

CITY TALKS

2

**PUNJAB CM OPENS 'DASTAN-E-SHAHADAT' TO SHOWCASE SIKH HISTORY**



CORPORATES & INDUSTRY

5

**MAJOR RESTRUCTURING: VEDANTA TO SPLIT BUSINESS INTO 3 LISTED ENTITIES**



POTPOURRI

8

**RAJKUMMAR RAO: GOT MARRIED TO MY EVERYTHING**



# KISANI ZINDABAD



HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

- 1 Modi announces repeal of 3 farm laws
- 2 India, China agree on need to find early resolution to remaining border disputes
- 3 What have you done on hate content: Delhi Assembly panel asks FB

## India, China agree on need to find early resolution to remaining border disputes

**NEW DELHI:** India and China have agreed on the need to find early resolution to the remaining disputes along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Thursday. The ministry said that both the countries agreed on the need to find an early resolution while fully abiding by the bilateral agreements and protocols so as to restore peace and tranquility in the region.

"The two sides also agreed that both sides should in the interim continue to ensure a stable ground situation and avoid any untoward incident," the ministry said after the 23rd meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on



India-China Border Affairs (WMCC), which was held on Thursday.

The Indian delegation was led by the Additional Secretary (East Asia) in the Ministry of External Affairs. The Director General of the Boundary and Oceanic Department of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs led

the Chinese delegation. The two sides recalled the agreement reached between the Indian External Affairs Minister and the Foreign Minister of China during their meeting in September in Dushanbe that military and diplomatic officials of the two sides should continue their discussions to resolve the remaining issues along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh. **AGENCIES**

**CHHAVI BHATIA**  
New Delhi

The three controversial farm laws that led to one of the biggest farmers protests in Indian history, will be withdrawn, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in a stunning development today. The decision comes close on the heels of state assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Punjab that go to polls early next year. PM Modi made the announcement while greeting people on the occasion of Guru Purab during an address to the nation in the morning.

Apologizing to the nation, the Prime Minister said, "Today, I want to say with a sincere and pure heart that maybe something was lacking in our tapasya (dedication) that we could not explain the truth, as clear as the light of the diya, to some of our farmer brothers. But today is Prakash Parv, not the time to blame anyone. Today, I want to tell the country that we have decided to repeal the

**“Do not dare to again conspire to make the farmer a slave in his own land by playing into the hands of a few capitalists.”**

**RAHUL GANDHI,**  
Former Congress chief

three farm laws." "In the Parliament session starting the end of this month, we will complete the process of repealing the three laws," he said.

"I would request all my protesting farmer friends, today is the auspicious day of Guru Purab, return home to your fields and your families and make a new beginning, let us move forward afresh." Before back-pedaling on the laws, the PM said that the new laws would have been reformative for small and marginal farmers.

**“Arrogance loses. From hubris to on your knees.”**

**DEREK O'BRIEN**  
TMC MP

"Whatever I did was for farmers. Whatever I am doing is for the country." Hundreds of thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been camping on the borders of Delhi for a year now demanding rollback of the "black laws" which, they felt, will leave them at the mercy of corporates. More than 700 people have lost their lives in the agitation even as eleven rounds of talks with the government failed to yield any result. The farmers remained unanimous and steadfast on their demands: repeal and Minimum Support Price (MSP). The PM, however, did not speak about the MSP, one

## Farm leaders welcome the move but refuse to call off stir

**CHHAVI BHATIA**  
New Delhi

The various farmers' union that have been leading the year-long farmers' protest welcomed the decision by PM Modi to repeal the contentious agriculture laws. They, however, remain steadfast to staying at the borders till the laws are rolled back in "black and white". The leaders have also demanded surety on Minimum Support Price (MSP), a long pending and key ask of the protesting landholders.

The PM's climb-down on the new farm laws came on Friday almost a year after hundreds of thousands of farmers started their stir on various borders of Delhi. The

peasants have lost around 700 people during the course of the agitation now.

Making it abundantly clear that they will not go back till the laws are withdrawn in the Winter Session, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader and a prominent face of the protest, Rakesh Tikait said, "We are not calling off the protest. No one of us is going back home. We need the government to bring a law on MSP. The fight is not over yet." He reiterated the farmers' stand in a tweet, "The agitation will not be withdrawn immediately. We will wait for the day after agricultural laws will be repealed in Parliament. Along with the MSP, the government should also discuss other issues with the

farmers."

The Samayukta Kisan Morcha, umbrella body of more than 30 farmers' union was also defiant towards the PM's appeal to farmers to go back home. Balbir Singh Rajewal, senior SKM leader said they are wary of the announcement till the rollback is passed in the Parliament. "This fight will continue. It is still a long walk to victory. We need a law on MSP which is in our charter of demands. There are several other issues attached to the protest such as many lives of protesting farmers were lost and they had to face cases from the government, we need answers on that too. He added, "It has become a pan-India movement now."

## Govt to announce and award India's cleanest cities

**NEW DELHI:** The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) on Thursday said President Ram Nath Kovind will honour the awardees of 'Swachh Survekshan (SS) 2021' at the 'Swachh Amrit Mahotsav', to be organised by the ministry, here on November 20. "The President will award cities certified under the 'star rating protocol for garbage free cities'. The Mahotsav will also pay tribute to the sanitation workers by recognising top performing cities under the 'Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge' earlier initiated by the Ministry," the statement said. More than 3,000 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the country have notified ban on non-biodegradable plastic bags. According to the ministry, the success of SS can be gauged through the unprecedented number of citizen feedback received this year -- over 5 crore, a marked increase from last year's 1.87 crore. The number of cities surveyed also increased from 73 in 2016 to 4,320 have participated in 2021. The ministry pointed out that six states and six Union Territories (UTs) have shown overall improvement (ranging between five to 25 per cent) in their overall ground level performance over last year more than 1,100 additional cities have started source segregation, nearly 1,800 additional ULBs have started extending welfare benefits to their sanitation workers. **AGENCIES**



## Priyanka asks women to fend for themselves

**CHITRAKOOT (UP):** Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday asked the women to start fending for themselves. "Suno Draupadi, shastra utha lo. Ab Govind na aayenge. Kab tak aas lagaogi tum, bike hue akhbaron se. Kaisi Raksha maang rahi ho, Dushasan ke darbaron se. (Listen Draupadi, take up arms because now Govind will not come. How long will you wait for justice from newspapers that are already sold. What kind of protection are you seeking from Dushasan's court)," she said. She said that this time, the talk of giving 40 per cent tickets to women in Assembly elections is just a beginning. "I



want half the population of women to contest 50 per cent seats in the 2024 elections. The mobile will help in your safety and the scooty will help you in your studies. All journeys will be free for women in the government buses and 40 per cent provision already exists for women in government posts," she said. Priyanka Gandhi targeted the BJP government and said that a minister's son crushed the farmers in Lakhimpur but the government helped him. "At the same time, the ASHA sisters have been beaten up badly by the administration for raising their demands. When you are being exploited continuously and you are being

tortured, then if you ask for your rights from those who beat you, you will never get it. You have to fight for your rights. If the government is not doing anything for you, then why should it be carried forward?" she asked. Priyanka,

on Wednesday, was interacting with a group of about 5000 women at Ramghat on the banks of the Mandakini river and heard their problems. The women, including Aanganwadi workers, Asha workers, lawyers and members of self-help groups spoke about their problems at home and at work and appreciated the reservation announced for women by the Congress. Priyanka Gandhi assured them that the Congress would stand by them and help them in every possible way to solve their problems. The programme that focused on the 'Ladki hoon, lad sakti hoon' slogan, saw women from all strata of society -- mainly low-income

## India now being called 'pharmacy of the world': Modi

**NEW DELHI:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the global trust earned by the Indian healthcare sector has led to the nation being called the "pharmacy of the world", in recent times.

"We believe in the well-being of the entire humankind. And, we have shown this spirit to the whole world during the Covid-19 global pandemic," the Prime Minister said. He said "our definition of wellness is not limited by physical boundaries". "We have exported life-saving medicines and medical equipment to over 150 countries during the initial phase of the pandemic. We have also exported more than 65 million doses of Covid vaccines to nearly 100 countries this year," Modi said. He inaugurated the first Global Innovation Summit of the pharmaceuticals sector on Thursday. Union Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya was also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Modi said that the pandemic has brought the pharmaceuticals sector into sharp focus.

"Whether it is lifestyle, or medicines, or medical technology, or vaccines, every aspect of healthcare has received global attention over the last two years," the Prime Minister said. He said that the Indian pharmaceutical industry has also risen to the challenge. The Prime Minister also envisioned creating an eco-system for innovation that will make India a leader in drug discovery and innovative medical devices. **AGENCIES**

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## Punjab CM opens 'Dastan-e-Shahadat' to showcase Sikh history



**CHANDIGARH:** Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, accompanied by Governor Banwarilal Purohit, on Friday dedicated the 'Dastan-e-Shahadat' to connect the youth with the glorious past of supreme sacrifices in the Sikh history. Extending his greet-

ings to the people on Prakash Purb of Guru Nanak Dev, the Chief Minister said it was really a matter of great honour to inaugurate this prestigious project which happens to coincide with the glorious past of supreme sacrifices in the Sikh history. Extending his greet-

ings to the people on Prakash Purb of Guru Nanak Dev, the Chief Minister said it was really a matter of great honour to inaugurate this prestigious project which happens to coincide with the glorious past of supreme sacrifices in the Sikh history. Extending his greet-

Speaking on the occasion, Channi said he was fortunate

enough that dream of his life has been fulfilled with the completion of this state-of-the-art theme park project, which would go a long way in apprising the visitors about the saga of Kacchi Garhi. He said the battle of Sri Chamkaur Sahib is a watershed moment in the Indian history where just 42 brave warriors, including the elder Sahibzadas of Guru Gobind Singh, who valiantly fought against the coalition forces of the Mughals.

Dwelling on the concept of the theme park, the Chief Minister said the sacred soil of Sri Chamkaur Sahib is soaked with the blood of "our brave warriors who made unparalleled sacrifices and displayed heroic deeds during the battle against the Mughals". Channi also complimented former Chief Minister Amarinder Singh for initiating this prestigious theme project during his tenure, which has now been finally completed after meticulous planning and reviewing its progress from time to time by him as the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs. **AGENCIES**

## Defining moment in history, says elderly Badal on farm laws

**CHANDIGARH:** Five-time Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Friday described Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement on withdrawal of three farm laws as "a defining moment in history" and said it marked a historic day for farmers on the sacred day of Guru Nanak Dev's Prakash Purb. "This is the greatest event in the history of farmer struggles all over the world. I thank the great Guru Nanak Dev-ji maharaj and congratulate every farmer working hard on his fields," said Badal in a statement here.

Bemoaning that the farmers were not consulted before enacting these laws, the former Chief Minister said, "It was the first time in the history of democratic governments that brazen and cruel laws were made without even taking the stakeholders on board. No government should ever do such an insensitive and cruel thing again." Reacting to the Prime Minister's announcement, the elderly Badal said this decision will have an implications far beyond the farmers

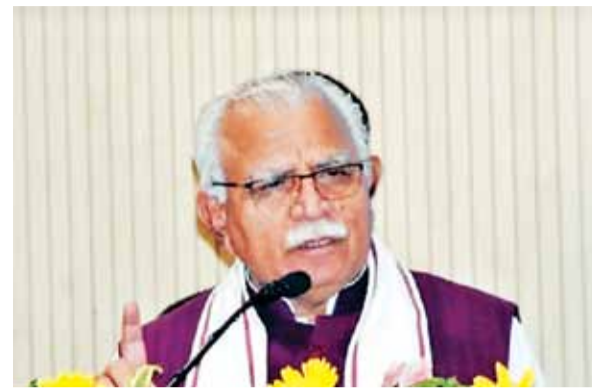


and will have wide-ranging and long-lasting impact on the struggle for justice for the poor and the deprived across the world. Badal, however, expressed sadness over the loss of precious lives during the struggle. "My first thoughts go with the families of over 700 farmers who kissed martyrdom on the path of this just and noble struggle. I wish that they were here with us to see this day today," he said. He said the loss of these 'brave soldiers' and tragic events like Lakhimpur Kheri would always remain a "dark blot" on the face of this government. Badal asked the Centre and the state governments to stand by the martyrs' families with liberal help in the form of government jobs and financial assistance. **AGENCIES**

## Repealing farm laws highlight Modi's supreme character: Khattar

**CHANDIGARH:** Hailing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to repeal three farm laws, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Friday said repealing the laws has once again highlighted the supreme character of the Prime Minister. The Chief Minister told the media here that for more than a year since the Central government had brought three agriculture laws for the benefit of farmers, especially small and marginal ones, unfortunately, some farmer unions had been protesting on the Delhi borders.

"Today, Narendra Modi while once again choosing the larger public interest announced to repeal these laws. However, soon after the introduction of these laws, a large number of farmers had considered these laws beneficial for them and had also appreciated the Central government," said Khattar. He said the decision of the Prime Minister showed that keeping the interest of the public was paramount for him



as he announced to roll back the laws in the upcoming session of Parliament. "Like Prime Minister, I would also urge farmers sitting on Delhi borders to immediately end their protest and return to their homes as the common man is also facing a lot of difficulties due to this agitation. Now, positive attitude should be adopted towards this issue," he said.

On the constitution of a committee for considering the demands of the farmers related to the minimum support price (MSP), Khattar said in the committee, representa-

tives of farmer unions, state governments and scientists would be included. "I hope a decision in this regard will also be taken soon," added the Chief Minister. Responding to a question regarding withdrawal of cases registered against farmers, he said in these cases many other issues were taken into consideration. "Some cases are general while in some incidents cases are registered under serious sections. Now, a positive initiative will be taken from the state government's side too and there will be no controversies." **AGENCIES**

## Amarinder thanks Modi, says look forward to work with BJP

**NEW DELHI:** Former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for repealing the three contentious agricultural laws and said he looked forward to working closely with the BJP-led Centre for the development of farmers. "Great news! Thankful to PM @narendramodi ji for acceding to the demands of every Punjabi & repealing the 3 black laws on the pious occasion of #GuruNanakJayanti," Amarinder Singh tweeted. "I am sure the central govt will continue to work in tandem for the development of Kisan! #NoFarmers\_NoFood @AmitShah." Amarinder Singh told a news channel after the announcement by Modi about the Centre's decision to take back its farm laws that his party is ready to hold talks with the BJP on seat sharing for the forthcoming Assembly elections in Punjab. He appealed to the protesting farmers to end their protest outside borders



of the national capital and return to their native places. In a series of tweets, the former Chief Minister said, "This has not only come as huge relief to farmers but has paved way for Punjab's progress. I look forward to working closely with @BJP4India led centre for development of Kisans. I promise Punjab's people I won't rest till I wipe every

tear from every single eye." In another tweet he said, "Huge huge day for all of us in Punjab."

