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PUNJAB CONGRESS POLITICS LIKELY TO AFFECT PARTY POLITICS IN HARYANA

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AMAZON SPENDS RS 8,546 CR IN LEGAL EXPENSES DURING 2018-20 TO MAINTAIN PRESENCE IN INDIA

POTPOURRI

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ACCEPT IT, MOVE ON: VIRAT KOHLI'S PEP TALK AFTER RCB'S LOSS TO KKR

Modi, Suga reaffirm commitment for free, open Indo-Pacific region

QUAD MEETING

DURING THEIR MEETING, THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS AGREE TO ENHANCE BILATERAL SECURITY AND DEFENCE COOPERATION

TOP AMERICAN CEOS APPRECIATE RECENT REFORM MEASURES IN INDIA, SHRINGLA SAYS AFTER THEY MEET MODI

WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga have reaffirmed their commitment towards a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, as they reviewed the multi-faceted bilateral relationship and exchanged views on recent global developments, including in Afghanistan, ahead of the first in-person Quad meeting to be hosted by US President Joe Biden.

Kamala Harris is a source of inspiration for many around the world: Modi

During their meeting here on Thursday, the two Prime Ministers agreed to enhance bilateral security and defence cooperation, including in the area of defence equipment and technologies, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Modi thanked Suga for his personal commitment and leadership, both as Prime Minister and Chief Cabinet



Secretary earlier, in enabling great advances in the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership over the last few years, it said.

"The two Prime Ministers reviewed the multi-faceted relationship between the two countries and exchanged views on recent global and regional developments, in-

cluding in Afghanistan. They reaffirmed their commitment towards a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region," it said.

The two Prime Ministers welcomed the increasing economic engagement between the two countries.

Prime Minister Modi in a tweet said that Japan is

one of India's most valued partners.

"I had an excellent meeting with PM @sugawitter on a variety of subjects that would further boost cooperation between our nations. A strong India-Japan friendship augurs well for the entire planet," Modi tweeted. "Furthering friendship

with Japan," the MEA said in a tweet after the meeting. "Prime Ministers @narendramodi and @sugawitter had a fruitful meeting in Washington DC. Both leaders held discussions on several issues including ways to give further impetus to trade and cultural ties," it said.

"Discussed a range of issues: Indo-Pacific, regional developments, supply chain resilience, trade, digital economy & P2P ties," the MEA said in another tweet.

A special strategic and global partnership with Japan - firmly rooted in history and based on common values, it further said.

They welcomed the launch of the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) between India, Japan and Australia earlier this year as a collaborative mechanism to enable resilient, diversified and trustworthy supply chains, the statement said.

Prime Minister Modi high-

lighted the need to develop bilateral partnerships in manufacturing, MSME and skill development.

Prime Minister Suga informed Modi that in order to operationalise the Specified Skilled workers (SSW) agreement which was signed earlier this year, the Japanese side would be undertaking skill and language tests in India from early 2022, it said.

They discussed the Covid pandemic and efforts to address it and highlighted the increasing importance of digital technologies and in this regard positively evaluated the progress in the India-Japan Digital Partnership, especially in start-ups.

The two leaders exchanged views on further collaboration in various emerging technologies. Discussions also took place on climate change issues and green energy transition, and the potential for Japanese collaboration with India's National Hydrogen Energy Mission, the statement said. **AGENCIES**

PM CARES not a govt fund, Prime Minister's office tells HC

NEWDELHI: The PM CARES Fund is not a Government of India fund and the amount collected by it does not go to the Consolidated Fund of India, the Delhi High Court has been informed.

An affidavit filed by an Under Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) who is discharging his functions in the PM CARES Trust on honorary basis, has said the trust functions with transparency and its funds are audited by an auditor - a chartered accountant drawn from the panel prepared by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

The affidavit was filed in response to a petition seeking a direction to declare the PM CARES Fund a 'State' under the Constitution to ensure transparency in its functioning. A bench of Chief Justice DN Patel and Justice Amit Bansal has fixed the matter for further hearing on September 27.

"To ensure transparency, the audited report is put on the official website of the trust along with the details of utilisation of funds received by the trust," says the affidavit filed by Pradeep Kumar Srivastava, Under Secretary at the PM's Office.

"I state that when the petitioner is claiming to be a public-spirited person and seeking to pray for various reliefs only for transparency, it does not matter whether PM CARES is a 'State' within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution of India," the officer said in the affidavit.

Irrespective of whether the trust is a 'State' or other authority within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution or whether it is a 'public authority' within the meaning



of provisions of the Right to Information Act (RTI), it is not permissible to disclose third party information, it added.

It said that all donations received by the trust are received via online payments, cheques or Demand Drafts and the amount received is audited with the audited report and the expenditure of trust fund displayed on the website.

"The trust functions on the principles of transparency and public good in larger public interest like any other charitable trust and, therefore, cannot have any objection in uploading all its resolutions on its website to ensure transparency," it said, while reiterating that "the trust's fund is not a fund of Government of India and the amount does not go in the Consolidated Fund of India."

The officer said he is discharging his functions in the PM CARES Trust on honorary basis which is a charitable trust not created by or under the Constitution or by any law made by the Parliament or by any State legislature.

"Despite being an officer of the Central government, I am permitted to discharge my functions in PM CARE Trust on an honorary basis," he said. **AGENCIES**

HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK

- 1 States to provide ₹50,000 compensation for each Covid death: Centre
- 2 India still has some Covid: UK on stricter Quarantine rules for Indians
- 3 National Covid recovery rate recorded at 97.77 per cent, highest since March 2020

Defence Ministry places Rs 7,523 crore order for 118 battle tanks



NEW DELHI: The Defence Ministry sealed a contract to procure 118 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) Arjun for the Indian Army at a cost of Rs 7,523 crore, in a major move to boost its combat capabilities.

The defence ministry placed the order for the Arjuna Mk-1A tanks with the Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF), Avadi, Chennai.

The MBT Mk-1A is a new variant of Arjun Tank designed to enhance fire power, mobility and survivability, infused with 72 new features and more indigenous content from the Mk-1 variant.

"The Ministry of Defence (MoD) placed an order with Heavy Vehicles Factory (HVF), Avadi, Chennai for supply of 118 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) Arjun Mk-1A for the Indian Army on September 23," the ministry said in a statement.

"The order, worth Rs 7,523 crore, will provide further boost to the "Make in India" initiative in defence sector and is a big step towards achieving "Aatmanirbhar Bharat","

it said. The ministry said the tanks would ensure effortless mobility in all terrains, besides precise target engagement during day and night.

It has been designed and developed by the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) by incorporating numerous upgrades on Arjun MBT, the in-service main battle tank with the Indian Army.

"The MK-1A is equipped with accurate and superior firepower, all-terrain mobility and an invincible multi-layered protection provided by an array of advanced technology systems. It can take on the enemy during day and night conditions and in both static and dynamic modes," the ministry said.

It said the production order to Heavy Vehicles Factory will open up a large avenue in defence manufacturing for over 200 Indian vendors including MSMEs, with employment opportunities to around 8,000 people. **AGENCIES**

CONGRESS POLITICS IN PUNJAB!

Polls ahead: Capt Amarinder quits, now Channi a new CM

DOLLY CHOPRA
Chandigarh

The fact is chief ministers come and go on a regular basis! But the real significance of Captain Amarinder Singh's resignation resides in what it says about the Congress party today, not in what it means for Punjab politics. With each passing day, it becomes increasingly evident that this is not the Congress that was elected in 2004 and 2009, but rather a whole other political party.

The first distinction is in Amarinder Singh's treatment. Singh is a Congress veteran who has won Punjab for the party and is well-liked across the country. When complaints about his leadership began to arrive - claims that he was inaccessible to his MLAs, that governance had been outsourced to bureaucrats, that he had done nothing to combat anti-incumbency, and so on - the party would have assessed whether these claims were true at one point or another.

If the allegations were proved to be true, Sonia Gandhi would have dispatched a senior aide (likely Ahmed Patel) to speak with the Chief Minister and urge him to take quick corrective action in the party's best interests.

The Congress leadership did



HIGHLIGHTS

- PUNJAB GOVT ORDERS REMOVAL OF EX-CM AMARINDER'S POSTERS FROM BUSES
- 9 IAS, 2 PCS OFFICERS TRANSFERRED ON SECOND DAY OF CHIEF MINISTER CHANNI ASSUMING OFFICE
- NCW CHIEF SEEKS NEWLY APPOINTED PUNJAB CM CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI'S RESIGNATION

not bother to do that this time because Ahmed Patel is dead, nobody else is playing that role, and anyway, that is not how the party functions now.

