

**CITY TALKS**



**DELHI NOW CLOSE TO WINNING BATTLE AGAINST DENGUE: CM KEJRIWAL**

**BANKING & FINANCE**



**MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA Q2 NET DIPS 66 PER CENT TO RS 487 CRORE**

**POTPOURRI**



**BHUMI PEDNEKAR JOINS RAJKUMMAR RAO IN BHEED**

# China says new land border law will not change country's position on border issues

**BEIJING:** China said that its new land border law will not affect the implementation of existing border treaties and urged relevant countries to avoid making "wanton speculation" about a "normal domestic legislation", a day after India raised concerns over the legislation.

China's national legislature - the National People's Congress (NPC) - on October 23 adopted the new law on the protection and exploitation of the land border areas which drew sharp reaction from India as it was passed amid the protracted military standoff between the two sides in eastern Ladakh region. India and Bhutan are the two countries with which China is yet to finalise the border agreements, while Beijing resolved the boundary disputes with 12 other neighbours. While the India-China border dispute covers 3,488-km along the Line of Actual Control, the China-Bhutan row covers about 400 km.



On Wednesday, India hit out at Beijing for bringing out the new land border law and said it expects China to avoid taking any action under the "pretext" of the legislation that could "unilaterally" alter the situation in the border areas. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi described Chi-

na's decision to bring out the law as a matter of "concern" as it can have implications on the existing bilateral pacts on the management of the border and the overall boundary question. "China's unilateral decision to bring about a legislation which can have implication on our existing bilateral arrangements

on border management as well as on the boundary question is of concern to us," he said. "Such unilateral move will have no bearing on the arrangements that both sides have already reached earlier, whether it is on the boundary question or for maintaining peace and tranquillity along

the LAC in India-China border areas," he said.

Responding to questions on the Land Border Law, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said, "The law has clear provisions on conducting cooperation with countries sharing a national land boundary with China and handling boundary affairs on the basis of adhering to relevant treaties related to national land boundary affairs and the principle of equality and mutual benefit."

In an apparent response to India's concerns, he said, "It will not affect China's compliance with existing treaties related to national land boundary affairs. China has already signed or change China's current mode of boundary management and cooperation with countries sharing a land boundary with it. Nor will it alter China's position and proposition on relevant boundary issues." To a specific question about India's criticism of the law, Wang said,

"I just shared China's consideration behind promulgating the National Land Boundary Law. We hope relevant countries will abide by norms of international relations and refrain from wanton speculations on China's normal domestic legislation".

He, however, did not respond to Bagchi's remark that the "new law does not in our view confer any legitimacy to the so-called China Pakistan 'Boundary Agreement' of 1963 which the Government of India has consistently maintained is an illegal and invalid agreement." Under the agreement, Pakistan had surrendered approximately 5,300 km of territory to China in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) region. Earlier, elaborating on the provisions of the new law adopted by the NPC last week, Wang said President Xi Jinping signed a decree No. 99 on the same day announcing that the law will come into effect from January 1, 2022. **AGENCIES**

**HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK**

**1 Can't sell Pegasus spyware to non-government actors: Israel's envoy to India**

**2 3 Punjab women run over at farmers' protest site at Tikri border**

**3 Nykaa IPO subscribed 1.55 times on first day of issue**

**BJP not going anywhere, problem is with Rahul Gandhi: Prashant Kishore**

**NEW DELHI/PANAJI:** Poll strategist Prashant Kishore has said that the Bharatiya Janata Party is not going anywhere for many decades and the problem with Rahul Gandhi is that he thinks that the BJP will be overthrown by people.



Kishore said this in Goa and a clip of his Q and A session has been shared in social media. The statement comes at a time when the Trinamool is spreading itself outside Bengal, and is also a proof that the talks of Kishore's entry into the Congress have ended.

He said that the BJP will be at the centre of Indian politics for years, it wins or loses, much like the Congress in the first 40 years after Independence.

«BJP is going to be the centre of Indian polity, whether they win, whether they lose, like it

was for the first 40 years for Congress. BJP is going nowhere. Once you secure 30 per cent plus votes at the national level you are not going away in a hurry.

So do not ever get into this trap that people are getting angry and they will throw away (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi," he said.

«Maybe they will throw away Modi, but

BJP is not going anywhere. They are going to be here, they are to fight it out for the next many decades. It is not going in a hurry," Kishore answered when asked.

He added: «Unless you examine, understand and take cognizance of strength, you will never be able to put a counter to defeat him (BJP & Modi's strength)». He said the problem with Rahul Gandhi is he does not realise this but thinks people will overthrow the BJP. **AGENCIES**

**Aryan Khan gets bail in cruise drugs case**

**MUMBAI:** Aryan Khan, son of superstar Shah Rukh Khan, was on October 28 granted bail by the Bombay High Court, over 20 days after his arrest in the case of seizure of banned drugs aboard a cruise ship off the Mumbai coast.

A single Bench of Justice Nw Sambre also granted bail to his co-accused Arbaaz Merchant and Munmun Dhamecha.

"All three pleas are allowed. I will pass detailed orders by tomorrow evening," Justice Sambre said.

Aryan Khan's advocates then sought permission to submit cash bail to which the court refused and said surety is to be given.

"I could have given the order also tomorrow. But I gave it today," Justice Sambre said.

The legal team of the 23-year-old Aryan Khan, who is presently in judicial custody and lodged at the Arthur Road prison in central Mumbai, will now try to complete the formalities for his release by Friday. **AGENCIES**

**Modi most successful administrator: Amit Shah**



**NEW DELHI:** Launching a blistering attack on the previous UPA regime, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said each of the ministers in the Manmohan Singh cabinet used to consider them as Prime Minister and claimed that Narendra Modi is most successful administrator India has ever had.

Addressing the inaugural session of national conference on "Delivering Democracy: Reviewing two decades of PM Narendra Modi as Head of Government", Shah said the UPA government had no policy and vision for the country and a new corruption allegation every day marked the regime. **AGENCIES**

**Delhi Police start removing barricades from Tikri, Ghazipur**

**CHHAVI BHATIA**  
*New Delhi*

The Delhi Police sprung into action Friday to remove barricades after a Supreme Court hearing that highlighted how traffic in the area had been stopped by the authorities and not protesters. The Delhi Police could be seen removing the barricades and concertina wires it had put in place at Ghazipur and Tikri where farmers have been protesting for almost a year now against the Centre's new farm laws.

The police had blocked the area with multiple layers of barricades, giant nails, concertina wires and giant nails when farmers converged at various borders of the national capital.



Supporters of the government had alleged that the farmers had blocked the roads, causing inconvenience to thousands of commuters. Last week, the top court had said that while farmers had the right to protest, they cannot block the road indefinitely. The farmers' union,

on the other hand, told the court that it was the police that had barricaded the road and blocking vehicular movement.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Priyanka Kashyap said Friday, "The process of removing barricades on NH-9

has been started. The temporarily barricading is being removed to ease out vehicular movement. However, the National Highway 24 was already opened for the traffic."

The opening of the road stretch would help thousands of commuters in Ghaziabad, Delhi, Noida as well as those travelling between the national capital and interiors of Uttar Pradesh to Meerut and beyond.

A police officer told PTI that four of the eight layers of barricades at the Tikri border have been removed. However, the cement barricades are still there and the road remains closed for commuters, a senior officer was quoted as saying.

On Friday, Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait said that the farmers have not

blocked the roads as it was not part of their protest. "PM had said that farmers can sell crops anywhere," he added. "If roads are open, we'll also go to Parliament to sell our crops. First, our tractors will go to Delhi."

Meanwhile, Haryana government officials, including Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Rajeev Arora and police chief PK Agrawal had visited the Tikri border with a delegation of farmers on Tuesday and found that the border had been sealed by the Delhi Police.

A meeting was held between the police officials of Haryana and Delhi. After this, authorities reached an agreement and the process of removing barricades started.

**Asean's unity, centrality always important priority for India: Modi**

**NEW DELHI:** ASEAN's unity and centrality have always been an important priority for India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said and announced that the year 2022 will be celebrated as the 'ASEAN-India Friendship Year' to mark 30 years of their partnership.

Addressing the India-ASEAN Summit virtually, Modi said India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) and ASEAN's Outlook for the Indo-Pacific are the framework for their shared vision and mutual cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

"We all had to deal with many challenges due to the Covid pandemic. But this challenging time was also a test



for India-ASEAN friendship. In the Covid era, our mutual cooperation, mutual sympathy, will continue to strengthen our relationship in future, and will be the basis of goodwill among our people," Modi said. "History is witness that India and ASEAN have had vibrant relations for thousands of years.

Shades of that are visible in our shared values, traditions, languages, texts, architecture, culture, food and, therefore, the unity and centrality of ASEAN have always been an important priority for India," he said.

This special role of ASEAN is embedded in India's Act East Policy and Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), he said.

"The year 2022 will mark the completion of 30 years of our partnership. India will also complete 75 years of its Independence. I am very glad that we will celebrate this important milestone as the 'Year of ASEAN-India Friendship'," Modi said. **AGENCIES**

**Survey shows Delhi has sero positivity of 97 pc: Health Minister Satyendar Jain**

**NEW DELHI:** The sixth serological survey has shown that the national capital has a sero positivity rate of 97 per cent, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain said.

All districts were found to have a sero prevalence of more than 95 per cent, he said.

"Women had a higher sero positivity rate than men. Those below 18 had a sero positivity rate of 88 per cent, while those above 18 had a sero positivity rate of 97 to 98 per cent," Jain told reporters here.

The people who had been



vaccinated had a sero positivity rate of over 97 per cent, while those who had not been inoculated had a sero positivity rate of 90 per cent, he added.

"This was the largest sero survey carried out and 28,000 samples were collected," he said. **AGENCIES**

# Yes, I am forming a new party: Captain confirmed

**DOLLY CHOPRA**  
*Chandigarh*

Former chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh held a press conference on October 27 and said that he will soon share the name and symbol of his new party once it is confirmed by the Election Commission.

"Yes, I will be forming a new party. The name will be announced once the Election Commission clears it, along with the symbol. My lawyers are working on it," Singh said in Chandigarh. None of his former Cabinet Ministers, MLAs or senior party leaders considered close to him showed up, but the former CM claimed many were in touch and they would come

out in the open at the right time. "I will not mention names. Already my supporters are being harassed. I promise that we will contest all 117 Assembly seats", he said.

Asked how many MLAs were in touch with him, he quipped: "If Rahul Gandhi needs to hold back-to-back meetings with Punjab Congress MLAs, what does it mean?" Asked as to why he had not resigned from the Congress yet, he replied: "I have spent 50 years in the Congress, how does it matter if I stay for another 10 days?"

Heading a delegation of agricultural experts, Captain is scheduled to meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah to find a solution to the farmers' stir. The ex-CM vowed to defeat

Sidhu in the coming polls. Citing surveys, he claimed there had been a 25% drop in Congress' popularity ever since Sidhu took over the reins of the Punjab Congress. He rejected the claim that a majority of MLAs had opposed his continuation in office, saying: "Once they (party leadership) made up their mind to replace me, these excuses were made."

Trashing allegations against his Pakistani friend Aroosa Alam, Captain said she had been visiting him for 16 years and he would invite her again. He shared with the media a booklet titled "Facts v/s Disinformation", detailing achievements of his government.

Navjot Sidhu, meanwhile, took another dig at him, calling him the "negative force" who



had stalled "justice and development." Navjot Sidhu slams Capt Amarinder Singh, says he sold Punjab's interests

Former Chief Minister Capt

Amarinder and PPCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu once again found themselves crossing swords with each other. The two leaders didn't mince words to

attack each other on Twitter.

In a series of tweets, Sidhu said: "We the 78 MLAs of Congress could never imagine what we received - an arm-twisted, ED-controlled BJP-loyal Chief Minister of Punjab who sold the interests of Punjab to save his skin! You were the negative force stalling Justice and development of Punjab." He further tweeted: "Were you unceremoniously dumped for good governance? And 18-point agenda shoved down the throat of the poorest performing CM of Punjab... you will be remembered as Jaichand of Punjab's political history."

Captain Amarinder Singh formally joined BJP: Randhawa Captain Amarinder Singh has today formally joined the BJP.

Informally and internally, he had joined the BJP long ago but today the former Chief Minister has let the cat out of the bag by announcing formation of a new party and negotiating seats with the BJP. This was stated by senior Congress leader and Deputy Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Randhawa in a press statement released here today.

Randhawa further said that Captain Amarinder Singh had stabbed back not only the Congress party but also the farmers and all Punjabis who had been struggling for the last 11 months. He said that Amarinder Singh had forgotten the sacrifices of the farmers who had lost their lives during the farmers' struggle even before he joined the BJP.

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# Delhi now close to winning battle against dengue: CM Kejriwal

**NEW DELHI:** Amid a spike in cases of dengue in the national capital, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal claimed that Delhi is now "close to winning the battle" against the vector-borne disease.

He encouraged all city residents to participate actively in the '10 Hafte, 10 Baje, 10 Minute' campaign to combat dengue.

People of Delhi have decided that they would only rest after driving away dengue from the city, he said.

"Delhi is now very close to winning the battle against dengue. Like previous weeks, let us all spend 10 minutes, inspecting our homes and surrounding areas, for any sign of stagnant water. If you do find such water, drain it, replace it or cover with a small layer of oil. Together, let us all make Delhi dengue-free," he was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office.

The chief minister's assertion comes amid a surge in dengue



cases in the last two weeks, and the first death due to it was reported.