"I'd been pursuing the matter with Centre for last 1+ year & had met @narendramodi ji @AmitShah ji requesting them to heed the voice of our annadaatas. Really happy they've heard farmers & understood our concerns." **AGENCIES**

## AAP leaders offer prayers near Indo-Pak border at Dera Baba Nanak

**DERA BABA NANAK (GURDASPUR):** AAP leaders on Friday visited Dera Baba Nanak and offered prayers near the India-Pakistan border, a day after they alleged that the Centre and the Punjab government denied them permission to visit the Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara in Pakistan. The over four-km-long Kartarpur corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Kartarpur, the final resting place of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev, to the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in Gurdaspur district. Pilgrimage to the Pakistan gurdwara was suspended in March last year due to the Covid pandemic. The Centre opened the corridor from Wednesday ahead of the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.

Led by Aam Aadmi Party's Punjab unit chief Bhagwant Mann, the party leaders prayed near

There is a talk of open 'darshan' of Sri Kartarpur Sahib but the Aam Aadmi Party leaders were not allowed to pay obeisance. There should not be any politics on the issue of going to Kartarpur Sahib."

the India-Pakistan border at Dera Baba Nanak for peace and prosperity of the state, according to a statement. Mann alleged that the Narendra Modi-led central government did not allow the AAP leaders to visit Kartarpur Sahib.

"There is a talk of open 'darshan' of Sri Kartarpur Sahib but the Aam Aadmi Party leaders were not allowed to pay obeisance.

There should not be any politics on the issue of going to Kartarpur Sahib," said Mann.

He said only the Centre knew the reasons for not allowing them to go to Kartarpur. Mann further appealed to the Centre to bear the USD 20 dollars fee to facilitate devotees. "The fee of USD 20 dollars is a heavy burden on a family. If five members of a family go to Sri Kartarpur Sahib, then the fee is around USD 100, which is about Rs 8,000 in Indian currency," he said. Those who accompanied him included Leader of Opposition in the Punjab Assembly, Harpal Singh Cheema, party's Punjab affairs co-incharge and Delhi MLA, Raghav Chadha; MLAs Kultar Singh Sandhwan, Aman Arora, Kulwant Singh Pandori, Meet Hayer, Manjit Singh Bilaspur and Jai Singh Rodi. **AGENCIES**

## Carpet Export Promotion Council not to participate in Textile Fair at Germany

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Members of Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) having strength of nearly 150 carpet exporters in the country which include over 50 exporters from textile town in Haryana at Panipat and remaining from Jaipur, Varanasi and other places in the country has decided not to participate in coming Textile Fair Demotex-2022 to be held at Hanover in Germany in the month January next year because of utter neglect faced by them in past few years by the organisers of Fair.

Talking to media persons President of CEPC Omer Hamid said that decision has been taken on the consent of carpet exporters in the country participating in this Fair in past years spending huge amount worth lakhs of rupees towards expenses while participating in this Fair in spite of the fact CEPC is offering handsome amount towards subsidy to



participants in this textile Fair. Omer Hamid said, Indian exporters participating in the Fair every year display their products in stalls allocated them in a big hall having large number of stalls in it allocated them by CEPC for display of their products in the front attracting large number of visitors as well as buyers but gradually the organisers of the Fair started allocating the place in the rear as a result the number of visitors as well as buyers gradually reduced adversely affecting their sale in spite of spending amount up to Rs 10 to 20 lakh towards expenses in participating in the Fair as such Indian exporters feeling neglected as well as unable to recover expenses has decided not to participate in coming Demotex-2022 textile Fair.

## MSP bigger issue for farmers: Sidhu



**CHANDIGARH:** Congress legislator and Punjab unit party president Navjot Singh Sidhu on Friday said the minimum support price (MSP) is the bigger issue than farm laws as it is the lifeline of farmers. "MSP is bigger issue than farm laws, it is the lifeline of Indian farmers. If the Central government genuinely wants to fulfil their promise of doubling the farmers income or accepting the C2 formula of the Swaminathan report, then they should accede to this demand," he tweeted.

Earlier on Friday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the government's decision to withdraw the three farm laws, saying the constitutional process to do so would be completed in the upcoming winter session of Parliament. **AGENCIES**

## Over 150 HSEB employees & about dozen IPS officers in Haryana on radar

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

Over 150 Haryana State Electricity Board (HSEB) employees including Engineers, Junior Engineers and linemen involved in irregularities and corrupt practice have been charge-sheeted and show cause notices has been served to them and in case satisfactory reply will not be made by them they are likely to be suspended or their services will be terminated by the state government. Talking to media persons, Ranjit Chautala electricity minister in Haryana state said that these employees are involved in power theft cases or other regularities causing state government heavy revenue loss and will not be spared at any cost.

Chautala said, since past about seven years efforts for reforms in electricity department in the state are being made as such all four power supply corporations in the state are earning profits especially since past four years and proving a model all over in the country as announced by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman advised other states in the country to follow measures adopted by Haryana state government which is a proud for the state. Chautala said, there is a proposal to promote those officers working in HSEB providing suggestions to improve services and profitability in the department. Chautala told that special schemes have been introduced to provide power connections in agriculture sector to achieve target to provide connections to nearly 1600 tube wells pending in the state since a long time immediately, besides another

40000 connections in the state by June 30, 2022. He said, a rebate of 37 paise per unit electricity was given last year to provide relief in power tariff to consumers in the state, in spite of this electricity companies earned profit worth over Rs 2000 crore in the year. Chautala admitted, nearly 16% electricity bills raised to consumers are usually found wrong for one reason or the other due to defect in meters or consumers premises found locked for which a special campaign has been introduced to correct such bills immediately and accept part payment towards the bill. Chautala disclosed that 24 hours regular electric supply in 5427 villages is being made in the state and efforts are being made to extend this facility to every village in the state under 'Mahara Gaon Jagmag Gaon' scheme.

Meanwhile, Haryana Home Minister Anil Vij expressed dissatisfaction over the working of nearly a dozen IPS officers in the state on the basis of a report till November 15, 2021 which recorded fast increasing crimes in these districts across the state and show-cause notices has been sent to SPs of these districts to submit a report as regard increasing criminal activities in the area and action being taken by them in this regard. While talking to media persons, Vij expressed satisfaction over the performance of DGP Haryana P.K. Aggarwal and Home Secretary Rajiv Arora and disclosed that about a dozen districts in the state has been identified having constantly rising criminal activities, of these without naming Vij said situation as regard crimes in about 50% districts is worst. **AGENCIES**

## Crop remains burning hold only 4 pc share in spreading pollution at Delhi: Anil Vij

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

While addressing media persons in his office, pointing at Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal Haryana Health & Home Minister Anil Vij said that crop remains hold only 4 pc share in spreading pollution at Delhi and Kejriwal should tell who is responsible for remaining 96% pollution at Delhi turned as a gas chamber and what steps his government is taking to control increasing



pollution. Vij said, Kejriwal and his team is in the habit of blaming others to hide their own lapses. He said,

in case of Yamuna canal water flowing inside Delhi observed highly polluted during present 'Chhat Puja'

festival Kejriwal should clarify if Haryana government has supplied polluted water to Delhi, if so Kejriwal should get checked purity of water in canal at Sonapat as well as at Okhla in Delhi and at Faridabad rather blaming Haryana.

Information reveals, Yamuna canal water flowing in Delhi contains thick foam, poisonous chemicals, industrial wastes, sewerage water and garbage harmful for the health of Delhi residents. Former Irrigation Minister

Om Parkash Dhankhad said, Delhi government is responsible for polluting Yamuna canal water due to own negligence when flowing inside Delhi. He accused Kejriwal government neglect to take action against those throwing polluted water containing harmful particles, sewerage water and industrial wastes in it through large number of drains at places while canal water passing inside Delhi. While addressing Vij raised a question over Kejriwal government how many STP plants have been installed and working to reduce pollution in Yamuna canal water becomes unfit for use after leaving Delhi.

## 39 pc increase in crop remain burning cases in 2021 in Haryana

**SATISH HANDA Ambala**

People residing at Delhi-NCR area facing severe health disorders including lungs, respiratory and heart diseases due to heavy pollution in the environments as a result of burning crop remains in open. In spite of tall claims by Haryana state government to control and take stern action against those violating directions to burn crop remains in open nearly and according to information nearly 39% increase in burning cases has been reported this year in the state.

However, according to past two years records nearly 50% drop in crop remains burning cases has been seen in five states which include 39.1% drop in burning cases in Haryana state as compared to previous year, 37.2% drop in



Punjab state, 9.7% drop in U.P state, 66% drop in Rajasthan state, 71.4% drop in M.P state between the period September 15 to November 15 this year. Though, Punjab state recorded 37.2% drop in burning cases this year but still the number of burning cases was much higher as compared to above five states this year.

Government had spent budget for amount worth Rs 700 crore to curb burning of paddy crop remains in open through



installation of high resolution cameras to detect violations of directions to burn crop remain in open spending huge amount as per information by Indian Council of Agriculture Research but failed to get desired results. Information reveals, amount worth Rs 1726.67 crore has already been spent by the government in past few years. According to information, last

year till month November 20 about 234 crop remain burning cases were recorded, whereas the number of such cases has increased to 331 this year, as such Delhi-NCR area facing swear smoke containing harmful contents during day time causing respiration problems especially for children and old-age persons. Six districts in Haryana state has been

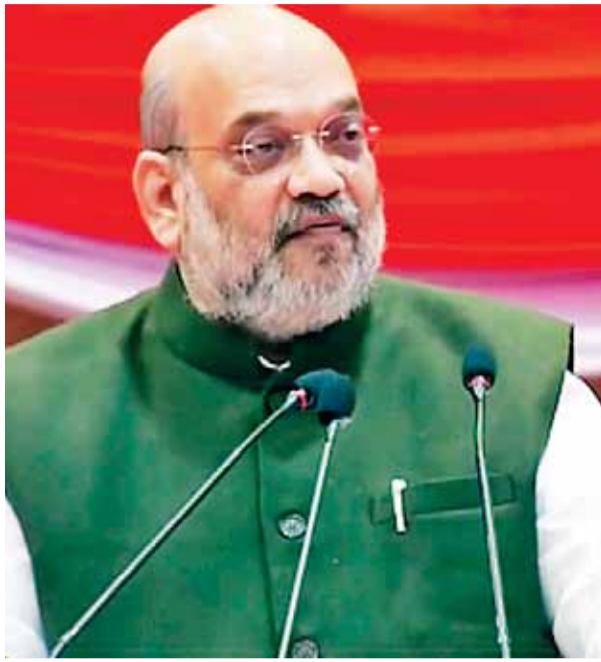
identified highly polluted and extremely harmful for health having Air Quality Index (AQI) level as 471mg at Gurugram, 467 mg at Faridabad, 445 mg at Ballabgarh, 466 mg at Hisar, 460 mg at Jind and 486 mg at Charkhi Dabri. According to information, 11 towns in Haryana state including Bahaurgarh, Bhiwani, Daruheda, Fatehabad, Sirsa, Panipat, Rohtak, Sonapat, Kaithal, Kaithal and Yamunanagar has been identified highly polluted having AQI ranging between 310 to 398 mg containing poisonous gases: Carbon Monoxide, Carbon Dioxide, Sulphur Dioxide, Nitrogen Oxide. Districts Faridabad, Gurugram, Bahadurgarh, Jind, Hisar and Panipat districts in the state has been declared Red Alert, whereas another 13 districts in the state has been declared Orange Alert.

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# PM has shown remarkable statesmanship: Shah

**NEW DELHI:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP chief J.P. Nadda on Friday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's announcement to repeal the three farm laws. Shah said the Prime Minister has shown a 'remarkable statesmanship' and Nadda said the decision will 'further the atmosphere of brotherhood in the nation'. In a series of tweets, Shah said, "PM @narendramodi's announcement relating to the farm laws is a welcome and statesmanlike move. As the Prime Minister pointed out in his address, the Government of India will keep serving our farmers and always support them in their endeavours."

"What is unique about PM @narendramodi Ji's announcement is that he picked the special day of 'Guru Purab' to make this announcement. It also shows there is no other thought except the welfare of each and every Indian for him. He has shown remarkable statesmanship," Shah said in another tweet. BJP chief Nadda tweeted, "The @BJP4India wholeheartedly welcomes PM @narendramodi's announcement, that too on the special day of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Parkash Utsav. Our PM has



shown that he has immense care for our farmers. This decision will further the atmosphere of brotherhood across our nation."

"The number of good governance measures taken by the @narendramodi Government are innumerable. Let us keep working together, and through our collective spirit take India to even newer heights in the

times to come," Nadda said. In his address to the nation, Prime Minister Modi said, "It seems some of the farmers are still not convinced by our sincere efforts. We have decided to repeal the three farm laws. The constitutional process to repeal these laws would be completed during the Parliament Session that would start at the end of this month." **AGENCIES**

# Win against injustice and arrogance: Rahul on repeal of farm laws

**NEW DELHI:** After the Prime Minister announced withdrawal of three farm laws, former Congress President Rahul Gandhi has termed it as 'win against injustice and arrogant government'. In a tweet, Rahul Gandhi said: "Congratulations its win against the injustice, the farmers of the nation have compelled the arrogant govt to bend down through satyagrah." The Congress is jubilant that the farm laws have been withdrawn as Rahul Gandhi has been supporting the farmers and demanding the withdrawal. Chhattisgarh Chief Minister said, "The Gandhian form of agitation has shown its strength and compelled the government."