Channi took oath. Congress leader Charanjit Singh Channi was sworn in as chief minister of Punjab, making him the first Dalit to

hold the top post in the state. Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and OP Soni were also sworn in. They will be designated as deputy chief ministers.

Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit administered the oath to the 58-year-old Channi at a ceremony held at the Raj Bhawan.

'Ready to make any sacrifice to stop Navjot Sidhu becoming CM'

An unrelenting Capt Amarinder Singh declared that he would fight Navjot Sidhu's elevation to Punjab chief ministership tooth and nail, and was ready to make any sacrifice to save the country from such a dangerous man.

Even as he reiterated his intention to counter any move to make Sidhu the state's CM face, Amarinder said he will pit a strong candidate against the PPCC president in the 2022 Assembly polls to ensure his defeat. "He (Sidhu) is dangerous for the state," said the former Chief Minister in a series of media interviews.

Asserting that he will only leave politics on a high, the former Chief Minister said, "I was ready to leave after victory but never after a loss." He said he had offered his resignation to Sonia Gandhi three weeks earlier but she had asked him to continue. "If she had just called me and asked me to step down, I would have," he said, adding that "as a soldier, I know how to do my task and leave once I am called back".

Teen gang-raped multiple times, 24 arrested, 2 boys detained

NEWDELHI: Rape cases are still on verge in India. In one of the case, over 30 people have been accused of gang-raping a 15-year-old girl multiple times over a period of nine months near Mumbai, in a case that has left Maharashtra shaken to the core. The girl has named 33 attackers, of which 24 have been arrested. Two minors have also been detained.

The tragic story began in January when the girl's friend allegedly raped her and filmed

the crime. He used the video to blackmail her and rape her again. He allegedly shared the video with many others - friends and acquaintances - and they all used it to blackmail the teen.

The girl was gang-raped by the group multiple times and at several spots near Mumbai, according to the police.

"It all started when the lover of the girl raped her in January and made a video of the incident. He started blackmailing her on the basis of that video. Later on,

his friends and acquaintances gang-raped her at least on four to five occasions at different places, including Dombivili, Badlapur, Murbad and Rabale in the district," Additional Commissioner of Police (East region), Dattatray Karale said.

The girl approached the police last night and is being treated in hospital. Her wrenching account led to the arrest of 24 men. She knew almost all the attackers, the police said. **AGENCIES**

India seals historic airbus military aircraft deal, Ratan Tata says bold step

NEW DELHI: The Defence Ministry inked a nearly Rs 20,000 crore deal with Airbus Defence and Space of Spain to procure 56 'C-295' medium transport aircraft which will replace the ageing Avro-748 planes of the Indian Air Force.

It is the first project of its kind under which military aircraft will be manufactured in India by a private company, officials said. Under the deal, 16 aircraft will be delivered in a flyaway condition by the Airbus Defence and Space of Spain within 48

months of signing the contract.

The remaining 40 planes will be manufactured in India by a consortium of the Airbus Defence and Space and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) within 10 years of signing the contract, officials said.

The Chairman of Tata Trusts, Ratan Tata, congratulated the Airbus Defence, Tata Advanced



Systems Limited and the Defence Ministry on the inking of the historic contract.

In a signed statement posted on Twitter, Tata said the clearance of the joint project between Airbus Defence and Tata Advanced Systems to build the aircraft is a "great step" forward in the opening up of the aviation and avionics projects in India.

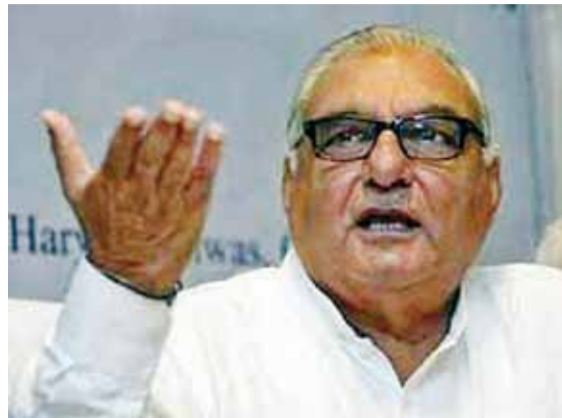
"It will create a domestic supply chain capability to international standards, which has never been undertaken before," Ratan Tata said. **AGENCIES**

Punjab Congress politics likely to affect party politics in Haryana

SATISH HANDA

After Congress high command played 'Dalit' politics in Punjab state appointing Charanjit Singh Channi as new Chief Minister compelling former Chief Minister Capt Amrinder Singh to resign due to political rift between Capt Amrinder Singh and state party president Navjot Singh Sidhu as such there is likely Congress high command may now have to face similar challenge in Haryana too due to on-going political rift between former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and party president in the state Shelja Gandhi having blessings by Smt Sonia Gandhi possessing all powers to run Congress network all over in the country in alliance with her son Rahul Gandhi. Like Punjab politics in which Capt Amrinder Singh had to part with his chief minister chair in Punjab state, likewise Congress high command may take similar type of decision in Congress network in Haryana state too in future.

According to information, Congress high command is going to take immediate action to finalize the appointment of office bearers in all districts in Haryana state and such matter lying pending since a long time in order to avoid worsening situation in Haryana too facing severe rift between senior party leaders similar to Punjab state. There is rift going on since a long time between former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda and state Congress president Shelja. Undoubtedly, Congress high command may have to take



action in Haryana similar to Punjab in case rift between senior Congress leaders continues.

Needless to say, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda is a senior Congress leader ruled over in the state for 10 years have support of 24 to 26 Congress MLAs out of total number of 31 MLAs in Haryana Vidhan Sabha. On the other hand, Shelja too is a heavy weight Dalit Congress leader in the state near and dear to Smt. Sonia Gandhi. Hooda in-spite of being a Jaat leader has always proved himself a leader of all 32 communities when he was chief minister in the state. Similarly, Shelja in-the spite being a Dalit political leader has never restricted herself only to Dalits in state politics when she was a minister in Union government and a Rajya Sabha member and likewise Congress high command played Dalit card by appointing Sikh leader Channi as chief minister in Punjab state having large number of Dalit voters neglected senior Congress leader as well as state chief minister Capt Am-



Channi meets Khattar, hopes for cooperation between Punjab, Haryana

CHANDIGARH: Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi met his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar here and expressed hope that the two states will work together with the spirit of friendship and cooperation. Khattar also expressed hope that with mutual cooperation, they will work for the overall development of the region.

Channi, who was sworn-in as Punjab CM, and met Khattar in the latter's office here. "I hope Punjab and Haryana would work together with the spirit of friendship and cooperation," said Channi. Channi offered sweets to Khattar during his visit. According to an official statement, Khattar congratulated Channi on becoming sworn-in as the new chief



minister of Punjab.

The Haryana CM said that it will be his endeavour to ensure the smooth progress of the region by working together in the spirit of mutual love, harmony and cooperation. Khattar wished Channi a bright future and also welcomed him by presenting him a bouquet. Khattar presented a copy of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, a memento and a shawl to Channi.

AGENCIES

rinder Singh, similarly Shelja's chair as Congress party president

in Haryana is also considered in safe zone in the state also having

sufficient number of Dalit voters in Haryana.

After taking oath as Punjab CM, Channi makes a few promises

RAVIDAS CHAIR AT DERA SACHKHAND BALLAN

JALANDHAR: Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, accompanied by his deputy Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa, paid obeisance at Dera Sachkhand Ballan. He said the Sri Guru Ravidas Chair would be set up adjoining the dera. He said the government would ensure the operation and maintenance of the Chair for 10 years. He said he wanted to set it up like a huge research centre on the life and philosophy of the guru.

The CM also said he would lay the foundation stone of a museum dedicated to Dr BR Ambedkar at Kapurthala tomorrow. Likewise, a management college in the name of Dr Ambedkar would also be set up. At this point,



Thinner power bills, free water in election-bound Punjab

CHANDIGARH: Channi asked the Centre to withdraw the three contentious farm laws, as he reiterated his government's commitment to support the farmers against the central legislations.

Getting down to business after the swearing-in, Channi gave a stern warning to mafia, especially those involved in sand mining, thus addressing one of the core issues in the five-point agenda handed out by the PPCC chief to Capt Amarinder Singh government. The other issues include action on the 2015 desecration of Guru Granth Sahib and the police firing on protesters, arrest of the big fish in drug rackets, cancellation of power purchase agreements and rejection of the Centre's new farm laws.

