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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The three controversial farm laws that led to one of the biggest farmers protests in Indian history, will be withdrawn, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in a stunning development today.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."

of the key demands of the protesting agriculturists. The rollback is also an astute and shrewd political move by the BJP as it eyes to retain UP, a big deciding factor for 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The saffron party has been facing massive boycotts in western Uttar Pradesh--nucleus of farmers' protest in the state. The region also holds one-fourth of the total electorate of UP. The BJP has also lost ground in Punjab after its ally, Shiromani Akali Dal fell out over the issue of farm laws.



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**



Priyanka asks women to fend for themselves

CHITRAKOOT (UP): Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadera 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 be-

ing 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

groups -- listening attentively to the Congress leader's programmes for women empowerment. Priyanka Gandhi also offered prayers at the famous Matgajendra Shiv temple in Chitrakoot. A special stage had been constructed on a boat for Priyanka Gandhi but the Congress leader chose to sit with the women during the interaction. Political analysts feel that the selection of Chitrakoot as the venue for a dialogue with women was a carefully curated move as Ramghat area of the district is, perhaps, one of the only other places to be close to the life of Lord Ram who has played a key role in drawing the political canvas of UP in recent decades. **AGENCIES**

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

NEWDELHI: 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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Historic day, victory of farmers & democracy: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI: Responding to the revocation of three farm laws by the Centre on Friday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal called the day 'historic and victory of not just Indian farmers, but also democracy'. "It is a historic day and will be remembered as August 15 and January 26. Today, the Central government had to succumb to the farmer's constant struggle and repeal the three black farm laws. It is not just our farmer's victory, but also democracy's as farmers have made it very clear to every political party and leader in the country that in a democracy it is the people that are supposed to be heard," Kejriwal said in a virtual media brief. Hailing the almost a year-long protest that began nearly two months after the introduction of farm laws in Parliament in September 2020, the AAP leader said, "This struggle had brought every Indian, irrespective of their differences, together. Youth, women, labourers, aarthis, traders from states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal



and Kerala stood united against the laws. This might have been the biggest and longest peaceful struggle in the world. "People continued to strive in sultry heat, chilling winters and heavy downpour. The government and its agencies tried their best to break them by labeling them as Khalistani, anti-na-

tional and terrorist, but failed. Despite all of this our farmers kept their fight on and won it." "However, more than 700 of our farmers lost their lives during the protest. Their lives could have been saved if only the laws were taken back earlier," he added. Soon after the announcement of the

repealing of the farm laws, Kejriwal tweeted, "What a joyous news on the occasion of Guru Purab! All three laws have been repealed. More than 700 farmers got martyred. Their sacrifice will always be remembered by the generations to come as to how they saved farming and their fellow brothers by putting their lives on the line. I salute the farmers of my country."

A little more than a year after they were passed, followed by widespread agitation by the farmers declining to accept them, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday announced that the Centre has decided to repeal the three farm laws. Coinciding with the auspicious occasion of Guru Nanak Jayanti, Modi also announced that the constitutional process to repeal the laws would be taken up in the winter session of Parliament that begins on November 29 and appealed to the agitating farmers to withdraw their agitation and go back to their homes. **AGENCIES**

Reshuffle continues in Delhi Police; 6 cops transferred

NEW DELHI: Delhi Lt. Governor Anil Bajjal on Thursday ordered a reshuffle in the ranks of six senior officers of Delhi Police. According to an order by Bajjal, as many as four Indian Police Service (IPS) officers and two Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar Islands Police Service cadre officers have been transferred to new positions. Jaspal Singh, a 1996-batch IPS officer who was holding the charge of Special CP (New Delhi Range) has now been posted as Managing Director of the Delhi Police Housing Corporation. Special CP (Crime) Alok Kumar was transferred to Provisioning and Logistics which is under the Provisioning and Finance Division. Manish Kumar Aggarwal, Special CP (Traffic HQ) has been sent to Protective Security Division as ID Shukla, who was earlier posted there was transferred to Goa as the Director General of Police. **AGENCIES**

Delhi BJP to intensify protest against new excise policy



NEW DELHI: The BJP's Delhi unit has planned to intensify its protest against the new excise policy of the city government and formed a "Sangharsh Committee" to take forward the agitation, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said on Friday. The 26-member committee, formed on directions of Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta, will lead protests across opening of new liquor vends across the city in coming days, he said.

Bidhuri, the Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, claimed that the new policy under which liquor stores are being opened in the city will "jeopardise" women safety and send youth in the wrong direction as it seeks to bring down the minimum legal drinking age from 25 years to 21 years.