Congress MP Manish Tewari said, "Struggle triumphs, arrogance wilts, Kisan Mazdoor ekta zindabad. Long Live Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiyyat." Soon after the Prime Minister's announcement, the Congress was quick to term it as 'a decision taken in view of the forthcoming elections'. P. Chidambaram said, "PM's announcement on



the withdrawal of the three farm laws is not inspired by a change of policy or a change of heart. It is impelled by fear of elections!" "What cannot be achieved by democratic protests can be achieved by the fear of impending elections! Anyway, it is a great victory for the farmers and for the Congress

party which was unwavering in its opposition to the farm laws," he added. The three farm laws that were passed last year have been a cause of widespread agitation with a consortium of farmers staging protests, especially in northwest India and at Delhi's doorsteps and earlier within the national capital too. **AGENCIES**

# Mamata Banerjee congratulates farmers on their victory

**KOLKATA:** After Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Centre has decided to repeal the three controversial farm laws, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday congratulated the farmers on their huge victory. Taking to Twitter, she said: "My heartfelt congratulations to every single farmer who fought relentlessly and were not fazed by the cruelty with which @BJP4India treated you. This is your victory." My deepest condolences to everyone who lost their loved ones in this fight. "Not only Banerjee, but MP and senior Trinamool Congress leader Sougata Roy said: "This is a victory for the farmers. The BJP government has decided to repeal these draconian laws because they understand that they will lose in the Assembly elections scheduled next year."

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress spokesperson and Rajya Sabha Member Sukhendu Sekhar Roy said that the "Modi government has understood that they have lost the support of the people and they will be defeated in the Assem-



bly polls in the five states scheduled next year." "They were afraid after the farmers threatened to go to the parliament in the next session starting from November 29."

CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty said: "I am happy, very happy because the decision to repeal the three farm laws shows that there is no alternative to the people's movement. It shows that in democracy people speak the last word. We are happy because we were also part of this movement. Farmer leader Hannan Mollah has been with the farmers fighting for their cause. Like Narendra Modi, it is time for Mamata Banerjee to realise that however autocratic he or she might be, nothing is more powerful than the common people and all will have to bow down in front of them." **AGENCIES**

# SC permits Hindustan Zinc disinvestment, orders CBI probe into irregularities



**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Thursday allowed the Centre to disinvest its residual 29.5 per cent stake in Hindustan Zinc (HZL) in open market, and directed the CBI to register a regular case into the alleged irregularities in the disinvestment of its controlling share in 2002. The top court also sought the periodic status reports. A bench comprising justices DY Chandrachud and BV Nagarathna took objection to the closure of preliminary inquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the HZL disinvestment during 1997-2003. "There is no bar

on the constitutional power of this Court to direct the CBI to register a regular case, in spite of its decision to close a preliminary enquiry," said the bench. The top court directed the CBI to fully investigate the National Democratic Alliance government's 2002 decision during the tenure of then minister Arun Shourie to disinvest the majority shareholding in HZL. Allowing further disinvestment, the top court said HZL ceased to remain a government company after Anil Agarwal-led Vedanta Resources firm, Sterlite Opportunities

and Ventures, picked up 64.92 per cent stakes in it. Directing a full-fledged CBI probe, the top court said: "It is our considered opinion that the disinvestment (26 per cent stake in HZL) in 2002 evinces a prima facie case for registration of a regular case. We are desisting from commenting on some crucial facts and names of individuals involved, so as to not cause prejudice to the investigation of the matter."

The bench took into account CBI officials' observation, who recommended the conversion of the preliminary enquiry into a regular case, and added that it satisfies court's conscience for exercising its exceptional powers to direct the CBI to conduct an investigation into the matter. "The registration of a regular case, followed by a full-fledged investigation must be conducted. This court shall be duly apprised of the status of the investigation," it added. **AGENCIES**

# Seers ask Akhilesh to apologise for 'chillumjevi' remark



**VARANASI:** The Akhil Bharatiya Sant Samiti (AKSS) has sought an apology from Samajwadi party chief Akhilesh Yadav for referring to saints as 'chillumjevi' (those who smoke tobacco and cannabis in earthen pipes) and 'ek rang wale' (people of one particular colour).

The national general secretary of the AKSS, Swami Jitendranand Saraswati, asked Akhilesh to either apologise or 'face the ire of saints'. During the fourth phase of his 'Vijay Yatra' on Purvanchal Expressway in Ghazipur on Wednesday,

Akhilesh had reportedly referred to saints as 'chillumjevi' and 'ek rang wale'. Swami Jitendranand said, "In his bid to target the BJP and its leadership, the SP chief has insulted the saffron-clad seers and their fraternity instead."

The Swami also defended Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in view of the SP chief's remark. "Yogi Adityanath is the head of one of the Goraksh peeth of Sanatan Dharma which is worshipped and honoured since ancient times. Nobody has the right to target him for the sake of politics and just because he has become a chief minister," said Swami Jitendranand. "The SP chief should immediately apologise for the remarks and avoid dragging seers in the political battlefield for petty electoral gains," he added. He warned that the saints will soon launch a campaign against the Samajwadi Party and Congress leaders for targeting the seers' community for political gains. **AGENCIES**

# Repealing of farm laws by PM is victory of democracy: Raj CM



**JAIPUR:** Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday termed the repealing of farm laws as the victory of democracy and defeat of arrogance of the Modi government. In his tweet, he said, "The announcement of the return of all three black agricultural laws is a victory of democracy and defeat of the arrogance of the Modi government. This is a victory for the patience of the farmers who have been agitating for the last one year. The country can never forget that hundreds of farmers have lost their lives due to the short-sightedness and pride of the Modi government," he said in his tweet. In another tweet, the Rajasthan CM said, "I bow to all the farmers who sacrificed their lives in the farmers' movement. This is the victory of his sacrifice." **AGENCIES**

# ED arrests one in connection with Rs 173.50 cr scam

**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested one Debabrata Halder in a case related to loss of Rs 173.50 crore to the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC), officials said on Thursday. "Halder was arrested on Wednesday under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002," the ED said. A day before the arrest, ED had carried out a search operation at six different places in West Bengal. Two vehicles -- one Toyota Fortuner, and a Toyota Corolla Altis (worth Rs 50 lakh), cash and jewellery (worth Rs 18.4 lakhs) were seized and an amount of Rs 3.95 crore, lying in the bank accounts of related fictitious MSME firms has been frozen under PMLA. ED had initiated a money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by the CID, West Bengal.

There was a total loss of Rs 173.50 crore to NSIC lent under its Raw Material Assistance Scheme (RMA Scheme) through criminal conspiracy by submitting Bank Guarantees (BGs) of other unconnected entities and fake BGs, purported to be issued by various branches of the erstwhile United Bank of India, Kolkata which came to fore when these were enforced by NSIC. The funds of NSIC obtained under its RMA Scheme, were laundered or diverted through accounts of various fictitious supplier firms. RMA scheme has been devised to provide credit facilities to various needy MSME firms. During investigation, it was revealed that Debabrata Halder, one of the main conspirators of the scam, acted as a middleman and main beneficiary of the whole scam. The accused has acquired various movable and immovable properties out of the proceeds of crime. **AGENCIES**



# Priyanka's Secretary booked for alleged assault

**LUCKNOW:** Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's personal secretary, Sandeep Singh, and two other party leaders, Shiv Pandey and Yogesh Kumar Dixit, have been booked for alleged assault and snooping on a house at 7 Mall Avenue in state capital Lucknow.

The FIR was lodged at Husainganj police station on a complaint by a driver with the estate department of the Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday evening.

The complainant Prashant Singh alleged that Sandeep Singh, Pandey and Dixit were spying on his house at Mall Avenue around midnight on

Wednesday. "I saw them moving suspiciously in my house and when I objected, the trio abused and thrashed me," he alleged. The police said the Congress

leaders named in the case were holding prime posts in the party and have been booked for criminal intimidation and voluntarily causing hurt.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP), Central Zone, Raghvendra Mishra, said an FIR has been registered in the case and probe is underway. **AGENCIES**

# Heavy rainfall to lash K'taka for 2 more days, schools shut in 7 districts

**BENGALURU:** As heavy rains are predicted in Karnataka for 48 hours, the government has announced holidays for schools and colleges in seven districts, including Bengaluru Urban and Bengaluru Rural districts. Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai is chairing a meeting on Friday with district administration to review the situation in the state due to incessant rainfall since the last week and also take up the relief measures.

Bommai will take up the virtual meeting of all the district commissioners, CEO's Zilla Panchayats to get information on damages caused by the rains,

availability of emergency funds. R. Vishal, Commissioner of Department of Public Instruction has authorised the district commissioners to take a call on declaring holiday for schools after assessing the situation of rains in their respective districts. "The decision has to be taken at the local level depending on the weather to ensure the safety of students."

The holidays will have to be compensated later," the circular said. The district authorities of Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Ramnagar, Tumakuru, Chamara Nagar districts have announced holidays for schools and colleges. **AGENCIES**

# Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray does corrective spinal surgery

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray underwent a successful surgery of the cervical spine at the HN Reliance Hospital in Mumbai recently and is reported to be in good health by the doctors.

The Chief Minister's health parameters were stable right through the surgical procedure after which he was shifted to his room where he continues to be in the best of health, the doctors added.

Meanwhile, the Maharashtra Minister of Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department, Nawab Malik launched the FLIGHT program, which comprised the Maharashtra's Skills Development Department -- in partnership with UN WOMEN, Skill Development -- across 5 districts in Maharashtra including Mumbai City, Mumbai Suburban, Thane, Raigad and Palghar.

The program, which covers Government ITIs, Polytechnics and Degree Colleges, seeks to motivate and enable 750 young women and girls to complete their higher education and gain employability skills. Out of 750 students, 375 girl students will be selected from 3 ITIs of Dadar (Girls), Thane (Girls) and Jawhar to be trained under the program for 3 years.

The FLIGHT program is

funded by PROSUS group and jointly implemented by UN WOMEN, Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department and Higher and Technical Education department, Govt of Maharashtra. The on ground implementation partners for this program are "PRADAN" and "B-ABLE".

Manisha Verma (IAS), Principal Secretary, Skill Development, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department, Government of Maharashtra, highlighted the department's efforts to enhance girls enrollment in the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) of Maharashtra.

Urging for the project to be scaled at state level, she noted the importance of having +gender lens+ and breaking the glass ceiling for women to ensure better women's representation across all professional sectors and senior leadership positions. "Meanwhile, the Maharashtra Governor urged for efforts towards economic uplift of tribals through economic empowerment -- alongside their social and cultural development."



The Governor inaugurated the first Janajati Gaurav Diwas at Raj Bhavan on the birth anniversary of Janajati Krantivir Birsa Munda at the instance of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India.

Highlighting the contribution of Adivasis and Janajatis in the nation's freedom movement, he complimented Government of India for creating a feeling of pride among tribals by deciding to organize the Janajati Gaurav Diwas.

Describing tribals as protectors of nature, the Governor said vanavasis and Janajatis have lived in forests and rural areas in perfect harmony with nature, while deriving livelihood from them, and these tribals included the tribal revolutionary Birsa Munda who was well-known for his sacrifices.

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Noting that the tribal communities have given the nation some of the best sports persons and mountaineers, he urged for improving mobile connectivity in tribal areas to hasten the development of the backward tribal regions by purchasing products made by the Adivasi people such as Bamboo Diwali Sky lamps, rakhis and furniture.

While community and Individual Forest titles were distributed to beneficiary tribals on the occasion, the Governor also gave away Tabs to tribal students from Palghar and felicitated tribal students who have passed UPSC Mains, NEET, JEE and other competitive examinations.

Governor Koshiyari also called for preparing a blueprint for the effective implementation of PESA Act for the empowerment of tribals and persons living in Scheduled Areas of the country. In this connection the Governor called for greater coordination between Panchayati Raj, Tribal Affairs, Revenue and Forest departments.

The Governor was addressing a virtual day-long national-level Conference -- on the occasion of 25 years of implementation of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 -- held at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in association with the

Ministry of Tribal Affairs Government of India.

Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Giriraj Singh, Minister of Tribal Affairs Arjun Munda, Minister of State for Panchayati Raj Kapil Patil, secretaries of various departments, Ministers and officials from various States and representatives of NGOs were present.

Describing PESA as an important legislation for empowering tribals the Governor said his predecessors had done good work during 2014-2018 by making a series of amendments to the Act, which had empowered villages and enhanced the participation of women in governance.

The Maharashtra Governor also paid tribute to the Founder-Chief Minister of Uttarakhand, late Nityanand Swami who -- as Minister of Energy and Irrigation in Uttarakhand -- completed the Tehri Garhwal project.

Addressing a cultural programme (Apnu Uttarakhand) organised here to celebrate the completion of 21 years in the establishment of the State of Uttarakhand, the Governor described Swamy as a "fighter leader" and a dedicated social worker who, despite the rough and tumble of politics, was a successful lawyer who climbed the rungs of politics by dint of his affable nature and humility.

## There are lessons for rulers in farm law controversy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rightly decided to repeal of the three farm laws that are at the centre of a protracted confrontation between his government and a section of farmers for a year. The laws sought to reorganise India's agriculture sector more in accordance with the principles of market economy. They would have redesigned the country's food procurement and distribution mechanisms, triggering fears that the producers and consumers would be adversely affected, to the benefit of big companies. Such fears were aggravated by the undemocratic manner in which these laws were brought about, through ordinances, and passed in Parliament without deliberations, or consultations with the States. The decision to repeal them is a triumph of democracy. On the one hand, the tenacity of the agitating farmers that the BJP and state agencies could not break while on the other, the looming Assembly elections in UP and Punjab, forced the ruling party's hand. Farmers should not only withdraw the protest now but also show a more flexible approach regarding the path ahead to reform the sector. Flexibility is not a bad trait in democracy, which is about constant negotiations, but it should not be merely political expediency. In this instance, the agitators were socially dominant, and economically and politically powerful groups whose hostility the BJP found difficult to handle. This should be an occasion for the Government to revisit its general attitude towards protest mobilisation. The reflex of the current dispensation has been to paint opponents and critics as traitors or anti-nationals — a tactic that was tried even in the case of the farmers. A consultative decision making would always be more sustainable and easier to enforce. Further moves on agriculture sector reforms must draw from the experience of the making, and now the repeal, of the farm laws.



