday, accusing him of hurting the sentiments of Hindus.

He took a dig at the AAP leader over his letter to the LG seeking permission for Chhath celebrations, saying stubbornness yields to faith.

"Jai Chhathi Maiya...stubbornness yields to faith. Did you not remember the story that you narrated in the letter today while putting obstacles in the way of Chhath celebrations? Anyway, better late than never, let us celebrate Chhath together. All of us will celebrate Chhath at the ghats

in a disciplined manner following the Covid norms," Tiwari said in a tweet in Hindi.

In his letter to the LG, Kejriwal wrote that the people of Delhi celebrate Chhath every year and the festival is an important part of the Vedic Arya culture.

The Purvanchalis (Bhojpuri-speaking natives of eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar) living in Delhi are considered a prominent vote bank in the national capital and Chhath is one of their most important festivals.

"If the Chhath ban is not withdrawn in 48 hours, around 60 lakh Purvanchalis in Delhi will pledge to uproot the city government to save their pride," Tiwari had said earlier.

Chhath, celebrated after Diwali, involves the offering of "Arghya" by fasting women to the Sun god in knee-deep water. Some experts believe that water could lead to the spread of the coronavirus infection when a large number of people celebrate Chhath.

AGENCIES

3 doctors 'assaulted' at Delhi hospital after newborn dies

NEW DELHI: Three doctors were allegedly assaulted by the family of a patient at a private hospital in northwest Delhi's Pitampura after a newborn baby died during a caesarean procedure, police said.

The patient's family members, who were detained, alleged that the baby died due to the "negligence of doctors", they said. During inquiry, it was found that a 26-year-old pregnant woman, a resident of Rani Bagh, was admitted to the hospital. Due to certain complications, the doctors performed a C-section on the woman but even after that the baby was stillborn, a senior police officer said.

Enraged at this, some family members of the woman quarrelled with the doctors and manhandled them, blaming them for the baby's death, the officer said. Footage of the incident showed a group of people hurling abuses at a doctor and assaulting him. The body of the baby was later



shifted to Baba Saheb Ambedkar Hospital for post-mortem, the police said.

One of the doctors lodged a police complaint against the patient's family for manhandling doctors and causing damage to the hospital, they said. The MLC (Medico-Legal Case) report of the three doctors found their injuries to be of simple nature, they added. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Usha Rangnani said that based on the doctor's complaint and

the MLC, a case was registered under sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint) and 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the IPC.

The accused were also booked under the Delhi Medicare Service Personnel and Medicare Service Institutions (Prevention of Violence and Damage of Property) Act, 2008, she said. The accused had been detained and the matter is being investigated, the police said.

AGENCIES

Delhiites should pitch in to bring down pollution in City: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal urged Delhiites to help bring down pollution in the city by giving up vehicle use once in a week and turning off engines of vehicles at red lights.

He also noted that pollution caused locally was in safe limit but stubble burning in other states was increasing it.

"I have been tweeting air quality data for past one month. It shows pollution has started increasing because neighbouring states did not help their farmers who are forced to burn paddy straw stubble," he said.

The chief minister said that it is high time that Delhiites took responsibility to bring pollution down.

It is necessary that every individual takes responsibility and contributes to the three measures, including 'Red Light On Vehicle Off' campaign starting from October 18, to at least reduce



pollution generated locally, he said. Experts say keeping vehicle engines off at red lights could save Rs 250 crore and reduce pollution by 13-20 per cent, he said.

He also urged people to use public transport or car pool to avoid use of their own vehicle at least once in a week. People should also become eyes and ears of the Delhi government by reporting incidents of pollution like garbage burning so that it could be checked, he added.

AGENCIES

Steel manufacturers demand to save industry.

SATISH HANDA

Government of our country had imposed Anti Dumping Duty (ADD) and Counter Vailing Duty (CVD) on imports of stainless steel from China and Indonesia in order to provide relief to domestic steel industry because the rate of imported steel was lesser than the steel manufactured by domestic industry and the step was taken since domestic manufacturers were losing business in the country as well as in export markets. The steel manufacturers of 'Steel Town' Hisar in Haryana expressed deep concern over withdrawal of ADD and CVD from month October this year by the government likely to adversely affect their business and cause heavy financial loss.



Steel manufacturers in Hisar said, manufacturer in the town as well as in country are already facing severe economic crisis since past sometime. Talking to media persons A. Jindal Managing Director of Jindal Industries said, the decision taken by the government at this time when entire industry in the country facing overall slump as well as demand recession in steel industry due to COVID-19 since

past over one and half year and farmers agitation in the country. Demanding to roll back the decision immediately to save steel industry in the country Jindal said government should offer special packages for the survival of steel industry at this stage.

Jindal said, in past few years, Ministry of Steel in the country had taken several steps to help domestic steel industry, especially in the year 2015-16 when imports of steel was increased over five lakh ton during the year, which was equal to nearly 20% of total annual consumption but in the annual budget presented on February 1, 2021 gave severe shock to entire stainless steel industry in the country.

Not only stainless the steel, the prices of iron, 'saria' having maximum requirement in

construction, angles, iron sheets too witnessing increase in prices since past sometime adversely affecting not only construction sector but also entire steel industry manufacturing nuts, bolts, automobile parts and all types of steel components. Information reveals, the price of iron have been increased by nearly Rs 10000 each ton in past about two weeks. According to iron and steel traders, 'saria' was being sold at the rate Rs 64000 each tons four-five days ago and now the prices increased to Rs Rs 67000 each ton adversely affecting steel industry at Mandi Gobindgarh in Punjab, Kala Amb in Himachal Pradesh and Samalkha and Rohatak in Haryana. They told that there is possibility of further increase in the rates within a week.

Delhi could face power crisis, says Kejriwal; writes to PM

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the National Capital could face a power crisis and that his government is taking adequate steps to avoid such a situation.

He said he has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his intervention in making adequate arrangements of coal and gas to generation plants supplying electricity to the city.

"Delhi could face a power crisis. I am personally keeping a close watch over the situation. We are trying our best to avoid it. In the meanwhile, I wrote a letter to Hon'ble PM seeking his personal intervention," Kejriwal tweeted.

In his letter to Modi, the Delhi CM noted that the city was facing coal shortage since August.

"I draw your attention to the prevailing coal shortage situation that is continuing since August/September for the third month in a row," the letter stated.

"It has affected the power

I draw your attention to the prevailing coal shortage situation that is continuing since August/September for the third month in a row. It has affected the power generation from the major central generating plants supplying power to Delhi"

generation from the major central generating plants supplying power to Delhi," it said. Kejriwal requested the Prime Minister's intervention for adequate coal to be diverted from other plants to plants like Dadri-II and Jhajjar TPS, which are supplying to Delhi.

He also requested gas allocations to Bawana, Pragati-I and GTPS supplying power to the city.

AGENCIES

HP to collaborate with CSIR-IMTech for study on natural farming

ARCHANA PHULL Shimla

A collaboration between the State Project Implementing Unit (SPIU) of Prakritik Kheti Khushhal Kisan Yojana of Himachal Pradesh government and the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)- Institute of Microbial Technology (IMTech), Chandigarh is on the cards for microbial study of dung and urine of indigenous cows being used for Subhash Palekar Natural Farming (SPNF) in the hill state.

The SPNF is a non-chemical low-cost climate-resilient agriculture technique, being promoted under PK3Y in Himachal Pradesh since its launch in 2018. It recommends the use of dung and urine of indigenous cow breeds as the key components for fertility enhancing and plant protection.

The government has given financial assistance for the purchase of 1000 indigenous cows by farmers under PK3Y across the state so far.

The cow dung harbours a rich microbial diversity, different species of bacteria, protozoa and yeast that play a significant role in promotion of plant growth and plant protection. The utilization of cow dung bacteria can mobilize



Director, CSIR-IMTech, Dr Sanjeev Khosla (second from right) on a visit to a SPNF farmer's apple orchard in Moolber village near Shimla with two other scientists earlier this week.

nutrients, besides contributing to sustainable agriculture.

The CSIR team of scientists headed by Director, Dr Sanjeev Khosla was in Shimla earlier this week to visit the farms, where SPNF technique is being followed by using different formulations like Beejamrit, Jeevamrit, Ghanjeevamrit etc prepared from urine and dung of indigenous cow, besan, jaggery and locally resourced leaves. The team visited an apple orchard of SPNF farmer, Hem Raj Sharma at Moolber village in Totu block and then a vegetable grower Sonam, who is doing natural farming of vegetables in polyhouses at Koara village in Mashobra block in Shimla district.

They interacted with the farmers and PK3Y officials and understood the basic concept of natural farming, its formulations and methodology and impact on the cultivation, production AND economy of the farmers, along with the state government's initiative to promote SPNF among the farmers.

Accompanied by Dr Ashwani Kumar and Dr Deepak Sharma from IMTech, Director, Dr Khosla also held a meeting with the State Project Director, PK3Y, Mr Rakesh Kanwar and Executive Director, PK3Y, Dr Rajeshwar Singh Chandel in Shimla to work out the modalities of the collaborative research.

Delhi riots: Court frames charges against accused; says 'miscarriage of justice' to throw out case over police delay

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court has framed charges of rioting and arson against nine accused in a February 2020 riots case, saying that it would be a "miscarriage of justice" to throw out the prosecution's case merely because the statements of the public witnesses were recorded after a delay.

The nine accused were allegedly part of the unlawful assembly and caused damage, looted properties worth crores of rupees, burnt a large number of houses, shops, schools, and vehicles on February 25, 2020, as per the police. It relied on the statements of four public witnesses.



Additional Sessions Judge Virender Bhat said that the delay in recording statements of the witnesses by the police was not deliberate or contumacious and was occasioned on account of the situation which prevailed in Delhi's northeast area during and after the al-

The judge took exception to the submission made by the defence counsel that the public witnesses were not trustworthy and were planted as their statements were recorded one month after the date of the alleged incident.

leged rioting.

The judge noted that there was an atmosphere of terror and trauma for several days even after these riots and the public witnesses were terrified and reluctant to present their version of the incident before the investigating agency.

"Keeping these circumstances in view, it would be a miscarriage of justice to disbelieve the statements of these witnesses at this very stage and throw out the prosecution case merely for the reason that their statements were recorded after about one month of the incident," ASJ Bhat stated in an order dated October 11.

He added, "In the opinion of this court, the delay in recording of the statements of witnesses does not appear to be deliberate or contumacious. It appears to have occasioned on account of the situation which prevailed in the area during and after the incident of rioting and therefore, the accused cannot claim discharge in this case merely on this score."

During the course of the hearing, Delhi Police apprised the court that the nine accused created disharmony in society by threatening and terrorising the public at large and that

their action was not only antinational but also a challenge to Rules of Law in Delhi.

The defence counsels, however, submitted that CCTV video footage which forms part of the charge sheet in the case pertains to the date February 24, whereas the incident admittedly took place on February 25, 2020.

The counsels pointed out that there was no CCTV video footage on record which pertains to the date February 25, a fact not disputed by the senior public prosecutor, according to the court's order.

However, the prosecutor

said that they did not rely on the CCTV video footage and that their case is based on other evidence on record, including the ocular version of the witnesses.

After considering the entire material on record, the judge said that it is prima facie evident that the charges under Sections 147 (rioting), 148 (rioting, armed with a deadly weapon), 149 (unlawful assembly), 380 (theft), 427 (mischief), 436 (arson), 452 (house-trespass) of the Indian Penal Code are liable to be framed against all the accused.

AGENCIES

Akhilesh attacks 'chillumjeevi' Adityanath, says BJP will never act against Union Minister Mishra

HAMIRPUR: Lashing out at the BJP, Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav said the saffron party would never act against the Union minister whose son has been arrested in connection with the Lakhimpur killings as it "stands with criminals", who are the happiest under the current regime.

In an indirect reference to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, he used the term "chillumjeevi". "Chillum" is a smoking pipe often used by "sadhus".

On his "Vijay Rath Yatra" here, Yadav said Adityanath has a liking for two things—the bull and the bulldozer—but the people of Bundelkhand have decided that the steering of the bulldozer, which is in their hands, will be snatched from him in next year's Assembly election. "They will run the bulldozer of votes on the BJP in the coming polls," he said.