The committee met on Friday to discuss its strategy for the agitation. Delhi BJP leaders including Adesh Gupta, South Delhi MP Ramesh Bidhuri, Ashish Sood, Kuljeet Chahal, Rajiv Babbar and Rajan Tewari attended the meeting. "The new excise policy which promotes liquor consumption will not be allowed to be implemented and protests will be held against it in all 70 Assembly constituencies in Delhi. Representatives of various religious, social

organizations, resident and market welfare associations will be associated with it," Gupta said. Under the new Excise Policy of the Delhi government, there will be 850 liquor vends in the city divided into 32 zones. Each municipal ward will have two-three swanky liquor stores with walk-in facility for consumers. **AGENCIES**

Delhi govt asks motorists to get colour-coded stickers for fuel type identification



NEW DELHI: In view of the alarming levels of air pollution, the Transport department of the Delhi government has asked motorists to get colour-coded fuel stickers for their vehicles. The display of chromium-based hologram stickers on all vehicles registered in NCT of Delhi are mandatory as per a Supreme Court order and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, said a notice issued by the department on Friday. "The owners of old vehicles are advised to approach dealers concerned for affixing Chromium based hologram stickers on the windshield of their vehicles depending on the relevant class of fuel," it said. The colour-coded stickers help enforcement personnel visibly identify fuel type of a vehicle during checks on the roads. Vehicles registered prior to April 2019 did not come with these stickers blue for petrol or CNG and orange for diesel vehicles.

According to the rules, owners of vehicles without sticker are liable to be slapped with a fine of Rs 10,000 compoundable to Rs 5,500 for the offence. "We are only increasing awareness about these stickers and no enforcement drive is planned in near future," said a Transport department officer. The stickers also contain details like the registration number, registering authority, a laser-branded PIN, and the engine and chassis numbers of the vehicles. **AGENCIES**

'Delhi Govt working on war footing to clean Yamuna by February 2025'

NEW DELHI: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday said his government is working on a war footing on a six-point action plan to clean the Yamuna by February 2025. The chief minister said he will deliver on the promise he made before the 2019 Assembly polls to clean the Delhi stretch of the river.



"It took the Yamuna 70 years to become so polluted. The damage done in 70 years cannot be undone in just two days. I had made a promise that I will clean the Yamuna (in Delhi) by the next Assembly polls and will take a dip in it along with all of you," he said at a press conference. "We are working on a war footing to clean the Yamuna. There are six specific action points to achieve this and I am personally

monitoring the progress," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader said.

He said the government is constructing new sewage treatment plants (STPs) as well as increasing the capacity of the existing ones and upgrading those. "This will increase our sewage treatment capacity from around 600 million gallons of

waste water a day to 750-800 MGD," Kejriwal said. He said the waste water from four major drains falling in the Yamuna—Najafgarh, Badshahpur, Supplementary and Ghazipur—is being treated in situ. The city government will shut down the industries discharging industrial waste into the Yamuna, the chief minister said. **AGENCIES**

Delhi Court refuses interim injunction against Salman Khurshid's book

NEW DELHI: A Delhi Court on Wednesday refused to grant ad-interim ex-parte injunction in a suit filed by Hindu Sena President Vishnu Gupta seeking direction to stop the publication, circulation, and sale of former Union Minister Salman Khurshid's book 'Sunrise over Ayodhya: Nationhood in our times' for its alleged remarks on Hindutva. Additional Civil Judge Preeti Parewa of Patiala House Court after taking note of the submissions made by the plaintiff's counsel Akshay Aggarwal said, the plaintiff had failed to establish the balance of convenience in his favour and declined the grant of interim relief.

The defendants herein have the right to publish the book, the judge noted in the order saying, "The plaintiff has not been able

to establish that inconvenience will be caused to him to avoid the book or the alleged offensive excerpts of the book.

"The court put up the matter for further arguments and clarification on the maintainability of the present suit on November 18. "As a principle, ex-parte injunction could be granted only under exceptional circumstances," the order read. As per the suit, the comment has been made in a chapter called "The Saffron Sky" on Page 113 of the book which reads as under "Sanatan dharma and classical Hinduism known to sages and saints was being pushed aside by a robust version of Hindutva, by all standards, a political version similar to jihadist Islam of groups like ISIS and Boko Haram of recent years". **AGENCIES**

Fraud selling govt land for Rs 45 cr held by Delhi Police



NEW DELHI: The Economic Offences Wing of the Delhi Police have arrested a fraudster for illegal sale of government property worth Rs 45 crore, an official said here on Friday. Furnishing details about the case, which probably seemed ripped from a Bollywood flick 'Khosla Ka Ghosla', the official said a complaint was filed by Timpi Sabharwal stating that she was approached by the accused identified as Rockes B. Sandhu and S.P. Garg who offered her a lucrative proposal for selling a land near Karbala, New Delhi for a total sale consideration of Rs 45 crore. Sandhu had also confirmed having all authority and rights for selling the land in question and induced her to enter into a letter of intent for the same

and subsequently, on the basis of his misrepresentation, Timpi paid an amount of Rs 3.19 crore to him as advance money.