According to a civic report on vector-borne diseases released, one death due to dengue, and a total of 723 dengue cases have been recorded this season till October 16, which is the highest case count since 2018 for the same period.

The chief minister's assertion comes amid a surge in dengue

Of the total number of dengue cases recorded in Delhi this year, 382 have been reported this month till October 16, which amount to nearly 52 per cent of the cumulative cases.

Kejriwal said that like last year, this time too the Delhi government is running the '10 Hafte, 10 Baje, 10 Minute' anti-dengue campaign.

All ministers, MLAs and officers of the Delhi government are also taking part in the campaign, and cleaning the water accumulated in their homes, he added.

Along with this, all the citizens living in Delhi are being made aware on changing of water in coolers, pots, every week, by joining the campaign, he said.

"We all have to work together to stop mosquito-breeding. We all have to do this for 10 weeks, and defeat dengue," Kejriwal said.

The maximum number of dengue cases is reported every year between September 1 and November 15, the chief minister said.

Dengue mosquitoes breed only in clear water. The mosquito lays larvae on clear water, which turn into mosquitoes within 8-10 days. If that water is changed before eight days, and larvae removed, then mosquitoes will not be generated, he added.

A total of 1,072 cases and one death was logged in the entire year in 2020. In 2015, the city had witnessed a massive outbreak of dengue, when the number of dengue cases reported has crossed 10,600 in October itself, making it the worst outbreak of the vector-borne disease in the national capital since 1996. **AGENCIES**

## Delhi HC fixes for final hearing pleas to recognise same-sex marriages under law



**NEWDELHI:** The Delhi High Court listed for final hearing separate pleas, including by two same-sex couples, seeking a declaration recognising same-sex marriages under the special, Hindu, and foreign marriage laws.

A bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh granted time to the parties for filing replies and rejoinders in the matter and listed it for final hearing on November 30. In the first petition, Abhijit Iyer Mitra and three others have contended that same-sex marriages are not possible despite the Supreme Court's decriminalising consensual homosexual acts and sought a declaration to recognise them under the Hindu Marriage Act (HMA) and Special Marriage Act (SMA).

The two other pleas are one filed by two women seeking to get married under the SMA and challenging provisions of the statute to the extent that it does not provide for same-sex marriages, and the other filed by two men who got married in the US but were denied registration of their marriage under the Foreign Marriage Act (FMA).

Another petition seeks to allow a foreign-origin spouse of an Overseas Citizen of India cardholder to apply for OCI registration regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

The petitioners are a married same-sex couple—Joy-

deep Sengupta, an OCI, and Russell Blaine Stephens, a US citizen—and Mario Dpenha, an Indian citizen and a queer rights academic and activist pursuing a PhD at Rutgers University, USA.

During the hearing, advocate Karuna Nandy, appearing for the couple, said they got married in New York and the law applicable in their case are the Citizenship Act, the FMA and the SMA.

She further submitted that the Citizenship Act is silent on the gender and sexuality of the spouse and it provides that a person married to an overseas citizen of India whose marriage is registered and subsisting for two years should be declared eligible to apply as a spouse for an OCI card. Nandy pointed out that the government has not yet filed a reply to her petition. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, argued that a 'spouse' means either husband or wife and 'marriage' is a term associated with heterosexual couples and there was no need to file a specific reply regarding the Citizenship Act.

"The law as it stands... personal laws are settled and marriage which is contemplated to be is between biological man and biological woman," he said, adding that there is some misconception of petitioners regarding the Supreme Court's verdict decriminalising consensual homosexual act. **AGENCIES**

## Delhi HC refuses bail to woman found possessing 600 gm of methamphetamine

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi High Court has refused bail to a woman in a case under the anti-drug law, saying that a "clean and tidy track record" would not absolve her from being in possession of 600 gm of methamphetamine and there is a "greater presumption" against a highly educated person in such cases.

Justice Subramonium Prasad observed that a "commercial quantity" of drug was recovered from the woman-petitioner and the material on record disclosed that she is "part of a network which deals in supply/sale of narcotics".

The court also noted that the petitioner's disclosure statement resulted in the arrest of two Nigerian accused persons who were found living illegally in India on fake passports and possessing narcotics. "The clean and tidy track record of the petitioner does not absolve her from being in possession of 600 g of methamphetamine."

"An uneducated person may claim no knowledge of the substance found in his or her possession and may raise a defense of the substance being planted on them, but being a highly educated person, there is greater presumption that carrying large quantities of narcotics is a crime and that it would entail consequences in law which could be harsh and irrevocable," the judge said in the order dismissing the petitioner's bail plea.

The petitioner was arrested in February 2018 after police received a secret tip that she would be travelling to Mumbai by train from Hazrat Nizamuddin Station, carrying illegal contraband in her baggage.

Seeking bail, the petitioner contended that as she was searched by police in a toilet inside the train and her bag was not there with her, the possibility of the bag being tampered with could not be ruled out. **AGENCIES**

## DDMA allows Chhath Puja celebrations at designated places amid strict Covid protocols

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) allowed devotees to perform Chhath Puja at designated spots in the national capital amid strict Covid protocols.

The DDMA, which devises Covid management policies for the capital, had banned Chhath Puja celebrations at public places, including at Yamuna riverbanks, water bodies and temples in Delhi, after a meeting on September 30.

The ban on Chhath celebrations had triggered protests by opposition parties the BJP and the Congress. "The DDMA has allowed Chhath Puja celebrations in Delhi at designated spots. A limited number of people will be allowed to perform the puja amid strict Covid protocols," Sisodia said at a press conference after a DDMA meeting. "People are requested to follow all COVID-19



protocols and wear masks... The Covid situation is under control in Delhi but one has to remain careful," he said.

Amid protests by the BJP and the Congress against the Chhath Puja ban, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had earlier this month urged Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal to call a meeting of the DDMA to allow celebrations in public. Chhath, celebrated after

Diwali by people belonging to Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, involves the offering of 'Arghya' by fasting women to the Sun god in knee-deep water.

Earlier in the day, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri launched a special COVID-19 vaccination drive in Burari's Ibrahimpur village for devotees who will be observing fast on Chhath festival. **AGENCIES**

## Canara Bank and other member banks organized Credit outreach programme

**NEW DELHI:** Canara Bank, along with other member banks, organized a "Credit outreach programme" on 25 October, 2021 as per the directive received from Department of Financial Services, a constituent of Finance ministry in New Delhi Dist. Canara Bank being the lead bank, organized the camp at Garhwal Bhawan, Panchkuian Road.

The programme commenced with lighting of the lamp, followed by felicitation of the guests. The dignitaries included Rita Vashist, Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice, Govt of India, M Paramasivam, Chief General Manager, Canara Bank, Anil Bansal, GM, Punjab National Bank and convener of SLBC, Delhi state, D Karthikeyan, ADM, New Delhi District and Sunil Kumar Sobti, Deputy General Manager, New Delhi Regional office under whose leadership, the



entire program was arranged. Rita Vashist lauded Canara Bank for their efforts and emphasized granting credit to the needy.

M Paramasivam congratulated New Delhi regional office and spoke about various schemes of the bank and asked member banks to increase the credit inflow for the growth of the country and requested customers for timely repayment of of loans.

D Karthikeyan emphasized and pushed customers to avail government schemes through the public sector banks. **AGENCIES**

## 22-year-old man loses entire family in house fire

**NEW DELHI:** His elder brother was scheduled to get married in November and his father's retirement was due in March 2022.

But the family's plans for the future have been reduced to cinders after a fire in their east Delhi home killed his entire family while they were sleeping, says Akshay Kumar.

The 22-year-old is the sole survivor from the fire that ravaged their Old Seemapuri home, killing four people.

The family owned two floors in the building. Kumar slept on the second floor, while the rest, father Horilal (59), mother Reena (55), brother Ashu (24) and sister Rohini (18), were on the third.

A housekeeping worker at a Sahibabad (UP) firm since January, Kumar said he came home around 12 am. He went to the third floor to get food and later slept on the second floor.

Police said he survived since the fire did not spread out.

Recalling last night, he said, "Around 4 am, I heard my neighbours screaming my mother's name. When I came out, they said the glass

of the window of third floor, where my four family members were sleeping, was broken and smoke was coming out of it. I was on the second floor and went upstairs, but there was heavy smoke. I came downstairs and again went up with neighbours to check on them.

"The window glass was broken, and there were signs of struggle on the main gate as my brother tried to open it. Later, police and fire brigade were informed about the incident," he said in a voice shaking grief.

"Ashu's marriage was fixed around six months ago and scheduled for November, but the date was yet to be decided. He used to work as a housekeeping staff in North Block. Ashu used to sleep on the second floor, but for the past few days, he was sleeping on the third floor of the building where the fire broke out," Kumar said.

Horilal was working as a peon in Shastri Bhawan, Delhi, and was due to retire in March 2022. His wife worked as a sweeper in MCD. His daughter was a class 12 student at a

government school while his son was unemployed, he said.

Kumar's employer, Pooran Singh, said he was shocked by the news.

Police said the fire might have broken out and spread across the third floor of the building. The victims might have died due to inhaling smoke, but the exact cause can only be ascertained after the post-mortem report arrives, they said.

Suraj Pal, who lives in the area, said neighbours informed the younger son when they noticed smoke coming out of the third floor.

"The neighbours kept banging on the main gate for five to 10 minutes till Kumar opened it. He went upstairs and said nobody was responding. Later, police were informed and they reached the spot along with the fire brigade," Pal said.

Kumar said the family was from Mathura in Uttar Pradesh.

Sunil Kumar Dhigan, who lives on the first floor of the building, said Horilal was a very humble and soft-spoken person. He used to talk to everyone politely, Dhigan added. **AGENCIES**

## Delhi records 38 Covid-19 cases, zero death; positivity rate at 0.06 per cent

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi recorded 38 Covid-19 cases and zero death, while the positivity rate dipped to 0.06 per cent, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin.

Delhi has recorded only four deaths due to the infection in October so far. Last month, five people had succumbed to the viral disease. Thirteen patients were discharged in the last 24 hours. With the new cases, the tally in the city climbed to 14,39,709. Of this, over 14.14 lakh patients have recovered from the disease. The death toll stands at 25,091.

According to the health bulletin, authorities conducted 59,909 tests, including 44,065 RT-PCR ones, the previous day. There are 348 active cases, up from 323 a day ago. The number of patients in home isolation is 106, up from 98 the previous day. The number of containment zones stands at 96, down from 97 a day ago.

In April and May, the city battled a brutal second wave of the pandemic that claimed

a massive number of lives with the issue of oxygen shortage at hospitals adding to the woes.

On April 20, Delhi had reported 28,395 cases, the highest in the city since the beginning of the pandemic. On April 22 the case positivity rate was 36.2 per cent, the highest so far.

The highest number of 448 deaths was reported on May 3.

The Delhi government has been ramping up health infrastructure to prevent a repeat of the crisis witnessed during the peak of the second wave of coronavirus in April and May.

Steps have been taken to increase the number of hospital beds accommodating up to 37,000 cases a day and to become self-reliant in oxygen supply.

Around 7,000 ICU beds are also being added at government health care facilities in Shalimar Bagh, Kirari, Sarita Vihar, Sulatpuri, Raghuvihar, Chacha Nehru Hospital. **AGENCIES**

## 7-yr-old girl raped in Delhi, one arrested

**NEW DELHI:** A 20-year-old man was arrested for allegedly raping a minor girl in central Delhi's Ranjeet Nagar area, police said.

The accused has been identified as Suraj, a resident of Raghuraj Nagar, they said. He was arrested from Kalanaur, Rohtak district, Haryana. He was previously arrested under the POCSO Act for allegedly harassing a minor under Khyala police station limits, police said.

"We checked footage from hundreds of CCTV cameras and obtained his photograph. The accused is in no way related to the victim and he is not a resident of that locality. There was no phone number, no vehicle, etc. that could help us in identifying the accused. Several police teams from the central district worked tirelessly for 36 hours to nab him.

"When the accused realised that the police were looking for him, he tried to flee from Delhi. Our teams followed him and intercepted him at Kalanaur," Deputy Commissioner of Police (central) Shweta Chauhan said.

In a purported CCTV footage that has gone viral, the accused could be seen going



with the girl. The incident took place on October 22 when the girl was on her way to a place where food was being distributed for free. Police said the place was close to her residence.

It is suspected that the accused lured the minor and then raped her, police said, adding the girl is stable.

A case under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the POCSO Act has been registered.

The Delhi Commission for Women issued a notice to the Delhi Police seeking immediate action in the matter.

The commission has also sought details of the FIR, it said.

DCW chairperson Swati Maliwal said, "I am very anguished over the incident. It is a matter of great concern and shame that we have to go through with such matters of sexual assault with children on a frequent basis".

"Only stringent measures can stop incidents of rapes with girls. I seek immediate action by the Delhi Police in the matter, accused must be immediately arrested and punished with capital punishment," she added. **AGENCIES**

## How to ensure liquor not given to underage persons in home delivery: Delhi HC to state govt

**NEW DELHI:** The Delhi High Court sought to know from the Delhi Government how it will ensure that liquor is not provided to underage persons on home delivery under the new excise policy.

A Bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh also asked the Delhi government as to what is the process of verifying the age of the person who is ordering from home delivery of liquor.

"How you will verify the age of a purchaser? You must answer this query. You cannot say you will not answer this," the Bench asked Delhi Government's se-

nior counsel Rahul Mehra who said this is only an amendment in the existing rule and it is yet to come into existence.