Our community does not need free atta and dal. Such schemes are of not much use in present times. We need to empower our coming generations by providing them good education and my government will work for it"

Channi said, "Our community does not need free atta and dal. Such schemes are of not much use in present times. We need to empower our coming generations by providing them good education and my government will work for it"

Sant Niranjan Dass honoured the CM with a shawl and siropa. Channi also visited Khatkar Kalan to pay tribute to Bhagat Singh at his ancestral place.

'Will ensure justice in sacrilege cases'

AMRITSAR: Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi paid obeisance at the Golden Temple and stated that justice would be done in the sacrilege incidents.

Flanked by his deputies Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and OP Soni, PCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu and other colleagues, Channi participated in the early morning rituals of installation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at the sanctum sanctorum of the Golden Temple.

11 held, 2 pistols seized in Sangrur

SANGRUR: The Sangrur police claimed to have arrested 11 criminals involved in organised crime and thefts from different locations of the district. Police have started further investigations.

"Since all the arrested persons are hardcore criminals, who were involved in heinous crimes, their arrest will help in bringing down the crime in Sangrur district," said Swapan Sharma, SSP, Sangrur, while addressing mediapersons.

Police have also seized a .32 bore pistol with two live cartridges, another pistol of 315 bore with five live cartridges and one scooter. **AGENCIES**

UK court discharges three British-Sikhs arrested on suspicion of murder in India

LONDON: A UK court discharged three British-Sikhs arrested in Britain on suspicion of "conspiracy to murder" in India 12 years ago, with India's appeal to extradite them dismissed due to insufficient evidence.

The arrests of Piara Singh Gill, Amritvir Singh Wahiwala and Gursharanvir Singh Wahiwala followed early morning raids on Indian extradition warrants executed by the West Midlands Police in December last year.

They were held in connection with the 2009 murder of Rulda Singh, a senior member of the Rashtriya Sikh Sangat, who was shot in Patiala and died a week after the attack. District Judge Michael

Snow presided over an appeal hearing at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London and ruled to discharge them.

"The accused have been discharged," said the UK's Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which appears in court on behalf of the Indian authorities.

The Indian government is yet to comment on its extradition bid being dismissed.

Crowds of supporters of the so-called "West Midlands 3" had gathered outside the court in support of the accused. An investigation into the case by the West Midlands Police dates back to 2011, with the judge noting that the issue has been a "long running saga" for the three men. **AGENCIES**

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

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

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

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



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

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



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

Akalis defaming farmers: AAP



CHANDIGARH: Slamming the SAD for its statement against farmers' organisations, AAP legislator and youth wing state president Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer said at the behest of the Narendra Modi-led government, SAD was running a campaign to defame farmers and said they should answer the questions being asked by people and farmers of Punjab.

Hayer said the Badals had again proved that their relationship with the BJP was still intact. "This is the reason why Harsimrat Kaur Badal, as a union minister, signed ordinances and later the Badals publicised the farm laws for three months. Not only this, Parkash Singh Badal also released a video to convince farmers by justifying the laws," he added.

However, when people opposed the party and banned its entry into villages, they did a drama of Harsimrat's resignation. **AGENCIES**

Over 10, 15 yrs old diesel, petrol driven vehicles banned in 14 Haryana districts



SATISH HANDA

As per Supreme Court of India directions, Haryana state government has decided to ban movement of all 10 years old diesel driven and 15 years old petrol driven automobiles in 14 districts in NCR area including Faridabad, Gurugram, Rohtak, Sonapat, Jhajjar, Nuh, Panipat, Rewari, Palwal, Bhiwani, Charkhi Dadri, Mohindergarh, Karnal and Jind districts with immediate effect and ordered traffic police in the state to seize all those vehicles violating directions. However, initially relaxation has been given to automobile owners of such vehicles in eight Haryana districts including Panchkula, Ambala, Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Fatehabad and Sirsa till further notice.

State police department will start a campaign to bring awareness among drivers of such old vehicles causing heavy pollution to obey Supreme Court of India

directions holding awareness campaigns at places including Taxi Stands, Automobile Markets, Truck Unions, Automobile Sale Counters and important Public Places in every town across the state. According to information, Supreme Court of India had given such directions about five years ago but the same could not be implemented in the state and court as well as NGT has now strictly ordered implementation of previous directions to state government.

Information reveals, there are more than 6.5 lakh old vehicles plying on roads in Haryana state at present, of these nearly 75% vehicles are travelling on roads in NCR area in the state polluting the environments in the area. According to state police department, stern action will be taken against owners of all 10 years old diesel driven and 15 years old petrol driven vehicles on roads in the state will be seized and sell these as condom vehicles by the police.

UT briefs SEC on preparations for MC polls

CHANDIGARH: A meeting was convened by the State Election Commissioner S.K. Srivastava with Adviser to the Administrator and his team of officers here to discuss various issues pertaining to the preparation of forthcoming Municipal Corporation Elections scheduled in December 2021 as the tenure of the present Municipal Corporation is coming

to an end on 31.12.2021. It was apprised that since the Chandigarh Administration has issued delimitation order merging 13 villages with the Municipal corporation, the number of Polling Stations shall increase substantially this time. The number of polling stations shall further increase due to limiting the number of electors to 1000 per PS during

COVID. Thus, number of polling stations are likely to be over 700 compared to 445 during the last elections. Accordingly the SEC, asked the Adviser to provide adequate arrangements and police personnel to ensure smooth and transparent elections. He also directed that requisite arrangements/ preparation be made timely. **AGENCIES**

Farmers' protest against 3 agri laws completes 300 days

NEW DELHI: As the ongoing farmers' protest against three contentious agriculture laws of the Centre completed 300 days, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) said the movement is a testimony to the will and determination of lakhs of farmers across the country that would only grow stronger. "It has been 300 days since lakhs of farmers were forced to stay put at Delhi's borders. The protesting farmers have been peacefully communicating their resistance against a corporate takeover of India's food and farming systems. Their demands are clear and known to the (Narendra



Modi government, which has been obstinately choosing not to agree to these legitimate demands of farmers, even though farmers constitute

the largest set of workers in the country and even though elections in our democracy are won through votes cast mainly by farmers," a statement issued

by the SKM said. "The Samyukt Kisan Morcha states that this historic movement stands as a testimony to the will, resolve and hope of lakhs of farmers across the country. The SKM also vows to strengthen the movement, going forward, and make it more widespread," it added. Meanwhile, preparations for the "Bharat bandh" called by the SKM on September 27 are in full swing. "Various sections of the society are being reached out to by farmers' outfits in different parts of the country to get their support and solidarity to the farmers' cause, which is also

becoming a movement to protect India's democracy," the SKM said.

According to the statement, workers' unions, trade unions, employees' and students' unions, women's organisations, transporters' associations, in addition to the joint planning meetings of many farmers' organisations, are being roped in for the planning of the "bandh".

Kisan mahapanchayats are also being organised to get more citizens to rally around the "bandh" call. Cycle and motorcycle rallies are also being organised, the SKM said. **AGENCIES**

Cancer hospital in Haryana awaits green signal for inauguration from Atomic Energy Board



SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

A team from Chandigarh comprising of Deputy Director Health Department Dr Rekha Singh, Chief Medical Physicist & RSO Dr Arun arrived along with senior experts from PGI Chandigarh to visit newly constructed multi-storey cancer hospital on inside Civil Hospital Ambala Cantt on which amount worth hundreds crores has been spent equipped with ultra modern latest equipments imported from other countries has been inspected. The team had a detailed meeting with the senior doctors of Civil Hospital Ambala including Dr Kuldeep Singh CMO Ambala, Dr Rakesh Sehla, Dr Viney Goel and Dr Pooja. This

hospital will provide medical treatment to patients suffering from dreaded cancer disease in the state.

Dr Kuldeep Singh CMO told that the hospital is ready for inauguration awaiting green signal from Atomic Energy Board. He said, the newly constructed hospital is equipped with latest machinery will have the services of two Senior Medical Officers, six Super Specialists, three Radiation Safety Officers, three Radiation Therapy Technicians, nine Technicians, 12 doctors, 17 Staff Nurses, three Pharmacists, four Lab Technicians, two Radiographers, five Assistants, three Clerks, two Nursing Sisters, 20 Outsourcing Cleaning Staff and 20 Outsourcing Class IV staff members.

Women's NDA entry not this year: Govt

NEED TIME TO DEVELOP FACILITIES, IT TELLS SC.

NEW DELHI: Women cadets' entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA) will not be possible this year as various facilities have to be developed for them before they are allowed into the academy, hitherto open to men alone, the Centre has told the Supreme Court.

Notification in May

A notification allowing women candidates to take the entrance exam for entry into the NDA will be released in May 2022, Ministry of Defence.