Dr. SOHAM D. BHADURI ON WHY NEW NITI AAYOG REPORT DEFIES LOGIC ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

## Is healthcare turning private?

The central government's flagship health insurance scheme, the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), aims to extend hospitalisation cover of up to Rs 5 lakh per family per annum to a poor and vulnerable population of nearly 50 crore people. Apart from AB-PMJAY and State-level government health insurance schemes, small segments of the Indian population are covered under social health insurance schemes and private health insurance. Covering the left out segment of the population, commonly termed the 'missing middle' sandwiched between the poor and the affluent, has been discussed by the Government recently. Towards this, NITI Aayog recently published a road map document entitled "Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle". However, to say the least, the report confounds all hopes and expectations of a credible pathway to universal health coverage (UHC) for India.

The report proposes voluntary, contributory health insurance dispensed mainly by private commercial health insurers as the prime instrument for extending health insurance to the 'missing middle'. Government subsidies, if any at all, will be reserved for the very poor within the 'missing middle' and only at a later stage of development of voluntary contributory insurance. This is a major swerve from the vision espoused by the high-level expert group on UHC a decade ago, which was sceptical about such a health insurance model as the instrument of UHC and advocated a largely tax-financed health system albeit with private sector participation.

### In-patient care

Those with even a rudimentary understanding of health policy would know that no country has ever achieved UHC by relying predominantly on private sources of financing health care. Evidence shows that in developing countries such as India, with a gargantuan informal sector, contributory health insurance is not the best way forward and can be replete with problems.

But even when we look at international precedents of contributory social health insurance models, some very important traits stand out, for example, significant levels of government subsidy to schemes; not-for-profit mode of operation; and some important guarantees for health. The NITI report sweepingly ignores these fundamental precepts.

For hospitalisation insurance, the report proposes a model similar to the Arogya Sanjeevani scheme, albeit with lower projected premiums of around Rs 4,000-Rs 6,000 per family per annum (for a sum insured of Rs 5 lakh for a family of five). There would be a standard benefit package for all, and the insured sum will be between Rs 5,00,000 and Rs 10,00,000. Insurance will be dispensed largely by commercial insurers who would compete among themselves.

It is clear how this model is a little different from commercial private insurance, except for somewhat lower premiums. These low premiums are achieved by reducing administrative costs of insurers through an array of measures, including private use of government infrastructure, and possibly by switching to low-powered modes of physician payments.

Most importantly, low premiums are not achieved on account of government subsidies or regulation. One can see how this model is vulnerable to nearly every vice that characterises conventional private insurance.

For instance, consider countries such as Switzerland. Despite relying predominantly on private insurers and a competitive model of insurance, certain important checks and balances exist: benefits are etched in legislation; basic insurance is mandatory and not-for-profit; cream-skimming and risk-discrimination are prohibited. Such checks and balances are a long shot in the Indian scenario, neither have they been discussed in the NITI report.

The report suggests enrolment in groups as a means to counter adverse selection.



The prevailing per capita expenditure on hospital care is used to reflect affordability of hospital insurance, and thereby, a possible willingness to pay for insurance.

Both these notions are likely to be far-fetched in practice, and the model is likely to be characterised by widespread adverse selection notwithstanding. It is important to remember that even free-of-cost government health insurance for the poor has little penetration in the country, despite a nearly two decade-long legacy. The possible destiny of contributory private health insurance with modestly lower premiums, for a target group that is not significantly well-off, is obvious.

### Out-patient care

An even more untenable case has been made with respect to out-patient department (OPD) care insurance coverage, which includes doctor consultations, diagnostics, medicines, etc. The report rightly acknowledges that OPD expenses comprise the largest share of out-of-pocket expenditure on health care, and concomitantly have a greater role in impoverishment of families due to health-care expenses. The report proposes an OPD insurance with an insured sum of Rs 5,000 per family per annum, and again uses average per

capita OPD spending to justify the ability to pay. However, the OPD insurance is envisaged on a subscription basis, which means that insured families would need to pay nearly the entire insured sum in advance to obtain the benefits. This is the last thing one would equate with UHC.

Clearly, this route is unlikely to result in any significant reduction of out-of-pocket expenditure on OPD care, which beats the whole purpose of providing insurance. Any cost savings or benefits that accrue would be due to using low-powered physician payment modes and a more integrated and coordinated pathway of care. However, their contribution is likely to be nominal and at least be partly offset by the administrative costs involved in insurance. Individuals are likely to be largely indifferent to such an OPD insurance scheme, particularly if it restricts choice of health-care providers.

### Wrong disposition

The NITI report defies the universally accepted logic that UHC invariably entails a strong and overarching role for the Government in health care, particularly in developing countries. Rather than plot a pathway for UHC in India, the report is more about expanding the footprints and penetration of the private health insurance sector.

Further, the report looks to attain the elusive UHC with few or no fiscal implications for the Government, which is an absurd idea by any stretch of the imagination. Such a disposition is highly dismaying in the aftermath of COVID-19. The National Health Policy 2017 envisaged increasing public health spending to 2.5% of GDP by 2025. Let us not contradict ourselves so early and at this crucial juncture of an unprecedented pandemic.

Dr. Soham D. Bhaduri is a physician, health policy expert, and chief editor of *The Indian Practitioner*. Views are personal.



R.K. RAGHAVAN ON THE RECENT ORDINANCE THAT ALLOWS CENTRE TO EXTEND THE TENURE OF CBI DIRECTOR

## Longer term, better impact

The Central government's decision to give a five-year tenure to heads of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has drawn a lot of flak. The Opposition smells a rat in the ordinances issued a few days ago. This is unsurprising. Any governmental move to strengthen a powerful law enforcement agency is bound to invite questions and raise suspicion. And the CBI's track record for objectivity and neutrality is anything but straightforward.

It is, however, preposterous to probe the intentions of this major move. How can we suspect the bonafides of the government until we have evidence to prove that the decision was motivated by dishonest intentions? No government is a saint, but to question the intentions behind an administrative decision right after it is made seems unfair. If one perceives politics here, let us remember that only 5-10% of the cases registered by the CBI involve politicians.

### Capricious decisions

When I assumed charge of the position 20 years ago, I was the first beneficiary of the apex court's directive giving a mandatory two-year tenure to the Director of the CBI. This was a fallout of the Hawala scandal. I had an extra four months because my retirement age automatically gave me this benefit.

Prior to my appointment, the government was arbitrary and capricious in choosing the Director. It was not rare to see



temporary appointments given to favour some individuals. Seniority was often ignored in appointments and Directors were removed frequently. In 1987, C.M. Radhakrishnan Nair was appointed as the Director. This decision was rescinded within days to give an extension to the man holding the post, Mohan Katre. Could there be anything more demoralising to the officer concerned and to the elite organisation?

The recent ordinances are timely and merited. A two-year tenure for a CBI head is too short for any officer to make an impact on the organisation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation chief in the U.S. gets a 10-year term. This provides them the much-needed continuity that a Director needs in an outfit charged with the task of

conducting highly sensitive investigations, which sometimes impinge on the longevity and stability of a democratically elected government.

We will have to wait for a few years to gauge the impact of the change in tenure rules. Any blatantly dishonest interference in the working of the organisation is bound to raise the hackles of those who believe in and carry out straightforward investigations. The government will therefore have to show enormous restraint in its interactions with the head of the CBI.

Of course, as a measure of accountability, the Director will have to keep the government informed of all major administrative decisions. He or she should inform the executive but not take orders from it.

The only problem with the latest ordi-

nance is that, at the end of the mandatory two-year tenure, the government will have to issue orders granting one-year extensions at a time. It would have better if there was a straight five-year term for the Director. The rule about three annual extensions can be misused by a tententious government. It may be construed as a reward for 'good behaviour', which is a euphemism for an obliging Director.

### Dependence on State governments

Successive chiefs have suggested the drafting of a CBI Act to ensure that the organisation is not dependent on the State governments, many of which have withdrawn consent for the CBI to function in that State. The Supreme Court has recently made caustic references to this objectionable development. Eight States — West Bengal, Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Mizoram — have withdrawn the general consent. The Court termed this a "serious issue". The CBI should be made to derive its authority for launching investigations from its own statute instead of depending on the Criminal Procedure Code, which makes the CBI a police organisation. Apt analogies are the Income Tax Act and the Customs Act, which enable the officers of the two mighty departments to act on their own, without being at the mercy of State governments.

R.K. Raghavan is a former CBI Director who is currently Professor of Criminal Justice at the Jindal Global University, Haryana

## FIVE OBSERVATIONS

### THE FARM BILL 2020

**1 AIM OF GOVERNMENT: FARM BILL 2020**  
The Farm Bill was passed with a plan to reform the agriculture sector and bring better benefits to the farmers in terms of getting them good deals for their produce.

**2 OBJECTION OF FARM BILL 2020**  
Many political parties and farmers of India are extensively opposing the Farm bill. Their outlook is otherwise and their version finds the farm Bill 2020 will impact the welfares of farmers.

**3 WHY IS OPPOSITION TO FARM BILL 2020 SO STRONG? — CONS**  
The Farm Bill stands against India's soul of cooperative federalism and directly encroaches upon the functions of the State.

**4 CHALLENGES TO FARM BILL 2020**  
Mistrust has been formed among farmers against the government due to the fact that the bill was passed without debates. Hence implementation of the Act will be a challenge to the government.

**5 CONCLUSION: FARM BILL 2020**  
The Exclusion of middlemen benefits farmers only when they have a well-formed infrastructure like markets, arduous storage facilities, electricity supply, and a link to food processing companies who could compete to buy their produce.

## LETTERBOX

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

## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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## BOOKS: REVIEW

## Approach relationships in post-#MeToo India

A new book, "Dear Men: Masculinity and Modern Love in #MeToo India", shows how Indian men across ages navigate romantic relationships in a country that is still teetering on the cusp of modern and traditional.

The book, published by Bloomsbury India, is written by Delhi-based writer and content creator Prachi Gangwani. It was released on Thursday, a day before the International Men's Day -- which falls on November 19 every year.

"The fight for gender equality is not a fight between men and women. It's a fight against a system which oppresses and limits both the genders - all the genders. In this book, I explore what the patriarchy does to heterosexual men, and how it impacts the way heterosexual men approach romantic relationships," said Gang-

wani about her new book.

"In post-#MeToo India, where the magnifying lens is on men's behaviour towards women, I hope this book will shed some light on how men navigate this new landscape, as well as how the system and culture we live in enables toxic masculinity," she added.

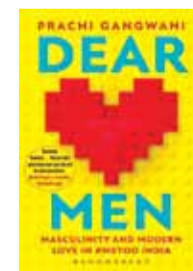
In the book, Gangwani acknowledges the "huge cultural shift" among men who now seem to be more gender neutral and how they don't see working women or sexually active women as an oddity -- at least on the surface -- but not without adding that there's "still a long way to go".

"In just a few years, there has been a huge cultural shift from men expecting their partners to prioritize home over work to now expecting their partner to have a job and contribute financially;

**In just a few years, there has been a huge cultural shift from men expecting their partners to prioritize home over work to now expecting their partner to have a job and contribute financially**

from men judging a woman's character based on her sexual history, to now, well, turning a blind eye to it," she writes in the book.

Direct, often tongue-in-cheek, accessible, and engaging, the book, according to the publishers, is an "investigation of what sexual boundaries really mean to Indian men, how they deal



Dear Men: Masculinity and Modern Love in #MeToo India  
By Prachi Gangwani  
Bloomsbury India  
248 pages; Rs 599

with online dating, manage traditional gender roles, talk about their mental health, if they think romance is still relevant, what marriage means to them, and why they hurt the women they love".

"Dear Men hopes to start an honest and open dialogue with Indian men about subjects that are becoming more and more relevant as movements like #MeToo gain traction," they said in a statement.

In the book, Gangwani explores the male entitlement paradox, how men deal with mental health issues, and their views on sex, live-in arrangements, marriage and fatherhood. But, the one thing that Gangwani is still unable to wrap her head around is their idea of dating.

"It's been quite a while since I

wrote the book, but I must admit, that there are certain truths I am still processing and finding hard to stomach. Most men I interviewed subliminally look at women as accomplishments — as if they are something to be achieved." That, she feels, has been the most difficult learning for her, while writing the book. Her subjects, she says, expected their partners to engage with their lives and social circle, and didn't necessarily return the favour.

"So, you [woman] are my partner, and I can pick you up, and take you wherever I want, but you can't do the same with me. That's how a man ends up inadvertently treating the woman like a handbag. It is of course, very frustrating for us women."

The widest schism she feels, is between how men and women view partnerships. Women are seeking equality, companionship and friendship in relationships; not all men are quite there yet. "Very few men — even now — believe that they can or should have a true partnership with their female partner," she says.

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## NEWSBRIEF

Kubota raises stake worth Rs 1,872 crore in Escorts

**NEW DELHI:** Japan-based farm equipment maker Kubota Corporation has raised its stake in Escorts worth Rs 1,872.74 crore in a bid to "strengthen their partnership". In a statement, Escorts said that it will issue 9,363,726 equity shares to Kubota through the preferential route at a price of Rs 2,000 per share. Post allotment, Kubota's total stake in Escorts will be 14.99 per cent. "Kubota will also make an open offer to the public shareholders of Escorts to acquire up to 26 per cent of the share capital, in accordance with SEBI regulations," the statement said. As per the statement, JM Financial acted as the financial advisor to Escorts. Besides, it mentioned that the current promoter group Nanda Family is not selling any of its shares held in the company. **AGENCIES**

**Sugar production for 2021-22 expected to be 114 LMT in UP**

**NEW DELHI:** The sugar production for the season 2021-22 in Uttar Pradesh is expected to be 114 lakh metric tonnes (LMT). This is about 4 LMT more than the 110.6 LMT sugar production in the sugar season 2020-2021, data from the Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD) showed. Uttar Pradesh contributes about 35-38 per cent to the national sugar production. Cane crushing during the current season (that is SS 2020-21) was 1,027 LMT, the data showed. The government said, total cane price payable for SS 2020-21 was Rs 33,014 crore while cane price already paid (as on November 11) is Rs 29,034 crore. This is almost 88 per cent, an all-time high attempt to clear the pending dues. That makes the cane dues pending (as on November 11) as Rs 3,980 crore, the data showed. The total area under sugar cultivation is 27.60 lakh Ha while there are about 158 installed sugar mills in the state. **AGENCIES**

## Major Restructuring: Vedanta to split business into 3 listed entities



**MUMBAI:** Billionaire Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Ltd proposes major restructuring of its corporate structure that may include demerger and listing of the aluminium, iron and steel, and oil and gas businesses as standalone entities. Under the proposed scheme of demerger, the company's flagship Vedanta Ltd would operate parallelly with the three proposed listed businesses.