He said there would be provisions like giving the Aadhaar number or any other age proof whenever it comes into existence. As per the new policy, the legal age to consume liquor in Delhi is 21 years.

The court heard a petition by BJP MP Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma challenging the provision of home delivery of liquor under the new Excise Policy of the Delhi government.

The counsel representing Verma said they have chal-



lenged the provision as there is no process of age surveillance due to which it can be handed over to an underage person and also at a public place.

Regarding the petitioner's contention that home delivery of liquor will have a adverse impact on children of the house, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, also representing the Delhi government, said even if a person goes out to purchase alcohol from a shop, he will bring it home so the impact would be the same and it does not mean that they are spoiling children.

Both Singhvi and Mehra said

only the modality has changed and the system of home delivery is existing for the last 20-30 years.

Earlier, the method of applying for home delivery of liquor was through email or fax, now it has to be done through some mobile app, the counsel said.

The court, which was informed that the reply filed by the Delhi government is not on record, said it be placed on record and listed the plea for further hearing on November 18, when other batch matters challenging the legality of the new excise policy are also fixed for proceeding. Several petitions

are pending before the court against the New Excise Policy.

In his petition, which challenges Rule 66(6) of the Delhi Excise (Amendment) Rules of 2021, and is filed through advocate Balaji Srinivasan, Verma has submitted that the new policy was introduced at a time when the national capital was "still grappling with the deadly second wave (of COVID-19) and acute shortage of medicines and vaccinations", and also overlooked the impact of bringing alcohol into households on domestic and child abuse.

"The 2021 Amendment un-

dermines the ban on the consumption of liquor in public places by making it possible to deliver alcohol to public places... The Rules enable the possibility of delivery of alcohol to hospitals and schools. It lacks any consideration to the safety of those delivering the liquor," the petition said.

It is also contended that home delivery of liquor was against Article 47 of the Constitution which makes it the duty of the state to improve public health and make an endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption of intoxicating drinks. **AGENCIES**

# 'Sedition law will be invoked against those celebrating Pak victory in T20 match'



**LUCKNOW:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that sedition law will be invoked against those celebrating Pakistan's victory against India in the recent T-20 World Cup match.

So far, five people have been taken into custody in the state for allegedly using indecent words against the Indian cricket team, according to police.

"Those celebrating Pakistan's victory will face sedition," a tweet posted on the official handle of Adityanath's office said. A man from Budaun was arrested in a sedition case, Senior Super-

intendent of Police OP Singh said. Niaz had posted the picture of a Pakistani flag and wrote objectionable comments in support of Pakistan on Facebook after the match, according to a complaint filed against him by Punit Shakya of the Hindu Jagran Manch.

The SSP said Niaz posted a picture of Pakistan's flag on his Facebook account and captioned, "I love you Pakistan, I miss you Pakistan, Jeet Mubarak Pakistan".

Niaz was booked for sedition and under relevant Sections of the Information Technology

Act on Tuesday and sent to jail on Wednesday, the officer said.

Pakistan had drubbed India by 10 wickets in a Super 12 game for their first win in 13 attempts over their arch-rivals in a World Cup match. PTI

FIR against 3 Kashmiri students for celebrating Pak cricket's victory against India

**AGRA:** Police here have registered an FIR against three engineering college students hailing from Kashmir for allegedly posting WhatsApp status celebrating the Pakistan team's victory against India in a T20 World Cup cricket match three

days ago.

According to the FIR registered at the Jagdishpura police station in the early hours of Wednesday, the three students from the Raja Balwant Singh Management Technical Campus have been booked under Indian Penal Code sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 505 (1)(B) (intent to cause, or which is likely to cause, fear or alarm to public).

They have been also charged under section 66F of the Information Technology Act. Various organisations, including right-wing outfits, protested at the Collectorate premises here and demanded action against the students. They also submitted a memorandum to officials concerned in this connection.

According to faculty members of the college, members from right-wing outfits allegedly barged in to the college campus and staged a protest against the college and its students.

Dr Pankaj Gupta, the institute's director of administration and finance, said they forcefully entered the campus at around 3.45 pm when classes were being held and they also tried to gain access to the students' hostels. **AGENCIES**

# India readying 2 mobile hospitals for emergency deployment by air, rail, road



**NEW DELHI:** India is gearing up to ready two container-based mobile hospitals for emergency deployment in cases of natural or other calamities, as part of the Rs 64,000 crore Prime Minister Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission unveiled by PM Narendra Modi.

Health minister Mansukh Mandaviya said the two hospitals would have 100 beds each and each hospital unit would have 33 containers for emergency medical care.

"These container based mobile hospitals will be ready for deployment in any emergency situation within 24 hours. The hospitals would be such that they can be transported

through road, railways and air. Two container based hospitals are being developed. One each will remain stationed at Chennai and Delhi for ready movement across north and south India depending on the need," Mandaviya said.

The hospitals are based on WHO norms, the ministry said. Mandaviya added that another major feature of the Mission would be availability of 134 types of diagnostic tests at district hospitals. The Mission has been allocated Rs 64,180 crore for roll out between 2021-22 and 2025-26. The idea is to ensure diagnostics and treatment at each of the 730 districts by the next five years. **AGENCIES**

# Amid allegations against NCB official Wankhede, his wife seeks support from Maharashtra CM



**MUMBAI:** Kranti Redkar Wankhede, the wife of NCB's Mumbai zonal director Sameer Wankhede, wrote a letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, seeking justice in the wake of the "attack on her family and her personal life".

She posted the letter on her Twitter handle and tagged it to the Maharashtra CMO. Sameer Wankhede is in the eye of a political storm following allegations of extortion in the high-profile cruise drugs case in which actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was arrested. The officer is facing the departmental vigilance probe.

State minister and NCP leader Nawab Malik had levelled a string of allegations against the NCB official, including illegal phone tapping. He had also alleged Sameer Wankhede was born as a Muslim, but forged documents, including a caste certificate, to show that he belonged to the Hindu SC category to get a job under quota after clearing the UPSC examination.

In her letter to the CM, the NCB official's wife, said, "Being a Marathi person, I expect some justice from your side as my personal life is unnecessarily being dragged into a controversy. Had late Balasaheb Thackeray (father of Uddhav Thackeray) been alive today, he would not have tolerated such personal attack on a woman's dignity."

"I see you as the torchbearer of his teachings and leadership. The dignity of a woman has become a joke in the regime that draws inspiration from the tenure of 17th century king Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," she said. Kranti Redkar, who is a Marathi actress, further said she is an artist and does not understand politics and is not interested in it.

"The personal attacks reflect the lowest level of

## Sameer Wankhede's sister files police complaint against Nawab Malik

**MUMBAI:** Yasmeen Wankhede, the sister of Narcotics Control Bureau's (NCB) Mumbai zonal director Sameer Wankhede, has filed a police complaint here seeking registration of an FIR against Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik for allegedly defaming her, an official said.

Sameer Wankhede is in the eye of a political storm following allegations of extortion in the high-profile cruise drugs case in which actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan was arrested. The officer is facing the departmental vigilance probe. In her two-page complaint submitted to the Oshiwara police here, Yasmeen claimed her family was being targeted on social media and that Malik had also called their family trip to Maldives as a "vasooli (extortion) trip", the official said.

An official from the Oshiwara police station said he had received a written complaint from Yasmeen Wankhede last week, but no FIR had been registered so far.

politics. I trust you and feel that there will be no injustice against me or my family," she said in her letter to the CM. She had said her husband was born as Hindu and he never changed his religion.

She had also contested the claim made by the Qazi, who performed the first marriage of Sameer Wankhede in 2006, that he was Muslim at the time of the 'nikah'.

Kranti Redkar, who married Sameer Wankhede in 2017, had also slammed Malik for playing 'low level' politics by making various allegations against her husband. **AGENCIES**

# Lalu hints at thaw with Congress before hitting campaign trail

**PATNA:** RJD president Lalu Prasad hinted at a thaw between his party and the Congress, saying had a telephonic talk with Sonia Gandhi whom he asked to hold a meeting of "like-minded" parties which could join hands to take on the BJP.

Prasad was talking to journalists before departing for election rallies in Tarapur and Kusheshwar Ashan assembly seats, where by-polls are scheduled for October 30.

"Sonia Gandhi enquired about my well-being. I told her I am fine," said the septuagenarian leader, underscoring his personal equation with the Congress president which has kept the RJD-Congress alliance afloat in the choppy waters of politics.

"I also said that she is the leader of a party with an all-India presence and she should convene a meeting of all like-minded parties which are opposed to the BJP," said Prasad, whose party recently snubbed the Congress with its unilateral decision to contest by-polls to both the seats.

The Congress had reacted with uncharacteristic aggression, with the AICC in-charge of Bihar Bhakt Charan Das asserting that his party, which has fielded its own



candidates for the two seats in the by-poll, will contest all 40 Lok Sabha seats in the next general elections.

Later, Prasad addressed the rally in Tarapur where huge crowds had turned up to catch a glimpse of the colourful leader who was addressing an election meeting after a gap of six years.

Prasad claimed that the RJD-led Grand Alliance had, in the assembly polls last year, fallen short of majority because of "beimani" (rigging) and that had he not been away in jail, serving sentences in the fodder scam, "they (pliant officials) would not have dared to do so". **AGENCIES**

He also seethed at Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, his arch rival, who had the previous day said that the RJD supremo "could get me killed", a sarcastic reference to the former CM's reputation for strong-arm tactics.

"Why do I need to kill him? I have said that I have come to complete his visarjan (political annihilation). He will be finished because of his own deeds. He betrayed us and sided with the BJP though the RJD had helped him return to power in 2015. His prohibition law is a sham," said Prasad, who, along with wife Rabri Devi, had ruled the state for 15 years on the trot. **AGENCIES**

# India is concerned about situation in Afghanistan: Pentagon

**WASHINGTON:** India is concerned about the current situation in Afghanistan, a top Pentagon official has told US lawmakers here.

"As I'm sure you're aware, they (Indians) are concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. They're concerned about the intersection between instability there and their counterterrorism concerns," Colin H Kahl, Under Secretary of Defence for Policy, told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during a hearing on Afghanistan, South and Central Asia Security.

"They (Indians) want to work with us on those issues, sharing intelligence, cooperating where we can," he said, adding that there is a tremendous convergence between US and Indian national interests right now. "It provides a lot of opportunity for us to cooperate with India, not just on Afghanistan and counterterrorism, but on broader regional security questions, in the Indian Ocean and as it relates to the broader Indo-Pacific," Kahl said.

He was responding to a question from Senator Gary



Peters.

"India's policies towards Afghanistan have been conceived largely through the lens of competition and proxy conflict with Pakistan. So it stands to reason that New Delhi should be no less concerned about the possibility that a Taliban government could benefit anti-Indian terrorist groups, especially those oriented towards Kashmir," he said.

"In view of our commitment to joint cooperation with this critical partner, and the fact that India is the only designated major defence partner of the United States, I believe it's important for us to understand how its view towards Afghanistan has and will evolve," Peters said. **AGENCIES**

# 'Perturbed' by many persons 'politely declining' to be part of Pegasus probe panel: Chidambaram

**NEW DELHI:** Senior Congress leader P Chidambaram said he was perturbed by the statement in the Supreme Court order on the Pegasus snooping matter that many persons "politely declined" to be a member of the probe committee, and asserted that the "episode" illustrated how far the

country had travelled from the exhortation of Mahatma Gandhi that Indians should not fear their rulers.

The Supreme Court set up a three-member independent expert panel to probe the alleged use of Israeli spyware Pegasus for targeted surveillance in India, observing the state cannot get a "free pass" every time the spectre of national security is raised and that its mere invocation cannot render the judiciary a "mute spectator". **AGENCIES**



# Warfare areas have shifted from territorial frontier to civil society: Ajit Doval

**PUNE:** National Security Adviser Ajit Doval said the new areas of warfare had shifted from territorial frontiers to civil societies, adding that factors like people's health, their sense of well-being and security, and their perception of government impacted the will of a nation.

Speaking on 'National Security Preparedness in the Age of Disasters and Pandemics', at the Pune Dialogue on National Security organised by Pune International Centre here, Doval said disasters and pandemics could not be tackled in isolation.

"You are all aware of the changes taking place in the global security

landscape. Wars are increasingly becoming cost ineffective instruments of achieving the nation's political and military objectives. "The new areas of warfare have shifted from merely territorial frontiers to the civil societies. The common people's thinking, their perception, health, sense of well-being and their perception of their government have assumed new importance," Doval said. All these elements cumulatively impacted the will of the nation, he added. **AGENCIES**

landscapes. Wars are increasingly becoming cost ineffective instruments of achieving the nation's political and military objectives. "The new areas of warfare have shifted from merely territorial frontiers to the civil societies. The common people's thinking, their perception, health, sense of well-being and their perception of their government have assumed new importance," Doval said. All these elements cumulatively impacted the will of the nation, he added. **AGENCIES**

# Maha CM highlights India's first wildlife DNA, women shakti, construction and debris

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

India's 'first' wild-life DNA analysis facility -- and new human DNA laboratory in the state -- has been set up at the regional forensic laboratory at Rahate Colony in Nagpur in Maharashtra with the Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray inaugurating it online recently.

Highlighting the Maharashtra Police's reputation of a +World-class+ Police force, Thackeray said that this fast-track DNA unit and wild-life DNA analysis department would provide a fillip to gathering necessary evidence in crime and punishing the guilty including cases pertaining to women and children,

while also preventing wild-life smuggling and action against poachers and smugglers.