In an affidavit filed in the apex court, the Ministry of Defence said a notification allowing women candidates to take the entrance exam for entry into the NDA will be released



in May 2022.

On September 8, the Centre had told the top court that it had decided to allow women

cadets into the NDA, which was hitherto open to men alone. However, it had sought an exemption from implementing the

decision for this year's examination scheduled for November 14 as certain procedural and infrastructural changes would

be needed before the entry of women cadets into the NDA.

The decision followed the top court's August 18 interim order that said debarring women amounted to gender discrimination. It had directed the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to issue an appropriate notification, taking into account its order and give it due publicity.

The NDA entrance exams are held twice a year and the government proposes to have necessary mechanisms in place by May 2022, the time by which the UPSC is required to publish the first notification next year, for the exam. A Bench led by Justice SK Kaul is expected to consider the MoD affidavit on Wednesday.

Placing on record its "clear and categorical stand" that the women candidates shall be con-

sidered for entry in the three Defence Services, in the existing streams, through the NDA, the Centre said a study group had been constituted by the Defence Services, comprising experts to expeditiously formulate the comprehensive curriculum for women cadets at the NDA.

A Board of Officers had also been convened to give a holistic and futuristic proposal for training of women cadets at the NDA, incorporating all relevant aspects, it submitted.

Noting that any dilution of physical training and service subject such as firing would invariably impact the battle worthiness of the armed forces adversely, it said, therefore, facilities such as equitation, swimming, games and sports were needed to be developed for the women candidates. **AGENCIES**

Bengaluru rape case: Cabbie took selfie before assaulting woman

BENGALURU: Karnataka Police investigating the alleged rape of a woman traveller by the driver of a reputed cab service in Bengaluru have found a selfie with the victim from the mobile phone of the accused, police sources said.

Jeevan Beema Nagar police arrested cab driver Devaraj alias Devarajulu, a resident of Avalahalli near KR Puram. The accused belongs to Andhra Pradesh.

The incident had taken place in the wee hours of Wednesday. The victim had rushed out of the cab following the crime after grabbing her bag and the driver's mobile phone. She handed over the cell phone to the police.

The police are surprised to find the selfie on the accused's mobile. The accused before committing the crime had clicked the selfie with the victim, who in the picture is asleep. Sources said the cab was booked at 3.20 am by the victim from her friend's place at HSR Layout. She reached her home at 3.40 am. However, she was asleep and did

not realise this. The driver opened the cab door for her and realised that she was asleep. He took the vehicle to an isolated place. There he clicked the selfie and raped her in the backseat of the cab, sources said.

By the time the victim got back to her senses it was too late. She managed to push the accused off and ran towards her home. She reached her house around 4.45 am.

The accused escaped from the scene. The police said the woman sounded the police. Immediately, a police team led by a woman police officer was sent to the house. Preliminary investigation has suggested sexual assault and the police are waiting for the medical report.

The accused had come to Bengaluru two years ago for a livelihood. The police suspect his involvement in many such cases and are questioning him. Though he denied having committed the crime initially, later he confessed to having sexually assaulted the woman. **AGENCIES**

Assam: Two killed in firing during protests against eviction

GUWAHATI: Two persons were killed and at least ten others, most of them policemen, were seriously injured on Thursday in firing by the force on protesters demanding rehabilitation of 800 families evicted by Assam's Darrang district administration and the clash that followed between the two sides, police said. The evicted families had launched a protest at Sipajhar demanding that the eviction be stopped and that they be provided with a comprehensive rehabilitation package.

Trouble broke out when a mob of protesters, who were armed with sharp weapons, started pelting stones and attacking policemen and general people present at the spot, Darrang Superintendent of Police Sushanta Biswa Sarma said. The police opened fire in self-defence, killing two persons, both civilians. This led to the two sides coming to blows, in which at least ten others were injured, he said. Most of the injured were policemen and the condition of an assistant sub-inspector Moniruddin was stated to be critical by doctors treating him. He has been shifted to Gauhati Medical College Hospital, he said. The dead have been identi-



fied as Saddam Hussain and Sheikh Forid, Sarma said. The situation was later brought under control and the mob dispersed. The eviction is on in Dholpur I and Dholpur III villages despite the tension in the area after the clash with the police. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said in Guwahati that the ongoing eviction will not be stopped. "The police have been entrusted with the responsibility of clearing the land of illegal encroachers and they will continue till the job is done". The eviction will stop

when it turns dark and resume again on Friday, he added.

The Darrang district administration has cleared 602.04 hectares and evicted 800 families since Monday and demolished four "illegally" constructed religious structures at Sipajhar, officials said. The Chief Minister had visited the area on June 7 and inspected the riverine areas allegedly encroached by "illegal settlers" near Dholpur Shiva Temple and had directed the district administration to clear the area for a community farming. **AGENCIES**

PMGSY-3 puts UP in fast lane



LUCKNOW: The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has put Uttar Pradesh in the fast lane. Around 6,208.45 km of new roads are being constructed at a cost of Rs 4,130.27 crore under PMGSY-III.

According to the government spokesman, in the past 4.5 years roads have been the priority of the Yogi Adityanath government in order to augment infrastructure and improve the lives of the rural population. "The state government is committed to inclusive development and the welfare of the people. The construction of roads under PMGSY-III will boost growth, create jobs and raise the standard of living for hundreds of millions in rural areas. The road projects taken up by the government are also generating direct and indirect employment as the manpower is engaged in the construction

works," the spokesman said.

All work under the first and second phases of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana has been completed in Uttar Pradesh. The state has already constructed over 57,162.55 km of road under the same. The maintenance work of five years has been assigned to the road contractors. Bhanu Chandra Goswami, Chief Executive Officer, Uttar Pradesh Rural Road Development Agency, said that in the third phase of the scheme, 6,208.45 km of new roads are being constructed.

In the third phase of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, the Government of India has set a target to construct roads of 18,937.05 km in Uttar Pradesh by the year 2024-25. With the construction of new roads, ambulances and other medical facilities are now easily accessible in villages. **AGENCIES**

Court seeks action taken report from police on plea against Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI: A Delhi court sought an action taken report from the Delhi Police on a private complaint filed against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for allegedly disclosing the identity of a minor rape victim, the lawyer for the complainant said.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Dharmendra Singh directed the police to file the report by September 29, when he will further hear the matter, the lawyer said.

Advocate Neeraj, who filed the complaint on behalf of local BJP leader Naveen Kumar Jindal, alleged that Rahul Gandhi "wilfully, intentionally and deliberately disclosed the identity of a minor rape victim through his social media account twitter handle".

The complaint urged the court to direct the officer concerned of the Crime Branch of Delhi Police to lodge an FIR under relevant provisions of law and investigate the matter.

The complaint has sought the prosecution of the Congress leader under the relevant sections of Juvenile Justice Act, Prevention of Child from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act and Indian Penal Code. **AGENCIES**

SC to set up expert panel to probe Pegasus row; order expected next week

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court said it would set up an expert committee to probe into the allegations that politicians, journalists and activists were snooped on using Pegasus spyware.

A Bench led by Chief Justice NV Ramana -- which had on September 13 reserved its order on petitions seeking an SIT probe into the allegations -- said a detailed order to set up the committee could be expected next week.

The court wanted to pass an order this week but it couldn't as some of the experts it had in mind for the committee didn't want to participate due to personal reasons, CJI Ramana told senior advocate CU Singh, who represented some of the petitioners in the case.

The Supreme Court had on September 13 said it would pass an interim order on petitions seeking a court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged snooping.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had said the government didn't want to file any additional affidavit to publicly clarify if Pegasus spyware was used for snooping or not even if he maintained that the Centre had nothing to hide.

"You have repeatedly been saying that the government doesn't want to file an affidavit. We also don't want any security issues to be put before us. You say that a committee will be formed and the report will be submitted... We have to look into the whole issue and pass an interim order," the Bench had said. **AGENCIES**

NCRB Report: 66,01,285 crimes reported in 2020

SATISH HANDA
Chandigarh

According to National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB), 66,01,285 criminal cases were registered in the country during past year 2020, which witnessed drop in crime cases against women, children, rapes and kidnappings as compared to previous year 2019, whereas cases of murder, cyber crime, theft and snatching were increased during the year. Out of total number of 66,01,285 criminal cases registered by the police in 2020 include 42,54,366 cases registered under Indian Penal Code (IPC) and 23,46,929 cases registered under Special & Local Lodge (SLL) as against total number of 51,56,158 cases registered in the year 2019.