The board of directors of Vedanta has decided on the restructuring considering the scale, nature and potential opportunities for various business verticals of the company. The

changes would follow a comprehensive review of the company's corporate structure. The restructuring would evaluate a full range of options and alternatives, including demergers, spin-offs, strategic partnerships for unlocking value and simplification of corporate structure, the company said in a statement.

Vedanta has also constituted a committee of directors to evaluate and recommend such options and alternatives to the board of directors. "The strategic objectives outlined by the board of directors for undertaking such an exercise

are simplification and streamlining of corporate structure; unlocking value for all stakeholders; creation of businesses which are positioned better to capitalise on their distinct market positions; and deliver long-term growth and enable strategic partnerships," the statement said. The objective of restructuring is also to evolve a tailored capital structure and capital allocation policies based on business specific dynamics; distinct investment profiles to attract deeper and broader investor bases; and accelerate emissions reduction and strong ESG practices. The board has also appointed various advisors to assist it in evaluating the options. It is anticipated that the board and the advisors will complete their evaluation and consider the way forward as soon as possible. Appropriate announcements and public disclosures in accordance with SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations and other applicable laws will be made as and when required, the company said. "Over the past few years, the group has materially improved the op-

erational performance of its businesses, increased cash flows, reduced debt while concomitantly focusing on accelerating investments in energy transition, health and safety, diversity and ESG in general," Agarwal said.

"This step, which we announced today, while pending a detailed evaluation, is designed to create independent, industry-leading, global public companies, where each can benefit from greater focus, tailored capital allocation, and strategic flexibility to drive long-term growth and value for customers, investors, and employees. We will continue to leverage our significant strengths in technology, operations and people to better serve our customers and all stakeholders," he added. Vedanta Limited, a subsidiary of Vedanta Resources Limited, is one of the world's leading oil & gas and metals company with significant operations in oil & gas, zinc, lead, silver, copper, iron ore, steel, and aluminium & power across India, South Africa and Namibia. **AGENCIES**

## Google to help Indian startups emerge stronger: Rajeev Chandrasekhar

**NEW DELHI:** Inviting Google to further help India realise its \$1 trillion digital economy goal by 2025, Union Minister of State for IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said here on Thursday that the collaboration between the government and Sundar Pichai-run Google will help Indian startups emerge stronger in the new normal during the pandemic. Addressing at the seventh edition of the 'Google for India' virtual event, Chandrasekhar said that the collaboration is a great example of how government and industry can work together to promote the growth of local businesses. "I'm hopeful and confident that Google's mentorship through this initiative will help selected startups emerge stronger in this new normal. I would like to invite Google and the rest of the industry to participate in India's \$1 trillion digital economy mission, which will pave the way for the rest of the world," he added.

Google in July last year announced to invest about Rs 75,000 crore (\$10 billion) in India in the next five to seven years. The minister said that India is on track to



attain new heights of digital empowerment under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Digital India. "We have formulated the vision to make India a \$1 trillion digital economy by 2025. Our priority is to improve the nation's connectivity and make India the largest connected nation by bringing all citizens online in an open, safe, trusted and accountable internet era," Chandrasekhar said.

Emphasising the growth in electronics manufacturing in India, the minister said that India is at the cusp of becoming a leading player in the evolving global value chain for the electronics manufacturing ecosystem. "Last year, when Google announced its plans to invest \$10 billion in India with a goal to fast-track,

assist and be a partner in India's digital transformation, the government welcomed Google's contributions not just with the investments but also with their technology and platforms to accelerate the digital adoption. This relationship makes our 'Digital India' story one of empowerment and inclusion," Chandrasekhar noted. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said at the event that with the digital economy's potential to add millions of jobs, the government is committed to providing Indians every opportunity to upskill. "It is heartening to see Google Career Certificates provide training in digital skills and launch an employer consortium to facilitate employment." **AGENCIES**

## CCI slaps penalty on paper manufacturers for cartelisation

**NEW DELHI:** The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has issued a final order against certain companies manufacturing paper from agricultural waste and recycled wastepaper along with an association, which were found to have contravened the provisions of the Competition Act proscribing anti-competitive agreements.

The case was initiated suo motu by the Commission on the basis of certain materials found during the ongoing investigation into two other cases. Although the DG investigated 21 original paper manufac-



turers and the association, it only recorded findings of contravention of the provisions of the Act against 10 such paper manufacturers and the association.

The period of cartel was noted by the DG to be from September 2012 till March 2013. The CCI found these companies and an association which provided its

platform for such activities to have indulged in cartelisation in fixing the prices of writing and printing paper. In this backdrop and further considering that during the pandemic, most businesses moved to the virtual mode thereby reducing the need for paper, affecting the paper business, CCI imposed a symbolic penalty of Rs 5 lakh each on the 10 paper manufacturers found guilty of cartelisation. Further, a penalty of Rs 2.5 lakh has been imposed on the association for providing its platform for anti-competitive activities. **AGENCIES**

## ED attaches assets under PMLA against ALPPL Directors, others



**NEW DELHI:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets worth Rs 2 crore under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 in a bank fraud case against Adarsh Leather Products Private Limited (ALPPL), an official said here on Thursday. The attached assets are in the

form of Fixed Deposit. The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of a 9-year-old FIR and subsequent charge sheet that was filed by CBI Kolkata under relevant sections of the IPC in 2013 against ALPPL, its Directors and other persons, for defrauding the IDBI bank to the tune of Rs 7.5 crore by availing

loan on the basis of false and forged documents. The ED said ALPPL utilised the said loan amount for purpose other than for which it was sanctioned. Money laundering investigation has revealed that after availing the loan worth of Rs 7.5 crore, the funds were diverted after rotating amongst various bank accounts maintained by various shell or dummy entities and given colour of genuine business transactions.

"Moreover, these dummy concerns were not complying with any statutory requirement like filing of Income Tax returns, VAT returns etc," the financial probe agency added. It said further investigation in the matter is still under progress. **AGENCIES**

**Saint-Gobain to invest Rs 2,500 cr in India**



**CHENNAI:** French multinational group Saint-Gobain will invest over Rs 2,500 crore in India to grow its home and construction business, said a senior official. The group's Indian subsidiary Saint-Gobain India also targets to earn about Rs 1,000 crore from its home solutions business in the next three to five years. "Saint-Gobain will be investing more than Rs 2,500 crore in India between FY2022 and FY2023 in the home and construction space," said Hemant Khurana, Executive Director, Saint-Gobain India. According to Khurana, the company will open more MyHome stores in India to earn a revenue of Rs 1,000 crore from its home solutions business.

The company has already opened stores in Kochi, Mumbai and Chennai. He said the company will open over 50 MyHome stores by the end of 2021 in the country in Tier I, Tier-II and Tier-III cities to provide an excellent touch-and-feel experience. "The home segment offers a significant opportunity for Saint-Gobain in India. With a market size of more than \$25 billion and growing at CAGR of 8-10 per cent, the segment is poised to grow even faster given the massive urbanisation that is yet to happen," Khurana said. **AGENCIES**

## K'taka set to make impact in industry 4.0 spurred by higher education: Apple VP

**BENGALURU:** Karnataka is all set to play a major role in industry 4.0 spurred by a marked improvement in the quality and standards of higher education and the initiatives taken in the sector, according to Priya Balasubramaniam, Vice-President (Operations), Apple Inc. Speaking at the plenary session of 'Bengaluru Tech Summit-2021' virtually from California, US on Thursday, she said it is commendable that the government is encouraging thousands of students to start enterprises and become self-employed with the help of industry body Nasscom. Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Machine Learning, Augmented Virtual Reality and such technologies are at the forefront of enterprise technology and have become part and parcel of Indian



learning, she said. Apple has been making its flagship iPhones in India since 2017 in Bengaluru and has now expanded its presence in Chennai. She said Apple has been able to generate direct and indirect employment to more than 1 million people in India through its partners. Priya Balasubramaniam said

Apple has partnered with Bengaluru-based non-governmental firm 'Enable India' to provide solar lighting to more than 2,000 homes. The company has also provided digital equipment required for education to thousands of children belonging to poor families thereby fulfilling their educational aspirations.

She said using the apps would become easier to do small businesses. Children have also begun to learn classical dance, music, and language with the help of the apps developed. Apple has used smart manufacturing methods and taken care to ensure that products have zero waste.

Priya Balasubramaniam who began her address in Kannada said she was proud to be a Bengalee and that she finished her engineering at the University Visveswarya College of Engineering in Bengaluru. "I was born and brought up and educated in Bengaluru. I am thankful to chief minister Basavaraj Bommai and appreciate and also congratulate the organizers of the Tech Summit. I am proud to say that I am a daughter of Karnataka," she said. **AGENCIES**

## India's Oct YoY retail sales fall on supply shortage, cost pressures: FADA

**NEW DELHI:** Semiconductor supply shortages as well as inflationary pressures dampened India's overall vehicle retail sales on a year-on-year basis, in October 2021. Accordingly, the data released by the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) showed a fall of 5.33 per cent during the month under review from October 2020. The vehicle retail sales fell to 13,64,526 units last month from 14,41,299 units sold during the corresponding month of 2020.

However, on a sequential basis, the overall vehicle retail sales for last month was higher than 12,96,257 units sold in September 2021. Similarly, last month's overall retail sales figure, when compared to the Oc-



tober 2019 (pre-pandemic) period, showed a decline of 26.64 per cent. In October 2019, the overall vehicle retail sales stood at 18,60,098 units.

Notably, the 42-days festive period during 2021 saw retail sales falling by 1.82 per cent to 20,90,893 from the corresponding period of last year. On YoY basis, passenger vehicle (PV) retail sales fell 11.38 per cent during the month under review from the level of October 2020. The PV

retail sales declined to 228,431 units last month from 257,756 units sold during the corresponding month of last year. However, two-wheeler registration declined by 6.07 per cent to 9,96,024 units. Similarly, tractor retail sales fell by 20.78 per cent to 44,262 units.

"We have witnessed the worst festive season in last decade. Semi-conductor shortage which was already a full blown crisis showed its true colours when in spite of an above healthy demand, we could not cater to customers' need as SUV, Compact-SUV and luxury categories witnessed huge shortage of vehicles," said FADA President Vinkesh Gulati. **AGENCIES**

## Sanjiv Puri's 'TTC Next' strategy to drive into commanding position in FMCG industry market

**NEW DELHI:** Powered by mega brands such as Aashirvaad, Sunfeast, Bingo!, Classmate, and Savlon, ITC is set to drive into a commanding position in what some analysts have estimated to be a Rs 5 lakh crore addressable FMCG industry market segment by 2035, with Chairman Sanjiv Puri putting in motion a carefully crafted 'TTC Next' strategy.

This re-crafted strategy, built around portfolio revitalisation, rapid platform-based innovation, aggressive digitisation, deeper synergies with other group businesses, structural leverages and a sharper focus on margins. As an FMCG major, ITC is the only company that is dominant across a range of product categories from branded atta to biscuits; snacks to spices; noodles to dairy; choco-

lates to coffee; juices to frozen snacks and vegetables; deodorants to hand and body wash; sanitizers and masks to floor cleaners; and from notebooks to agarbatti, that none of the other Indian or multinational brands can claim to be present in. Puri's 'TTC Next' strategy pivots around a multi-pronged approach to revitalize the company's current FMCG portfolio by fortifying and scaling up its proven megabrands, leveraging adjacencies through horizontal brand extensions, and nurturing new platforms with innovative products that will scale up to be leaders in their respective categories.

Mega brands and adjacencies ITC has a plethora of megabrands such as Aashirvaad, Sunfeast, Bingo! and Classmate that already command leader-



ship positions in the market. The strategy of creating value added adjacencies could be best illustrated by the new Aashirvaad portfolio including Aashirvaad Nature's Super Foods range comprising ragi flour, multi-millet mix, gluten free flour, organic atta and pulses as well as chapatis, instant meals and the Aashirvaad Svasti dairy range. ITC is also fostering

new platforms and strengthening its new brands including Fabelle chocolates, Sunbean coffee, B Natural juices, Nimyle home cleaners, Savlon hygiene products and so on. The overarching strategy for new platforms of innovative products is to first validate the concept and business model in select beachheads. Having gained a dominant market penetration,

these new lines of products and brands will gain strength to occupy adjacent markets with different opportunities, building a larger brand with each new product, creating new and steady vectors of growth for the future.

ITC under Puri is unwavering in its resolve to build a formidable FMCG business. With innovation as the new lifeblood, the company today is one of the largest incubators of world-class Indian brands.

The Company's wide range of FMCG portfolio has demonstrable headroom to expand rapidly in the FMCG industry overall addressable market segment of Rs 5 lakh crore. For instance, the total size of the packaged snacks market for the overall industry is set to vault 4.5 times from about Rs

32,000 crore to an estimated Rs 1.43 lakh crore by 2035. The market for overall spices industry is projected to grow from about Rs 22,000 crore currently to Rs 1.1 lakh crore in 15 years, a growth of five times. Similar industry growths are expected in other categories such as biscuits, branded atta, noodles, deodorants, personal care products and the cleaners categories.