Yadav was apparently referring to the stray cattle menace in Uttar Pradesh and the govern-



ment's drive to raze buildings, the plans for many of which were not approved, in various parts of the state.

"The BJP will never act against the (Union) minister because it stands with criminals. If criminals are the happiest anywhere, it is under the BJP government," he said, replying to questions from reporters on the Lakhimpur Kheri incident.

Eight people, including four farmers and a journalist, were

killed in the October 3 violence that erupted during a farmers' protest in Lakhimpur Kheri. Union Minister of State for Home Ajay Mishra's son Ashish Mishra is among those arrested in connection with the incident.

Without taking any names, Yadav said the "chillumjeevi" is out to distribute tablet computers among students now and wondered why such an initiative was not taken in the last over four years.

He warned the people against the "chillumjeevi" and asked them if they had understood who was he referring to.

The SP president was apparently referring to the chief minister distributing tablet computers and smartphones among youngsters recently.

Addressing a public meeting later, Yadav said, "When farmers protested against agriculture laws, they were crushed under the wheels of vehicles."

Hitting out at the ruling BJP over three contentious farm laws of the Centre, he said, "I want to tell the farmers of Bundelkhand, Uttar Pradesh and the country that the manner in which the BJP has brought the three black laws, it will crush you like the (four) farmers were crushed and killed in Lakhimpur Kheri."

On the state of affairs in the water-scarce Bundelkhand region, he said, "Maximum number of farmers have committed suicide in Mahoha, Hamirpur, Banda and the surrounding areas and after coming to power, the SP government will extend all facilities to the farmers here, be it irrigation or mandis."

He alleged that the three new farm laws brought by the Centre will force farmers to quit farming and make them labourers.

"There is very less time left for the election. The BJP does not want to give the backward classes and Dalits their rights and therefore, a caste-based census has not taken place till now. It should be done as the BJP says that Yadavs have benefitted the most. I want to tell them that they are misleading the people," the SP chief said.

Reiterating his charge that projects launched during his tenure as chief minister have been re-inaugurated and renamed by the BJP government

in Uttar Pradesh, Yadav alleged that the current regime has sold away government assets.

He also alleged that in the name of a defence corridor in the Bundelkhand region, the land of farmers has been acquired but no industry has come up here.

"This is the 'sutli bomb' (damp squib) of the BJP. They had shown the dream of a defence corridor and betrayed the poor people of Bundelkhand. These are people who tell lies and there is a need to be alert about them. Just think, if a yogi is telling lies, where will the people go," Yadav said.

Talking about the "samajwadi pension scheme" launched by his government, he said if needed, the amount under the scheme would be increased three-fold after the SP comes to power again.

The scheme, started by Yadav in 2014, provides a monthly pension of Rs 500 to families falling under the Below Poverty Line. **PTI**

'Naya naya Hindu' Akhilesh doesn't know difference between Ram Navami and Maha Navami: BJP



LUCKNOW: Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav invited the ire of the BJP over his tweet wishing people on the occasion of "Ram Navami" on a day when Hindus worldwide celebrate "Maha Navami", with the ruling party describing him as "naya naya Hindu".

In the tweet, Yadav extended his greetings to people on "Ram Navami".

Prominent among those who were quick to respond was Amit Malviya of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who pointed out that Ram Navami is celebrated in the month of "Chaitra" in the Hindu calendar, which falls in March-April, and during this period, people celebrate "Maha Navami", which is a day of worshipping goddess Durga.

"This is what happens when those who open fire on kar sevaks put up the drama of being Hindus with elections approaching," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

The official Twitter handle

of the Uttar Pradesh BJP posted two pictures side by side—one of Yadav and another of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath performing "kanya puja"—and said "the difference is clear—naya naya Hindu (new Hindu) and Sanatani Hindu".

"Akhileshji, who does not know the difference between Ram Navami and Maha Navami, talks about Ram and Parashuram. Do not fool the people (maat pehnae topi), it looks better on you," it said.

SP workers often wear red caps.

The SP had announced that a 108-foot-tall statue of Lord Parashuram will be installed in Lucknow.

The BJP has claimed that the SP president has withdrawn his tweet and his Twitter handle now conveys his wishes to people on Maha Navami.

BJP leaders also retweeted a similar tweet by senior Congress leader Anand Sharma, who wished people on Ram Navami. **PTI**

Surgical strike sent strong message to world on terror: Amit Shah

PANAJI: Talking tough against Pakistan over terrorism, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said surgical strike carried out by India five years ago sent a strong message to the world that no one can interfere with its borders.

He said under the BJP-led NDA rule, India gives a befitting reply to terrorist attacks which was not the case when the Congress-headed UPA was in power.

Shah was addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone for the National Forensic Science University at Dharbandora village in South Goa.

During the UPA government, terrorists from across the border used to infiltrate into India and cause unrest, and Delhi would do nothing, but now, India responds in the same language which they (terrorists) understand, he said.

Referring to the 2016 surgical strike, Shah said India, through the military action, sent across a strong message to the entire world that no



to a terrorist attack on an Army base in the Uri sector of Jammu and Kashmir.

Shah recalled the contribution of BJP stalwart late Manohar Parrikar as defence minister.

Parrikar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be remembered for years for introducing One Rank One Pension (OROP) in the armed forces, the home minister said.

"Parrikar will be remembered for introducing One Rank One Pension for all the three wings of the armed forces under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi" **AGENCIES**

one can interfere with its borders.

India had conducted the surgical strike on September 29, 2016, across the Line of Control (LoC) as a response

Sri Lanka Navy arrests 23 Indian fishermen, seize 5 trawlers for alleged poaching

COLOMBO: The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 23 Indian fishermen and seized two trawlers for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters, an official statement said.

The Navy arrested the fishermen off the coast of Vettilakeni in the northern province's point Pedro area.

"Taking into account the impact of foreign fishermen poaching in Sri Lankan waters on the local fishing community and the sustainability of fishery resources of Sri Lanka, the Navy is conducting regular patrols as well as operations to curb illegal fishing activities in island waters," the Navy said in a statement.

The operation also led to the seizure of fishing gear from those vessels, used for illegal fishing practice known as 'bottom trawling', and a stock of fish caught by the same fishing method.

In March, the Navy seized five fishing vessels and 54 Indian nationals for poaching in Sri Lankan waters.

The Navy said that due



to the Covid pandemic, the seizure of foreign fishing vessels became limited and the arrestees were repatriated.

The Navy will continue to carry out regular patrols in Sri Lankan waters adhering to Covid protocols, to prevent

illegal fishing practices and other illegal acts by foreign fishermen, with a view to protecting the fishery resources claimed by Sri Lanka and secure the livelihood of local fishermen, the release said. **AGENCIES**

Active Covid cases in India lowest in 7 months



NEW DELHI: India logged 16,862 new coronavirus infections taking the total tally of Covid cases to 3,40,37,592, while the active cases declined to 2,03,678, the lowest in 216 days, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

The death toll climbed to 4,51,814 with 379 fresh fatalities, according to the data updated at 8 am.

The daily rise in new coronavirus infections has been below 30,000 for 21 straight days and less than 50,000 daily new cases have been reported for 110 consecutive days now.

The active cases comprise 0.60 per cent of the total infections, the lowest since March 2020, while the national Covid recovery rate was recorded at 98.07 per cent, the highest since March 2020, the ministry said.

The 379 new fatalities include 174 from Haryana, 96 from Kerala and 35 from Maharashtra.

Haryana added the death figures after the report of the State Death Audit Committee, the ministry said.

A total of 4,51,814 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 1,39,705 from Maharashtra, 37,922 from Karnataka, 35,853 from Tamil Nadu, 26,667 from Kerala, 25,089 from Delhi, 22,897 from Uttar Pradesh and 18,945 from West Bengal. **AGENCIES**

Centre notifies appointments of 7 more judges in three HCs

NEW DELHI: The Centre notified the appointments of seven judges to the high courts of Patna, Allahabad and Bombay.

Those appointed were: Advocates Sandeep Kumar, Purnendu Singh, Satyavrat Verma and Rajesh Kumar Verma to the Patna High Court; judicial officer Om Prakash Tripathi to the Allahabad High Court and judicial officers Anil Laxman Pansare and Sandip Kumar Chandrabhan More to the Bombay High Court, the Department of Justice said in separate notifications.

This is the fifth set of appointments notified by the government following the recent recommendations made by the Supreme Court collegium to fill judicial vacancies in various high courts — most of

which have been functioning with lesser number of judges compared to their sanctioned strength.

Yesterday, the Centre had notified the appointments of 14 judges to the high courts of Telangana, Kerala and Orissa which will get seven, four and three judges respectively.

Earlier, it had notified the appointments of 17 new judges to the Allahabad, Madras and Gauhati high courts. On October 11, three advocates and two judicial officers were elevated as judges of the Rajasthan High Court.

Similarly, on October 9, eight judges were elevated as chief justices of high courts and five high court chief justices were transferred based on recommendations made by the Supreme Court collegium. **AGENCIES**

MHA: BSF's jurisdictional power extended to secure border areas

THE ORDER IS AIMED AT ESTABLISHING UNIFORMITY IN DEFINING THE AREA WITHIN WHICH THE BSF CAN OPERATE AS PER ITS CHARTER OF DUTIES AND EXECUTE ITS TASK OF GUARDING BORDERS

NEW DELHI: The Centre's decision to give additional jurisdictional powers to the Border Security Force (BSF) within the 50-km belt along the international borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh has created a political storm, with several political parties in Punjab and West Bengal terming it an "attack on federalism".

A notification by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued on October 11 conferred on BSF officers the power to arrest, search,



and seize 50 km inside Punjab, West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura.

A senior MHA official said, "The order is aimed at establishing uniformity in defining the area within which the BSF can operate as per its charter of duties and execute its task of guarding borders. This will also enable improved operational effectiveness in securing the International Border (IB)."

Terrorists resorting to targeted killings in J-K to instil fear: Mohan Bhagwat

NEW DELHI: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat called population control as the need of the hour and cautioned the government about maintaining extra vigil on the borders.

In his Vijaydashmi address, Bhagwat said India should be cautious about the Taliban. "The Taliban may have changed, but have Pakistan and China changed?" he asked. "We need to be careful about all our borders," he said.

Bhagwat said people in Jammu and Kashmir are getting the benefits of doing away with Article 370. "Terrorists want to re-establish fear in the minds of people for their survival, that is why they are doing targeted killings," he said. "We must give a befitting reply to the terrorists," he said, speaking on the killings of civilians in J&K.

Bhagwat also called for freeing Hindu temples from the state control. **AGENCIES**

SKM condemns 'murder' at Singhu, says conspiracy to turn morcha communal

FW BUREAU New Delhi

The Samayukta Kisan Morcha today distanced itself from the incident where the body of a man was found tied to a barricade near Singhu border. The man was allegedly killed by a group of Nihangs for desecrating a sacred scripture of the Nihangs at Singhu. Condemning the 'be-adabi', the farmers' body also expressed disapproval of the alleged murder, asserting that

the kisan morcha is a struggle to get the new farm laws repealed and some "mischievous elements" are trying to give it a religious angle.

Addressing a press conference held shortly after the incident, senior SKM member Jagjit Singh Dallewal said, "No religious symbol should be disrespected and it is highly condemnable. That said, we are also against anyone taking the law in their hands to avenge any desecration." Sharing the details

Urban mental wellbeing index: Kochi, Chandigarh best; Kolkata, Chennai worst

NEW DELHI: An independent firm tracking consumer insights and behaviour in its research on mental wellbeing of people in urban centres has shown that people in tier 2 cities are doing much better on the wellbeing index than those in metros.

In its second Mental Wellbeing Whitepaper released to mark the World Mental Health Day, TRA Research followed citizens across urban India and covered 1,003 respondents across 16 cities between July and September 2021. It measured the nature of worry people had—health worry, economy worry, family worry and financial worry and their ability

to cope with these challenges.