Noting the spike in crimes against women, Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil said that the +SHAKTI+ Act would be soon passed in the winter session of the state legislature for ensuring safety of women, besides the fast-track DNA unit playing a major role in punishing the guilty in such offences.

The Chief Minister -- while addressing a meeting of the Tiger Conservation Regulatory Board here -- directed for various departmental schemes ensuring jobs for locals alongside managing the tiger project areas and conserving the state's entire biodiversity.



Blaming "wrongly-constructed" road dividers on national highways passing through the state's Tiger Project areas that caused tigers and wildlife accidents, he said prevention and speedy informa-

tion to concerned authorities of the central government was needed for follow up and safe path for tigers.

Besides preventing wildlife-railway line accidents, the quality of works of internal

roads should be improved to boost tourism and suggestions of public representatives should be considered positively, he said while also urging for employment to locals dependent on forests through the schemes of various departments.

The Chief Minister also came down heavily on illegal constructions by calling for immediate action by the Mumbai Municipal Corporation, which should also appoint ward-wise squads to prevent debris dumping.

Assuring government support at 'war footing' to the Mumbai Municipal Corporation against any pressure in unauthorized constructions, Thackeray told an

MMC meeting that huge amount of debris was seen being dumped along the East and West highways, and immediate action was needed including through installing CCTV cameras there.

While the civic body performed well during the COVID-19 pandemic, it now needed to complete its work timely-focused on services like roads, sidewalks, sanitation and civic amenities to portray Mumbai as the country's +model city+, he said while urging for systematic and transparent manner tender process for road repairs and for forming squads for collecting debris and cleaning of construction waste, stone-brick soil.

# 3 women farmers crushed to death by truck at Tikri



**FW BUREAU**  
Tikri

Three women farmer protesters were crushed to death when a speeding truck ran over them early morning at Tikri. The women were sitting on the footpath waiting for an auto rickshaw when the truck ran over them. While two of them died on the spot, one succumbed at the hospital. The victims have been identified as Amarajit Kaur, Gurmail Kaur and Sukhwinder Kaur. Three other women were injured. One of them has

been referred to the PGI, Rohtak. The incident took place around 5:30am.

The driver of the truck ran away from the accident scene, police said. According to the police, a group of seven women protesters were waiting for an auto rickshaw to go to Bahadurgarh railway station as they planned to leave for their village in Mansa, Punjab. Nar Singh, SHO, Sector 6, Bahadurgarh, police station, said the dumper driver fled the spot after the mishap while statements of eyewitnesses were being recorded.

# Killer KMP Express-way to heaven

**SATISH HANDA**

136 km long KMP Express-way built with project budget worth over Rs 2000 crore started in 2003 by Haryana State Industrial Development Corporation (HSIDC), remained hanging for years for one reason or the other and construction work was completed up to Gurugram in 2018, still lacking facilities for those driving and travelling on the road causing frequent mishaps and claim large number of lives

of travelling passengers. Surprisingly, government started collecting revenue through Toll Plaza on the route worth over Rs 90 lakh daily prior to Express-way was open for public without offering basic facilities to vehicle owners, which are still neglected in spite of public demand on this killer Express-way to heaven.

It was unfortunate for the family returning after visiting a holy religious place lost eight lives on the spot in a road mishap in which three others were also



seriously injured near Bahadurgarh a couple of days ago when the vehicle in which family was travelling rammed into a truck wrongly parked on road side when hit by another truck from behind. According to residents living on both sides of Express-way, although government is earning handsome revenue towards toll tax but lacks all basic facilities including petrol pumps, parking places for vehicles, good eating place, facility of drinking water and toilets except large

number of illegal roadside 'dhaba' and liquor vends on sides attracting the attention of vehicle drivers stop their vehicles on this Express-way inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018 and even HSIDC failed to get power connections from state government or installation of a Solar Plant for street lighting during night on this 136 km road causing frequent mishaps.

Information reveals, there are few illegal 'dhaba' and liquor vends seen amidst agriculture fields on both side of Express-way attracting attention of drivers park their vehicles on road side inviting mishaps.

## Intolerance of progressive ads needs to stop

In a land of matchless diversity, where 138 crore people live, it is perhaps not surprising that social conflicts run along several lines including caste, class, gender, language and religion. Deepening fault lines touch every part of life, and advertising, which at a basic level nudges a consumer to make a purchasing decision but also does social messaging, is learning it the hard way. With the start of the festival season, at least two companies, Fabindia and Dabur, have had to pull out ads days after the launch for “offending sentiments” and huge social media outrage. In the case of Fabindia, people protested against the use of the words “Jashn-e-riwaaz” for a new collection of clothes ahead of Deepavali. BJP MP Tejasvi Surya led the campaign against Fabindia calling for an economic boycott; a hashtag #NoBindiNoBusiness also did the rounds, in protest against the models in the ad without bindis. Dabur’s Fem brand had to pull out a Karwa Chauth ad which showed a same-sex couple observing the rituals. A Ceat ad featuring Aamir Khan asking people not to burst crackers on the roads too upset the right wing which said it should have also addressed the “problem of blocking roads” for namaz. While advertisements which do not stick to the script can be a breath of fresh air, there are some which miss the mark completely with the messaging. So, if Shah Rukh Khan’s latest Cadbury ad urging people to buy from small kirana shops this Deepavali is making the right noises, Kent RO’s atta and bread maker ad last year and its tone-deaf portrayal of house-helpers was decried. Tanishq had to withdraw an ad last year that showed a Muslim family organising Hindu baby shower rituals for their Hindu daughter-in-law. It got vitriolic comments with some accusing the Tatas of promoting “Love Jihad”. The intolerance of progressive values needs to stop and this cannot happen without public support.



T. JAYARAMAN WARNS OF ACCEDING TO OVER-APPROPRIATION OF THE GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET BY A FEW

## India shouldn't sign on to net zero

Despite the net zero campaign by a number of countries and non-state actors, the timing of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions reaching net zero is not the critical parameter for the safety of humanity. As the recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change made it clear, limiting the increase in the world’s average temperature from pre-industrial levels to those agreed in the Paris Agreement requires global cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide to be capped at the global carbon budget. It is a truism that such a cap means that eventually emissions must go to zero, or more precisely, net zero. But reaching net zero by itself is irrelevant to forestalling dangerous warming. This is no more rocket science than saying that the promise of when you will turn off the tap does not guarantee that you will draw only a specified quantity of water.

What do we know about projected cumulative emissions? The top three emitters of the world — China, the U.S. and the European Union — even after taking account of their net zero commitments and their enhanced emission reduction commitments for 2030, will emit more than 500 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide before net zero. These three alone will exceed the limit of about 500 billion tonnes from 2020 onwards, for even odds of keeping global temperature increase below 1.5°C. With these committed emissions, there is no hope of “keeping 1.5°C alive.” The target is dead-on-arrival. For two-to-one odds for the same target, the limit is 400 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, a limit that is even more certain to be breached.

Neither the Paris Agreement nor climate science requires that net zero be reached individually by countries by 2050, the former requiring only global achievement of this goal “in the second half of the century”. Claims that the world “must” reach specific goals by 2030 or 2050 are the product of specific economic models for climate action. These are designed to achieve the Paris goals by the “lowest cost” methods, foregoing equity and climate justice. They front-load emission reduction requirements on developing coun-



tries, despite their already low emissions, to allow the developed world to backload its own, buying time for its own transition. These stringent limits on future cumulative emissions post 2020, amounting to less than a fifth of the total global carbon budget, is the result of its considerable over-appropriation in the past by the global North. Less than a fifth of the world has been responsible for three-fifths of all past cumulative emissions, the U.S. and the EU alone having contributed a whopping 45%. Promises of net zero in their current form perpetuate this hugely disproportionate appropriation of a global commons, while continuing to place humanity in harm’s way.

### What India must do

India’s emissions story cannot be bracketed with the top three. India is responsible for no more than 4.37% cumulative emissions of carbon dioxide since the pre-industrial era, even though it is home to more than a sixth of humanity. India’s per capita emissions are less than half the world average, less than one-eighth of the U.S.’s, and have shown no dramatic increase like China’s post 2000.

For India to declare net zero now is to accede to the further over-appropriation of the global carbon budget by a few. India’s

contribution to global emissions, in both stock and flow, is so disproportionately low that any sacrifice on its part can do nothing to save the world. Nor can it proceed with the expectation that the developed world and China would limit their emissions further in the future. If such expectations were belied, it would endanger the future of its own population, subjecting it to unprecedented hardship. The failure of the developed world to meet its pre-2020 obligations along with its refusal to acknowledge this provides little confidence for the future.

The allocation of property rights, without grandfathering, is essential to ensure equitable access to any global commons. The global carbon budget has been subject to no such restriction allowing the developed countries to exploit it fully, in the past and the present. Only China, from among the rest, has managed to surmount this barrier to access. India, in enlightened self-interest, must now stake its claim to a fair share of the global carbon budget. Technology transfer and financial support, together with “negative emissions”, if the latter succeeds, can compensate for the loss of the past. In the absence of such a claim, India’s considerable current efforts at mitigation are a wasted effort, only easing the way for the

continued over-exploitation of the global commons by a few.

Such a claim by India provides it greater, and much-needed long-term options. It enables the responsible use of coal, its major fossil fuel resource, and oil and gas, to bootstrap itself out of lower middle-income economy status and eradicate poverty, hunger and malnutrition for good. India’s resource-strapped small industries sector, which provides employment and livelihoods to the majority of the population outside agriculture, needs expansion and modernisation. The agriculture sector, the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions for India after energy, needs to double its productivity and farmers’ incomes and build resilience. Infrastructure for climate resilience in general is critical to future adaptation to climate change. All of these will require at least the limited fossil fuel resources made available through a fair share of the carbon budget.

Developed countries and China, on the other hand, if they are serious about the Paris Agreement targets, must reach net zero well before 2050. For a target of 2°C, there is more room for the rest of the world, since the cumulative emission limit for it, with the same even odds, is 1,350 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide. However, without restriction of their future cumulative emissions by the big emitters, to their fair share of the global carbon budget, and the corresponding temperature target that they correspond to made clear, India cannot sign on to net zero.

Even if India were to enhance its short-term Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement in some fashion, unnecessary as of now, it should do so while staking a claim to its share of the global commons. This will ensure that its efforts will not further enable the free-riding of the developed world and protect its access to this strategic resource, vital to India’s industrial and developmental future.

T. Jayaraman is Senior Fellow, Climate Change, at the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai



K. SRINATH REDDY EXPLAINS HOW ABHIM CAN FIX THE WEAKNESSES IN INDIA’S HEALTH SYSTEM

## Strengthening healthcare system of the country

COVID-19 exposed several weaknesses in India’s underfunded health system. Rural primary care is underfunded and has shortages of staff, equipment, drugs and infrastructure in many parts of the country. Urban primary healthcare has still not emerged as an active programme in many States. District and medical college hospitals suffer shortages of specialist doctors and support staff.

The private sector ranges from advanced tertiary care hospitals in big cities to informal and often unqualified care providers in villages. During the pandemic, it could not assuredly provide affordable care or deliver vaccines in large parts of India. There was a disconnect between the various levels of care within the public system, and the private system operated in a separate universe. Most government-funded healthcare insurance programmes did not cover outpatient care. This patchwork quilt of a mixed healthcare system frayed fast when challenged by the surging second wave of the virus.

Alerted by the experience of the first wave of 2020, the government proposed in the Budget greater investment in the health system. The Fifteenth Finance Commission too recommended strengthening of urban and rural primary care, stronger surveillance systems and laboratory capacity as well as creation of critical care capacity at different levels of the health system. The Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (ABHIM), announced



recently, links these elements. It will support infrastructure development of 17,788 rural health and wellness centres (HWCs) in seven high-focus States and three north-eastern States. In addition, 11,044 urban HWCs will be established in close collaboration with Urban Local Bodies. The various measures of this scheme will extend primary healthcare services across India. Areas like hypertension, diabetes and mental health will be covered, in addition to existing services. Concomitantly, the network of centres will build a trained public health workforce that can perform routine public health functions while responding to a public health emergency.

Support for 3,382 block public health units (BPHUs) in 11 high-focus States and establishment of integrated district public health laboratories in all 730 districts will strengthen capacity for information technology-enabled disease surveillance. To enhance the capabilities for microbial surveillance, a National Platform for One Health will be established. Four Regional National Institutes of Virology will be established. Laboratory capacity under the National Centre for Disease Control, the Indian Council of Medical Research and national research institutions will be strengthened. Fifteen bio-safety level III labs will augment the capacity for infectious disease control and bio-security.

Many non-COVID-19 patients were denied treatment during the pandemic, as hospitals were crowded. Critical care hospital blocks, with 50-100 beds, will be established in 602 districts, to enable care for those with serious infectious diseases without disrupting other services. In non-pandemic situations, this capacity will be utilised for providing critical care for other disease conditions. For enhancing the level of disaster response readiness, 15 health emergency operation centres and two container-based mobile hospitals will be created.

There is a need to train and deploy a larger and better skilled health workforce. Upgraded district hospitals offer the best opportunity for creating new training centres. Public health expertise will be needed for

programme design, delivery, implementation and monitoring in many sectors that impact health. We must scale up institutional capacity for training public health professionals.

To provide a continuum of care at different levels, HWCs will be linked with the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, for all entitled beneficiaries. The hub-and-spoke model of block, district, regional and national public health laboratories will enable effective microbial surveillance. Private sector participation in service delivery may be invited by States, as per need and availability.