Most of ITC's FMCG products occupy the first or the second positions in their respective categories giving them unique opportunity to corner most of these segment growths. Aashirvaad, India's number one branded packaged atta, itself has a consumer spend of over Rs 6,000 crore. Digital, consumer-centric and future-ready Puri's strategy to make ITC

future-ready manifests in his focus on driving the three megatrends emerging out of the pandemic - innovation, digitalisation and sustainability. The Company's R & D Centre, the ITC Life Sciences and Technology Centre (LSTC) in Bengaluru helped ITC to launch 120 differentiated products amid the pandemic to meet emerging preferences. To further support this goal, the company has set up 9 state-of-the-art integrated consumer goods manufacturing facilities (ICML) to create structural advantages.

Digitalisation is being accelerated pan-ITC through the use of new technologies such as Industry 4.0, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Big Data, Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), etc. These technologies are also being deployed

across the entire supply chain spanning sourcing, manufacturing, trade engagements and e-commerce, including its own ordering platform the ITC e-store.

The FMCG business has further driven enhanced competitiveness through a multi-channel distribution strategy which has been strengthened by customised apps. Power of Synergies The 'TTC Next' FMCG strategy has also been bolstered by synergies flowing in from the company's other businesses. A good example of synergies is ITC's foods business deriving a significant competitive advantage from agribusiness's sourcing capabilities. The culinary expertise of ITC's Hotels business has also enabled ITC to craft differentiated food offerings. **AGENCIES**

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# Consumption demand making strong comeback: RBI Guv

**MUMBAI:** Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das on Tuesday said that consumption demand triggered by the festive season is making a strong comeback. Speaking at the eighth SBI Banking & Economics Conclave, he said: "There are signs that consumption demand triggered by the festive season is making a strong comeback." "This would encourage firms to expand capacity and boost employment and investment amidst congenial financial conditions."



According to Das, the recent cut in excise duty on petrol and diesel by the Centre and in value-added tax (VAT) by several state governments will augment purchasing power of people, which in turn, will create space for additional consumption. Besides, he said that while it is "heartening to note" that the economy is gradually getting back on its feet after a devastating second wave, recovery has progressed in an uneven manner. "Contact-intensive

services are still to regain the lost capacity despite rapid improvement in the recent period. The Q1: 2021-22 data on GDP revealed that there still exists significant gap in both private consumption and investment, relative to their pre-pandemic levels in 2019-20."

"So, while the economy is picking up pace, it is yet to cover a lot of ground before it gets broad-based and en-

trenched. This points to the need for sustained impetus so that growth could return to, or better still, exceed the pre-pandemic trend."

Furthermore, he said India has potential to grow at a reasonably high pace in the post-pandemic scenario. "Several factors are stacked in India's favour. First, India as an emerging market and developing economy has significant potential to catch

## HIGHLIGHTS

- 'THERE ARE SIGNS THAT CONSUMPTION DEMAND TRIGGERED BY THE FESTIVE SEASON IS MAKING A STRONG COMEBACK'
- 'SO, WHILE THE ECONOMY IS PICKING UP PACE, IT IS YET TO COVER A LOT OF GROUND BEFORE IT GETS BROAD-BASED AND ENTRENCHED. THIS POINTS TO THE NEED FOR SUSTAINED IMPETUS SO THAT GROWTH COULD RETURN TO, OR BETTER STILL, EXCEED THE PRE-PANDEMIC TREND.'

up with the rest of the world supported by favourable demographics, improving skill base and strong domestic demand."

"Second, the Government is providing necessary support - especially through capital expenditure and reforms in various sectors like infrastructure, manufacturing and telecom, apart from other institutional changes to boost productivity, ease supply constraints and improve business environment." "Third, the pandemic has opened

new opportunities of growth in digital and green technology and also on account of resetting of global supply chains that could be advantageous to India. Fourth, exports have been a bright spot during the recent months and are likely to benefit further from global economic recovery." "In the presence of such enabling conditions and supportive policies, he said that India has a unique opportunity to step up growth and emerge from the pandemic. **AGENCIES**

## Reduce GST on mobile phones to 12 pc, ICEA writes to state CMs



**NEW DELHI:** The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) said on Tuesday that it has written to various state chief ministers to reduce the GST rates on mobile phones to 12 per cent and on mobile parts and components to 5 per cent. The 12 per cent GST rate on mobile handsets had increased tax by almost 50 per cent in this sector from a prevailing national average rate of 8.2 per cent (pre-GST era). The mobile industry was emerging from the GST rate hike and the government once again increased the rate by another 50 per cent (from 12 per cent to 18

per cent). "This increase in the GST rate has a trickle-down effect leading to the rise in prices for the consumer, which, in turn, is decreasing the demand for mobile phones," the ICEA said in a statement.

Further, the move is proving to be a deterrent to the 'Digital India' initiative, as the existing high cost of smartphones amplifies more due to the increase in GST rate," the industry body lamented. The ICEA, in association with Ernst & Young (EY), also released a report, titled a consequential GST step: Boon or Bane for Mobile Handset In-

dustry?, that underlines the importance of mobile phones in the current economic environment and taxation laws applicable on mobile phones. "This report captures all the focal points for policymakers that highlight the increase in GST rates of mobile handsets and its parts and components," said Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, ICEA. "Affordability will be key to India reaching a \$80 billion size in the domestic market by 2026, and the GST rates will play an important role," he added. Mobile phone subscribers have crossed the one-billion mark, and the monthly sales of mobile phones have consistently been between 20-27 million in numbers. "The rates for mobile phones and parts must be rationalised, and as highlighted in this report, brought back to 12 per cent on the mobile phones and simultaneously removing the inverted duty structure," said Bipin Sapra, Partner, EY. **AGENCIES**

## NEWS BRIEF

Negative global cues subdue indices; metal stocks down

**MUMBAI:** Negative global cues along with inflationary worries and mild profit bookings subdued India's key stock indices S&P BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty-50 during the mid-afternoon trade session on Thursday. Initially, the two indices opened on a positive note. Among sectors, all of them traded in the red with loss leaders being Metals, Capital Goods, Auto, IT and Healthcare. At 2.30 p.m., the S&P BSE Sensex of the BSE traded at 59,665.68 points, down 342.65 points or 0.57 per cent. It opened at 60,179.93 points from the previous close of 60,008.33 points. Similarly, the broader 50-scrip Nifty at National Stock Exchange (NSE) traded lower. It traded at the 17,778.45 points, down 120.80 points or 0.67 per cent during the trade session. **AGENCIES**

## IndiGo to resume on-board meal services

**NEW DELHI:** Airline major IndiGo will resume meals on-board service for flights of less than 2 hours of duration. The decision was taken after the Civil Aviation Ministry allowed airlines to serve meals on all domestic flights. Since April 15 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, air carriers were not allowed to serve in-flight meals, which were less than two hours of duration. "Effective 19th Nov, 2021, all our customers will be able to buy 'Food and Beverage' on-board as well as pre-book their choice of food," said Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, President & Chief Operating Officer, IndiGo. "The resumption of this facility will not only help customers travelling with young children and senior citizens, but also those catching red-eye flights. **AGENCIES**

## EV startup Lucid now more valuable than Ford

**NEW DELHI:** Electric vehicle startup Lucid Motors market value has exceeded Ford Motor Group to \$89.9 billion, after it closed at \$55.52 a share, Al Arabiya reported. The EV startup's market value, which is backed in part by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), blew past Ford Motor on Tuesday to \$89.9 billion and is close to surpassing General Motors, which currently has a market cap of \$90.9 billion. The recent surge of the Saudi-backed EV company comes after its CEO Peter Rawlinson said that he believes there is a long runway for the electric vehicle startup's stock and market value to rise beyond legacy automakers and to eventually be valued more like industry leader Tesla. **AGENCIES**

## 'Bank brokerages to continue reporting strong performance'



**MUMBAI:** The domestic capital markets continue to remain on an upward trajectory after a strong performance in FY2021. The average daily turnover (ADTO) increased to Rs 27.92 lakh crore in FY2021 from Rs 14.39 lakh crore in FY2020, registering an annual growth of 94 per cent. Transaction volumes remain strong in the current fiscal, with the markets clocking an ADTO of Rs 56.36 lakh crore in H1 FY2022.

As per ICRA, the market performance has been supported by favourable liquidity in both domestic and international markets,

optimism related to a recovery after the graded reopening of the economy, progress on vaccination rollout and steady retail investor momentum. Throwing more light, Samridhi Chowdhary, Vice President & Sector Head - Financial Sector Ratings, ICRA says, "The pool of ICRA-rated bank brokerages reported a strong performance in FY2021 with the estimated average daily turnover (ADTO) increasing 28 per cent Y-o-Y to Rs 1.51 lakh crore from Rs 1.18 lakh crore in FY2020, led by the healthy growth in the retail segment. **AGENCIES**

## Telecom Ministry issues advisory to promote safe online transactions

**NEW DELHI:** With an exponential rise in online transactions via mobile phones, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has put out an advisory promoting 'safe and best practices. With rising online transactions, risks of falling into fraudsters' traps have become a major cause of concern for the end user. As a preventive measure, the advisory intends to make citizens aware by asking them not to scan any 'QR' code shared by anyone, unless the objective is to pay.

"Think before you click any link as banks never send links to update KYC. Do not share confidential data such as 'OTP', 'CVV', 'PIN' with anyone, including bank officials," the advisory said. The advisory also urged the citizens not to install any remote access application on their devices. "Be extra careful whenever asked for advance or money in any form and verify the credentials of the person or company," the advisory said. To stay away from potential online fraud, the Centre



Do not visit suspicious websites such as pornographic, gambling etc., which may render your phone vulnerable and may lead to extortion, financial losses"

through the advisory also asked people not to share personal information, such as contact numbers and sensitive banking details, with anyone. "Be judicious before sharing your phone number with unknown persons," it added. It urged people not to store important and sensitive in-

formation and password on mobile and social media platforms, and in case necessary, use some form of encryptions. "Do not visit suspicious websites such as pornographic, gambling etc., which may render your phone vulnerable and may lead to extortion, financial losses," it added. **AGENCIES**

## Kerala finance corp launches new loan scheme for entrepreneurs

**THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:** In a bid to rev up the business scenario, state owned Kerala Financial Corporation (KFC) has launched a new scheme for small and medium sector enterprises offering loans up to Rs 1 crore at 5 per cent interest under the Chief Minister's Entrepreneurship Development Programme. A KFC official said the scheme is being implemented by revamping the existing Chief Minister's Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

"At present, up to 50 lakh is available under the scheme at 7 per cent interest. The scheme will be changed to provide up to Rs 1 crore at 5 per cent interest. The Government of Kerala will provide 3 per cent subsidy under the scheme and a further 2 per cent subsidy will be provided by KFC. The target is 2,500 enterprises in five



years at the rate of 500 enterprises per annum. For this KFC will set aside 300 crore every year," said the official. The units looking for loans must have MSME registration. The age of the chief entrepreneur should be below 50 years. The age limit for SC/ST entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs and Non-Resident Keralites is up to 55 years. Loans are available to start new ventures and modernize the existing ventures. The repayment period is up to 10 years. **AGENCIES**

## 'Regulatory clarity key for retail sector growth in post-Covid Indian economy'

**NEW DELHI:** Think Change Forum, an independent think-tank dedicated to generating new ideas and finding answers and solutions for the now disrupted global economic order, on Thursday organised a virtual roundtable on the crucial and imperative issue of the "Role of Retail Sector in Rebooting the Indian Economy in the Post Pandemic World". The retail sector in India accounts for almost 10 per cent of the nation's GDP and is among the top three employment generators, providing livelihoods to about eight per cent of the country's workforce. It features all possible formats from the most traditional to the most innovative. Despite outstanding innovations, the Indian retail sector remains a hotbed of conflict among its various constituents.

It is the view of Think Change Forum that the retail sector can play a significant role in revitalizing the Indian economy post the pandemic provided we can create an environment where all participants can co-exist and work in harmony with each other. The roundtable saw participation from a high-powered panel of eminent experts and industry specialists. These included Dr. Sanjaya Baru, Journalist, Author, Policy Analyst, Political Commentator and Advisor - Think Change Forum; G Padmanabhan, Former Executive Director of RBI; Harminder Sahni, Founder & MD, Wazir Advisors; and Devangshu Datta, Chief Executive, Third Eyesight & Managing Partner, PVC Partners. The panel discussion was moderated by the senior journalist Gaurav Choudhury, Founder and CEO, Earshot Media and

The retail sector in India accounts for almost 10 per cent of the nation's GDP and is among the top three employment generators, providing livelihoods to about eight percent of the country's workforce. It features all possible formats from the most traditional to the most innovative"

Consulting Editor, Network 18. For a rapid and harmonious growth of the Indian retail sector, without any conflicts, the panel underscored the need for a greenfield policy in retail, on the critical regulatory agility to promptly address issues and conflicts among players to prevent the high cost of delay, and the importance of providing teeth to regulators such as the Competition Commission of India (CCI). The consensus was clearly on the fact that while the worst was behind us, but the best is still not there. To make the best of the opportunity, retail's huge employment generation potential must be safeguarded, even at the cost of large players who may harm smaller traders and their employing potential. **AGENCIES**

## Scindia says 'evaluating process' on normalising overseas flight operations

**NEW DELHI:** Civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday said the government is evaluating the process for normalising international operations and asserted that it wants to return to normalcy while keeping in mind the coronavirus pandemic situation in certain parts of the world.

In a possible indication that overseas flight operations are unlikely to be fully normal in the near term, the minister said that people should not let down their guard. "I am all for regaining our space



in the civil aviation arena in the world and making a hub in India and for more wide body aircraft. We will get there but bear with me and trust me, I am on your side. We will work together

but in a safe environment," he said. Scheduled international passenger flights to and from India remain suspended since March last year amid the coronavirus pandemic. India has air bubble arrangements

with more than 25 countries for operating international flights. Under an air bubble arrangement between two countries, international passenger flights can be operated by their respective carriers into each other's territories subject to certain conditions.

"We are evaluating the process," the minister said while responding to a query on when international flight operations are likely to normalise. Speaking at a summit organised by industry body CII, Scindia also said that his aim is to make India an avia-

tion hub. "Let me commit to you that we are evaluating that process. We want to return but keeping in mind what is happening in the world... today what is happening in Russia, parts of Europe, they are going through a fourth wave with vaccine. Let us not erase our short term memories so soon," the minister said.