The research found Tier 2 cities displayed the highest mental wellbeing scores. Kochi showed the highest MWBI (Mental Wellbeing Index) 2021 score followed by Lucknow and Chandigarh. Indore and Jaipur were next displaying very good mental wellbeing scores.

The worst mental health scores came from Kolkata, Ahmedabad and Chennai.

TRA Research said in the 2020 Whitepaper the highest anxiety of citizens across India was financial worry at 60 pc. This has been reduced to 47 pc in MWBI 2021. **AGENCIES**

SKM condemns 'murder' at Singhu, says conspiracy to turn morcha communal

Punjab, he claimed that the man was living with the Nihangs for some time. While replying to a question that Nihangs are part of the farmers' protest, Dallewal said that the morcha is a pan-world revolution. "People from all sects and religions are part of the protest. Such incidents are handiwork of some mischievous elements who want to paint it with a communal brush and disrupt harmony. We cannot link the protest to one particular community," he

said, demanding an impartial probe into the matter.

Denying that the SKM is not washing its hands off the alleged killing, the farmer leader again asserted that it was only to make farmers' protest a religious protest. "We will discuss the presence of Nihangs at the protest site and take a call on it. Besides, we will also investigate which jathebandi of the Nihangs was involved in it," said Ruldu Singh Mansa, another senior SKM leader.

of the deceased identified as Lakhvir Singh of Tarn Taran, **AGENCIES**

Time to check the velocity of Gati Shakti Plan

With the Gati Shakti National Master Plan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has expanded on the familiar theme that India's slowing economic growth engine can find renewed momentum through major infrastructure upgrades that will cut logistics costs for industry and raise all round efficiency. Essentially a technocentric administrative initiative that promises silo-breaking integration of 16 Ministries including railways, roads and ports through information technology, satellite mapping and data tools, the programme seeks to appeal to the national imagination as an umbrella integrator of Rs 111-lakh crore worth of projects under the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) for 2020-25. The importance given in the plan to rail-road multimodal connectivity and higher share of freight for the railways — articulated also by NITI Aayog — has evident multiple benefits. This includes reducing the cost of logistics to GDP that has prevailed at about 14% even at the time the NDA government took office, to an aspirational 8%. There is also the challenge of reducing vehicular emissions from road freight growth to meet climate change commitments and containing input costs due to extraordinarily high taxes on diesel. The observations in the Economic Survey projects maximum investments towards NIP sectors, with about Rs 8.5-lakh crore to be invested by either side annually. As the effects of COVID-19 continue to be felt in terms of lost jobs, depressed wages and consumption, while the planners are pinning their hopes on infrastructure projects for a new deal outcome that will boost jobs and demand for goods and commodities, besides attracting major investments. Convincing citizens that they stand to benefit from such grand plans through better social welfare, lower service costs and higher efficiencies will be a tough task.

KV PRASAD ON WHY DEBATE IN US HOVERS AROUND EFFICACY OF CAATSA-RELATED CURBS AGAINST INDIA

The sanctions cloud over India-U.S. ties

The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, recently said that the delivery of the S-400 Triumf air defence systems from Russia is expected according to schedule. In response, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman hoped that both the U.S. and India could resolve the issue. The "issue" here is that receiving the missile systems could attract for India sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), enacted by the U.S. Congress. Ms. Sherman emphasised that the U.S. thinks it's "dangerous" for "any country that decides to use the S-400". India is scheduled to receive five squadrons of the surface-to-air missile systems under the \$5.43 billion (Rs 40,000 crore) agreement it signed three years ago.

Even though CAATSA was signed into law by then President Donald Trump in 2017, India stuck to its guns, signed the agreement with Russia a year later, and paid an advance in 2019. The missile systems were originally scheduled to be delivered between 2020 and 2023 and the supplies are expected to commence now. Both New Delhi and Washington have been in conversations over the deal. India has stressed on the tactical importance of the defence missile systems considering the environment in the Indian subcontinent.

The CAATSA was passed when the U.S. sought to discourage trade in the defence and intelligence sectors of Russia, a country perceived to have interfered with the 2016 U.S. presidential election. The Act mandates the President to impose at least five of the 12 sanctions on persons engaged in a "significant transaction" with Russian defence and intelligence sectors. These sanctions include suspending export licence, banning American equity/debt investments in entities, prohibiting loans from U.S. financial institutions and opposing loans from international finance institutions.

The Act also built in a safety valve in the form of a presidential waiver. This was written into the law after much persuasion and is interpreted as one crafted to accommodate countries like India. Policy planners



on either side are aware of the law and the provisions to work around it. Ms. Sherman and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who came to India earlier this year, cannot be expected to announce whether India can secure a waiver from President Joe Biden when the time comes for the White House to make a decision.

The "modified waiver authority" allows the President to waive sanctions in certain circumstances. He has to decide whether the move is in American interest; does not endanger the country's national security; and affect its military operations in an adverse manner. In addition, he has to determine whether the country in question is taking steps to bring down its inventory of defence equipment from Russia and cooperating with Washington on matters of critical security. There are a few more provisions including one that allows for sanctions waivers for 180 days, provided the administration certifies that the country in question is scaling back its ties with Russia.

The debate in the U.S. hovers around the efficacy of such sanctions against India when the geopolitical situation in the region is undergoing a change. Today, there is a growing relationship between China and Russia with both countries seeking to expand engagement in Afghanistan from where the

U.S. withdrew its military after two decades of war. India turned sullen over the manner in which the U.S. negotiated the exit deal with the Taliban. Yet, on the strategic plane, India remained on course by agreeing to the upgrading of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and sharing the same vision as the U.S. on the Indo-Pacific construct.

Sanctions have the tremendous potential of pulling down the upward trajectory of the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and India, which now spans 50 sectors, especially in the field of defence. The U.S.'s apprehension is that bringing India under a sanctions regime could push New Delhi towards its traditional military hardware supplier, Russia. Till about a decade ago, an influential segment of the Indian political leadership and top bureaucracy remained wary of deeper engagement with the U.S. Sanctions can stir up the latent belief that Washington cannot be relied upon as a partner.

Over the last decade, India's military purchase from Russia has steadily declined. India's import of arms decreased by 33% between 2011-15 and 2016-20 and Russia was the most affected supplier, according to a report by the Stockholm-based defence think-tank SIPRI. In recent years, though, there have been some big-ticket deals worth \$15 billion including S400, Ka-226-T utility

helicopters, BrahMos missiles and production of AK-203 assault rifles.

On the other hand, over the past decade, government-to-government deals with the U.S. touched \$20 billion and deals worth nearly \$10 billion are under negotiation. The U.S. designated India as a Major Defence Partner in 2016. It later gave India Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 which allows access to critical technologies. Today, manufacturers in both countries are exploring ways to co-develop and co-produce military equipment.

What next?

There are advocates in the U.S. who strongly favour imposing sanctions on India following the U.S.'s decision to impose restrictions on its NATO ally, Turkey. China was the first country to attract the provision after it procured the S-400. Should India be treated with a different yardstick? A section of influential lawmakers in the Democratic Party hold a different view.

There are three clear steps in this regard. The first is the presidential determination on waiver; the second is the referral to the Congressional Committees; and the third is clearance by these panels. While referral to the Armed Services is spelled out, it is a distinct possibility that this will be sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committees. This powerful committee, headed by Senator Bob Menendez, wrote to Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin ahead of his visit to New Delhi in March this year that he must inform India of the perils of the deal, while a Republican, Todd Young, on the panel argued against it.

The CAATSA test will determine the course of the India-U.S. strategic partnership. Will the Biden administration sail through opposition within his party in allowing India a clear passage? While the administration will have to do the heavy lifting, the role of Indian-Americans should be significant just as they rallied around to support the historic Civil Nuclear Deal in the face of stiff resistance from Democrats opposed to nuclear proliferation.

K.V. Prasad is a journalist and former Fulbright-APSA Fellow with the U.S. Congress

KAILASH SATYARTHI EXPLAINS WHY ANY INVESTMENT IN HEALTH CARE HAS FAILED TO TRANSLATE INTO A SENSE OF SECURITY

The next step is a constitutional right to health



The brevity of human memory is often a blessing and even necessary for our collective healing from suffering. But the lessons we learn from suffering are possibly even more crucial. As our people continue to face individual and collective grief as a result of the novel coronavirus pandemic, it is the moral responsibility of our leaders to look ahead and learn the necessary lessons.

The lesson here is the need for the constitutional 'Right to Health for all'. The pandemic has exposed and aggravated the cracks in our health-care systems, and this is a lesson we cannot afford to ignore and not learn.

In June this year, I called on the Parliament of India to take immediate measures to make necessary amendments to the Constitution to declare health care a Fundamental Right. I was reassured with positive responses from parliamentarians across party lines who have supported this call. Now, the time has come to make this a reality for India so our people never have to undergo the suffering that they did.

The primary question raised is: what will a constitutional 'Right to Health' mean for a citizen of India? I will try and explain this through the lens of three categories of citizens: farmers and unorganised workers, women and children.

Farmers are the primary protectors of our fundamental right to life. Yet, the majority remain at a loose end when it comes to their



own rights and well-being, and that of their families. Without an anchor during times of severe illness or disease, generations of children of small and landless farmers, and unorganised, migrant and seasonal workers are thrown into bondage and debt by having to pay for medical costs from their limited earnings. Employment benefit schemes do not reach them, and the ones that do are mostly on paper. The implementation of the right to health can provide simple, transparent and quality health care to those who are most in need of such care.

Women bear a disproportionate burden of the gaps in our health-care system. The taboos and patriarchal expectations surrounding their health lead to immense

avoidable suffering. In addition, social and economic challenges prevent them from freely and openly accessing the little care that is available. A 'Right to Health' would mean that services reach the woman where and when she needs them.

A large number of children who belong to the poorest and most marginalised communities of our country grow up working in hazardous situations be it fields, mines, brick kilns or factories. They are either not enrolled in schools or are not able to attend it due to the pressing financial needs of the family — often because of unexpected out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Making it safer for children

My organisation has rescued over 1,00,000 such children from child labour, bonded labour, and trafficking. When rescued, these children are ridden with complex health impacts of working — primarily tuberculosis, skin diseases, eyesight impairment, and malnutrition, besides the substantial mental health impact. These children have been denied a safety net of early childhood care and protection, the consequences of which are felt for a lifetime. The 'Right to Health' will help transition the children in exploitative conditions into a safer future.

A constitutional 'Right to Health' will transform not only the health and well-being of our people but will act as a leap for the economic and developmental progress of the nation. Presently, any investment in health

care fails to translate into a sense of security and sanctuary for the people of India. Instead, the complex and often corrupt means of accessing even existing health care only adds to the suffering instead of alleviating it. The vision for Ayushman Bharat will be strengthened with a constitutional 'Right to Health'. The immediate financial security that will come with the constitutional 'Right to Health' will be seen as a measurable impact on family savings, greater investment, and jobs creation on the one hand, and in the long-term emotional, psychological and social security of people.

As a legacy

The world is taking steps, both big and small, in recovering from the pandemic through foresight in policy and investment. India must not lag behind. The right to free and compulsory education was arguably one of the most valuable legacies of the earlier Government. The true testament of bold leadership lies in its timely, compassionate and courageous decisions for the greater good. A constitutional amendment to introduce the 'Right to Health for India' can be the legacy of this Government.

Kailash Satyarthi, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014, is an advocate of children's rights. He is also the founder of the Global Campaign for Education and the Laureates and Leaders for Children. Views are personal

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

COVAXIN FOR CHILDREN APPROVED

1 VACCINATION DRIVE
If Covaxin is approved for the purpose by the DCGI, the country will move a significant step closer towards starting the vaccination drive for tens of crores of kids in the age group of two to 18 years.

2 INFECTIONS AMONG CHILDREN
With schools, coaching centres and sports complexes reopening gradually, the need for inoculation of youngsters cannot be overemphasised.

3 CONFIDENCE AMONG STUDENTS
major challenge will be to build confidence among students and their parents and nip vaccine hesitancy in the bud.