"The full and final payment was to be made when the sale-deed was to be executed in favour of the complainant but once he usurped the aforesaid amount, he had lost interest in the deal and never executed sale-deed," the official said. After filing the complaint, the police immediately swung into action and started probing the matter. The first thing the cops came to know was that as per the revenue record, the land in question was government land and was placed at the disposal of the DDA. The police, after getting all these details, constituted a team to apprehend

the accused. The accused was absconding since the registration of an FIR and shifted to places such as Inderpuri, Delhi, Chandigarh and later to Amritsar in Punjab. Thus, a Look Out Circular (LOC) was issued against Sandhu.

Thereafter, on the basis of technical surveillance, the accused offender Sandhu was located nearby the Connaught Place in Delhi and was arrested. He was later taken to a local court which sent him to three days of police custody. Sharing details about the accused's modus operandi, the police said Sandhu used to identify the unoccupied or vacant properties through property brokers and thereafter, float lucrative offers and minimal prices for the property to induce the public. After taking advance payment, he used to flee away. Deputy Commissioner of Police-III (Economic Offences Wing) K. Ramesh urged the people to take proper measures before investing in any property. "Before investing in property, do proper verification and due diligence from land-owning agencies with regard to status of property," he said. Further investigation of the case is still in progress, the official added. **AGENCIES**

Inflation rate lowest in Delhi during pandemic: Report



NEW DELHI: The rate of inflation in the national capital was the lowest among the five major metros during the Covid-19 pandemic year, according to an annual report of the price index for Delhi. In the 2020-2021 financial year, the increase in inflation in Delhi was 3 per cent while Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Bengaluru registered 4.6 per cent, 4.4 per cent, 4.1 per cent and 4.0 per cent, respectively, said the report prepared by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics.

"In the financial year 2020-2021, the rate of growth in average annual inflation based on Consumer Price

Index (CPI) was 5 per cent nationally while in Delhi this rate was only 3.0 per cent," Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said while presenting the report on Thursday, while also reiterating the Delhi's government commitment towards the common people. According to the Minister, the national inflation rate for food prices was 5.7 per cent and in Delhi this rate was only 4.1 per cent, the lowest in the country. "The Housing Index of the Consumer Price Index saw an increase of 5.2 per cent in the entire India in the financial year 2020-21, but in Delhi this rate was only 3.9 per cent," he added. **AGENCIES**

Delhi air quality remains 'very poor'; minimum temp 10.9 deg C

NEW DELHI: The air quality in the national capital remained in the 'very poor' category on Friday with AQI in the evening being recorded at 381, data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) showed. Neighbouring Faridabad (354), Ghaziabad (372), Greater Noida (388), Gurugram (345) and Noida (385) also recorded air quality index (AQI) in the 'very poor' category. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered good, 51 and 100 satisfactory, 101 and 200 moderate, 201 and 300 poor, 301 and 400 very poor, and 401 and 500 severe. According to authorities, the air quality is likely to improve "significantly" from Sunday owing to relatively strong winds and reach "poor category".

To combat pollution, the Delhi government on Wednesday had issued 10 directions, including a ban on the entry of trucks carrying non-essential items in the city and closure of schools and colleges till further orders. On Thursday too, the AQI had stood in the 'very poor' category. Delhi's AQI had on Tuesday slipped into 'severe' category in the evening, and the rising pollution



level had been a matter of concern for all authorities and health experts. Meanwhile, the minimum temperature in the national capital was recorded at 10.9 degrees Celsius in the morning, one notch below the season's average, India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The maximum temperature in the evening was recorded

at 22.4 degrees Celsius, and a relative humidity of 69 per cent on Friday, it said. On Thursday, the city had registered a low of 10.5 degrees Celsius.

At 9.6 degrees Celsius, the national capital on Wednesday had recorded the lowest minimum temperature of the season so far. **AGENCIES**

SC agrees to examine plea against Asthana's appointment as Delhi Police chief

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to examine a plea challenging the appointment of Gujarat cadre IPS officer Rakesh Asthana as the Delhi Police commissioner, just three days before his retirement.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, representing the NGO Centre for Public Interest Litigation, submitted before a bench headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud that he would file a special

leave petition challenging the Delhi High Court ruling, stating that there was no irregularity in Asthana's appointment as the Delhi Police Commissioner, by Monday. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, and senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Asthana, objected to pendency of writ petition saying the issue had already been decided by the high court. They submitted

that court, however, may consider a plea challenging the high court's judgement.