ABHIM, if financed and implemented efficiently, can strengthen India’s health system by augmenting capacity in several areas and creating a framework for coordinated functioning at district, state and national levels. It can enable data-driven decentralised decision-making and people-partnered primary care at the block level while strengthening national connectivity for delivering universal healthcare. Many independently functioning programmes will have to work with a common purpose by leaving across boundaries of separate budget lines and reporting structures. That calls for a change of bureaucratic mindsets and a cultural shift in Centre-State relations. Perhaps the platforms for active citizen engagement can catalyse both.

K. Srinath Reddy, a cardiologist and epidemiologist, is President, Public Health Foundation of India. Views are personal

### FIVE OBSERVATIONS

#### HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS TO GET MORE IMPROVEMENT

- EXPOSURE OF HEALTH INFRA**  
The Covid pandemic woefully exposed the inadequacies of India’s health infrastructure, particularly during the destructive second wave in April-May this year.
- HEALTH ID- A DIGITAL PUSH**  
Even as the third wave looms large, the government’s digital push is welcome, but technology alone can’t bring about revolutionary changes in the health sector.
- SHORTAGE IN STAFF**  
The staff shortage is all the more stark in rural areas, forcing villagers to throng urban centres that are already overburdened.
- MANY THINGS ARE REQUIRED**  
Much work needs to be done to achieve the lofty goal of setting up one medical college and hospital in every district of the country.
- SERVICES**  
It’s also important to bridge the digital divide that is preventing millions of people from making the most of technology-based public services.

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Revisiting life of Rani Laxmibai’s lawyer Lang

A new book revisits the life of John Lang, the Australian writer-lawyer settled in India in the 19th century who fought many cases against the British and also represented Rani Laxmibai in her legal battle against the annexation of her kingdom of Jhansi by the East India Company. “John Lang: Wanderer of Hindoostan, Slanderer of the Ranees” by Amit Ranjan is about Lang’s life, his exploits and his literary works.

Lang (1816-1864) was a fiery journalist and novelist who constantly harassed the establishment of East India Company with his invective and infective wit. He lived in India after the age of 26. As a lawyer, he mostly

fought against the British and won a few famous cases in the company’s own court.

So why is the need for Lang to be resurrected? Ranjan argues it is not just because he is the first Australian writer, or he is among the first writers of English prose in Indian, and not just because of his important historical location of having lived in the politically volatile 19th century; but also, and primarily because he is a fine writer.

Lang’s body of work is huge - 24 novels (that have been discovered, and more), five volumes of poetry, editorials and articles in his newspaper Mofussilite, editions of which came out from Ambala, Calcutta and Meerut, and

**Ranjan argues it is not just because he is the first Australian writer, or he is among the first writers of English prose in Indian, and not just because of his important historical location of having lived in the politically volatile 19th century**

numerous apocryphal works presumed to have been written or co-authored or significantly inspired by him. Most of the novels were written as serials in his newspaper; some were published as books as well



John Lang: Wanderer of Hindoostan, Slanderer of the Ranees By Amit Ranjan; Niyogi Books; 472 pages; Rs795

from Britain and India. Fifteen of his novels were set in India.

One of the most famous accounts of Lang is his presenting the case of Rani of Jhansi to the British government, defending her right to rule Jhansi, which she had lost owing to the Doctrine of Lapse.

“The Rani had employed him because of his fame amongst the Indians but he lost the case quickly, probably because of his notoriety among the British,” the book, published by Niyogi Books’ Paper Missile imprint, says.

In his works like “Household Words”, Lang, apart from detailing his

journey to Jhansi and the circumstances of the case, also describes Rani as a person.

Ranjan says that Lang’s newspaper Mofussilite was for members of public service and thrived on scandals related to them.

“Lang can indeed be viewed as the father of Indian tabloid journalism. The tabloid, of course, had its equivalent of what is now known as ‘Page 3’, but it was very different - in that it was very literary, with an overdose of Lang’s Latin, Boccaccio and Byrons,” Ranjan writes.

Lang’s novels were found to be too feminist for Victorian comfort, and his white male protagonists were often described by the narrator as ‘India he loved, England he despised’.

As a journalist, he was irreverent toward the army and legal systems and as a lawyer, Lang learnt Persian and Urdu fast to be able to argue cases in lower courts.

## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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## NEWSBRIEF

## RIL eyes 26% more in Sterling &amp; Wilson Solar

**NEW DELHI:** Reliance Group firm Reliance New Energy Solar has offered Rs 375 per share to acquire 4.91 crore shares, constituting 25.9% equity stake or the entire public holding of Sterling and Wilson Solar for over Rs 1,840 crore. Apart from Reliance New Energy Solar Ltd (RNESL), the other Reliance Group firms which would be persons acting in concert (PAC) are Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and Reliance Ventures Ltd, according to the draft letter of open offer. On October 10, the company had announced that RNESL had executed agreements with Shapoorji Pallonji firm, Khurshed Daruvala and Sterling and SWSL to acquire 40% stake post-money in SWSL through a series of transactions. **AGENCIES**

## Tesla's m-cap surpasses \$1 trn after bagging mega order

**B'LMUR/WASHINGTON:** Tesla Inc surpassed \$1 trillion in market value after landing its biggest-ever order from car rental company Hertz, a deal that reinforced the electric car leader's ambitions to top the entire auto industry in sales over the next decade. Tesla shares surged as much as 14.9% to \$1,045.02, making it the world's most-valuable automaker according to calculations based on its latest filing. Even Tesla Chief Executive Elon Musk expressed surprise at the velocity of the surge. "Strange that moved valuation, as Tesla is very much a production ramp problem, not a demand problem," Musk tweeted in reply to a comment by Ross Gerber, co-founder of the investment fund Gerber Kawasaki and a Tesla shareholder. "Wild \$Tmes!" Musk wrote in a separate tweet. Tesla is the first carmaker to join the elite club of trillion-dollar companies that includes Apple Inc, Amazon.com Inc, Microsoft Corp and Alphabet Inc (Google). **AGENCIES**

## JioPhone to drive next wave of smartphone revolution: Pichai



**NEW DELHI:** As Reliance Jio gets ready to launch its next handset soon in the festive season, Alphabet and Google CEO Sundar Pichai said that in three-five years, the affordable JioPhone Next device will have a lot of impact in connecting and helping millions take advantage of a smartphone. The upcoming JioPhone

Next smartphone will house Pragati OS, powered by Android, which is touted as a world-class operating system built specifically for India. "People are looking for access and there's definitely been a wave of them who have adopted smartphones (in India)," Pichai said during the earnings call after announcing robust

quarterly results. "There is still demand to shift from feature phones to smartphones. JioPhone Next is like building a phone beyond the English-speaking community and going local, doing it in a way that many more people can take advantage of a smartphone," he elaborated. The device is built with excit-

ing features like the Google Assistant, automatic read-aloud and language translation for any on-screen text, a smart camera with India-centric filters and much more. Pichai said that he views JioPhone Next as laying the foundation for the next wave of digital transformation. "It's a version of digital transformation. And I think over the 3-5 year time-frame, the Jio phone will end up having a lot of impact. But overall, India continues to be an exciting market for us. We see strength across the categories we are involved in. And you'll continue to see us stay focused there," Pichai noted. The device will support all the available android apps which users can download and use on the device via Google Play Store.

In the span of five years, Jio has become a household name in India. With 430 million users, its services span geographies, economic and social classes.

With JioPhone Next, the company aims to take a decisive step towards its vision of democratising digital connectivity in India. **AGENCIES**

## Centre serves 202 notices to e-commerce companies for incorrect declaration of 'country of origin'

**NEW DELHI:** The Centre has issued 202 notices to e-commerce players for incorrect declaration of "country of origin" on products on their platforms in the past one year.

The maximum number of such violations (47) were found with respect to electronic appliances, followed by clothing/apparel (35) and home products, Consumer Affairs Secretary Leena Nandan said, speaking to media persons.

Of the 217 notices, 202 notices were issued for violations relating to the "country of origin" norm. The remaining 15 notices were for incorrect declaration of date of expiry/best before, address of manufacturer and importers, charging more than MRP, non-standard units and net quantity. As many as 75 companies have compounded their offences, out of which 68 have compounded for violations relating to country of origin. The total amount collected by compounding of the offences is Rs 41,85,500.

However, the Consumer Affairs Ministry did not disclose the names of the e-commerce players to whom the notices



were issued. On why the government was not naming and shaming the companies for violation, Nandan said, "We are trying to do this exercise to alert both companies as well as consumers. The companies should be aware that they do whatever is legally maintainable in terms of consumer redressal of grievances. And consumers need to know their rights."

The government has further strengthened the platforms through which consumers can file their complaints from across the country, officials said, adding that some complaints filed

through National Consumer Helpline (NCH) have been successfully resolved in the last few months. The CCPA has taken strong action on violations of consumer rights, Nandan said, adding that it has been "efficiently and effectively tightening noose over the violators".

Since LM (Packaged Commodity) Rules also mandate declaration of country of origin on e-commerce platforms, CCPA is also working in coordination with the Legal Metrology Department for necessary action under the Legal Metrology Act, they added. **AGENCIES**

## Apple sued in China for selling iPhones without charger: Report

**BEIJING:** A group of university students in China has sued tech giant Apple for not including a charger with an iPhone 12 Pro Max, media reports say.

The students claimed the included USB-C to lightning cable was not compatible with other chargers, leaving one student unable to charge the phone as advertised.

The plaintiffs also did not believe Apple's waste reduction claims, citing Vice, Engadget reported. Apple was only using this as an excuse to promote MagSafe wireless chargers that waste more energy than their wired counterparts, the students argued.

They want Apple to supply the charger as well as pay legal fees and 100 yuan (\$16) for breach of contract.



Apple reportedly told the Beijing virtual court it was common for phone brands to sell power adapters separately and that the government-sanctioned this practice.

However, the students pointed out that multiple Chinese companies offer the choice of an

adapter in the box. You can buy the Xiaomi Mi 11 with or without a power brick, for example.

The case is still ongoing, and there are no guarantees it will lead to either compensation for the students or a shift in Apple's no-charger policy, the report said. **AGENCIES**

## Bombay HC restrains Invesco from calling Zee shareholders' meeting

**MUMBAI:** The Bombay High Court granted an interim injunction against Zee Entertainment Enterprise Ltd's (ZEEL) largest shareholder Invesco, restraining the latter from going ahead with the requisition of an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) seeking removal of the ZEEL MD and CEO Punit Goenka.

A single Bench presided over by Justice Gautam Patel said, "I have granted an injunction to the respondents." The high court had reserved its order on the issue last week after ZEEL had told the court that it was not willing to hold an EGM of shareholders as requested by its largest shareholder, Invesco.

The submission was made in response to a pre-



vious suggestion made by the Bombay HC whereby, Justice Patel had asked the ZEEL if it was willing to hold such a meeting.

Senior counsel Gopal Subramanian, who appeared for ZEEL, had told the HC at the time that the company's Board could not grant permission for something that could turn out to be "illegal."

Invesco Developing Markets Fund and OFI Global China Fund, the largest investors of ZEEL, had sent a requisition to the company on September 11 to call for an EGM for the removal of MD and CEO Punit Goenka and two other non-independent and non-executive directors from the company's Board. **AGENCIES**

## Paytm to hike IPO size to Rs 18,300 cr as Alibaba's Ant, other investors dilute more stake



**NEW DELHI:** Digital financial services firm Paytm will increase its initial public offer size to Rs 18,300 with company's biggest shareholder Alibaba group firm Ant Financial and existing investors, including Softbank, deciding to dilute more stake in the company, sources said.

The company had plans to raise a total of Rs 16,600 crore by issuing fresh equity worth Rs 8,300 crore and another Rs 8,300 crore through an offer-for-sale.

With existing shareholders deciding to dilute more equity, the offer-for-sale will go up by Rs 1,700 crore to Rs 10,000 crore.

"Roughly half of the offer for sale is by Ant Financial and the remaining by Alibaba, Elevation Capital, Softbank and other existing shareholders," one of the sources said.

Softbank was not part of investors selling stake in the disclosure made by the company in its IPO draft paper.

According to the document, investors selling stake included Antfin (Netherlands) Holding BV (which has 29.6 per cent stake), Alibaba.Com Singapore E-Commerce (7.2 per cent) and Elevation Capital V FII Holdings (0.7 per cent). **AGENCIES**

## Rackspace highlights India IT leaders lacking confidence, resources against Cyber threats

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

About nearly half of India's IT leaders are not "fully confident" in their ability to respond to data, malware phishing, supply chain, ransomware, cloud, IoT and application attacks, according to a new global survey by Rackpace Technology® (NASDAQ: RXT), a leading end-to-end, multicloud technology solutions company.

A 150-respondents survey in India noted that 46% of them could effectively respond to incidents, mitigate threats (45%), or understand the nature of the threats they are facing -- when it comes to organisations' attack response capabilities.

The survey covering 1,420 IT professionals also revealed widespread uncertainty about organizations possessing the talent and skills required to meet cybersecurity challenges, while the majority (89%) of respon-



dents highlighted their organizations lacking the necessary skills and expertise to respond to a growing array of threats.

"Though most respondents to our survey say they are 'prepared' for cyber-attacks, there is a high degree of anxiety about their ability to effectively confront adversaries who are increasingly sophisticated," said Jeff DeVertter, Chief Evangelist, Rackpace Technology.