4 DOSES ADMINISTERED
Of the 96 crore-plus doses administered so far in India, Covaxin's contribution has been barely 11 per cent.

5 OUTCOMES
A lot of ground has to be covered to ensure that people most vulnerable to the worst outcomes get protection at the earliest.

BOOKS: REVIEW

Book on naval officer's secret mission in Pakistan in 1965

A book based on the daring mission lead by India's Naval attaché to Pakistan in 1965 Captain Jack Shea to bring back the first secretary and his family out of the country months ahead of the Indo-Pak war that year was launched here on Tuesday.

Written by the naval officer's daughter Debora Ann Shea, the book, titled "Escape from Pakistan", is grounded in years of examining archival resources, letters and diaries, personal accounts and the author's own bittersweet memories.

Speaking at the launch event, entrepreneur turned author Debora said that it was her attempt to "do justice to the service" her father had done for the nation.

"I have longed for this day for years...the times we were at home and he was at his perilous duty are still vivid and 'Escape From Pakistan' is just a written document of

those bittersweet memories along with carefully examined archival resources, letters and diaries," she said.

Captain Shea, who was posted in Karachi as the Naval Attaché in the Indian High Commission, was given the task of pulling out the First Secretary and his family after the latter was "dangerously close" to being booked for espionage in Pakistan.

While Shea managed to bring the official and his family back to India in a cargo ship, he landed in trouble months after the war as he was drugged, beaten up by hitmen and thrown off a terrace that put him in coma for months.

"The attack on my father had come as a consequence of pulling out a marked diplomat. My father lay in the hospital for months as my mother doggedly sat outside the ICU room, afraid of another attack on his life," Debora recalled.

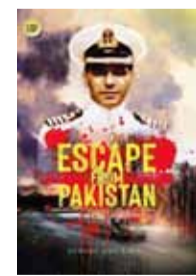
She added that after coming back

My father lay in the hospital for months as my mother doggedly sat outside the ICU room, afraid of another attack on his life

from the hospital nothing deterred him from his duty as he completed his tenure in Pakistan before coming back to India.

"The doctors had declared he would never walk again. He did not accept the doctors' verdict and managed to walk, although the impact of the attack on his hand and wrist left it immobile," she said.

After returning to India, Shea received the Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and assumed command of the 11th Destroyer Squadron of the Royal



"Escape from Pakistan" By Debora Ann Shea; India Penguin Enterprise; 216 Pages; Rs 599

Indian Navy which played a pivotal role in the Indo-Pak war of 1971 before retiring as Commodore in 1976.

The book launch event was also attended by retired vice admiral Premvir Das, retired air marshal SP Singh, retired commander Keith Suares and Vijai Kapil.

The book is published by Penguin Random House India and is available on online and offline stores.

The author is the daughter of the protagonist. A heart felt and touching recount of a story that lived in her heart for decades. This book unveils that untold gripping story, authored by the late Commodore's daughter, Debora Ann Shea. I finished the page-turner in one reading. And so will anyone who picks up a copy.

Devars, from the Indian Police Service, was deputed to Pakistan

before the 1965 war. He was a great asset in collecting information that kept the Indian forces a step ahead of Pakistan throughout the conflict. When Pakistan learnt about his role, they wanted to snatch him. On the Indian High Commissioner's orders, Garnet Milton Shea — the Indian Naval Attaché also known as Jack Shea — outlined an extremely complex operation.

Relying on Pakistanis who worked for the Indian intelligence, Devars got into a jeep driven by an Indian, Prabhjot, who could pass for a Pathan and spoke Urdu and Punjabi well to reach from Karachi to a village close to the Indian border, a distance of 200 km. If nothing went wrong, the journey would consume about six hours.

But this was the one and only chance to escape; there was no scope for failure. Devars, who knew no Hindi or Punjabi, was given the identity of an Arab immigrant from Somalia (name Bashir Ali) who had been working for a Pakistani landlord tending to his sheep and goats. He was prepared for a cameral ride — for the final lap until he crossed over India.

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NEWSBRIEF

Adani Group takes over operation of Thiruvananthapuram International airport



THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The Adani Group has taken over the operation, management and development of the international airport in Thiruvananthapuram, saying it is now a Gateway to Goodness.

Announcing the formal takeover of the airport, the business giant said in a tweet that it was privileged to serve and welcome passengers to God's Own Country. "Connecting lives with cherished travel experiences, we are pleased to share that #ThiruvananthapuramAirport is now a #GatewayToGoodness. We are privileged to serve and welcome passengers to God's Own Country filled with lush greenery, beautiful beaches, and exquisite cuisine", the group said in the tweet, both in English and Malayalam, past midnight. The group took over the operations of the airport despite protest by both ruling LDF and opposition UDF against handing it over to private players. Last year, the Kerala Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution protesting the privatisation of the airport. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had criticised the takeover of the airport by the Adani group, saying it was not for the development of the facility but to protect the interest of monopolies. Thiruvananthapuram International Airport is the first of four airports in the state. Established in 1932, the airport was owned and operated by Airports Authority of India. **AGENCIES**

Infosys profit rises to ₹ 5,421 crore in Q2, revenue guidance raised on higher demand

NEW DELHI: Infosys announced its July-September quarter results for the financial year 2021-22 on Wednesday, October 13, reporting a net profit of Rs 5,421 crore, up 11.88 per cent year-on-year, on a consolidated basis. The country's second-largest information technology (IT) services provider by market value, raised its annual revenue guidance as pandemic-led digital services demand helped the company in securing large deals from global businesses looking to expand their digital offerings. **AGENCIES**



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FinMin meets us corporates, pitches for investments

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman discussed investment opportunities, reforms in India and other related issues during her meeting with leaders of global corporations in the US, who said they were upbeat about investing in the country.

Sitharaman had arrived in that country to attend the annual meet of the World Bank and IMF in Washington as well as G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FM-CBG) meeting.

During the official visit, the finance minister is expected to meet US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

After arriving in New York, Sitharaman travelled to Boston where she will meet investors during a roundtable hosted by FICCI and US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) and executives of global corporations and also address students at Harvard University.

Prominent among those who met the minister in Boston were John Connaughton co-managing partner and Stephen Pagliuca, co-chairman of Bain Capital; Edmund DiSanto, Executive Vice President, Chief Administration Officer and General Counsel of American Tower Corporation (ATC);



Prahlad Singh, President and CEO of Perkin Elmer and Dr John Ardill, Senior Vice President of ExxonMobil.

Expressing their confidence in the Indian economy and the ongoing reforms, the corporate leaders said that they were upbeat about investing in the country.

Sitharaman also attended a dinner hosted by Lawrence Summers, former Treasury Secretary, along with other eminent experts in the fields of economics, public policy, finance, and development.

"The finance minister elucidated the intent of the country to be more inclusive in development and growth," Prahlad Singh said after his meeting with Sitharaman in Boston.

In a wide-ranging discussion with the minister, Singh stated that some of the best science graduates and skill sets that Perkin Elmer as a company leverage, come out of India.

He said that India's healthcare industry is ripe for investment.

Singh added that amid the COVID-19 pandemic, products that have been developed in the company's facilities in Goa are being used and exported outside the country for use for COVID-19 testing.

In her meeting with ATC's

DiSanto, the minister highlighted reforms including National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) for private sector investment towards new infrastructure creation in brownfield infrastructure assets.

Opportunities in India steering foreign collaborations and attracting Foreign Direct Investment in the next five years under NMP through investment in strategic sectors, including telecom, formed part of discussion, the finance ministry said.

ATC, which has 76,000 towers in India, aims to expand operations in the telecommunications sector by adding another 4,000 towers.

"So we'll make an incremental investment in the ordinary course even in the pandemic that'll bring us to 80,000 (towers)," DiSanto said.

ATC India is among the passive telecom infrastructure providers in India and is an indirectly-held subsidiary of American Tower Corporation.

"I see that the moves that the government of India has made recently has sent a very powerful message to the world of western investors, indicating a new receptivity and a new system that I think does encourage the opportunity," DiSanto said after his meeting with Sitharaman. **AGENCIES**

HCL Tech reports net profit of ₹ 3,259 crore in q2, declares interim dividend

NEW DELHI: HCL Technology announced its July-September quarter results for the financial year 2021-22, reporting a net profit of Rs 3,259 crore on a consolidated basis, compared to Rs 3,143 crore in the corresponding month last year, marking a growth of four per cent year-on-year.

The IT major's revenue from operations in the second quarter of the current fiscal stood at Rs 20,655 crore, compared to Rs 18,594 crore, registering a growth of 11.3 per cent year-on-year, according to a regulatory filing by the company to the stock exchanges today. HCL Tech said that it expects revenues to grow in double digits in constant currency for 2021-22.

HCL Tech's net income in the September quarter stood at Rs 3,265 crore, up 3.9 per cent year-on-year, and its total income stood at Rs 20,895 crore on a consolidated basis. The company's board declared an interim dividend of Rs.10 per equity share of Rs.2 each of the company for the financial year 2021-22. The payment



date of the interim dividend is set as November 8, 2021.

"We signed 14 large new deals which helped us to record net new booking of \$2.3 B, a growth of 38 per cent YoY. Our net employee addition hit an all time high of 11,135 this quarter," said C Vijayakumar, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) & Managing Director, HCL Technologies.

"Services revenue (ITBS & ERS) grew strongly at 5.2 per cent QoQ in constant currency, with stable EBIT. P&P growth was impacted due to

delays in closure of certain deals. Client mining has been healthy across all categories, notably, the number of \$ 50 million clients now stand at 41 (Up 12 YoY)," said Prateek Aggarwal, Chief Financial Officer, HCL Technologies.

On October 14, shares of HCL Tech settled 1.17 per cent lower at Rs 1,250.90 on the BSE. HCL Tech opened at Rs 1288.00, touching an intra day high of Rs 1,293 and an intra day low of Rs 1,244.35, throughout the trading session today. **AGENCIES**

Wipro's September quarter profit falls to Rs 2,930 crore

NEW DELHI: Information Technology (IT) major Wipro witnessed a fall in its net profit for the second quarter of 2021-22, which at Rs 2,930 crore was lower than Rs 3,242 crore of the June quarter of the current fiscal.

The quarter on quarter fall was mainly due to contraction in the company's margins after effecting a wage hike and amortisation charges on Capco's acquisition. Wipro had wrapped up the acquisition of London-based The Capital Markets Company (Capco) for \$1.45 billion in April 2021. Capco is a consultancy firm in the banking and financial services sector.

Revenues from IT services increased to Rs 19,760 crore in



the September quarter, vis-à-vis that of Rs 18,252.4 crore recorded in the previous quarter.

Commenting on the results, Wipro's CEO and Managing Director Thierry Delaporte said, "the second quarter results demonstrate that our business strategy is working well. We grew at

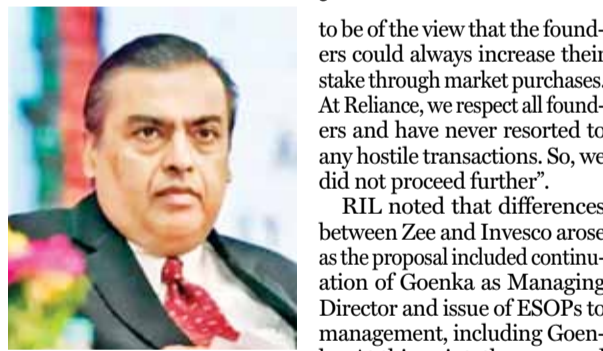
over 4.5 per cent organic sequential growth for a second quarter in a row, resulting in a 28 per cent year on year growth in the first half of this financial year. I thank our customers, partners and colleagues as we surpassed the \$10 billion milestone of annualised revenue run rate." **AGENCIES**

No hostile transactions, says Reliance on reports it wanted to buy Zee

NEW DELHI: Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) issued a clarification that though it was interested in Zee Entertainment's acquisition, the deal fell through and that it regretted being drawn into the dispute between the entertainment conglomerate and its US-based investor, Invesco, further stating that it never resorted to any "hostile transactions".