After hearing brief arguments in the matter, the top court posted the matter for further hearing on November 26. The bench also asked Bhushan to serve the copy on Centre's counsel as well as Asthana to obviate any chances of delay in hearing. On October 12, a bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti



Singh said: "In view of the aforesaid context of judgements, expounding the principle of contemporaneity expositio, we do not find any irregularity, illegality or infirmity in the action of Respondent No 1 (Centre) in appointing Respondent No 2 (Asthana), following the procedure followed for nearly over a decade."

The high court also ruled that Centre has power, jurisdiction

and authority to make inter-cadre deputation of officers in public interest and the Supreme Court's judgements in Prakash Singh case on appointment of police heads would not apply to Union Territories. The court junked the petition against Asthana's appointment as Commissioner of Delhi Police on July 27, just before his superannuation on July 31. "We see no reason to interfere in the decision of granting

Inter-Cadre deputation to Respondent No 2," it noted, in its 77-page judgment.

The high court had said that petitioners -- advocate Sadre Alam and NGO CPIL led by advocate Bhushan -- have not been able to make out a case calling for interference or even remotely demonstrate that there is any blot in the service career of Asthana, which making him unsuitable for the post. **AGENCIES**

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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, Raghendra 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 was speaking at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of Ekal Shrihari Samiti, an organization working for the social and cultural empowerment of tribals, at the Garware Club in Mumbai recently. He presented the Ekal Shrihari Samman to Mangal Prabhat Lodha, MLA, Smt Manju Lodha and 15 other eminent social workers.



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.

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.

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

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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

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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.

ALSO READ | ATP FINALS: DJOKOVIC MAKES WINNING START IN RECORD TITLE BID * P8 | NZ TO START ADMINISTERING BOOSTER DOSES FROM NOV 29 * P8

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 encryption. "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 per cent 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.

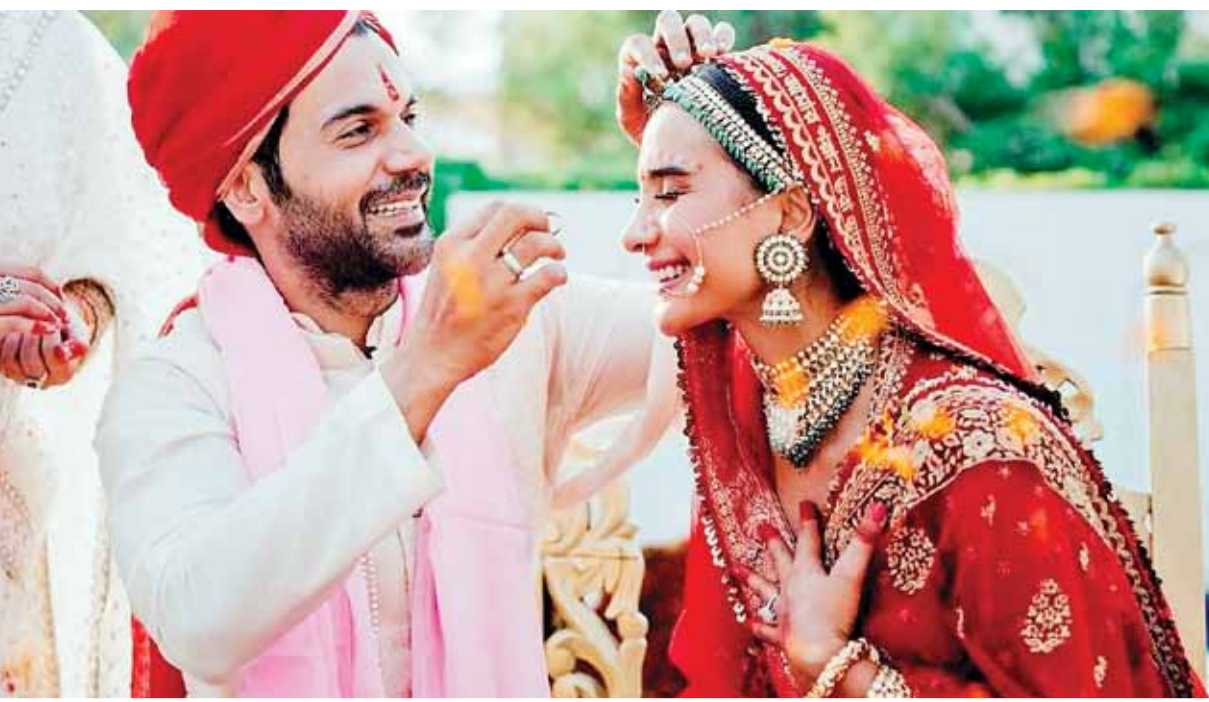
In the pre-DeMo period (2013-Q3 2016), the top 7 cities saw approx. 16.15 lakh units launched while

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**



"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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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