According to report, 4,05,326 crimes against women were registered in the country during year 2019 and 3,78,236 crime cases against women were registered during year 2018. The number of such crimes against women were reduced to 3,71,503 in the year 2020 on an average 77 rape cases reported daily, which included 1,11,549 cases were related to torture by husband and other members of the family, 85,392 cases of sexual harassment, 62,300 kidnapping cases, 28,046 rape cases, 3,741 cases of attempt to rape, 6,966 cases of dowry demand and 105 cases of acid attack on females. Similarly, the number of crime against children also reduced to 1,28,531 in 2020 as compared to 1,48,090 cases in 2019.

Out of total number of 28,016 rape cases registered in the year 2020 more than 28153 females were sexually molested included 25,498 adults, 2655 children and minors of age below 18. Information reveals, the number of sexually assaulted females was much more since large number of such type of cases are usually not reported to police. Among rape victims included maximum number of 5210 victims from Rajasthan. Whereas, according to NCRB report the number of rape cases was registered as 32,033 cases in the year 2019, 33,356 cases in the year 2018 and 32,559 in the year 2017.

As regard cases of murders, on an average 80 murders cases were registered every day in the country with the total number of 29,143 persons were reported killed during year, which included 3779 persons killed in U.P and among victims 35.9% were between age 18 to 30 years, 38.5% between age 31 to 40 years and 18.4% between age 41 to 60 years killed during the year as compared to 28,915 persons reported killed in the year 2019. NCRB information reveals, fall in kidnapping cases was registered in year 2020 with 84,805 kidnapping cases were reported to police which included 56,591 children as compared to 1,05,032 kidnapping cases registered in 2019.



Maharashtra Billion Dollar Contributor to India's GDP: Thackeray

DOMINICK RODRIGUES

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray recently reiterated the Government's efforts to invest heavily in the "Auric City" project in the State. AURIC -- an industrial city with tens of thousands of acres of well-equipped infrastructure -- is an important initiative of the Central and State Governments with and the AURIC City area under the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor featuring well-planned infrastructure facilities for various industries.

Thackeray, who was accompanied by Maharashtra Industry Minister Subhash Desai, reviewed the AURIC project and noted that even adverse conditions like Covid did not hamper industrial development as entrepreneurs are keen to invest in it due to its well-planned infrastructure for industry.

Meanwhile, the Maharashtra Industry department recently held -- in collaboration with Gem and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) and DGFT -- a two-day 'Vanijya Utsav' from September 21 at the World Trade Centre here with focus on promotion of exports from India. This event was held to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence, by the Government of India, under which Department of Commerce is organizing 'Vanijya Saptah' from 20th to September 26, 2021 with a focus on economic growth and promotion of exports from India.

The Utsav highlighted panel discussion on various sectors Food, Engineering, Textile, Leather, Chemicals and Phar-



maceuticals, Gems and Jewellery, Handicraft and Services, besides involving DGFT, Customs, Consulate Generals, Infrastructure bodies and Financial organizations. The event witnessed all relevant stakeholders gathering under a single roof to highlight the progress made in exports from Maharashtra, showcase export potential, hold panel discussions and focus on strategies to improve export scenario from the State.

The panel discussion on "Bilateral Trade Opportunities" drew keen industry audience attention including from diplomatic representation from Russia, Turkey, South Africa, Spain and Mauritius, who sought to highlight opportunities emerging in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several insights were shared by the panel members -- emphasizing value-added trade with complementarities like capital goods and formulation drugs which would fuel each others' export capacities and competencies, besides also Trade Infrastructure and Sustainable Development as potential collaboration areas.

Describing Maharashtra as leader in the economy, GSDP,

Industries and services sectors in India, State Industries Minister Subhash Desai said Maharashtra is the largest economy in the country with a whopping US\$ 480 billion contribution of 15% of India's GDP. With 31.4% of FDI flows in the State and contribution of 25% to India's exports, Maharashtra is growing and the Government will continue upgrading the export ecosystem to nourish the Export sector, he said.

Desai highlighted the export-oriented infrastructure projects being developed in the state, including a "Bulk Drug Park" in Raigad and the envisaged "Gems & Jewellery Park" in Navi Mumbai. He also announced the State Government's stimulus initiatives for the export sector, in which he assured of a reduction in power tariffs to benchmark rates and an amnesty scheme for export oriented MSMEs on net GST liability basis.

At current prices, Maharashtra's gross state domestic product stood at Rs. 26.62 trillion (US\$ 366.67 billion) in 2020-21AE. GSDP increased at a CAGR 6.42% from 2015-16. The State capital - Mumbai -- is known as the trade and

Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane highlights Building technology Centres

The Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane recently reiterated the need to build a strong nation through setting up of more technology centres. He was speaking while digitally inaugurating the Rohtak Technology Center in Haryana from Mumbai.

Dr. Arvind Sharma, Member of Parliament, B.B. Swain, Secretary (MSME), Devendra Kumar Singh, Ms Preeti Verma, CEO, KVIC and other senior dignitaries were present on the occasion when the MSME Minister inaugurated the Technology Center at Rohtak, Haryana digitally from the KVIC's Mumbai Office.

Highlighting the Centre's 20 acres setup that would skill over 8400 trainees annually, Rane observed that India needed more technology centres to benefit the country's 135 crore population as the technology developed by these MSME Centres would provide a "good impetus" to Aatmanirbhar Bharat during the present tough times comprising the pandemic.

These Centres' new technologies would enable building a nation of entrepreneurs, while making them financially stronger, enhancement in GDP and also boosting India's rise as a "Superpower," he said while lauding the efforts of concerned Maharashtra officials and PMEGP institutions.

commerce capital of India, besides also being the financial center of India and evolved into a global financial hub.

Maharashtra is the leading State for exports in India with total exports constituting 22.7% of India's exports. With total export value at US\$ 58.40 billion (Rs 4,31,699.84 Crore) in FY 2020-21, Maharashtra has set a benchmark for other states regarding exports and export supply chain in the current financial year.

Maharashtra's top export sectors include: Precious Stones and Jewellery, Drugs and Pharmaceuticals, Motor Vehicles & Cars, Engineering products, Iron & Steel, Textiles and Agro & Food products. While the Gems and Jewelry sector in India is one of the largest in the

world by contributing to 29% of global demand, the State accounts for approximately 35.1% of the country's output of automobiles by value. The food processing industry (FPI) in Maharashtra has more than 13% share in Indian food processing. There has been a significant growth in exports year to year from Maharashtra and this would help in achieving the 100 billion export target for India.

Major Exports from Maharashtra: The total exports of Gems and Jewellery Exports in FY 2020-21: US\$ 18.64 billion (71.17% of the total exports of India) and the sector is expected to grow to US\$ 19.57 billion (approx. 5% growth). Currently the top markets for export are Hong Kong, USA, Belgium,

India's Mamta Binani bags prestigious IWIRC WOYR(A) Award

"Tough times don't last, Tough people do," was the message driven home by the International Women's Insolvency and Restructuring Confederation (IWIRC), the premier international, networking and professional growth organization for women in the restructuring and insolvency industry which is highlighting "exceptional" women in Asia who -- even despite the present challenging times -- have sought to advanced their careers alongside promoting other women.

The IWIRC statement came even as it announced India's Mamta Binani as the 2021 winner of the 4th edition of the WOYR(A) Award -- which complements India's IWIRC International's pre-existing award program "Woman of the Year in Restructuring Award" that has been administered internationally since 2006.

UAE, Israel.

The total exports for Pharmaceuticals Exports in FY 2020-21: US\$ 3.6 billion (18.92% of the total exports of India), and the sector is expected to grow to US\$ 3.99 billion (10.72% CAGR). The Auto and Auto Components Exports in FY 2020-21 stood at US\$ 1.3 billion (25.54 % of the total exports of country) and is expected to grow to US\$ 1.33 billion (approx. 2% growth). Top countries for exports are USA, Germany and Italy.

NRC process doesn't need another reboot

The next twist or turn in the long-running saga of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) update for Assam is never far. The latest seeks to imbue a sense of finality to the exercise, though it has come from what is only a quasi-judicial body. A Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) in Karimganj district of southern Assam, while removing the ambiguity around a man's citizenship, has pronounced that there is no doubt that the NRC published on August 31, 2019, is the final one. The exercise left out over 1.9 million from a list of around 33 million applicants, whose citizenship would be determined at the FTs. The entire updating process was monitored by the Supreme Court and executed by the State's administrative machinery. Its publication annoyed political parties across the ideological divide, with some alleging it victimised document-less Bengali Hindus and indigent Assamese people and others that it targeted the Bengali-origin Muslims. In the run-up to the publication of the final document, Assam and the Centre had petitioned the Supreme Court for re-verification of a sample of names included in the draft NRC — 20% in the border districts and 10% elsewhere — but this was dismissed after Prateek Hajela, the State NRC Coordinator, said re-verification of 27% names had been already done. In May this year, the State NRC authority filed a petition in Supreme Court seeking re-verification of the August 31, 2019 list, citing inclusion of ineligible names and exclusion of eligible ones, and other errors. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma had said the State government wants 20% re-verification in the districts bordering Bangladesh and 10% in others. The crux of the matter is that post-publication progress on the NRC has been excruciatingly slow, and not just due to the pandemic. Mounting another gargantuan exercise at a colossal cost may only add to troubles and discontents.