"We regret our being drawn into the dispute between Zee and Invesco. The reports in the media are not accurate. In February/March 2021, Invesco assisted Reliance in arranging discussions directly between our representatives and Punit Goenka, member of the founder family and Managing Director of Zee. We had made a broad proposal for merger of our media properties with Zee at fair valuations of Zee and all our properties," RIL said in a statement.

The clarification from Mukesh



Ambani's company came after Invesco earlier stated that it had brought in RIL to help it acquire Zee Entertainment.

Reliance further said that the "valuations of Zee and our properties were arrived at based on the same parameters... However, differences arose between Goenka and Invesco with respect to a requirement of the founding family for increasing their stake by subscribing to preferential warrants. The investors seemed

to be of the view that the founders could always increase their stake through market purchases. At Reliance, we respect all founders and have never resorted to any hostile transactions. So, we did not proceed further".

RIL noted that differences between Zee and Invesco arose as the proposal included continuation of Goenka as Managing Director and issue of ESOPs to management, including Goenka. At this point, the proposed talks fell through as Invesco has long been seeking changes in the management of Zee Entertainment, and wants Goenka removed. Invesco, which owns almost 18 per cent stake in Zee, has alleged financial irregularities and has been seeking holding of an extraordinary general meeting of the board and shareholders to facilitate appointment of six new independent board members and removal of Goenka. **AGENCIES**

Reliance arm to invest in Germany-based Nexwafe

NEW DELHI: Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries today announced that its wholly-owned subsidiary Reliance New Energy Solar Limited (RNESL) has entered into an agreement with Germany-based NexWafe GmbH (NexWafe) for acquiring 86,887 series C preferred shares of face value of EUR 1 each.

Reliance New Energy Solar Limited will also be issued 36,201 warrants which are exercisable for a consideration of EUR 1 per warrant subject to achievement of agreed milestones, according to a regulatory filing by the conglomerate to the stock exchanges. The transaction is proposed to be completed by end of this month.

The Reliance arm and NexWafe also entered into an India Strategic Partnership Agreement for joint technology development and commercialization, - at scale of high-efficiency monocrystalline 'green solar wafers', according to the statement.

As part of the India Strategic Partnership Agreement, the Reliance arm will secure access to NexWafe's proprietary technology and plans to build large-scale wafer manufacturing facilities in India using the NexWafe processes and technology. The acquisition is not a related party transaction and none of the promoter or the promoter group/companies have interest in NexWafe.

The investment by the Reliance arm will accelerate prod-



uct and technology development for the Germany-based firm, including the completion of commercial development of NexWafe's solar photovoltaics products on prototype lines in Freiburg, added Reliance in its statement.

On October 12, shares of Reliance Industries settled 0.66 per cent higher at Rs 2,668.55 apiece on the BSE. Reliance opened on the BSE at Rs 2,641, swinging to an intra day high of Rs 2,682.75 and an intra day low of Rs 2,641, throughout the trading session. **AGENCIES**

Earlier, commissions ranged from 8.5 per cent for small orders to 30 per cent for high-ticket orders - and now it will range from 8.5 per cent to 25 per cent. The highest slab currently applies to the high value orders and the change will help partners earn more on high value orders, according to the company's statement.

In terms of changes for customers, Urban Company said that it will "marginally" increase prices of several high demand services across categories to improve the take-home pay/earnings of their partners. The company recently introduced cancellation fee to discourage customers from making last-minute cancellations. **AGENCIES**

gram headquarters, demanding better pay, safer working conditions, and social security benefits, according to media reports. Urban Company - formerly Urban Clap, announced that it will slash the highest commission it charges beauty service professionals - majority of them being women partners, from 30 per cent to 25 per cent, among other things.

Urban Company hikes service prices, cuts commissions to improve partner earnings

NEW DELHI: Home services marketplace Urban Company increased the prices of several high demand services across categories and also slashed commission charges of its beauty services professionals, among a slew of other changes announced to improve the livelihood and payouts of its service professionals.

In an official blog post on October 14, the on-demand home and beauty services platform released a 12-point agenda to improve "partner earnings and livelihood".

The development comes days after more than 100 partners - majority of them women professionals from the spa and salon verticals, protested outside the company's Guru-



months before surfacing in January, speaking to a group of teachers by video. That eased concern about his unusual absence from the limelight and sent Alibaba shares surging. In May, Ma made a rare visit to Alibaba's Hangzhou campus during the firm's annual 'Ali Day' staff and family event, company sources have said. On September 1, photographs of Ma visiting several agricultural greenhouses in the eastern Zhejiang province, home to both Alibaba and its fintech affiliate Ant, went viral on Chinese social media. The next day, Alibaba said it would invest 100 billion yuan (\$15.5 billion) by 2025 in support of «common prosperity», be-

TPG group to invest ₹7,500 cr in Tata Motors' electric vehicle arm



NEW DELHI: Tata Motors announced that TPG Group, a private equity firm and Abu Dhabi's ADQ will invest Rs 7,500 crore in its electric vehicle entity, which will be newly incorporated.

The entire investment will be made in different tranches over an 18-month period, starting from the date of completion of the first tranche. The first instalment of capital infusion will be done by March 2022 while the entire process will be completed by end of 2022.

Tata will incorporate a separate electric mobility unit in which TPG and ADQ will get between 11 per cent and 15 per cent stake at an equity valuation of \$9.1 billion.

"I am delighted to have TPG Rise Climate join us in our journey to create a market-shaping electric passenger mobility business in India. We will continue to proactively invest in exciting products that delights customers while meticulously creating a synergistic ecosystem. We are excited and committed to play a leading role in the Government's vision to have 30 per cent electric vehicles penetration rate by 2030," Tata Motors Chairman N Chandrasekaran said.

Apart from Tata Motors foray in the electric vehicle business, Mahindra & Mahindra had also announced that it will invest Rs 3,000 crore in the next three years to build an electric vehicle vertical. **AGENCIES**

Billionaire Alibaba Founder Jack Ma reappears in Hong Kong: Report

ON SEPTEMBER 1, PHOTOGRAPHS OF MA VISITING SEVERAL AGRICULTURAL GREENHOUSES IN THE EASTERN ZHEJIANG PROVINCE, HOME TO BOTH ALIBABA AND ITS FINTECH AFFILIATE ANT, WENT VIRAL ON CHINESE SOCIAL MEDIA

HONG KONG: Alibaba Group founder Jack Ma, largely out of public view since a regulatory clampdown started on his business empire late last year, is currently in Hong Kong and has met business as-

sociates in recent days, two sources said.

The Chinese billionaire has been keeping a low profile since delivering a speech in October last year in Shanghai criticising China's financial regulators.

That triggered a chain of events that resulted in the shelving of his Ant Group's mega IPO. While Ma made a limited number of public appearances in mainland China after that, as speculation swirled about his whereabouts, one of the sources said the visit marked his first trip to the Asian financial hub since last October.

Alibaba did not immediately respond to requests for comment outside of its regular business hours.



Comments from Ma typically come via the company. The sources declined to be identified due to confidentiality constraints.

Ma, once China's most famous and outspoken entrepreneur, met at least «a few» business associates over meals last week, said the people.

Ma, who is mostly based in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou, where his business empire is headquartered, owns at least one luxury house in the former British colony that also houses some of his companies' offshore business operations.

Alibaba is also listed in Hong Kong, besides New York. The former English teacher disappeared from public view for three

months before surfacing in January, speaking to a group of teachers by video.

That eased concern about his unusual absence from the limelight and sent Alibaba shares surging.

In May, Ma made a rare visit to Alibaba's Hangzhou campus during the firm's annual 'Ali Day' staff and family event, company sources have said. On September 1, photographs of Ma visiting several agricultural greenhouses in the eastern Zhejiang province, home to both Alibaba and its fintech affiliate Ant, went viral on Chinese social media.

The next day, Alibaba said it would invest 100 billion yuan (\$15.5 billion) by 2025 in support of «common prosperity», be-

coming the latest corporate pledge to support for the wealth sharing initiative driven by President Xi Jinping.

Alibaba and its tech rivals have been the target of a wide-ranging regulatory crackdown on issues ranging from monopolistic behaviour to consumer rights.

The e-commerce behemoth was fined a record \$2.75 billion in April over monopoly violations. Earlier this year, regulators also imposed a sweeping restructuring on Ant, whose botched \$37 billion initial public offering in Hong Kong and on Shanghai's Nasdaq-style STAR Market would have been the world's largest. **AGENCIES**

ALSO READ | HARDIK PANDYA CELEBRATED HIS BIRTHDAY WITH HIS 'BEST FRIEND' * P8 | DINESH KARTHIK REPRIMANDED FOR BREACHING IPL CODE OF CONDUCT * P8

Bank FD to fetch negative real interest with elevated inflation

NEW DELHI: Senior citizens and others depending upon income from bank fixed deposit (FD) schemes will be at the receiving end with the retail inflation exceeding the interest rates.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its latest monetary policy review has projected retail inflation at 5.3 per cent for the current financial year.

Last week, the RBI said the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation is now projected to be at 5.3 per cent for 2021-22 with risks evenly balanced.

At this level, the fixed deposit for one year with the country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) would rather earn negative interest. The real interest rate would be (-) 0.3 per cent for the saver.

Real rate of interest is card rate minus inflation rate. The retail inflation for August stood at 5.3 per cent.

Even for higher tenure 2-3 years, the interest rate earned is 5.10 per cent lower than expected inflation for the current fiscal.



In the private sector, the market leader HDFC Bank offers 4.90 per cent interest rate for 1-2 year fixed deposits while 5.15 per cent for 2-3 years.

However, small savings schemes run by the government offers better return compared to fixed deposit rates of

banks. For term deposits 1-3 years, the interest rate offered is 5.5 per cent higher than inflation target.

There is natural advantage of moving money from bank FD to government saving schemes as rates are slightly higher. Thus, the real rate of interest is in the positive ter-



The present average savings deposit rate offered by banks which is around 3.5 per cent and less than five per cent rate on one year deposit indicates a negative return, not even covering the expected inflation rate"

ritory.

Experts said that it is a usual phenomenon that real returns are negative in a crisis and post-recovery world, given the way fiscal stimulus to overcome difficulty.

India is no exception and in fact, new asset allocation patterns would need to emerge, with more allocation to real assets from financial assets.

Real rates are going to be negative for a while, given that the post crisis repairs may take some time and it is imperative that financial literacy initia-

tives guide people into making the right investment choices, Grant Thornton Bharat partner Vivek Iyer said.

"A negative rate of interest, for savers on bank deposits, these days, is a reality, which the depositors have to face because of a complex set of factors.

"The present average savings deposit rate offered by banks which is around 3.5 per cent and less than five per cent rate on one year deposit indicates a negative return, not even covering the expected inflation rate," Resurgent India Managing Director Jyoti Prakash Gadia said.

The impact of negative interest on bank savings deposits is obvious, with lower growth of such deposits and the public now seeking alternatives like mutual funds and equity for better returns.

The options although involving more risk have shown phenomenal growth which is likely to continue till inflation is tamed or bank deposit rates are substantially increased, Gadia added. **AGENCIES**

Government says e-filing portal now stable, 2 crore returns filed

NEW DELHI: Just a day after Infosys CEO Salil Parekh said that the e-filing portal for income tax returns is making "steady progress" and that taxpayers' concerns are being addressed, the government said that more than two crore income tax returns (ITRs) have been filed through it till date and the platform has "substantially stabilised".

Urging tax payers to file their returns for the fiscal 2020-21 at the earliest, the last date for which is December 31, 2021, the income tax department in a statement said that more than 1.70 crore returns have been e-verified and of these, 1.49 crore were done through Aadhaar based one-time password (OTP) system.

The process of e-verification through Aadhaar OTP and other methods is important for the department to commence processing of the ITR and to issue refunds, if any.

Of the verified ITRs 1 and 4, more than 1.06 crore ITRs have been processed and over 36.22 lakh refunds for the AY



2021-22 have been issued. Processing of ITRs 2 and 3 will be taken up shortly, the department said.

The new e-filing portal was launched on June 7 this year and soon after, users had started complaining of glitches, which led to the finance ministry summoning Infosys officials (the company has designed the portal) and asking it to fix the issues. Due to these problems, the government had to extend the deadline for filing returns twice.