DevOps methodologies and condensing of development cycles -- coupled with other IT trends -- have made addressing cyberthreats an increasingly complex task. Around 31% of India's survey respondents cited the growth in cloud and IoT as key challenges, followed by new threats and attack methods, the growth in data volumes, digital operations, and remote work (42%), which has resulted in increased opportunities for attackers.

Forty-eight percent of India respondents say their ability to manage application security in a more complex environment is influenced by new ways of working, including DevOps and Agile development practices. Other dynamics include faster release/delivery cycles 52%, the growth in microservice application architectures (51%), hybrid/multicloud environments (49%) and container runtime environments (43%)

"Moreover, the expanding use of the cloud, IoT and applications, as well as a tight talent market and an increase in remote work -- largely driven by the pandemic -- have made the security environment much more challenging. Few organizations actually have the people, processes, and technologies that match a mature cybersecurity model," he said.

The ubiquity of the cloud,

## Airtel accepts 4-year moratorium on spectrum, AGR payments

**NEW DELHI:** Bharti Airtel has informed the government that it will opt for the four-year moratorium on payment of AGR and spectrum dues, a source said.

The option of dues moratorium was offered by the government to telcos as part of a recently-announced relief package for telecom sector.

Airtel communicated its decision to the telecom department, the source said.

Airtel has told the government that it will take the four-year moratorium on AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue) and spectrum dues with the option of prepaying as per NIA (Notice Inviting Applications) norms, the source said.

On the option for converting the interest amount (of

moratorium period) into equity, companies still have ample time to convey their decision, the source pointed out. An e-mail sent to Bharti Airtel on the matter, did not elicit a response.

In line with the bold reforms unveiled for the telecom sector, the government recently wrote to telcos including Bharti Airtel, Vodafone Idea and Reliance Jio asking them to convey by October 29 if they would be opting for the four-year dues moratorium.

Telcos have also been given 90 days time to indicate if they want to opt for converting the interest amount pertaining to the moratorium period, into equity.

Bharti Airtel Chairman Sunil Mittal had last month



said the company will opt for payment moratorium and redirect the cashflow to aggressively build networks.

With regard to interest dues on payment moratorium, Mittal had said Airtel will take a decision, when the offer comes from the government, on whether

to go for equity conversion mechanism or pay cash.

The company's board will take a decision at that point, Mittal had said adding that with interest component working out to Rs 7,500-10,000 crore, the stake involved may work out to 2-3 per cent, in case the

company opted for it.

The moratorium will free up cash flow to the extent of Rs 40,000 crore and that amount is sufficient to meet the market's requirements, he had said.

Vodafone Idea, last week, said its board has approved availing the four-year spectrum payment moratorium. VIL had further stated that other options offered in the telecom department's notification will be considered by the board of directors within the stipulated timeframe.

According to the letter sent to the telcos, the government has offered the option to defer payment of the spectrum auction instalments due up to four years, with immediate effect, excluding the instalments due for spectrum auction

2021. This option is applicable from FY 2022-23 to FY 2025-26.

These deferred amounts will be spread equally over the remaining instalments to be paid, without any increase in the existing time period specified for making the instalment payments. Interest as stipulated in the relevant year of auction of spectrum will, however, be charged so that the Net Present Value (NPV) of the payable amount is protected.

"Option for converting the interest amount, arising out of protection of NPV on account of deferred spectrum dues, pertaining to the moratorium period, by way of equity, shall be exercised within 90 days of this notification," the DoT letter to telcos had said.

The Department of Telecom's letter had spelt out the fine print related to moratorium of deferred spectrum auction instalments and AGR related dues, as also the modalities for converting interest amount into equity.

The method of arriving at the price and valuation for equity conversion of interest dues is different for listed and unlisted companies.

One of the letters issued by DoT to a listed company had mentioned that equity shares would be issued by the company to the government on preferential basis. It went on to add that the NPV of the interest amount will be calculated as on the date of exercise of option.

The interest amount will continue to be treated as a loan to companies till the

completion of the equity infusion process, DoT had said.

The government recently approved a blockbuster relief package for the sector that besides the four-year break for companies from paying statutory dues, includes permission to share scarce airwaves, change in the definition of revenue on which levies are paid and 100 per cent foreign investment through the automatic route.

The measures, aimed at providing relief to companies such as Vodafone Idea that have to pay thousands of crores in unprovisioned past statutory dues, also include the scrapping of Spectrum Usage Charge (SUC) for airwaves acquired in future spectrum auctions. **AGENCIES**

ALSO READ | MOSCOW SHUTS MOST WORKPLACES AS INFECTIONS, DEATHS SOAR \* P8 | PV SINDHU, LAKSHYA SEN WIN, SAINA NEHWAL RETIRES \* P8

# Maruti Suzuki India Q2 net dips 66 per cent to Rs 487 crore

**NEW DELHI:** The country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India reported a 66 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 487 crore in the second quarter ended September 30, 2021, impacted by the ongoing semiconductor shortage and increase in commodity prices.

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,420 crore in the second quarter of last fiscal, Maruti Suzuki India said in a statement.

Consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 20,551 crore in the second quarter, as compared to Rs 18,756 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

Total vehicle sales were down 3 per cent at 3,79,541 units in the second quarter, as against 3,93,130 units in the corresponding period last fiscal, it said.

Domestic sales were at 3,20,133 units in the second quarter, as against 3,70,619 units in the year-ago period.

Exports were, however, the



highest ever at any quarter in the company's history at 59,408 units in the second quarter, as compared to 22,511 units in the same period last fiscal.

An estimated 1.16 lakh vehicles could not be produced owing to the electronics component shortage mostly cor-

responding to the domestic models, the company said.

Maruti Suzuki India further said it had more than 2 lakh pending customer orders at the end of the quarter for which it is making all efforts to expedite deliveries.

"This quarter was also marked by an unprecedented

increase in the prices of commodities like steel, aluminium and precious metals within a span of one year.

"The company made maximum efforts to absorb input cost increases offsetting them through cost reduction and passed on minimum impact to customers by way of car price

**“**The company made maximum efforts to absorb input cost increases offsetting them through cost reduction and passed on minimum impact to customers by way of car price increase**”**

increase," it said adding as a result there was a drop in its net profit.

In the first half of the fiscal year ended September 30, the company sold a total of 7,33,155 units with domestic sales at 6,28,228 units.

Exports in this half year were at 1,04,927 units as compared to 32,083 units in the same period last fiscal, the company said, adding overseas shipments in the first half this year exceeded the full year sales of last year. **AGENCIES**

# Union Bank of India cuts home loan rates to 6.40 per cent

**NEW DELHI:** The Union Bank of India reduced its interest rates on home loan to an all-time low of 6.40 per cent to provide affordable loan offers to its customers amid the festive season. The reduced rate will come into effect from October 27, 2021, according to a statement released by the state-run lender today.

The new rates will be applicable to customers applying for new loans or those who wish to transfer their existing loans including balance transfers, according to the bank.

Recently, Bank of India also reduced its interest rates on home loans and vehicles loans by 35 basis points and 50 basis points, amid the festive season. The interest rates on home loans starts at 6.50 per cent, compared to 6.85 per cent earlier, while rates on vehicle loans start at 6.85 per cent, compared to 7.35 per cent earlier, according to Bank of India.

State Bank of India (SBI) - the country's largest state-run lender, also has reduced



home loan interest rates to 6.7 per cent to support home loan customers amid the festive season. SBI is offering credit score linked home loans at 6.70 per cent - irrespective of the loan amount. The bank waived off the processing fees completely and is offering attractive interest concession based on the credit score of the borrower.

Among private lenders, HDFC had also announced a special limited period offer for the festive season with the latest home loan interest

rates starting at 6.70 per cent. As part of the festive season offer, customers can avail the HDFC home loans at 6.70 per cent from September 20, 2021 - which will be valid till October 31, 2021.

On October 26, shares of Union Bank of India settled 0.52 per cent lower at Rs 48.10 apiece on the BSE. Union Bank of India opened on the BSE at Rs 48.45, touching an intra day high of Rs 50.20 and an intra day low of Rs 47.25, throughout the trading session today. **AGENCIES**

## NEWSBRIEF

**Govt enables tax audit utility form for 2019-20, 2020-21**

**NEW DELHI:** The tax audit utility form has been enabled by the income tax department on its website for financial years 2019-20 and 2020-21. According to the provisions of the income tax department, taxpayers are mandated to get their accounts audited if the sales, turnover or gross receipts of business exceed Rs 10 crore. If a taxpayer is a professional, the limit was over Rs 50 lakh in 2020-21 (assessment year 2021-22). The last date for filing the tax audit report for the financial year 2020-21 is January 15, 2022. For 2019-20 i.e. assessment year 2020-21, the limit was Rs 5 crore for businesses and Rs 50 lakh for professionals while the due date for original tax audit report was January 15, 2021. **AGENCIES**

**Finance Ministry releases Rs 44,000 crore to states**

**NEW DELHI:** Finance Ministry has released Rs 44,000 crore to states as part of the back-to-back loan facility in lieu of GST compensation. With this, the total amount released to states is now Rs 1,59,000 crore, a statement issued by Finance Ministry said. Thursday's amount is in addition to the normal GST compensation which is released every two months out of the actual cess collection. During the meeting of the GST Council held on May 28, 2021, it was decided that the Centre will borrow Rs 1.59 lakh crore and release it to states on a back-to-back basis to meet the resource gap due to shortfall in compensation released to them. **AGENCIES**

**Sitharaman to attend G-20 joint finance, health ministers meet in Rome**

**NEW DELHI:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will attend the G-20 joint Finance and Health Ministers' meeting in Rome on October 29, which among other things will discuss Covid pandemic prevention and response. "Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman embarks on an official visit to attend #G20 Joint Finance & Health Ministers meeting in #Rome to discuss measures to strengthen #COVID19 #PandemicPrevention, #preparedness & #response. The meeting precedes #G20RomeSummit," the Finance Ministry tweeted. Finance and health ministers will discuss how to keep momentum on response to pandemic and build on further coordination arrangements between health and finance ministries. On October 29, G20 Finance and Health Ministers will gather in Rome for their first joint meeting under the Italian G20 Presidency. The meeting will be co-chaired by Daniele Franco, Italian Minister of Economy and Finance and Roberto Speranza, Italian Minister of Health. **AGENCIES**

## PNB declines 10% after interest income falls in September Quarter

**NEW DELHI:** Shares of the country's second largest public sector lender - Punjab National Bank - declined as much as 10.4 per cent to hit an intraday low of Rs 41.50 on the BSE a day after it reported September quarter earnings. The sharp decline in Delhi-based Punjab National Bank's share price came on the back of a fall in net interest income. Punjab National Bank's net interest income - the difference between interest earned and interest expended - fell 25 per cent to Rs 6,353 crore in the September quarter from Rs 8,455 crore in the year-ago period.

The bank's profit, however, jumped 78 per cent to Rs 1,105 crore from Rs 621 crore in the same quarter last year on the back of lower provisioning for bad loans, but the earnings were below estimates, analysts said.

PNB's provisioning for bad loans fell to Rs 2,693 crore versus provisioning of Rs

3,811 crore during the same period last year. Punjab National Bank's asset quality showed a slight improvement; its gross non-performing assets as a percentage of total advances came in at 13.63 per cent versus 14.33 per cent in the previous quarter. Its gross NPAs in absolute terms were over Rs 1 lakh crore. Net NPA came in at 5.49 per cent compared with 5.84 per cent in the previous quarter.

As of 2:11 pm, Punjab National Bank shares traded 9 per cent lower at Rs 42.10. The stock was the top loser in the 12-member Nifty Bank index. **AGENCIES**

## Impartial audit must for resilient economy: RBI

**NEW DELHI:** Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das said accurate and analytical audit reports are essential for financial stability and growth as they instil confidence among members of the public.

In case of the public sector, auditing is a cornerstone of good governance, he said while addressing officers at the National Academy of Audit and Accounts (NAAA).

"By providing unbiased and objective assessments of whether public resources are managed responsibly and effectively to achieve the intended results, a fair and impartial audit instils confidence among citizens and stakeholders," he stated.

Observing that fair and impartial audit in a globally integrated economy is not just a domestic concern, he said, it is also an instrument to enhance the country's reputation and credibility on a global stage.

"With increasing complexity of financial markets and higher expectations from the public about efficient resource allocation, the role of audit has



**“**As India aspires to grow faster, the expertise and independence of auditors will have to be leveraged to provide more assurance on financial performance to all stakeholders. We need robust audit for a dynamic and resilient economy**”**

become even more important. "As India aspires to grow faster, the expertise and independence of auditors will have to be leveraged to provide

more assurance on financial performance to all stakeholders. We need robust audit for a dynamic and resilient economy," he said. **AGENCIES**

## Gold bond series VII-X opens soon

**NEW DELHI:** The government's Sovereign Gold Bonds Scheme 2021-22, will be issued in four more tranches in the current fiscal - starting from October 2021 - March 2022, said the finance ministry in a statement today. The first upcoming tranche - Series VII, will open for subscription on Monday, October 25 and will close on October 29 - remaining open for investors for a period of five days.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issues the interest-paying bonds linked to the market price of the yellow metal, as part of the sovereign gold bond scheme. The gold bond sare issued by the RBI on behalf of the government.

The issue price of each tranche will be fixed in rupees on the basis of a simple average of closing price of gold of 999 purity, by the Mumbai-based India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA) for the last three working days of the week preceding the subscription period. The issue price of the



gold bonds will be Rs 50 per gram less for the online subscribers - who pay through the digital mode.