SYED MUNIR KHASRU EXPLORES HOW NEW DELHI CAN UPDATE ITS NDCS TO MEET THE SET TARGETS

A climate change narrative



In a keynote speech on September 8 in a seminar organised by a think tank, R.K. Singh, Union Minister for Power, New and Renewable Energy stated, "Environment is something we are trustees of and have to leave behind a better environment for our children and great grand children." However, a recent report, "Assessment of Climate Change over the Indian Region" by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) reveals that India has warmed up 0.7° C during 1901-2018. The 2010-2019 decade was the hottest with a mean temperature of 0.36° C higher than average. Heatwaves continued to increase with no signs of diminishing greenhouse gas emissions despite lower activity since the novel coronavirus pandemic. Prolonged exposure to heat is becoming detrimental to public health, especially the poor unable to afford support for coping with the heat. Assessment by the MoES shows that India may experience a 4.4° C rise by the end of this century.

India has also suffered two of the 10 most expensive climate disasters in the last two years. Super-cyclone "Cyclone Amphan" that hit India in 2020, cost more than USD13 billion even as the country was just recovering from "June-October Monsoon Flooding" that cost USD10 billion and around 1,600 lives. It was India's heaviest monsoon rain in the last 25 years and the world's seventh costliest. In early 2021, India suffered two more cyclones: Cyclone Tauktae hitting the west coast and Cyclone Yaas from the east.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, India's Internally Displaced Populations (IDPs) are rising due to damaging climate events. Uttarakhand residents began deserting their homes after the Kedarnath floods in 2013 due to heavy precipitation that increases every year. Within 2050, rainfall is expected to rise by 6% and temperature by 1.6° C.

To make things worse, India lost about 235 square kilometres to coastal erosion due to climate change induced sea-level rise, land erosion and natural disasters such

as tropical cyclones between 1990-2016. About 3.6 million out of 170 million living in coastal areas were displaced between 2008-2018. Recent figures are more alarming with 3.9 million displaced in 2020 alone, mostly due to Cyclone Amphan.

India's Deccan plateau has seen eight out of 17 severe droughts since 1876 in the 21st century (2000-2003; 2015-2018). In Maharashtra and Karnataka (the heart of the Deccan Plateau), families deserted homes in 2019 due to an acute water crisis. Hatkarwadi, a village in Beed district of Maharashtra State, had as few as 10-15 families remaining out of the previous population count of 2,000 people.

India held the top 10 position for the second year in a row in 2020's Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI). The country received credit under all of the CCPI's performance fields except renewable energy where India performed medium.

India vowed to work with COP21 by signing the Paris Agreement to limit global warming and submitted the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with a goal of reducing emissions intensity of

GDP by 33%-35% and increasing green energy resources (non-fossil-oil based) to 40% of installed electric power capacity by 2030.

India cofounded with France at COP21, in 2015, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) — a coalition of about 120 countries with solar rich resources — which aims at mobilising USD1 trillion in investments for the deployment of solar energy at affordable prices by 2030. Despite leading ISA, India performed the least in renewable energy according to the CCPI's performance of India. The question is, are these global alliances and world-leading policies being practised or are merely big promises with little implementation?

The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report asserts that the contribution of greenhouse gas emissions from various activities is the scientific basis for global warming and climate change.

Experts agree that India can achieve the 2° C target of COP15 Copenhagen in 2009. But it also observes that the country is not fully compliant with the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal of the NDCs

and there are still risks of falling short of the 2° C goal. According to India's carbon emission trajectory, the country is en route to achieve barely half of the pledged carbon sink by 2030. To achieve the Paris Agreement's NDC target, India needs to produce 25 million-30 million hectares of forest cover by 2030 — a third of current Indian forestation and trees. Going by the facts, it seems India has overpromised on policies and goals as it becomes difficult to deliver on the same.

The Glasgow COP26 offers India a great opportunity to reflect on the years since the Paris Agreement and update NDCs to successfully meet the set targets. India is expected to be the most populated country by 2027, overtaking China, contributing significantly to the global climate through its consumption pattern. India is in a rather unique position to have a significant influence on global climate impact in the new decade.

Alok Sharma, President of the COP26 met Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav in August to persuade India to deliver a more ambitious NDCs for 2030 to which the Minister responded by stating, "India believes that climate actions must be nationally determined... UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement for developing countries should be at the core of decision-making..."

Being one of the observer states of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) as well as an influential member of COP26, India has the ability to improve its global positioning by leading a favourable climate goal aspiration for the world to follow. The country has the opportunity to not only save itself from further climate disasters but also be a leader in the path to climate change prevention.

Syed Munir Khasru is Chairman of the international think tank, The Institute for Policy, Advocacy, and Governance (IPAG), New Delhi, with a presence in Dhaka, Melbourne, Vienna and Dubai. Views are personal

PARASHRAM PATIL BELIEVES INDIA HAS POTENTIAL TO BE A GLOBAL LEADER IN FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR

Changing the agri exports basket



The Indian government has been encouraging agricultural exports to meet an ambitious target of \$60bn by 2022. The Ministry of Food Processing Industries shows that the contribution of agricultural and processed food products in India's total exports is 11%. Primary processed agricultural commodities form the majority share. India's export earnings will increase by focusing more on value-added processed food products rather than primary processed agricultural commodities (Siraj Hussain, 2021). From 2015-16 to 2019-20, the value of agricultural and processed food increased significantly from \$17.8bn to \$20.65bn. The Indian agricultural economy is shifting from primary to secondary agriculture where the focus is more on developing various processed foods. The Indian food processing industry promises high economic growth and makes good profits.

India's agricultural export basket is changing from traditional commodities to non-traditional processed foods. Traditionally, Basmati rice is one of the top export commodities. However, now there is an unusual spike in the export of non-basmati rice. In 2020-21, India exported 13.09 million tonnes of non-basmati rice (\$4.8bn), up from an average 6.9 million tonnes (\$2.7bn) in the previous five years.

Similarly, Indian buffalo meat is seeing a strong demand in international markets due to its lean character and near organic

nature. The export potential of buffalo meat is tremendous, especially in countries like Vietnam, Hong Kong and Indonesia. In 2020-21, the export of poultry, sheep and goat meat, cashew kernels, groundnuts, guar gum, and cocoa products went down in terms of value and total quantity.

The export of processed food products has not been growing fast enough because India lacks comparative advantage in many items. This may imply that the domestic prices of processed food products are much higher compared to the world reference prices.

The main objective of the Agriculture Export Policy is to diversify and expand the export basket so that instead of primary

products, the export of higher value items, including perishables and processed food, be increased. The exporters of processed food confront difficulties and non-tariff measures imposed by other countries on Indian exports (Siraj Hussain, 2021). Some of these include mandatory pre-shipment examination by the Export Inspection Agency being lengthy and costly; compulsory spice board certification being needed even for ready-to-eat products which contain spices in small quantities; lack of strategic planning of exports by most State governments; lack of a predictable and consistent agricultural policy discouraging investments by the private sector;

prohibition of import of meat- and dairy based-products in most of the developed countries; withdrawal of the Generalised System of Preference by the U.S. for import of processed food from India; export shipments to the U.S. requiring an additional health certificate; and the absence of an equivalency agreement with developed countries for organic produce.

The way forward

The Centre's policy should be in the direction of nurturing food processing companies, ensuring low cost of production and global food quality standards, and creating a supportive environment to promote export of processed food. Developed countries have fixed higher standards for import of food items. Reputed Indian brands should be encouraged to export processed foods globally as they can comply with the global standard of codex. Indian companies should focus on cost competitiveness, global food quality standards, technology, and tap the global processed food export market. India has competitive advantages in various agricultural commodities which can be passed onto processed foods. It has the potential to become a global leader in the food processing sector.

Parashram Patil is an Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Fellow, New Delhi. Views are personal

BOOKS: REVIEW

Basing Nepal ties on old foundations insufficient

The old foundations for India's relationship with Nepal are no longer sufficient and there is need to provide an overarching economic vision for the ties both bilaterally and at the sub-regional and regional levels, says former Indian ambassador to Nepal Ranjit Rae.