However as problems persisted with the platform, Fi-

nance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had called Parekh and gave the company time till September 15 to address concerns of taxpayers.

Though nothing was heard about the issue after that, during Infosys' second quarter financial results declaration, Parekh on October 13 said that the portal was making "steady progress" and all concerns are being "progressively addressed".

He however did not give any indications as to when the technical issues will be fully resolved. **AGENCIES**

NEWS BRIEF

RBI bans Srei Infra's auditor for two years

MUMBAI: In an unprecedented move, the RBI banned one of the country's top chartered accountant firms Haribhakti & Co LLP from undertaking any type of audit assignments for regulated entities for a period of two years starting April 1, 2022. Unprecedented move This is the first time that the RBI has taken such action against an auditor of any systemically important NBFC Haribhakti & Co LLP was the auditor of Srei Infrastructure Finance Limited (SIFL), whose Board was superseded by the RBI and insolvency proceedings were initiated last week. The term of the firm expired with the conclusion of the 35th annual general meeting (AGM) held on September 19, 2020. **AGENCIES**

Rally continues, Sensex, Nifty jump to record high

MUMBAI: Equity gauges Sensex and Nifty climbed to new record high, stretching their winning run to the fifth consecutive session, as investors continued to lap up auto, power and infra shares. After scaling a lifetime intra-day high of 60,836.63 during the session, the Sensex settled 452.74 points higher at 60,737.05 — its all-time closing high. Similarly, the Nifty rallied 169.80 points to a new closing peak of 18,161.75. It also touched an intra-day record of 18,197.80. M&M was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, zooming over 5%, followed by PowerGrid, ITC, L&T, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel and Titan. On the other hand, Maruti Suzuki, HUL, Nestle India, Axis Bank and SBI were among the laggards. "Auto stocks led by Tata Motors propelled the Nifty to new highs of 18,200 with good support from infra and metal stocks on the launch of the Master Plan for Infrastructure Development and Multi-Modal Connectivity," S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP securities, said. Tata Group stocks hogged the limelight despite profit-taking in late afternoon trade, he added. **AGENCIES**

SBI's multi-currency foreign travel card

NEW DELHI: State Bank of India's (SBI's) Multi-Currency Foreign Travel Card is a prepaid capital that can be loaded with money in multiple currencies. According to the country's largest lender, the card can be used at ATMs (automatic teller machines) and merchant points abroad.

"Using this card, customers can withdraw cash from over 2 million ATMs and pay for goods and services in shops, restaurants and hotels at 34.5 million merchants worldwide," SBI said in a release.

Features Of SBI's Foreign Travel Card:

- Chip and PIN (personal identification number) protected prepaid travel card;
- Can be used for seven different currencies (US Dollar, British Pound, Euro, Singapore Dollar, Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar and UAE Dirham);
- Additional card available for backup;
- Round the clock global

assistance with free replacement of card if lost or stolen;

- No bank account information is required;
- Reloadable until the expiry date on the card with valid passport and Form A2. Form A2 is FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) declaration for the purchase of forex for remittance purposes.

How To Apply:

- This card can be availed by either visiting the nearest SBI branch or by logging on to the bank's official website. **AGENCIES**



CBDT exempts certain non-residents, foreign investors from filing ITR FY21 onwards

NEW DELHI: The income tax department has exempted certain non-residents and foreign investors from filing Income Tax Return (ITR) from 2020-21 onwards, a move aimed at easing compliance burden.

Through a notification, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said non-residents (corporates/ otherwise) who do not earn any income other than income from investment in 'specified fund', being Alternate Investment Fund Category III located in International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) or GIFT city shall not be required to file ITR.

Further, eligible foreign investors (non-residents who operate in accordance with SEBI instructions), who during the financial year, have only transacted in capital asset like Global Depository Receipts, Rupee Denominated Bonds, derivatives or other notified securities, listed on recognised stock exchange in IFSC, have also been exempted from ITR filing. This is subject to the condition that the consideration for transfer of such asset is discharged in foreign currency and no other income is earned by such class of persons in India.

However, in both the cases



above, these classes of non-residents shall have to ensure that they are exempted from the requirement of obtaining PAN. As per I-T rules, PAN is not required if tax has been duly deducted on income of non-residents and remitted to the government by the 'specified fund'. Additionally, requisite details and documents like contact information, TIN and residential status declaration, are submitted by the non-resident to the 'specified fund'.

Nangia Andersen LLP Director Neha Malhotra said since the government has all the tax related information regarding the taxpayers exempted from filing ITR and their income is also subject to deduction of tax at source, this

move doesn't impact the government kitty.

"Exempting such non-residents from the obligation of filing the return of income, simply eases their compliance burden. Reducing the compliance burden on taxpayers reflects on the country's efficient tax administration, which will further improve investor confidence," Malhotra said.

Tax and consulting firm AKM Global, Tax Partner Amit Maheshwari said the notification has provided that the overseas investors who invest in a fund operating in Gift City and having income from such funds shall not be required to file the tax return in India provided they don't have any other income in India. **AGENCIES**

How to setup UPI app's auto-pay facility to make recurring payments

NEW DELHI: The Reserve Bank of India's new auto-debit rule on Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA), has been made applicable from October 1. With the UPI Auto-Pay facility, customers can use any UPI application for recurring payments such as electricity bills, EMI payments, insurance, mobile bills, mutual funds, among others, upto Rs 5000.

As per details shared by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), here's a step-by-step guide on how to setup BHIM UPI Auto-Pay facility to make recurring payments:

Any UPI-enabled application will have a 'mandate' section, through which customers can create, modify, pause and revoke the auto-debit mandate. The mandate section will allow customers to view their past mandates. UPI users can create e-mandate through the UPI ID, QR scan, or intent. The pattern for the auto-debit mandate is created according



to customers' spends on recurring payments. The mandates can be set for one-time, daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, and yearly.

The mandates are generated instantly and payments get deducted automatically on the authorized date. Customers have to authenticate the account through UPI PIN one-time and the subsequent monthly payments will be debited automatically. **AGENCIES**

At \$22.6 billion in Sept, trade deficit widens to highest level in 14 years

NEW DELHI: The country's merchandise trade deficit - the gap between imports and exports, widened to a record \$22.6 billion in September 2021 - the highest level in at least 14 years, according to news agency Reuters.

The country's overall exports (merchandise and services) rose 21.44 per cent to \$54.06 billion in September from \$44.52 billion in the corresponding month last year, while overall imports grew 70 per cent to \$68.49 billion from \$40.29 in the year-ago period, according to government data released on Thursday.



Merchandise exports rose 22.60 per cent to \$33.79 last

month from \$27.56 in the same month last year, while merchandise imports grew 84.76 per cent to \$56.39 billion from \$30.52 in the year-ago period, according to data by the commerce ministry today. The purchases of crude oil and gold pushed imports to record-high levels last month. The data for the services sector released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is for August 2021, so the trade data for September 2021 is an estimation. It will be revised based on the RBI's subsequent release, said the commerce ministry.

The overall exports in the April-September period is estimated at \$312.47 billion, marking a growth of 40.52 per cent

over the corresponding period last year, and a growth of 18.30 per cent compared to the April-September period in 2019 (pre-Covid era). In terms of exports, the major groups of commodities exhibiting growth in September 2021 are coffee, cashew, petroleum products, cotton/yarn, handloom products, engineering goods, among others.

Whereas, the major groups of commodities exhibiting de-growth in September include iron ore, oil meals, oil seeds, tobacco, ceramic products and glassware, spices, meat, dairy and poultry products, drugs and pharmaceuticals. **AGENCIES**

PNB lowers interest rates on loans against SGB, jewellery



THE COUNTRY'S SECOND-LARGEST PUBLIC SECTOR BANK ALSO SLASHED THE MARGIN ON HOME LOANS. CUSTOMERS SEEKING HOME LOANS CAN NOW AVAIL OF LOANS UP TO 80 PER CENT OF THE PROPERTY'S VALUE WITHOUT ANY UPPER CEILING ON THE LOAN AMOUNT

NEW DELHI: Punjab National Bank lowered its interest rates on loans against gold jewellery and Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) by 145 basis points, as part new range of offers for customers amid the festive season. The public-sector lender will now offer loans against sovereign gold bonds at 7.20 per cent and loans against gold jewellery at 7.30 per cent, according to news agency.

Punjab National Bank also reduced the home loan rate, which now starts from 6.60 per cent, while customers can avail car loans starting from 7.15 per cent and personal loans from 8.95 per cent. The bank is also

offering a full waiver of service charges or processing fees on the loans against gold jewellery and SGB - similar to home loans and vehicle loans announced recently.

The country's second-largest public sector bank also slashed the margin on home loans. Customers seeking home loans can now avail of loans up to 80 per cent of the property's value without any upper ceiling on the loan amount, according to Punjab National Bank's home loan offer. On Wednesday, October 13, shares of Punjab National Bank settled 0.48 per cent higher at Rs 41.45 on the BSE. Punjab National Bank opened on the BSE at Rs 41.40, touching an intra day high of Rs 42.05 and an intra day low of Rs 41.30 throughout the trading session.

Meanwhile, State Bank of India - the country's largest lender, also reduced home loan interest rates to 6.7 per cent in its special festive season offer, for customers seeking affordable loans. The bank's home loans consist of low interest charges, zero processing charges and is a credit score linked home loan. **AGENCIES**

Welcome to Britain, the bank scam capital of the world

LONDON: It was an email offering a discount on an electric toothbrush that began the sequence of events that ruined Anna's life.

Within minutes of entering her card details, she got a call from her bank telling her fraudulent transactions were being made. The next day Robert Clayton from Britain's Financial Conduct Authority called to say they were pursuing the criminals responsible but that her savings were at risk.

There was no toothbrush, though. No fraud department, no Robert Clayton. They were all part of a scam to gradually siphon off Anna's life savings, and within a few weeks the plot had succeeded, to the tune of about 2,00,000 pounds (\$270,000). "I am still in shock, the guilt

and shame are impossible to convey," said the 78-year-old widow from central England, who did not want her full name to be used in this story.

She is one of thousands of people who have seen savings swept away this year by an unprecedented wave of online bank fraud hitting Britain, where you're more likely to be a victim of online fraud than any other crime.

The country is the global epicentre for such attacks, according to five of the biggest British banks and more than a dozen security experts who said scammers were buying up batches of consumers' personal details on the dark net to target the record numbers shopping and banking online since the pandemic.



The country's super-fast payments infrastructure, relatively light policing of fraud-related crime, plus its use of the world's most widely used language Eng-

lish, also made it an ideal global test bed for scams, the banks and specialists added.

A British record of 754 million pounds (\$1 billion) was

stolen in the first six months of this year, up 30% from the same period in 2020, according to data from banking industry body UK Finance, and up more than 60% from 2017, when it began compiling the figures.

That represents a per capita fraud rate roughly triple that seen in the United States in 2020, according to a Reuters calculation from UK Finance and the latest available Federal Trade Commission data.

"The most sophisticated fraud tends to start in the UK, and then move two years later to the US and then around the world," said Ayelet Biger-Levin, vice president of product strategy at US-based cybersecurity firm BioCatch, which provides anti-fraud technology to banks. "In the last 12 months we

have seen more fraud attacks than we had seen in any other year in history. Data breaches have also accelerated, so there's a lot more personal information out there that criminals can take advantage of."

Unlike simple email-based scams of the past purporting to be from princes or oil barons seeking your help to shift their millions, the modern bank scam can be sophisticated, multi-phased and extremely convincing.

"We've seen some cases where the fraudster has been talking to somebody for three or four years as someone else before they actually scam them out of a large amount of money," said Brian Dille, group director for economic crime prevention at Britain's biggest bank Lloyds. **AGENCIES**

Indian Rupee may touch 74-mark against US Dollar by end of Dec



NEW DELHI: A potential gush of foreign inflows on the back of a slew of large share sales is likely to bring reprieve to the Indian rupee, pummeled by rising oil prices.