The sovereign gold bonds will be sold through the scheduled commercial banks (except small finance banks and payment banks), stock holding corporation of India Limited (SHCIL), Clearing Corporation of India Limited (CCIL), the designated post offices, and recognised stock exchanges - National Stock Exchange of India and the Bombay Stock Exchange Limited. The gold bonds are held in the RBI books or in a demat form. **AGENCIES**

## Centre appoints KV Kamath as NaBFID chairperson



**NEW DELHI:** The central government announced the appointment of veteran banker KV Kamath as chairperson of the newly set up Rs 20,000 crore National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID).

Parliament had in March cleared the National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID) Bill 2021 to support the development of long-term non-recourse infrastructure financing in India, including the development of the bonds and derivatives markets necessary for infrastructure financing.

"New approach to building #AatmaNirbharBharat! Central Government has appointed Shri K. V. Kamath to the post of Chairperson, National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development, a newly set up DFI in India," Department of Financial Services (DFS), under the finance ministry, tweeted. Kamath, the first head of the New Development Bank (NDB) set up by the BRICS group of

**“**The first head of the New Development Bank (NDB) set up by the BRICS group of emerging market economies, had completed his five-year tenure last year**”**

emerging market economies, had completed his five-year tenure last year. The 73-year-old banker, known among his friends as KV, began his career at the erstwhile development finance institution (DFI) ICICI in 1971.

Back in 2008, when ICICI Bank was hit by widespread rumours of 'run-ons', Kamath led from the front and was instrumental in its complete turnaround.

He retired as managing director and CEO in April 2009 and became its non-executive chairman. **AGENCIES**

## Large private banks to become larger, consolidation likely over FY22-24

**MUMBAI:** The Indian banking sector is set to witness a fresh phase of consolidation over the medium term which will primarily be driven by large private sector banks (PVBs).

Given the current buoyancy in the equity markets, there is a significant opportunity for large Indian private banks to explore the inorganic growth route through the acquisition of smaller private banks that continue to face headwinds or even public sector banks where the government is considering disinvestment, an analysis by credit ratings agency Acuite said.

The consolidation in the banking space is also imminent as many small-sized private banks continue to face chronic asset quality problems which constrain their capital availability, hence there is uncertainty on their scalability and business sustainability over the short to medium term. Whereas, the larger banks have built a comfortable capital cushion that can insulate them from any asset quality stress. Also, the low return on assets (RoAA) for smaller private banks in FY19 and FY20 in the range of 0.2 per cent-0.3 per cent reflects their vulnerabil-



ity to a challenging operating environment, the agency said. **IANIS**

With regard to the performance of private banks as compared to the public sector, the former clearly outrun the latter in earnings growth, taking away 10 per cent of its market share in five years.

While Public Sector Banks (PSBs) continue to dominate the Indian banking industry with a majority market share in both deposits and advances, their market share is declining. Over the last five years, their market share has dropped by around 10 per cent in both deposits and advances, which has been largely taken over by private banks. **AGENCIES**

## IndusInd bank launches EMI on debit cards

**NEW DELHI:** IndusInd Bank announced the launch of the EMI or equated monthly instalments facility on debit cards, which will allow customers to convert their high value transactions into simpler instalments.

With the introduction of this facility, a debit card holder of IndusInd Bank can walk into any participating store, and avail it by swiping or tapping their card at a merchant PoS (point-of-sale) terminal - where retail transactions are completed.

IndusInd Bank has partnered with more than 60,000 offline merchant outlets - including large format retailers, hypermarkets, multi-brand and stand-



alone stores to facilitate purchases across categories such as electronics, consumer durables, apparels, **AGENCIES**

home décor, automobiles, hospitals and more.

The bank will also partner with leading e-commerce platforms to enable online purchases as well. The debit card holders can avail the facility of buying products and then choose an EMI option with tenures from 3, 6, 9, 12, 18, and 24 months.

Customers can also check their eligibility for availing the option through SMS - by typing 'MYOPR', addressed to 5676757.

"IndusInd Bank has always been at the forefront at driving customer convenience by introducing products that bring unparalleled value to their banking experience. We are delighted to

launch an EMI facility for our debit card holders that will enable them to purchase products of their choice from a wide array of categories, and also give them the flexibility of making payments in easy instalments over a period of time," said Charu Mathur, Chief Digital Officer & Head-Business Strategy, IndusInd Bank.

On October 20, shares of IndusInd Bank settled 0.56 per cent higher at Rs 1,201.1 apiece on the BSE. IndusInd Bank opened on the BSE at Rs 1,193.80, swinging to an intra day high of Rs 1,213.35 and an intra day low of Rs 1,172.35, throughout the trading session today. **AGENCIES**

## 10% thermal power capacity vulnerable to outage as coal shortage lingers: Report

**MUMBAI:** Crisil Rating warned that despite the respite from a temporary fall in power demand, a tenth of the thermal capacity is still vulnerable to the outage as it sees coal-stock remaining in single-digit days through the rest of the year.

Recently, the agency had said the ongoing coal shortage could debilitate corporate India if it lingers on for long.

About 10 per cent of the 209 GW, to be precise 20 GW capacity of coal-based private power stations remain vulnerable to outage amid surging coal demand. Despite the recent dip in demand (10 per cent over October 16 and 17) due to heavy rains, coal shortage persists as their inventory is only for 5 days, the report said.

Over half of these capacities do not have fuel supply agreements, which increases their reliance on coal, either through imports or through e-auction where prices re-



main elevated, both these may force these plants to shutter operations for a few days as their operating cost may outweigh revenue.

Coal shortage is acute despite domestic supply rising 16 per cent in Q2FY22 over the same period in the pre-pandemic FY20, partly due

to substitute non-coking coal imports falling over 20 per cent and depleted coal stock at the plants. Another problem is the erratic domestic supplies due to seasonal rains impacting mining. Overall coal supply grew around 8 per cent.

Meanwhile, domestic e-auction premia have jumped

over 130 per cent over the Coal India notified rate in September, from 80 per cent in September 2019 due to the supply shortage.

Even global coal prices are 160 per cent up over September 2019 rates due to growing energy demand across the globe, constraints in production, and high natural gas prices skewing the energy mix.

The agency expects high global coal prices and the domestic e-auction premia to remain elevated till supplies stabilise, which will lead to 20 GW of private capacities from the overall 209 GW of coal-based capacities to be hit and forcing them to down shutters for a few days to shore up coal stock and to avoid heavy operating losses.

However, outages are unlikely at Central and state gencos accounting for 133 GW because most of them have fuel supply agreements for their entire requirement, which guarantee coal supplies

at notified prices. These plants cater to over 60 per cent of thermal generation.

The balance 56 GW of the private gencos have more than half of their coal requirements tied up.

As much as 80 per cent of the coal domestically produced is supplied to gencos, which generate 75 per cent of the power, the demand for which grew 9 per cent in Q2 over the same period in the pre-pandemic level.

The problem also rose because the reliance on thermal sources increased disproportionately because of lower hydro and nuclear generation during the period.

Thermal plant load factors have expanded by 400 bps to 57 per cent in Q2 FY22 from 53 per cent in the same quarter FY20 and are expected to remain high at 60 per cent for the full fiscal as against 56 per cent in FY20. As a result, the pressure on coal demand will also remain high. **AGENCIES**

## September crude imports hit 5-month high as business activity pick-up

**NEW DELHI:** India's crude oil imports in September hit a five-month high, government data showed, as a pick up in economic activity and mobility led to higher fuel demand.

Crude oil imports in the world's third largest oil consumer and importer rose 16% to 17.61 million tonnes from a year earlier, according to data on the website of the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell. «India's September crude oil imports climbed to highest levels since April, a sign that the reopening of the economy continues,» said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at brokerage OANDA.

«Indian refiners see crude demand roaring back as driving picks up and on expectations for a strong return of international travel in November.»

Reliance Industries Ltd, the operator of the world's biggest refining complex, imported nearly 12% more oil in September than in August.

Factory activity in Asia's third-biggest economy im-



proved last month, with recovery expected to continue for at least a few more months supported by ultra-easy monetary policy.

On a monthly basis, crude oil imports increased 1.3% versus August.

Earlier this month, data showed fuel consumption and refiners' crude oil throughput ticked higher in September from the preceding month.

Oil product imports jumped about 13% to 3.50 million tonnes from a year earlier and exports were up about 3%.

Of the 4.94 million tonnes of exports in September, diesel continued to hold a major share at 2.79 million tonnes, up 4.5% year on year and 7.3% higher from August. **AGENCIES**

## Tax revenues likely to beat forecast on strong recovery, say officials

**NEW DELHI:** Government expects tax revenues for the current financial year to be 10 per cent above budget, beating forecasts for the first time in four years, two officials said, as the economy powers back towards pre-pandemic levels.

Tax revenues, budgeted at Rs 15.45 lakh crore for the year to March 31, have been below projections ever since 2017-18, as the economy lost momentum even before COVID-19 and then slipped into a deep recession.

But now retail sales have picked up and exports are surging at a record rate, suggesting it is rebounding faster than anticipated after a devastating



second wave of coronavirus infections this year.

India's economy grew 20.1 per cent between April and June, versus a 24.4 per cent contraction during the same period last year.

«Activity levels have improved a lot. All indicators are showing a faster-than-anticipated recovery, we are set to beat our own (tax) estimates this year if all remains well,» the second official said.

The finance ministry did not immediately reply to emails and messages seeking comment on tax revenues.

If tax payments remain strong and the government is able to hit the 2021-22 target for revenues from its ongoing privatisation programme, then it will be able to beat its fiscal deficit projection of 6.8 per cent by as much as 30-40 basis points, the second official said.

India aims to raise Rs 1.75 lakh crore in the current fiscal year through sales of stakes in state-run companies and is hoping the sale of Air India to conglomerate Tata will provide an impetus. **AGENCIES**

## FM urges Asian infrastructure bank to support development

**NEW DELHI:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and similar institutions should enhance private sector capital mobilisation, which would help in inclusive development.

Taking part in the sixth annual meeting of the board of governors of AIIB, the finance minister said that it should look for investment opportunities for developing social infrastructure.

The significance of multilateral development banks have been understood after the Coronavirus pandemic erupted, Sitharaman said, adding that multilateral development finance has an important role to play in the current scenario.

Assuring India's cooperation and support to AIIB for its future endeavours, she urged the Beijing-based lender to set up a Resident Board and Regional Offices to ensure accountabil-



ity, transparency and quality of operations and investments.

During her intervention in the governor's round table discussion on the theme of «Covid-19 Crisis and Post-Covid Support», Sitharaman said that the social and economic stimulus packages given by the government in India along with various other reforms, led to the economic recovery in the country. Listing the various measures taken by the govern-

ment during the pandemic to provide relief to the people, the finance minister said that the schemes boosted the economy and protected livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable sections of the society.

She appreciated AIIB's prompt actions in providing financial support to member countries, including India, in their efforts to contain and combat the pandemic, the finance ministry said in a statement. **AGENCIES**

## Sugar Industry eyes Govt ethanol price hike in diverting sugar for ethanol prod

**DOMINICK RODRIGUES**  
Mumbai

The sugar industry has welcomed the government's recent announcement of an incentive to encourage sugar mills to divert excess sugarcane/sugar to ethanol and to achieve targets of blending ethanol with petrol in line with the «Ethanol Blended with Petrol program», according to Vishwaraj Sugar Industries Limited (VSIL), Executive Director Mukesh Kumar.

Quoting the Union Food Ministry as having stated that «...incentive on sugar sacrificed for producing ethanol from B-heavy molasses/sugarcane juice/sugar syrup/sugar has been doubled from October 2021 onwards in their monthly release quota,» Kumar said the Government is expected to announce a price hike of around Rs 2-3 per litre for ethanol in its new contract starting from December 1.

«Now, those sugar mills -- which will be diverting sugar to ethanol -- would be getting 100% incentive for the entire quantity of sugar sacrificed on producing ethanol from B-heavy molasses/sugarcane



juice/sugar syrup/sugar in their monthly release quota,» he quoted while noting that Vishwaraj Sugar Industries Limited (VSIL) is expanding its distillery capacity by 150 KLPD to produce 250 KLPD ethanol, at an estimated cost of Rs 150 crore at its existing plant in Belgaum district in Karnataka.

The Centre is taking several steps for diversion of sugar to ethanol and, in order to find a permanent solution to address the problem of excess sugar, the government is encouraging mills to divert excess

sugarcane to ethanol, he said, adding that a target of 10 per cent blending of fuel grade ethanol with petrol has been fixed for 2022 and 20 per cent blending by 2025.

Kumar said that Vishwaraj Sugar Industries Limited has also drawn up Rs 250 crore expansion plans for setting up of +greenfield+ sugar factory along with a distillery facility in Karnataka, for which land acquisition and preliminary process has commenced.

India is a leading sugarcane-producing country and during the new sugar season which

started from October, the sugar production is estimated at 310 lakh tonnes -- which will be the same as last year -- but the production of ethanol will increase substantially due to more distilleries, Kumar said.

While VSIL is an integrated sugar company producing sugar, power and ethanol, the de-regulation of sugar witnessed the company developing a robust marketing and sales team and the company's turnover is expected to double in the next 5 years after the proposed projects go on stream, he said.

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

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

## Dearness allowance effective from July 1, 2021 hiked to 31%

**NEWDELHI:** Finance Ministry has said that dearness allowance (DA) for central government employees has been hiked to 31 per cent of the basic pay from 28 per cent, which would be effective from July 1, 2021.