The diplomat draws from his experience in bilateral relations with Nepal and personal recollections from his days as ambassador to give a behind-the-scenes view of important contemporary moments in the India-Nepal relationship in his book.

"Kathmandu Dilemma: Resetting India-Nepal Ties" examines India's perspective on developments in the context of the civilisational and economic underpinnings of the relation-

ship, as well as the issues that continue to prevent it from exploiting its full potential.

Relations between asymmetric neighbours are never easy; both sides need to demonstrate sensitivity to the aspirations and interests of the other, the author argues.

"India must respect Nepal's desire for greater political space and an independent foreign policy, just as we strive for greater strategic autonomy as part of our own foreign policy goals. India should not view every Nepalese agreement with China as adversely impacting Indian security, especially when we ourselves have substantial cooperation with China," he writes in the book published by Penguin Random House India.

Nepal, on the other hand, he says, must ensure that nothing

We have to lay deeper foundations by providing an overarching economic vision for the relationship both bilaterally and at the sub-regional and regional levels

that it does affects India's security interests, particularly since the two countries share an open, friendly border.

According to Rae, any close, even intimate relationship such as the one between India and Nepal, is prone to misunderstandings and differences; there is a tendency for complacency to set into the relationship.

The relationship needs to be nurtured constantly through ever



"Kathmandu Dilemma: Resetting India-Nepal Ties" By Ranjit Rae; Vintage Books; 224 pages; Rs499

greater engagement at all levels, he suggests.

"The old foundations for our relationship with Nepal, though important, are no longer sufficient. We have to lay deeper foundations by providing an overarching economic vision for the relationship both bilaterally and at the sub-regional and regional levels," he says.

And with SAARC almost becoming non-functional, he suggests the focus should be on sub-regional cooperation, particularly among Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

The first two decades of the new millennium have witnessed a dramatic socio-political transformation of Nepal. A violent Maoist insurgency ended

peacefully, a new constitution abolished the monarchy and established a secular federal democratic republic.

Nevertheless, political stability and a peace dividend have both remained elusive. Nepal is also buffeted by changing geopolitics, including the US-China contestation for influence and the uneasy relationship between India and China.

As a close neighbour, India has been deeply associated with the seminal changes in Nepal, and the bilateral relationship has seen many twists and turns.

Rae also says that China is no longer viewed as a mere counter-balance to India.

"Nepal sees huge opportunities for economic benefit from its engagement with China. Like our other neighbours, it is attracted to the 'no strings' support. It enthusiastically participates in the BRI, despite being aware of the pitfalls of a debt trap and unmindful of Indian concerns. Indeed, for some, China is the only economic game in town," he writes.

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

CONGRESS ON CHOOSING A NEW CM OF PUNJAB

1 CASTE GAME
Congress has tried to tick all the caste boxes. Choosing a Dalit CM had become an electoral compulsion for the party after the Shiromani Akali Dal, which is contesting the 2022 polls together with the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)

2 PROJECTING AAM AADMI
Channi is already busy projecting himself as the 'aam aadmi' a la AAP, a radical departure from what was perceived to be the overly bureaucratic functioning of his predecessor's government.

3 POLL PROSPECTS
More importantly, Channi's job is to consolidate the SC vote — to the detriment of the rival parties' poll prospects.

4 PARTY CAMPAIGN
The Opposition pounced on AICC general secretary Harish Rawat's statement that the party's election campaign would be spearheaded by Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu.

5 ELECTION STUNT
BSP president Mayawati dubbed Channi's elevation as an election stunt, claiming that the Congress was keen on a non-Dalit as the future CM.

LETTERBOX

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

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NEWSBRIEF

Twitter to pay \$809m to settle shareholder lawsuit

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter said it will pay \$809.5 million to settle a lawsuit alleging that the company misled investors about how much its user base was growing and how much users interacted with its platform. The company said the proposed settlement resolves all claims against it without Twitter admitting any wrongdoing. The original lawsuit filed in 2016 by Twitter investor Doris Shenwick claimed that Twitter executives "knowingly made inaccurate public statements regarding these metrics, and failed to disclose internal information about them, resulting in an inflated share price that fell when the truth about user engagement became known." **AGENCIES**

Telecom Dept initiates new reforms with simplifying KYC process

NEW DELHI: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) started the implementation of new telecom reforms by simplifying the KYC (Know Your Customer) process. The Union Cabinet had last week approved a slew of measures for its cash-strapped telecom sector including a four-year moratorium on airwaves payments due to the government and 100% FDI through automatic route in the sector.

The department said, "Customer consent has been made compulsory in case the Aadhaar is being used and demographic details are being obtained electronically from UIDAI." For contactless, customer-centric and secured KYC process, the DoT said that it has implemented three fresh ways.

1) Aadhaar-based e-KYC: The process has been re-introduced for new mobile phone connections. Service providers will be charged Re 1 per customer authentication by the UIDAI for this paperless and digital process.

2) Self-KYC: Issuance of mobile connection is done via an app/portal-based online process wherein customers can apply for connection sitting at home or office and can get their SIM card delivered at door step using documents electronically verified by UIDAI or DiGiLocker.

3) OTP based conversion of connection: The implementation of OTP based conversion process enables a subscriber to convert his mobile connection from prepaid to postpaid and vice-versa virtually via OTP-based authentication.

Aadhaar is a 12-digit identification number issued by UIDAI. Currently, a subscriber needs to visit a Point of Sale (PoS) unit with original identity documents and address proof for KYC verification. **AGENCIES**

Amazon spends Rs 8,546 cr in legal expenses during 2018-20 to maintain presence in India

NEW DELHI: US e-commerce giant Amazon, which is said to be investigating alleged bribes paid by its legal representatives in India, spent a staggering Rs 8,546 crore or USD 1.2 billion in legal expenses for maintaining a presence in the country during 2018-20, sources said.

Sources aware of the firm's public account filings said entities of Amazon - including Amazon Retail India Pvt Ltd, Amazon Seller Services Pvt Ltd, Amazon Transportation Services Pvt Ltd, Amazon Wholesale (India) Pvt Ltd, and Amazon Internet Services Pvt Ltd (AWS) - paid Rs 3,420 crore in India during 2018-19 and Rs 5,126 crore during 2019-20 towards legal fees.

Amazon is locked in a legal tussle over the takeover of Future Group and is facing a probe by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

While the company declined to comment on the legal fee issue, traders body CAIT claimed that Amazon spending 20 per cent of its revenue on lawyers was questionable. "The whopping amount spent under legal professional



fees clearly shows how Amazon and its subsidiaries are misusing their financial muscles to bribe and manipulate Indian government officials," CAIT National Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal wrote to Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. Without offering any proof for his claim, he demanded a CBI inquiry.

A report by Morning Context stated that Amazon has initiated an investigation against some of its legal representatives for allegedly bribing Indian government officials. Its senior corporate counsel

has reportedly been sent on leave in this matter.

The company had stated that it takes allegations of improper actions seriously and investigates them fully to take appropriate action. While it did not confirm or deny the allegations, Amazon had said it has "zero tolerance for corruption".

"Which company over the globe while spending more than 20 per cent of its accrued revenue on paying to lawyers is able to sustain in business and that too even making losses year by year but yes it is

globally e-tailer Amazon in India which is a living example of this mind-boggling acrimony," CAIT alleged on Tuesday.

Khandelwal in a statement claimed that Amazon has spent about "Rs 8,500 crore on legal and professional fees against a turnover of about Rs 45,000 crore in two years (2018-20)".

Amazon also faces a probe by India's fair trade watchdog CCI for alleged anti-competitive practices, predatory pricing and preferential treatment of sellers.

The US-based firm has also been locked in a legal tussle with Future Group. Amazon is contesting a Rs 24,713-crore deal between Future Group and Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd and has dragged Future Group to the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC). It has argued that Future violated the contract by entering into the deal with rival Reliance.

Amazon and Future Group had also filed litigations in Indian courts, including the Supreme Court, on the issue.

Amazon is an investor in Future Coupons, that in turn is a shareholder in Future Retail Ltd. **AGENCIES**

A dream come true: Freshworks CEO after company gets listed on Nasdaq

NEW DELHI: "Today is a dream come true for me," said Freshworks Founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Girish Mathrubootham after India's first software-as-a-service (SaaS) tech startup got listed on US stock exchange Nasdaq. Mr Mathrubootham acknowledged the contribution of employees, partners, and investors, and took to Twitter expressing his gratitude for believing in the dream.