Further, Scindia noted that a process is being followed and there has to be a dialogue with other ministries before reaching a decision on overseas flight operations. **AGENCIES**

## Pre vs post DeMo: Black money deals down 75-80 pc, housing sales outstrip new supply

**NEW DELHI:** Post demonetisation, the Indian housing sales have outstripped new supply, a new ANAROCK Research has found. Confusion and uncertainty immediately after demonetisation notwithstanding, the negative impact has receded after a major market derailment within the first year of its announcement. "A notable impact of the triple whammy of DeMo, RERA, and GST was a significant deceleration in new property launches. Data shows that in the pre-DeMo period between 2013 till Q3 2016, the top 7 cities saw approx. 16.15 lakh new units launched while the post-DeMo period (Q4 2016-



Q3 2021) saw 9.04 lakh units launched in the top 7 cities -- a drop of nearly 44 per cent between the two periods," said Anuj Puri, Chairman - ANAROCK Group. "In the pre-DeMo period, new supply outstripped hous-

ing sales - whereas, in the post-DeMo period, housing sales overtook new supply in the top 7 cities," said Puri.

In the pre-DeMo period (2013-Q3 2016), the top 7 cities saw approx. 16.15 lakh units launched while

housing sales in this period stood at approx. 11.78 lakh units. After DeMo, between Q4 2016 and Q3 2021, these cities saw cumulative new launches of approx. 9.04 lakh units and housing sales clocked in at approx. 10.37 lakh units.

With major lessons learnt and a huge market realignment following this period of upheaval, the ongoing trend of sales exceeding supply will continue as developers keep a sharp eye on the demand-supply gap, the research report said. The housing market has emerged stronger, with speculative buying and selling now done away with and end-users firmly in the driver's

seat. Even luxury housing, which took a major hit after DeMo, has seen a significant resurgence after the Covid-19 pandemic caused latent demand to surface strongly. Predictably, the secondary sales or resale housing market proved far more vulnerable to demonetization than the primary market.

This segment, along with luxury housing, historically drew the bulk of 'cash components'. While the resale housing sector continues to reel from the after effects of DeMo, affordable and mid-segment housing demand in primary sales (sales by developers) increased. **AGENCIES**

Israel, UAE launch talks on free trade agreement



**JERUSALEM:** Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday began negotiations to reach a free trade agreement, the Israeli Ministry of Economy said in a statement. The agreement is expected to include issues relating to trade in goods and services, regulation, customs, government procurement, e-commerce and the protection of intellectual property rights, Xinhua news agency reported. The discussions were launched in a video meeting between the two countries' economy ministers, Israel's Orna Barbiwai and Abdullah bin Touq Al Marri of the UAE. Al Marri said that the future agreement would significantly strengthen trade between the two countries, remove barriers and expand economic cooperation. Barbiwai said the agreement would help industry and businesspersons from both countries and create opportunities for a wide range of business collaborations. Trade of goods between the two countries, who signed a normalization agreement in September 2020, totaled nearly \$500 million in January-July 2021. **AGENCIES**

India has potential to attract annual FDI of \$120- \$160 bn by 2025: Minister

**NEW DELHI:** India has the potential to attract an annual FDI in the range of \$120-\$160 billion by 2025, Minister for Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday. Speaking at the second edition of the CII National Conference on MNCs, 2021 via video link, he said: "We have the potential to attract an annual FDI in the range of \$120- \$160 billion by 2025."

"Last seven years we've seen a record FDI, each year breaking the previous record for seven years in a row." According to the minister, the Centre has introduced several key policy and business reforms for improving the investment climate. "The closest and most recent decision like the privatisation of Air India which was successfully bid by the Tata group, the removal of that very, very unfortunate 'Retrospective Tax' which has, I believe,



cost us dear in terms of investment climate for many years, the kind of reforms in 'Mining', in the 'Coal' sector, ones that we are hoping to do in 'Power', the huge 'Renewable Energy' growth story in India, all of these things, I think, encourage us to look for a brighter future." In addition, Goyal said the 'National Single Window System' (NSWS) has been launched to serve as a one-stop-shop for approvals and clearance needed by investors. "The portal hosts approvals across 18 Central departments and 9 States. Another 14 Central departments and 5 States will be added by December." **AGENCIES**

Sitharaman interacts with CMs, FMs to step up investment, growth

**NEW DELHI:** With a view to enhance the investment climate in the country in the wake of strong recovery and the opportunities accorded by a shift in geo-political realities post the Covid-19 pandemic, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday virtually interacted with the Chief Ministers and Finance Ministers of all the states along with Lieutenant Governors of the UTs. The meeting was attended by the Chief Ministers of Assam, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttar Pradesh, along with the Lt Governors of Jammu and Kashmir, and Deputy Chief Ministers of Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, and Delhi.

State Finance Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand, West Bengal; and state government officials of Ladakh, Maharashtra,



tra, Jharkhand, Andaman and Nicobar, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, and Lakshadweep also attended the meeting. In her opening remarks, Sitharaman emphasised that the economy has been growing significantly post the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic and indicators such as imports, exports, PMI manufacturing, digital payments, etc. have already reached pre-pandemic levels. Sitharaman highlighted that with favourable international perception of India's growth and in light of the structural, sectoral and financial reforms undertaken by the government of India, global and domestic investors are upbeat about the investment attractiveness of the country. The states should leverage this opportunity to scale up investments and growth, she said. The Finance Minister also said that the government of India has taken concrete steps to increase capital spending and drive an infrastructure and investment-led growth. Benefits of higher investment in infrastructure manifest in the form of increased employment opportunities, access to market and materials, improved quality of life and empowerment of vulnerable sections, she said. **AGENCIES**

Akasa Air orders 72 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft for nearly \$9 bn

**DUBAI:** Stock market maverick Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed SNV Aviation, whose upcoming airline venture -- Akasa Air -- on Tuesday placed an order for 72 Boeing's 737 Max aircraft at the Dubai airport which is being held here. The airline, through this order, aims to build up on its fleet to serve the rapidly growing Indian market. Accordingly, this order includes two variants from the 737 Max family, the 737-8 and the high-capacity 737-8-200.

"We believe that the new 737 MAX airplane will support our aim of running not just a cost-efficient, reliable and affordable airline, but also an environmental friendly company with the youngest and greenest fleet in the Indian skies," said Akasa Air CEO Vinay Dube. "India is one of the fastest-growing aviation markets in the world with an unparalleled potential. We are already witnessing a strong recovery in air travel, and we see decades of growth ahead of us." **AGENCIES**

Fuel price relief continues as OMCs keep petrol, diesel prices unchanged

**NEW DELHI:** Consumers continue to get relief from the rising fuel prices as oil marketing companies (OMCs) have kept the petrol and diesel rates unchanged post revision of duties by the state governments on Diwali eve. Accordingly, petrol and diesel prices remained static for the 12th consecutive day on Tuesday under the daily price revision mechanism followed by oil marketing companies. So, the pump price of petrol in Delhi, which fell to Rs 103.97 a litre at 6 a.m. on the



Diwali day on November 4 from previous days' level of Rs 110.04 a litre, remained at the same level on Tuesday. The diesel prices also remained unchanged in the

capital at Rs 86.67 a litre. In the financial capital Mumbai, petrol continued to be priced at Rs 109.98 a litre and diesel Rs 94.14 a litre. Prices also remained static on Monday in Kolkata where the price of petrol reduced by Rs 5.82 to Rs 104.67 per litre and that of diesel by Rs 11.77 to Rs 89.79 per litre in the first week of November. Petrol price in Chennai also remained at Rs 101.40 per litre and diesel Rs 91.43 per litre. Across the country as well, the price of fuel largely

remained unchanged on Tuesday but the retail rates varied depending on the level of local taxes. The global crude prices, which has touched a three-year high level of over \$85 a barrel on several occasions in the past one month, has softened now to around \$ 82 a barrel. Rise in the US inventory has pushed down crude prices, but OPEC+ decision on only gradual increase in production in December could raise crude prices further. **AGENCIES**

2 days after PM's meet, parl panel discusses crypto currency

**NEW DELHI:** Two days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level review meeting in connection with crypto currency, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance on Monday discussed the same with industry experts, association heads and stakeholders. After listening to the stakeholders' views, the majority of the members were of the opinion that the advent of digital currency is inevitable but it cannot go ahead without regulation, sources said. The Parliamentary panel, headed by former Union Minister and BJP MP Jayant Sinha met to discuss 'Hearing of views of Associations/Industry experts on the subject 'Crypto Finance: Opportunities and Challenges.'



Over the last few years, even as scores of private establishments have offered it as an attractive investment option, hundreds and thousands of Indians have invested in the highly volatile crypto currencies, a market which is not yet regulated. Newspaper advertisements and enticing audio-visuals on television and OTT platforms are constantly streamed to capture newer markets. This has put common investors' money at high risk. This is the first such meeting on the subject. The discussion led to a consensus that there is a need to have a regulator and there is a need of a regulatory mechanism for the same. However, as this is an emerging field, there was no clarity as to who or which department should be regulating it, sources said. "The government representatives have been asked to appear before the panel and address the concerns raised by the Parliamentary panel," the sources said. **AGENCIES**

India's Oct YoY merchandise exports up by 43pc; Imports rise 62 pc

**NEW DELHI:** India's October merchandise exports rose to \$35.65 billion, higher by 43.05 per cent on a year-on-year basis, official data showed on Monday. Exports during October 2020 stood at \$24.92 billion. The data by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed that in comparison to October 2019, last month's exports rose by 35.89 per cent. "Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in October 2021 were \$26.09 billion, as compared to \$20.43 billion in October 2020, registering a positive growth of 27.75 per cent," the Ministry said. "As compared to October 2019, non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports in October 2021 registered a positive growth of 36.82 per cent." Similarly, India's merchandise imports in October 2021 increased, rising by 62.51 per cent over last year to \$55.37 billion from \$34.07 billion. "Oil imports in October 2021 were \$14.43 billion which was 140.47 per cent higher in dollar terms, compared to \$6 billion in October 2020. Non-oil imports in October 2021



were estimated at \$40.94 billion which was 45.85 per cent higher in dollar terms, compared to \$28.07 billion in October 2020." "Non-Oil and Non-Gold imports were \$35.84 billion in October 2021, recording a positive growth of 40.14 per cent, as compared to non-oil and non-gold imports of \$25.57 billion in October

2020. Non-Oil and Non-Gold imports in October 2021 recorded a positive growth of 35.66 per cent over October 2019. "Consequently, trade deficit widened by 115.50 per cent on a year-on-year basis to \$19.73 billion in September 2021 from \$9.15 billion in the like period of 2020. It had widened to \$11.75 billion in October 2019. **AGENCIES**

ITC signs Jaipur hotel for its luxury brand Mementos

**NEW DELHI:** Days after unveiling its new luxury brand Mementos with Ekaaya Udaipur, ITC Hotels on Tuesday sealed another agreement to open a hotel under the new umbrella in Jaipur. The agreement was signed by ITC Hotels Chief Executive Anil Chadha and Mementos Jaipur owner Ritesh Derewala in the presence of Nakul Anand, Executive Director, ITC Ltd. The Mementos hotels in Jaipur and Udaipur, according to an ITC Hotels media release, are poised to be top favourites in the destination wedding segment. Targeting this market, Mementos Jaipur is all set to unveil the two-acre Shahi Bagh, a Mughal Gardens-inspired setting for weddings, celebrations and showcases in the Meetings Incentives Conference Events (MICE) segment.



This luxury hotel, located at Kukas close to the Pink City, celebrates the architecture, art, culture and colours of Jaipur. Its 130-plus rooms will be spread over sprawling 25 acres. "All the rooms have the luxury of space with a minimum size of 50 sq. mt each and comfortable sit-out courtyards," the media release said. Also on offer will be the formidable food and beverage repertoire of ITC Hotels, including the acclaimed Kebabs & Kurries restaurant. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Chadha said: "The growth story of ITC Hotels is driven by an asset-right strategy. Brand Mementos helps us deliver unique luxury stays across different destinations through collaborations with asset owners who choose ITC Hotels for its top-notch hospitality expertise." Derewala added: "These are exciting times as we see a pick-up in the leisure business. ITC's prowess in food and beverage is well known and we see the value they bring to the hospitality business in driving and managing high-profile events. Partnering with the right brand and operator was of immense importance to us." **AGENCIES**

India to step up oil exploration, production in very big way: Hardeep Puri

**ABU DHABI:** India will have "massive additional" areas for oil exploration and production by 2025, said Hardeep Singh Puri, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, and Housing and Urban Affairs, at an event here. "As far as the government of India is concerned, we are going to step on the accelerator in terms of exploration and production in a very big way," Puri said after opening the India pavilion at the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition and Conference (ADIPEC) on Monday. India will double its oil and gas exploration acreage in the northeast part of the country. "In the northeast, we will increase the area under E and P (exploration and production)



from 30,000 square km to 60,000 square km," he said. The minister said that India aims to expand its gas pipeline network to 34,000 km. "This means \$60 billion investment in gas pipeline infrastructure alone, increasing the refining capacity from 250 million metric tonnes to 400 million metric tonnes per annum by 2030 and gas mix from 6 per cent to 15 per cent," he said. The ADIPEC returns as a face-to-face and in-person event presenting the global energy industry with

its first opportunity to discuss the impact of the key decisions of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26), and define the energy agenda for the next three decades. The minister said that at the COP26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi committed to hit net-zero carbon emissions by 2070. "At the Glasgow COP26 Summit, the Prime Minister made some very bold announcements and committed us to net zero by 2070," he said. At the ADIPEC, Puri will be engaging in bilateral meetings with his counterparts. "The last year hasn't been easy as the Covid-19 pandemic subjected us to confront challenges, which were not experienced for a long time." **AGENCIES**

Road General insurers in India, China, Indonesia may reduce exposure to coal industry gradually: Moody's