This was informed through a notification issued by the Department of Expenditure on October 25, 2021, just a week after the Union Cabinet had cleared a 3 per cent hike in DA and dearness relief (DR) for pensioners.

The notification said that the term «basic pay» means the pay drawn as per the 7th pay commission matrix and does not include any other type of pay like special pay.

The hike will be applicable for civilian employees as well as for those employed in defence services. **AGENCIES**

## Gold demand could jump in Q4 on festivals

**NEW DELHI:** The country's gold demand could strengthen significantly in the fourth quarter, the World Gold Council (WGC) said, with a drop in global prices and the release of pent-up demand expected to lift jewellery sales during the peak festive season.

Higher demand from the world's second-biggest gold consumer could help support spot prices after a near 5 per cent correction so far this year, but a rise in imports of the metal would widen India's trade deficit and weigh on the rupee.

«The fourth quarter is likely to be one of the best quarters in recent years. Pent-up demand, softening of gold prices and weddings will drive the demand,» Somasundaram PR, regional chief executive officer of WGC's Indian operations, told Reuters.

Demand for the precious

In a report published, the WGC said gold demand jumped 47 per cent in the third quarter from a year earlier to 139.1 tonnes as jewellery demand surged 58 per cent to 96.2 tonnes.

Demand for coins and bars -- known as investment demand -- rose 27 per cent in the same period to 42.9 tonnes as investors increased hedging amid a stock market rally, the WGC said.

Somasundaram did not provide a demand estimate for 2021, but said demand could be better than 2019's 690.4 tonnes and well above 2020's 446.6 tonnes.

«With restrictions being gradually lifted across the country, retail demand is bouncing back to pre-Covid levels. With the upcoming festive and wedding season, there is all the more enthusiasm towards gold demand,» he said. **AGENCIES**

metal usually spikes towards the end of the year in India, as buying gold for weddings and major festivals such as Diwali and Dussehra is considered auspicious.

Indians celebrated Dussehra earlier this month and anecdotal feedback from manufacturers indicated strong sales, he said.

The pick-up in retail demand gave confidence to manufacturers, and imports in the September quarter jumped 187 per cent from a year ago to 255.6 tonnes, he said.

## LPG price may be hiked next week; petrol, diesel rates up again

**LPG IS STILL A CONTROLLED COMMODITY. SO, TECHNICALLY, THE GOVERNMENT CAN REGULATE THE RETAIL SELLING PRICE. BUT, WHEN THEY DO THAT THE OIL COMPANIES HAVE TO BE COMPENSATED FOR THE UNDER-RECOVERY (OR LOSSES) THEY INCUR ON SELLING LPG AT RATES BELOW THE COST**

**NEW DELHI:** Cooking gas LPG prices may be hiked next week after under-recovery on the fuel widened to over Rs 100 per cylinder, sources said insisting that the rate hike, including the quantum of increase, is dependent on government permission.

If allowed, this will be the fifth increase in cooking gas rates across all categories -- households using subsidised gas for cooking and heating purposes, non-subsidised fuel and industrial-sized gas.

LPG rates were last hiked by Rs 15 per cylinder on October 6, taking the total increase in rates since July to Rs 90 per 14.2-kg cylinder.

«LPG is still a controlled commodity. So, technically, the government can

regulate the retail selling price. But, when they do that the oil companies have to be compensated for the under-recovery (or losses) they incur on selling LPG at rates below the cost,» one of the sources.

The government last year eliminated subsidies on LPG by bringing retail prices at par with the cost through periodic hikes.

But, unlike petrol and diesel, whose pricing has been decontrolled, the government has not official announced deregulation of LPG rates.

«So far, there is no indication that the compensation or subsidy will be restored as the gap between cost and retail price has widened,» the source said.

While Saudi LPG rates have jumped by 60 per cent to USD 800 per tonne this month, international benchmark Brent crude oil is trading at USD 85.42 per barrel.

Sources with direct



This is the rate that domestic households -- who are entitled to 12 cylinders of 14.2-kg each at subsidised rates, poor households that got free connections under the Ujjwala scheme and industrial users pay.

Meanwhile, after a two-day pause, petrol and diesel prices on Wednesday were again hiked by 35 paise per litre each, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers.

Petrol now costs Rs 107.94 a litre in Delhi and Rs 113.80 in Mumbai. Diesel is now priced at Rs 96.67 a litre in Delhi and Rs 104.75 in Mumbai.

While petrol has already hit the Rs 100-a-litre mark or more in all major cities of the country, consumers of any steep burden.

Currently, cooking gas costs Rs 899.50 per cylinder in Delhi and Mumbai, and Rs 926 in Kolkata.

diesel has touched that level in over one-and-a-half dozen states and UTs from Jammu & Kashmir to Tamil Nadu.

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

Petrol price has been hiked on 22 occasions since September 28, when a three-week-long hiatus in rate revision ended. In all, prices have gone up by Rs 6.75 a litre.

Diesel rates have been increased by Rs 8.05 per litre in 24 hikes since September 24.

Prior to that, the petrol price was increased by Rs 11.44 a litre between May 4 and July 17. The diesel rate had gone up by Rs 9.14 per litre during this period. **AGENCIES**

# BHUMI joins Rajkumar Rao in Bheed



**B**humi Pednekar has come on board with Rajkumar Rao for a movie titled Bheed. The film will be directed by Anubhav Sinha, and will be Bhumi and Rajkumar's second movie together. They will be seen for the first time in Badhaai Do, which is currently in the making. Bhumi and Raj will join Anubhav Sinha in Lucknow soon after Diwali to begin the shoot. The filmmaker is currently busy with the post-production work on Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer Anek and pre-production of Bheed. The film is jointly produced by Bhushan Kumar's T-Series and Anubhav Sinha, and is said to be a hard-hitting social drama. As for Badhaai Do, the movie has been directed by Harshvardhan Kulkarni. It is a sequel of Ayushmann's 2018 film Badhaai Ho.



## Saif, Kareena go holidaying in Jaisalmer with sons



**JAIPUR:** Bollywood power couple Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor are in Jaisalmer spending their holidays with their two sons. Kareena shared a picture of her son in a

playful mood standing in a mountain pose. "Downward Dog Y'CEYCEYoga runs in the family you seeYYY,#8 months Pike position #Mera Beta ai," she wrote on Instagram.

Kareena Kapoor also shared her picture on Twitter in sportswear. The picture shows her in her regular workout sessions. She captioned it "Desert Run".

AGENCIES

## Moscow shuts most workplaces as infections, deaths soar

**MOSCOW:** The Russian capital started a nonworking period intended to stem coronavirus infections as new daily cases and deaths from COVID-19 surged to all-time highs. The government coronavirus task force reported 1,159 deaths in 24 hours, the largest daily tally since the pandemic began.



The country's official death toll from the pandemic, by far the highest in Europe, now stands at 235,057. To slow the spread of the virus, Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered a nonworking period from Oct. 30 to Nov. 7, when most state organizations and private businesses are to suspend operations. He encouraged the most affected regions to start sooner, and some ordered most of their residents off work earlier this week. Moscow followed, shutting kindergartens, schools, gyms, entertainment venues and most stores, and allowing restaurants and cafes to only

provide service for takeout or delivery. Food stores, pharmacies and companies operating key infrastructure remained open. Access to museums, theaters, concert halls and other venues is limited to people holding digital codes on their smartphones to prove they have been vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19, a practice that will remain in place after Nov. 7. Putin has also instructed local officials to close nightclubs and other entertainment venues, and ordered unvaccinated people older than 60 to stay home. **AGENCIES**

## T20 WC: West Indies, B'desh face must-win situation against each other

**SHARJAH:** Their campaigns thrown haywire by back-to-back losses, defending champions West Indies and Bangladesh would be locked in a do-or-die battle when they square off in a crucial group 1 Super 12 match of the T20 World Cup.



While the West Indies lost to England and South Africa, Bangladesh were defeated by Eoin Morgan and Co. after going down to Sri Lanka. Both teams need a win to keep their semi-final hopes alive. The West Indies desperately need to sort out their batting woes. In their campaign opener against England, they were bowled out for 55 and all their batters were guilty of throwing away their wickets going for big shots instead of rotating the strike and building the innings. In the second game, the two-time champions slightly tweaked their no-holds barred approach, sending Lendl Simmons to anchor the innings. But the opener was painfully slow, managing 16

another spin bowling option. The West Indian bowlers have also looked ordinary with not enough runs to defend. Only left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein has been impressive. Additionally, the UAE conditions do not suit West Indies' "big-hitting" style of play. They are yet to register a win in seven outings, including the two warm-up games played ahead of the tournament. On the other hand, Bangladesh are familiar with the sluggish sub-continent tracks and yet they have failed to exploit it. **AGENCIES**

## PV Sindhu, Lakshya Sen win, Saina Nehwal retires



**PARIS:** PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen sailed into the second round but it was curtailed for Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth on a mixed day for Indians at the French Open Super 750 badminton tournament. In women's singles, Sindhu beat Denmark's Julie Dawall

Jakobsen 21-15 21-18, while Saina, who had suffered a groin injury at Uber Cup final, retired after lagging 11-21 2-9 against Sayaka Takahashi of Japan. Sen defeated Ireland's Nhat Nguyen 21-10 21-16 in men's singles. Sourabh Verma also made a positive start,

outwitting Brazil's Ygor Coelho 22-20 21-19 in 43 minutes. However, it was curtains for Srikanth, Parupalli Kashyap and HS Prannoy. Srikanth played his heart out to match top seed Kento Momota and also held a two-point lead towards the end of the decider but ended up losing 18-21 22-20 21-19 in 79 minutes. Kashyap went down fighting 17-21 21-17 11-21 to Brice Leverdez of France, while Prannoy lost 11-21 14-21 to Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen. The men's doubles pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila beat Ireland's Joshua Magee and Paul Reynolds 21-13 21-7. In mixed doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa beat Denmark's Mathias Thyri and Mai Suroow 21-19 21-15 in 37 minutes. In women's doubles, Lee Sohee and Shin Seungchan beat Ashwini and N Sikki Reddy 21-16 21-17. **AGENCIES**

## NZ eases their quarantine requirements but won't welcome tourists yet

**WELLINGTON:** New Zealand officials said Thursday they will gradually loosen their border quarantine requirements, which have been among the toughest in the world throughout the pandemic. But while the changes will make it easier for New Zealanders stranded abroad to return home, officials gave no date for when tourists might be welcomed back. That change is likely still months away. Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said that from next month, most people arriving in New Zealand would need to spend seven days in a quarantine hotel run by the military, half the previous requirement. He said some new arrivals from low-risk Pacific island countries could skip quarantine altogether and isolate at home. He said the new rules were an interim step ahead of broader reopening measures that would be gradually introduced once more than 90% of New Zealanders aged 12 and over were fully vaccinated. So far, 72% of eligible people have had both shots.



The change follows a growing outcry from New Zealanders who have been trying to return home but have been unable to secure spots in the quarantine system. Some have resorted to legal action. "I acknowledge that there's a lot of pressure there. My mes-

sage to the people who are keen to get back into New Zealand is: There isn't very long to wait now," Hipkins said. "And encouraging their fellow New Zealanders to get fully vaccinated will help us get to that point faster." Hipkins said he expected most new arrivals would be able to isolate at home by sometime in the first quarter of next year. He said the first priority was New Zealanders and those with valid visas. "Tourists are more of a challenge, in that they don't necessarily have somewhere to isolate on arrival," Hipkins said. "But we'll work our way through all of that." Political opponents said the changes didn't go far enough and that fully vaccinated travelers returning home posed little risk. Before the pandemic began, more than 3 million tourists visited New Zealand each year, and the industry was among the nation's largest earners of foreign income. For more than a year after the pandemic began, the strict quarantine system helped New Zealand remain almost completely virus-free and allowed life to return to normal. But an outbreak of the more contagious delta variant in Auckland more than two months ago has proved impossible to extinguish, forcing officials to abandon their previous zero-tolerance approach in favour of a suppression strategy. With the virus continuing to spread in Auckland, which remains in lockdown, the border requirements had begun to seem outdated. Announcement came after officials said two people in the city of Christchurch had caught the virus after one returned from Auckland. **AGENCIES**

## 1.5 to 2 Million Indians suffer from Stroke every Year. - Dr Gourav Jain

**CHANDIGARH:** On the occasion of World Stroke day to Create awareness on Brain Stroke & Life Style Modification team of Doctors from Alchemist and Ojas Hospital Panchkula, addressed the media person today. Present on the occasion were Dr Gourav Jain, Consultant Neurology, Dr Amandeep Singh, Sr Consultant Interventional Neuroradiology, Manish Budhiraja Consultant Neuro Surgery from Alchemist Hospital, Panchkula and Dr Rahul Mahajan Consultant Neurology & Dr Prashant Maskara Consultant Neuro Surgery from Alchemist Ojas Hospital.

Addressing the media person Dr Gourav Jain said "Stroke is emerging as the new epidemic in India with 1.5 to 2.0 million new stroke cases being reported across the country every year. The actual numbers are bound to be higher, as many of these patients never reach health care facilities. Everyday around 3000-4000 stroke happen in India and not more than 2-3% are treated. Worldwide incidence rate of stroke in 60-100 cases per 100,000 population per year, whereas in India it is close to 145-145 cases per 100,000/year. The reason for increased incidence in India is lack of awareness about the disease per se and the methods of prevention. He also shared that Strokes are responsible for more deaths annually than those attributed to AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria combined and yet it remains a silent epidemic. Dr Gourav also shared that

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