The currency, which has become emerging Asia's worst performer over the past month, may gain about 2% from Wednesday's close to 74 per dollar by the end of December, according to a Bloomberg survey. Big inflows may make way for Indian shores as digital companies, including Warren Buffet-backed Paytm, plan to raise about \$10 billion in initial share sales.

The rupee has come under pressure as surging commodity prices rekindled worries about inflation and the financial health of the net oil-importing nation. A stronger dollar, spurred by rising wagers of U.S. stimulus taper, has also weighed on emerging-market currencies.

"Historically, when crude was boiling, equities were sluggish, and money was not coming in, so everything turned negative

for the rupee," said Sajal Gupta, head of foreign-exchange and rates trading at Edelweiss Securities Pvt. But this time, "the slate of IPOs should substantially cushion the impact of high crude prices."

Traders have been surprised by the RBI's soft intervention to arrest the currency's losses. The rupee has declined by 3% since early September, and India Forex Advisors Pvt. says the RBI may have allowed losses intending to correct the rupee's overvaluation.

That's why the RBI "has not intervened too aggressively by selling dollars," said Abhishek Goenka, Chief Executive Officer at India Forex Advisors. The RBI may allow the rupee to trade in a wider range of 73.90-76.90 per dollar in the current fiscal year,

he said. Higher oil prices and fast recovering local demand have boosted imports, widening India's trade deficit to an all-time high in September. Oil imports surged by about 200%.

India got \$100 million worth of foreign inflows into stocks so far in October, among the highest in Asia, after receiving \$445.8 million in the quarter ended September, data compiled by Bloomberg show. Besides, Paytm, the country's leader in digital payments, Flipkart, the Indian e-commerce giant controlled by Walmart Inc., is also aiming for an IPO as soon as the fourth quarter.

"Inflows will remain supportive of the rupee, especially amid vibrant IPOs," said Dhiraj Nim, a foreign exchange strategist at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. "The key driver could be the RBI's policy. Assuming inflows sustain, the RBI will have to pare FX purchases, simultaneous to its management of surplus domestic liquidity." **AGENCIES**

Energy prices should retreat by early 2022: IMF Chief Economist Gita Gopinath

NEW DELHI: Rising energy prices are weighing on households but the recent spike is unlikely to fuel a 1970s-style oil crisis and should retreat early next year, IMF chief economist Gita Gopinath told AFP. Energy prices collapsed last year amid the shutdowns imposed to contain the Covid-19 pandemic, but 2021 has brought a sharp rebound in demand as the global economy recovered, Gopinath said.



In the energy market, a long, cold winter followed by a particularly hot summer led to greater demand and depleted stocks, especially gas reserves in Europe.

"This recovery is really quite unique," she said, speaking on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

Supplies of many other goods have not been able to rebound as quickly as demand, hampered in part by the spread of the Delta variant of Covid-19, which has made workers reluctant to return to

their jobs and snarled supply chains.

Those labor shortages are "feeding into price pressures" in countries such as Germany, the United States and Japan, she said.

"We are in a difficult situation where we've seen prices go up very sharply," and the key question is whether that will persist, she said.

While energy prices "will be elevated" for the next couple of months, "We expect that to come back down by the end of the first quarter next year and into the second quarter," she said. **AGENCIES**

Global debt touched new high of \$226 trillion in 2021: IMF

NEW DELHI: Due to COVID-19 and policies put in place to respond to it, the global debt has jumped to a new high of \$226 trillion with India's dues projected to rise to 90.6 per cent in 2021, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said.

Advanced economies and China contributed more than 90 per cent to the accumulation of world-wide debt in 2020. The remaining emerging economies and low-income developing countries contributed only around seven per cent.

"Because of COVID-19 and policies put in place to respond to it, debt levels increased fast and reached high levels. High



and rising levels of public and private debt are associated with risks to financial stability and public finances," IMF Director of Fiscal Affairs Department Vitor Gaspar told reporters during a release of the 2021 Fiscal Monitor Report.

"The debt of governments, households and non-financial corporations added up to \$226 trillion in 2020 - \$27 trillion above 2019. This increase is, by far, the largest on record," he said. This figure includes both public and non-financial private sector debt.

In its 2021 Fiscal Monitor report, the IMF said India's debt increased from 68.9 per cent of its GDP in 2016 to 89.6 per cent in 2020. It is projected to jump to 90.6 per cent in 2021 and then decline to 88.8 per cent in 2022, to gradually reach 85.2 per cent in 2026.

Constraints on financing are particularly severe for poorer countries, Mr Gaspar said.

Noting that in 2020, fiscal policy proved its worth, he said the increase in public debt, in 2020, was fully justified by the need to respond to COVID-19 and its economic, social and financial consequences. But the increase is expected to be one-off, he said. He said debt is expected to decline this year and next - by about 1 percentage point of GDP per year.

After that, it is projected to stabilise at about 97 per cent of GDP. These debt dynamics are driven by a strong contribution from nominal GDP growth, accompanied by a much more gradual reduction in the primary deficit, he said. **AGENCIES**

Informal sector hit hardest by Covid crisis in India: World Bank President

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy that was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic is now in recovery mode and the World Bank welcomes that, its president David Malpass said on. Malpass also said that India, which faces huge challenges of integrating more people into the formal sector economy and raising the earnings of the people, has made some progress but that's not enough.

"Indians were hard hit by the waves of COVID and that's unfortunate. They responded with the huge production of vaccines and there's been progress on the vaccination effort. But we have to recognise the hit that COVID caused on the Indian economy and especially on the informal sector of the Indian economy which is large," Malpass told reporters here.

Last week, the World Bank projected the Indian economy to grow at 8.3 per cent this year.



He also said India, like other nations, is now facing a supply chain disruption due to the COVID-19. "The Indian economy is recovering, and we welcome that. It's going through to the other side of the COVID of...the, the latest wave. That's good. But India, like other countries, is hit hard now by the supply chain disruptions and by the inflation that's been rising in the world," Malpass

said in response to a question.

"I'm giving the general mixed view that there's progress, but not enough. India faces huge challenges of integrating more people into their economy into the formal sector economy and raising the earnings of people," he said. The Indian government, he said, is focused on that.

Malpass said he went to India in late 2019 and saw the changes that were being made that were quite positive in terms of the banking system, the financial system, the civil service system, and ways that India was looking for ways to improve the clean water situation which is very important in India for child nutrition for improving nutrition. Clean water is one of the most important starting points for life, he said. "I've mentioned that this is a huge, giant challenge for the world's biggest democracy," Malpass said. **AGENCIES**

October power supply deficit in India worst since March 2016: Report



NEW DELHI: The power supply in India fell about 750 million units short of demand during the first 12 days of October, largely due to a coal shortage, a deficit of 1.6 per cent that was the worst since March 2016, data from grid regulator POSOCO showed. The October shortfall was already the biggest in absolute terms for a single month since November 2018, even with 19 days of October still left.

Northern states such as Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, and the eastern states of Jharkhand and Bihar, were the worst affected, registering supply deficits of 2.3 per cent-14.7 per cent. Increased economic activity after the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic has driven up demand for coal, leading

RBI likely to hike rates from first quarter of 2022: Report

DEMAND REMAINS STRONG IN INDIA, BUT THERE ARE SUPPLY-SIDE HEADWINDS IN AREAS LIKE CHIPS WHICH IS BOTHERING THE AUTO SECTOR AND COAL SHORTAGES WHICH THREATENS TO PUT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY INTO DARKNESS

NEW DELHI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may change its monetary policy stance and increase lending rates from the first quarter of 2022, Japanese brokerage firm Nomura said.

The apex bank will begin moving towards normal liquidity flow from this month, it said, adding that this will narrow down the gap between the rate at which it funds the system and the rate at which it absorbs excess cash flow, in December.

A section of experts have seen RBI's move to narrow down excess liquidity through stated targets as a first step towards normalising its policy



stance, which has been quite accommodative since last year, to soak in the pressures created due to the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the report by the brokerage firm noted.

Nomura hiked its consumer price index inflation target for 2022 to 5.2 per cent from 5 per cent earlier.

Demand remains strong in India, but there are supply-side headwinds in areas like chips which is bothering the auto sector and coal shortages

which threatens to put parts of the country into darkness, it said.

There has been an acute shortage of coal in the country and the power companies are facing the prospects of importing coal at high costs and with power demand expected to rise in the coming days due to the festival season, supply side constraints could lead to downside risk to growth momentum, Nomura warned in its report. **AGENCIES**

Important for India to focus on green investment post-pandemic: IMF

WASHINGTON: As the Indian economy recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic that hit it hard, it is important for the country to focus on public investment, particularly in green sectors, the International Monetary Fund said.

"As we move towards the recovery, it is also important to focus on public investment, particularly on green investment, so that the recovery can be inclusive and green," IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department Deputy Director Paolo Mauro told reporters during a news conference in Washington.

He said India's debt is at the ratio of about 90 per cent, and it is important to give a signal that there is a medium-term fiscal framework in place that ensures investors that the debt ratio will decline in the medium term. Responding to a ques-



tion, Mauro said the situation is improving when it comes to the epidemic. It is very different from a few months ago, he said, adding, fortunately, the number of cases is declining and the vaccination is becoming more widespread.

"On the economic front, therefore, even though the situation is improving, the priority remains to address the health emergency. It remains to pro-

vide ample support, particularly to the poorer segments of the population through social protection, employment benefits, and so on," Mauro said.

"In terms of more recent reforms, one that I would like to highlight is the National Asset Reconstruction Company, the so-called bad bank. This is potentially very promising because it is important to tackle non-performing loans," he said. This has been a long-standing drag on credit, and potentially this is very promising, he added.

"It is very important that both the governance and the independence of such so-called bad banks be in place so that the costs to public finances can be kept under control and one can go back to promoting inclusive growth," Mauro said. **AGENCIES**

India looks at close to double digit growth this year, says Nirmala Sitharaman

BOSTON: India is looking at near close to double-digit growth this year and the country will be one of the fastest-growing economies, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said.

The Minister also emphasised that she expects the economic growth next year to be in the range of 7.5-8.5%, which will be sustained for the next decade.

"As regards the growth of India, we are looking at near close to double-digit growth this year and this would be the highest in the world. And for the next year, on the basis of this year, (the) growth would definitely be somewhere in the range of eight (%)," Sitharaman said here during a conversation at Harvard Kennedy School.

She noted that while the Ministry of Finance has not done

any assessment as yet about the growth number, but the World Bank, IMF and rating agencies have all come nearer to this kind of growth number for India.

"So, the next year would also be somewhere in the range of eight to nine (%), 7.5 to 8.5 (%), would be the growth. And I expect that to be sustained for the next decade because of the rate at which expansion in core industries is happening, the rate at which services are growing, I don't see a reason for India to be any way lesser than" in the next coming decades, she said.

During the conversation with Professor at Harvard University Lawrence Summers during the talk organised by the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, Sitharaman, when asked about the state of the global economy, said: "I

don't think you can have one picture for the entire globe. The emerging market economies are likely to recover speedily and are likely to have a growth trajectory, which will probably be even the title of engine for growth. They are the ones who are going to be pulling forward the global economy."

"And in that, at least from the data which has been released yesterday and the week before, I can say that India's growth this year will be the highest in the world, of course, based on a lower base of last year, but that will continue into the next year. And even there, we will be one of the fastest-growing economies," she noted.

She added that some other countries in the emerging market areas will also record high growth rates.

"The developed world will also catch up ... because their base is very high. So, the growth that they can show off will not be closer to double-digit but certainly will be also adding to the global growth," she said, adding that she sees "different picture in different regions".

When asked about the sustained growth of 8%, a historical rarity, her medium and long term vision of where that growth is going to come from, Sitharaman underlined that she does not think the growth of any country post-pandemic can be compared with what had happened earlier, prior to the pandemic.

"The reset which the globe has seen itself tells you a narrative that the way in which countries are going to plan their growth is going to be



very different from what it was earlier," she said.

She noted that the COVID-19 pandemic itself is one of the reasons for the reset, which is "happening from certain geographical territories where people are coming out of it, looking for other places where

they can run their businesses from because no longer you have the transparency and rule of law in certain geographical territories".