**CHENNAI:** General insurers in India, China, Indonesia and Vietnam, part of the Asia-Pacific nations, will take a gradual approach in reducing their exposure to coal or coal related industries, said Moody's Investors Service in a new report. According to Moody's, the plan of Asia-Pacific (APAC) insurers to curtail or even cease underwriting and investment exposures to coal or coal-related industries are credit positive, although their coal exposures are generally small. According to Moody's, such initiatives will reduce insurers' potential liability risk from weather-related claims and stranded asset risk, where insurers' coal-related investment assets will lose economic value. "APAC economies' coal depen-



dency will drive insurers' pace of coal reduction. China (A1 stable), India (Baa3 stable), Vietnam (Baa3 positive) and Indonesia (Baa2 stable) are more dependent on coal than other APAC economies for their energy consumption. As a result, insurers in these economies are more likely to take a gradual approach in reducing their coal exposures," said Young Kim, a Moody's analyst. By contrast, insurers operating in economies with low coal dependencies,

such as Japan (A1 stable), and Korea (Aa2 stable) will take a more progressive approach to lowering coal exposures. Meanwhile, the speed at which different economies can reduce their existing carbon exposure will vary. This will especially be the case where these economies need to balance environmental concerns that drive carbon emission initiatives with broader policies and socioeconomic considerations. Foreign insurers operating in APAC markets could incorporate their parent companies' broader environmental social and governance commitments in their local underwriting and investment practices regarding coal-intensive sectors. **AGENCIES**

India's Oct wholesale price inflation rises to over 12 pc

**NEW DELHI:** Higher prices of primary goods, food items and costly transport fuel stiffened India's October wholesale inflation on both sequential and year-on-year basis. The annual rate of inflation, based on wholesale prices, rose to 12.64 per cent last month from 10.66 per cent in September. Similarly, on a YoY basis, the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) data furnished by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has risen exponentially over October 2020, when it stood at 1.31 per cent. "The high rate of inflation in October is primarily due to the rise in prices of mineral oils, basic metals, food products, crude petroleum and natural gas, chemicals and chemical products etc, as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year," the ministry said



in its review of 'Index Numbers of Wholesale Price in India' for October. "The onth over month change in WPI index for October 2021 (as compared to September 2021) was 2.28 per cent," it said. As per the data, the primary articles segment, which has one

of the highest weightage in the WPI, increased at a faster rate of 5.20 per cent in October as compared to 4.10 per cent reported for September 2021. In the fuel and power segment, which has a weightage of 13.15 per cent, the rise in in-

flation was recorded at 37.18 per cent from 24.81 per cent in September 2021. However, cost of manufactured products, which has a weightage of 64.23 per cent, increased at a faster rate of 12.04 per cent from 11.41 per cent. Similarly, the growth rate of WPI food index consisting of food articles from the primary articles group and food products from the manufactured products group rose to 3.06 per cent from 1.14 per cent. "Broad-based input price pressures amid a depreciating INR, as well as a spike in vegetable and electricity prices, pushed the WPI inflation to a higher-than-expected five month high 12.5 per cent in October 2021, with the core inflation rising to a fresh all time high of 11.9 per cent," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA. "Other than

non-food primary articles and minerals, all the commodity sub-groups recorded an uptick in YoY inflation in October 2021 relative to the previous month." According to Sunil K. Sinha, Principal Economist, India Ratings and Research: "This is the seventh consecutive month in which wholesale inflation has stayed at double-digit level." "A sharp surge in the momentum effect of 2.3 percentage point was the reason behind rise in wholesale inflation in October 2021. This primarily came from the fuel and power inflation which jumped to 37.18 per cent in October from 24.81 per cent in September 2021. Within fuel and power group, electricity prices showed a sharp jump to 10.8 per cent in October 2021 from a deflation of 6.74 per cent in September 2021." **AGENCIES**



**"I GOT MARRIED TO MY EVERYTHING TODAY; MY BOYFRIEND, MY PARTNER IN CRIME, MY FAMILY, MY SOULMATE...MY BEST FRIEND FOR THE LAST 11 YEARS! THERE IS NO GREATER FEELING THAN TO BE YOUR WIFE! HERE'S TO OUR FOREVER"**

my everything today, my soulmate, my best friend, my family. Today there is no greater happiness for me than being called your husband @patralekhaa Here's to forever .. and beyond." Patralekhaa too shared a few pictures from the wedding. "I got married to my everything today; my boyfriend, my partner in crime, my family, my soulmate...My best friend for the last 11 years! There is no greater feeling than to be your wife! Here's to our forever," she wrote. The couple have been in a relationship for 11 years. Recently, a video of Rajkummar going down on one knee and asking his ladylove to marry him went viral. Their wedding invite too took over social media. Rajkummar and Patralekhaa, who are all set to get married this month, have together worked in films such as 'Citylights' and the web show 'Bose: Dead/Alive'.

# Rajkummar Rao: Got married to my everything

**MUMBAI:** Bollywood actors Rajkummar Rao and Patralekhaa are now a married couple after dating each other for over a decade. The two lovebirds tied-the-knot in Chandigarh on Monday and Rajkummar said that he got married to his everything. The actor shared a picture

on Instagram on Monday evening after the wedding rituals took place. Sharing the first photos from their wedding, which currently has 2.2 million likes on the photo-sharing website, Rajkummar wrote: "Finally after 11 years of love, romance, friendship and fun, I got married to



# Hardik Pandya: My watch cost Rs 1.50 crore, not Rs 5 crore

**MUMBAI:** A peeved cricketer Hardik Pandya on Tuesday said that contrary to speculation, an expensive watch in his possession when he arrived from Dubai early on Monday with Team India was worth Rs 1.50 crore and not Rs 5 crore. "The cost of the watch is Rs 1.50 crore and not Rs 5 crore as per the rumours floating around on social media," Pandya asserted, on certain reports claiming otherwise. Issuing a detailed rebuttal on media theories that his watch "worth Rs 5 crore" was allegedly seized by Customs sleuths and he was reportedly detained, Pandya said that "wrong perceptions have been floating around on the social media regarding my declaration to Customs at Mumbai Airport."



The 28-year old cricketer claimed that after arriving here from Dubai early on November 15 and picking up his luggage, he proceeded to the Mumbai Airport Customs counter to declare the items brought by him and to pay the requisite customs duty. "I had voluntarily declared all the items that I'd lawfully purchased from Dubai and was ready to pay whatever duties that needed to be paid... All allegations against me of

crossing any legal boundaries are totally unfounded," said Pandya. In fact, the cricketer contended that the Customs Department asked him to provide all the purchase documents, which he submitted and now they are doing the proper valuation for the duty which he has already confirmed he would pay. "I am a law-abiding citizen of the country and respect all government agencies. I have

received all the cooperation from the Mumbai Customs department and I have assured my full cooperation to them with whatever legitimate documents they need to get this matter cleared," Pandya said. Pandya, who is the younger brother of another cricketer Krunal, both hailing from Vadodara was at the receiving end of many who brutally roasted him on social media. **AGENCIES**

# Gen Naravane interacts with Indian peacekeepers deployed in Israel as part of UN mission

**TEL AVIV:** Indian Army chief Gen MM Naravane on Thursday interacted with the Indian peacekeepers deployed in Israel as part of the UN mission and complimented them for their dedication towards duty. Gen Naravane, who arrived in Israel on Sunday on his maiden visit to further strengthen India's defence and security cooperation with the Jewish state, also laid a wreath at the Indian Soldiers War Memorial in Jerusalem. "General MM Naravane #COAS interacted with #IndianArmy Logistics Company peacekeepers deployed in #Israel as part of #UnitedNation mission & complimented them for their dedication towards duty. President #AWWA also interacted with soldiers about the well-being of their families, the Indian Army tweeted. General MM Naravane #COAS laid a wreath at the Indian Soldiers War Memorial in #Jerusalem & paid homage to the #Bravehearts of #IndianArmy who made the supreme sacrifice during the World War I," it said in another tweet. On Wednesday, Gen Naravane visited the Israel Defence Forces headquarters where he was briefed



on multi-domain concept and force build up. He had also visited the Indian Cemetery in the northern Israeli coastal city of Haifa on Wednesday where he paid tributes to brave Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during the World War I to liberate the city from the Ottoman rule in what most war historians consider the last great cavalry campaign in history. The Indian Army commemorates September 23 every year as Haifa Day to pay its respects to the three brave Indian Cavalry Regiments - Mysore, Hyderabad and Jodhpur Lancers - that helped liberate Haifa following a dashing cavalry action by the 15th Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade. On Tuesday, the Indian

Army chief visited the Northern border of Israel where he was briefed on terrain and border management aspects by Israel Defence Forces. Gen Naravane met with Major General Tamir Yadai, Israeli Army's Chief of the Ground Forces, on Monday and discussed ways to bolster bilateral military cooperation and also visited the Special Operations Unit of the Israel Defence Forces where he was briefed on various aspects of counter-terrorism operations. His five-day maiden visit to Israel comes weeks after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar travelled to Tel Aviv. In August, then Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal R K S Bhaduria also paid a four-day visit to Israel. **AGENCIES**

# ATP Finals: Djokovic makes winning start in record title bid

**TURIN:** World No 1 Novak Djokovic began his campaign for a sixth ATP Finals title with victory on Monday, defeating Norway's Casper Ruud 7-6(4), 6-2 in Green Group action. The top seed, who took a tumble on a breakpoint in the first game, rallied from a break down, found his rhythm from the baseline to fire 23 winners to secure victory after 90 minutes. Ruud converted the lone breakpoint in the first set as he took Djokovic to the tiebreak. But that was his only success in the match as the Serb World No 1 did not give him many chances, converting three of the five break points he earned in the match. "I recovered from that fall on that breakpoint in that first game," Djokovic said in his on-court interview as reported by the ATP. "It was very strange. I played a good forehand and came into the net and had a pretty comfortable overhead and I slipped, tripped, dropped my racquet, and lost my serve. The conditions here are quite tough. If you lose your serve, it is difficult to get it back. But I managed to stay in. I am very pleased with



the way I handled the match." Djokovic served 10 aces as compared to none by Ruud, who also sent down four double faults. He won 90% first server points and won a total of 77% total service points. The Serbian, who last lifted the Brad Drewett Trophy in 2015, is aiming to tie Roger Federer's record six triumphs at the tournament, which is being held in Turin for the first time. Djokovic will also play Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece and Andrey Rublev of Russia in the round-robin stage, with the pair facing off in their opening match on Monday evening. **AGENCIES**

# NZ to start administering booster doses from Nov 29



**PEOPLE ARE ELIGIBLE TO TAKE UP THE OFFER OF A BOOSTER ONCE SIX MONTHS HAVE PASSED SINCE THEIR SECOND DOSE, BUT THERE'S NO NEED TO RUSH TO GET THE BOOSTER. THE SCIENCE SHOWS FULLY VACCINATED PEOPLE REMAIN REALLY WELL PROTECTED FROM INFECTION, AND FROM BEING SERIOUSLY ILL IF THEY DO GET COVID-19**

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand will start administering Covid-19 booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine from November 29, a Minister said here on Monday. The country's regulatory authority Medsafe has already approved the use of Pfizer as a

booster for people above 18, Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins told a press conference. The decision followed further advice to the cabinet from the vaccine technical advisory group, reports Xinhua news

agency. "Vaccination is the best protection against Covid-19. Booster doses will be available free for anyone in New Zealand aged 18 or older who has completed their two-dose course more than six months ago," Hipkins said, adding people will be able to access boosters in New Zealand, whether they received their earlier doses here or overseas. The Pfizer vaccine will be used for boosters, regardless of which vaccine was used for earlier doses. It is the

same one used for the first two doses in the vaccination rollout, he said. "While most other countries are rationing boosters to certain groups, we have made the decision to make boosters available to everyone. That ensures simplicity and equity," said the minister. "People are eligible to take up the offer of a booster once six months have passed since their second dose, but there's no need to rush to get the booster. The science shows fully vaccinated people remain really well protected from infection, and from being seriously ill if they do get Covid-19," he added. Hipkins said healthcare and border workers are a priority group for booster vaccine doses because they are on the front line against Covid-19 and because large numbers of them completed their vaccine course six months or longer ago. Older people including people in residential care are also a priority to access booster doses. There are currently 144,000 people in New Zealand who have been vaccinated for six months and 455,847 who will be by the end of the year, he said. **AGENCIES**

# No consensus on inviting Ukraine: NATO chief



**BRUSSELS:** NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has said that member countries have not reached a consensus on inviting Ukraine to join the military alliance. "We have no consensus agreement in NATO now on inviting Ukraine into becoming a full member," Stoltenberg said in an interview on Monday. He added that NATO has strengthened relations with Ukraine. In a political statement at the Bucharest Summit in 2008, NATO said Ukraine will eventually become a member of the bloc, but refused to provide the Membership Action Plan to Kiev, the first step in the legal procedure for joining the organisation. After the pro-West authorities came into power in Ukraine in 2014, the country has increased interactions with NATO and made joining the bloc a priority. NATO recognised Ukraine as its Enhanced Opportunities Partner in 2020. However, the alliance has not promised Ukraine immediate membership prospects. **AGENCIES**

# POTPOURRI

# Taylor Swift performs 'All Too Well' on 'Saturday Night Live'



**LOS ANGELES:** Singer Taylor Swift delivered a 10-minute performance of 'All Too Well' on 'Saturday Night Live' as she kept up the momentum behind Friday's release of 'Red (Taylor's

Version)'. The moody, anthemic ballad has become a fan favourite over the years and was expanded from the original 2012 version of the song. Swift began the performance

with an acoustic guitar and by the end was joined by two female backup singers. Swift and a few musicians performed on top of a patch of autumn leaves and in front of a giant-screen projection of the 'All Too Well' short film that she directed and released on Friday, reports variety.com. Swift was playful during the performance. She rolled her eyes and twirled her finger when she sang one of the new lyrics to 'All Too Well'. Jonathan Majors, star of Netflix's new Western drama 'The Harder They Fall', hosted this week's episode. Earlier in the episode, Swift made a surprise appearance in a pre-taped segment with 'SNL' star Pete Davidson and a trio of the show's writers - Ben Marshall, John Higgins and Martin Herlihy - who also perform as the comedy group Please Don't Destroy. Swift's fifth appearance as musical guest on 'SNL' comes at a busy time for the superstar. On November 12 she released her second album re-recording of her early Big Machine work, 'Red (Taylor's Version)' and the 'All Too Well' short film. The new rendition of the 2012 album is expanded to 30 tracks, from 16. **AGENCIES**

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