"Therefore, the industry is the first one to get out. Investments are the first ones to get out and they are looking for

destinations where certain assumptions can be taken up - rule of law, democracy, transparent policies and assurance that you're with a broad global frame of things and that you are not an outlier, that you will not have anything to do with the global scheme of things, and it's no good for us."

The Minister said all these are extraneous factors that have helped India to attract industries to set businesses there. She also pointed out that India itself is a huge market.

"Today, our demographic dividend is not a dividend without reason. It's a dividend, which has great purchasing power ability. The middle class in India has the money to buy things," she said, adding that the people who are moving from other destinations to invest in India and to produce in India will have a captive market.

"The same demographic dividend also gives us another advantage - the youth population of India today is a skilled set of youngsters skilled in various different areas, most of them in STEM," the Minister noted.

Sitharaman said India will attract investments and have the purchasing power to demand the best of things from whoever produces it.

India is even today best in agriculture. "The food security of many countries depend on imported food. Many in the Middle East depend on India for their basic food materials. We will be one of the largest exporters of food and food processed materials," she added. **AGENCIES**

ARYAN

receives money order; speaks with parents Shah Rukh, Gauri Khan via video call

Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan received a money order worth Rs 4,500 from his home to order food and other items from the canteen at Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail.

This is the maximum amount of money allowed that can be sent to someone in jail.

Aryan was also allowed a brief video call with his family.

Aryan is said to have spoke with his father Shah Rukh Khan and mother Gauri Khan via video call from inside Mumbai's Arthur Road Jail.

The Bombay High Court order stated that prisoners must be allowed to talk to their families once a week.

Aryan Khan and five others arrested in a drug seizure case have been now shifted to general barracks of the Arthur Road prison here as their quarantine period was over, an official said on Thursday.

Aryan (23), arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) on October 3



from a cruise ship off the Mumbai coast, will have to remain in jail for at least six more days, as a special court earlier in the day posted his and two others' bail pleas for orders on October 20.

They had been shifted to the

Arthur Road prison in central Mumbai after their initial custodial remand with the NCB got over and a magistrate sent them in judicial custody but denied them bail.

Based on a tip-off that a rave party was scheduled on the ship,

an NCB team raided the Goa-bound Cordelia cruise on October 2 evening and allegedly seized drugs. Several persons including Aryan Khan, Arbaaz Merchant and Mummun Dhamecha were arrested. **AGENCIES**

POTPOURRI



Anushka shares a picture with **VAMIKA** on *Ashtami*

Anushka Sharma recently dropped a cute picture with daughter Vamika on the occasion of Ashtami. In the picture, the actress is seen holding her daughter as she smiles ear to ear. We catch a glimpse of the little munchkin in a pink top. Sharing the picture, Anushka wrote, "Making me braver and more courageous every day. May you always find the strength of the goddess in you my little Vamika..."

Priyanka Chopra was all love for her

Dil Dhadakne Do co-star as she dropped a heart emoji. Tahira Kashyap wrote, "So precious..." Ranveer Singh was in awe of Vamika as he wrote, "Oh-Lay", Genelia D'souza was also all love for Anushka and her daughter. Fans were also going gaga over the cute click as they showered a lot of love on the mother-daughter duo in the comments. "Cutest Picture", "Love this... one day!", "Omg, I am crying", "Okay but this is so cute" and more such fans comments filled the Anushka's post. **AGENCIES**

Hardik Pandya celebrated his birthday with his 'best friend'



MUMBAI: It was team India and Mumbai Indian's all-rounder Hardik Pandya's birthday. As the cricketer turned a year older, he made sure to celebrate his birthday with his 'best friend'.

Pandya, who is in the UAE awaiting to join the Indian cricket team for their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 campaign, took to his official Twitter account to upload a picture with his son. As he

thanked he friends and fans for the wishes, he wrote, "Celebrating a new year of life with my best friend. Thank you for your wishes everyone."

Hardik's birthday celebration was a thing of love. He enjoyed the day with his wife Natasa and son Agastya. Here is a glimpse of his birthday special day for you.

Even Natasa made a video with their pictures together to wish her 'whole world' on his special day. Sharing it on Instagram, she captioned it, "Happy bday my bebu. you are my whole world, my everything. Forever grateful for you. Agastya and i are blessed to have you by our side, you are simply the best. to the moon and back @hardikpandya93."

Although Mumbai Indians did not qualify for the IPL 2021 Playoffs, Hardik Pandya along with other cricketers is currently in the UAE for the upcoming T20 World Cup. On Hardik Pandya's birthday, cricketers like Virat Kohli, Ishan Kishan, and others wished the 28-year-old champion all-rounder. Virat Kohli shared a picture of himself with Pandya and wrote, "Happy birthday Hardik Pandya! good health, happiness, and peace to you always". **AGENCIES**

At 7 feet 7 inches, 24-year-old Rumeysa Gelgim from Turkey named world's tallest living woman

CHANDIGARH: 24-year-old Turkey's Rumeysa Gelgim has been named as the tallest living woman by Guinness World Records with a height of 7 feet and 0.7 inches.

Rumeysa was re-measured this year, after she was first awarded the title for the tallest teenager living (female) back in 2014, when she was aged 18, as per guinnessworldrecords.com.

Rumeysa tall stature is a condition called Weaver syndrome. This is an extremely rare condition that causes accelerated growth amongst other abnormalities, including skeletal maturation, as per Guinness World Records. The condition means that Rumeysa uses a wheelchair most of the time, but can move for short periods using a walker.

Ever since her first record in 2014, Rumeysa has felt it was important to use her platform to educate others about rare medical conditions such as her own.

She says that her height makes people intrigued when they pass her on the street, but most people are kind and supportive when they meet her for the first time.

In her free time Rumeysa



likes to go out for nice meals with her family and finds swimming really helps her to relax. Her family are very happy and proud of her for having the Guinness World Records title.

It's particularly fascinating that Rumeysa is from Turkey, as alongside Sultan Kösen (251 cm; 8 ft 2.8 in), both the tallest living male and female

record holders are now from the same country - a rare occurrence in Guinness World Records history.

The last time the two holders shared the same nationality was in 2009, when China's Bao Xi Shun (236.1 cm; 7 ft 8.95 in) and Yao Defen (233.3 cm; 7 ft 7 in) held the tallest male and female records respectively. **AGENCIES**

Salman Khan to now launch his NFT collection

MUMBAI: On his birthday, megastar Amitabh Bachchan launched his non-fungible token (NFT) collection on Fatico, a platform that focuses on creating assets in the field of cinema, music, art and sport curated with the help of connoisseurs.

Now, following in the footsteps of Big B, superstar Salman Khan too has decided to go the NFT way. The actor soon plans to launch his NFT collection and he made the announcement on his Instagram. He has selected BollyCoin as the platform.

Sharing three of his different looks in pictures, the actor wrote, "Aa raha hoon main, NFTs leke. Salman Khan Static NFTs coming on @bollycoin. Stay tuned, bhai lo! www.bollycoin.com #BollyCoin #NFTs #ComingSoon."

BollyCoin, as the name suggest is Bollywood-themed NFT that was started by filmmaker-actor Atul Agnihotri. Through NFTs, art or cinema lovers and fans can own exquisite collectibles of their favourite stars. So, now, fans can invest in pictures and video clips, dialogues, posters, unseen footage, social media content and even merchandise from the film personalities.

Salman took to Instagram where he made the announcement of the launch of his own collection of NFTs that will be available on BollyCoin.

According to bollycoin.com, the platform has partnered with prominent production houses, such as Salman Khan Films, Arbaaz Khan Productions, Sohail Khan Productions, and Reel Life Productions.

Going by the website of BollyCoin, it states that the presale and auction will go live from October 2021. **AGENCIES**



Dinesh Karthik reprimanded for breaching IPL code of conduct



SHARJAH: Kolkata Knight Riders wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik has been reprimanded for breaching the Indian Premier League's code of conduct during his team's second qualifier against Delhi Capitals, which it won by three wickets here.

The exact nature of the breach was not specified by the IPL but Karthik was seen dislodging a stump out of frustration after he was dismissed during the high-voltage game on Wednesday.

Karthik, on his part, admitted to a level one offence and also accepted the sanction. "Dinesh Karthik, the Kolkata Knight Riders wicketkeeper-batsman, has been

reprimanded for breaching the IPL's Code of Conduct during his team's Qualifier 2 against Delhi Capitals at Sharjah, 13th October," a statement issued by the IPL stated.

"Karthik admitted to the Level 1 offence 2.2 of the IPL's Code of Conduct and accepted the sanction. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," it added.

Rahul Tripathi smashed a six off the penultimate ball of the match as Kolkata Knight Riders beat Delhi Capitals by three wickets in the second IPL qualifier here to set up a title clash against Chennai Super Kings. **PTI**

UK to allow cheaper COVID-19 tests for returning vaccinated travellers

LONDON: Fully vaccinated travellers returning to England from countries not on the travel ban red list can take a COVID-19 negative Lateral Flow Test (LFT) instead of the more expensive Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test under new rules effective from October 24. Travellers vaccinated in over 100 countries and territories, including India, will also be treated the same as returning fully vaccinated UK residents, the government said.

These eligible fully vaccinated passengers arriving in England from countries not on the red list can take an LFT on or before day two of their arrival from October 24, rather than PCR tests. The LFTs can be booked from October 22 and are largely aimed at families planning a break during the upcoming school holidays at the end of this month. "We want to make going abroad easier and cheaper, whether you're travelling for work or visiting friends and family," said UK Health Secretary Sajid Javid.

"Lateral Flow Tests will be available later this month for those returning from half term holidays. This change to testing is only possible thanks to the incredible progress of our vaccination programme, which means we can safely open up travel as we learn to live with the virus," he said. Travellers will be able to order cheaper



LFTs from private testing providers as an alternative to a PCR, offering faster results.

The list of approved private providers will go live on GOV.UK later this month. Passengers will need to take a photo of their LFT and booking reference supplied by the private provider and send it back to them to verify the result.

"Today's rule changes will make testing on arrival simpler and cheaper for people across the country who are

looking forward to well-earned breaks for this October half term," said UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps. "Taking away expensive mandatory PCR testing will boost the travel industry and is a major step forward in normalising international travel and encouraging people to book holidays with confidence," he said. Those that have already bought a PCR do not need to buy another test.

Under the rules, an arrival

test must be taken as soon as possible on or before the second day of a passenger's arrival in the UK. "Testing, along with vaccines, remains one of our first lines of defence against COVID-19. Getting a test as early as possible on arrival and isolation when necessary, can help control the spread of the virus and protect one another," said Dr Jenny Harries, Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). **AGENCIES**

37 dead, over 70 injured as blast hits Shia mosque in Afghanistan's Kandahar during Friday prayers



KABUL: A large explosion tore through a Shi'ite mosque in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar during Friday prayers, killing at least 37 people and wounding more than 70, officials said, the second massive attack in a week targeting worshippers from the minority sect. A local reporter in Kandahar told Reuters that eyewitnesses had described three suicide attackers, one of whom blew himself up at the entrance to the mosque with the two others detonating their devices inside the building. "The situation is very bad. Mirwais hospital is messaging and calling on young people to give blood," he said, referring to a local hospital where dead and injured had been taken.

Photographs and mobile phone footage posted by journalists on social media showed many people apparently dead or seriously wounded on the bloody floor of the Imam Bargah mosque. A hospital official gave figures of 37 dead and more than 70 wounded and said the final total could be higher. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Interior ministry spokesman Qari Saeed Khosti of the ruling Taliban movement said authorities were collecting details. The blast took place just days after an attack claimed by Islamic State militants, which killed scores of Shi'ite worshippers at a mosque in the northern city of Kunduz. The full death toll from that attack has been estimated as high as 80. Sunni Muslim fighters of Islamic State have repeatedly targeted Shi'ites in the past. The Taliban are also strict Sunni Muslims but have pledged to protect all ethnic and sectarian groups since sweeping into power in August as U.S. forces withdrew. **AGENCIES**