"Today is a dream come true for me - from humble beginnings in #Trichy to ringing the bell at @Nasdaq for the FreshWorks IPO. Thank you to our employees, customers, partners, and investors for believing in this dream," wrote Mr Mathrubootham on Twitter.

After raising \$1 billion in the initial public offering (IPO) - priced above the market range, shares of Freshworks Inc rose 32 per cent after getting listed on the US stock exchange with its market capitalization hitting \$13 billion. Freshworks IPO was led by Morgan Stanley, JPMorgan Chase & Co. and



Bank of America Corp. Its shares are now trading on the Nasdaq Global Select Market under the symbol 'FRSH'.

The newly-listed software services company sold 28.5 million for \$36 each after marketing them for \$32 to \$34, - a target that the company had elevated from \$28 to \$32.

"Welcome to the Nasdaq family, FreshworksInc! Designed with the end-user in mind, #Freshworks builds and delivers software-as-a-service that makes it easy for businesses to delight their customers and employees," wrote Nasdaq in a tweet.

After the COVID-19 pandemic prompted businesses to go digital, Freshworks boosted revenue about 40 per cent last year, and sales continued to grow in the first half of 2021, while its net loss reduced.

Freshworks was founded in India and moved to the Silicon Valley to be closer to customers. The company still retains a substantial workforce in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The company is primarily involved in delivering software services to the end-user - mostly building tech for sales, marketing, IT, customer service, HR, among others. **AGENCIES**

Bharti Airtel's rights issue to open on October 5; price fixed at ₹ 535 per share

NEW DELHI: Bharti Airtel's Rs 21,000 crore rights issue will open on October 5, the company said in a filing to the stock exchanges. The telecom major's right issue will close on October 21, 2021. A total of up to 392,287,662 shares will be offered as part of the rights issue, the company's special committee of directors for rights issue decided at its meeting held on Wednesday, September 22, 2021.

The rights shares will be issued at a price of Rs 535 per fully paid-up share, including face value of Rs 5



and a premium of Rs 530 per share. Eligible investors will receive one share for every 14 shares held as on the record date. The record date for determining shareholders'

eligibility to participate in the rights issue has been fixed as September 28.

Bharti Airtel is the second largest telco in the Indian telecom market, with a mobile user base of 35.2 crore. It added 38.1 lakh wireless subscribers in June, as per subscriber data recently released by telecom regulator, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.

A rights issue or rights offer refers to the rights being offered by a company to its existing shareholders to buy additional securities. **AGENCIES**

Development of fuel efficient cars to remain critical in sales strategy: Maruti Suzuki

NEW DELHI: Maruti Suzuki India will keep developing and launching cars with great fuel efficiency as it remains a critical factor for customers while making a purchase decision, a senior company official said.

The country's largest carmaker - which has launched a campaign 'Kam Se Kaam Banega' to celebrate three decades of leadership in offering the country's most fuel-efficient cars - noted that efficiency goals will be achieved without compromising on the performance of the vehicles.

"Our internal studies have shown that fuel efficiency has been high in buying criteria even when fuel prices were down. Now with so much increase in fuel prices, it has become an even more important factor," MSI Senior Executive Director (Sales and Marketing) Shashank Srivastava told PTI. He noted that the fuel prices were not expected to come down any time soon and thus customers would look for a product with better fuel efficiency.

Srivastava pointed out that developing fuel-efficient cars was also important for the companies to achieve the stringent norms, which come into play in the country from next year. "The second phase of CAFE norms are due in 2022 and the third phase in 2027. So, obviously every OEM would have to improve the fuel efficiency of their cars. We are currently quite comfortable in this regard," Srivastava stated.

Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) norms are embedded in BS-VI emission regulations and are part of the government's efforts to reduce vehicular carbon footprint.

In Phase I (2017-2022), CAFE norms require average corporate CO2 emissions to be less than 130 gm/km. In Phase II (2022 onwards), emissions need to be further reduced to less than 113 gm/km.

Srivastava said MSI has been able to improve fuel efficiency figures in some of its models by up to 30 per cent in the last decade due to various technological

innovations like a smart hybrid, S-CNG, K-Series engines and HEARTTECT platform etc. "It has been possible due to these three factors. We are leaders in all categories when it comes to fuel efficiency with products like Alto, Wagon R, Baleno Smart Hybrid, Dzire, Ciaz, Ertiga, Vitara Brezza, Eeco. These are the most fuel-efficient cars in their respective categories," Srivastava said.

The company has already sold 70 lakh cars with the K Series engines, known for fuel efficiency and performance, he added. "Going ahead also, our focus would remain on achieving fuel efficiency without compromising on the performance of the vehicles. In fact, the performance of our vehicles has become better over the last few years," Srivastava noted.

Maruti Suzuki has always been a champion in offering fuel-efficient cars and with every new model and upgrade, the company brings innovation and technology to address the customer's need for better mileage and performance, he added. **AGENCIES**

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Google suing competition commission of India over probe report leak

NEW DELHI: Alphabet Inc's Google said it is suing the Competition Commission of India (CCI) following the leak of a confidential CCI report into an antitrust investigation of the US tech giant.

The Times of India newspaper, and then Reuters, reported that a CCI investigation had found Google abused the dominant position of its Android operating system in India, using its "huge financial muscle" to illegally hurt competitors.

Google said last week it looked forward to working with the CCI to "demonstrate how Android has led to more competition and innovation, not less."

In statement the company said it had filed a legal challenge against the CCI at the Delhi High Court "to pre-



vent any further unlawful disclosures of confidential findings."

Google said it was "protesting against the breach of confidence which impairs Google's ability to defend itself and harms Google and its partners."

"We cooperated fully and maintained confidentiality throughout the investigative process, and we hope

and expect the same level of confidentiality from the institutions we engage with," its statement added.

The CCI did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the legal action. A Google spokesman declined to comment on whether it had sought cease and desist orders on further media coverage of the contents of the CCI report. **AGENCIES**

Vodafone idea eyes funding on govt package boost

NEW DELHI: Vodafone Idea is confident it can reach a fundraising deal with potential investors, bolstered by a government package that provides much-needed relief to the debt-ridden mobile carrier, its chief executive officer said.

Vodafone Idea, with a net debt of Rs 1.91 lakh crore (\$25.86 billion) and other government dues of Rs 1.68 lakh crore, had expressed repeated concerns about its ability to stay afloat without federal help.

Investors were waiting to see whether New Delhi would ensure that at least three players exist in the telecoms sector and also wanted the funding to be used for business rather than paying government dues,



Ravinder Takkar, the CEO of Vodafone Idea, said in a video interview. "With this package all of those fears to some extent have been put aside," said Takkar, without specifying the names of investors the company was in talks with or a timeline for the fundraising.

"With this tremendous change our business plans will have to be updated, which

means our funding requirements will also have to be updated."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government last week approved a relief package for the cash-strapped telecoms sector, including a four-year moratorium on airwaves fees due to the state. Telecoms sector ran into trouble in late 2016 with the entry of tycoon billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio, which sparked a price war that forced some rivals out of the market and turned profits into losses.

A Supreme Court ruling in late 2019 also added to the sector's pain, saddling telecoms companies with dues of roughly \$13 billion. **AGENCIES**

Zee Entertainment, Sony Pictures Network India announce merger

NEW DELHI: India's largest publicly-traded television network Zee Entertainment Enterprises will merge with Sony Pictures Network India (SPNI), capping days of high drama during which the firm's shareholders sought removal of key officials.

Sony, which will invest USD 1.575 billion, will hold 52.93 per cent stake in the merged entity and Zee the remaining 47.07, Zee Entertainment Enterprises (ZEEL) said in a statement.

In recent days, Zee has seen its top investor seek a management reshuffle, including the exit of chief executive Punet Goenka. A majority of the merged company's board would be nominated by Sony, while Goenka would lead it, according to the terms of the deal.

Invesco Developing Markets Fund and OFI Global China Fund LLC, which together hold about 17.9 per cent stake in Zee, had sought an extraordinary general meeting of shareholders last week to oust Goenka along with two board members.

The move was seen as an attempt to end the sway of founder Subhash Chandra's family over the company founded in 1992. While the deal may take some pressure off Zee, it will help expand Sony's media business in India. In an exchange filing, Zee said it has entered into a non-binding term sheet with SPNI to bring together their linear networks, digital assets, production operations and programme libraries.

The combined entity will own over 70 TV channels, 2 video streaming services (ZEE5 and Sony LIV) and two film studios (Zee Studios and Sony Pictures Films India) making it the largest entertainment network in India. Its nearest rival would be now Star and Disney in the Indian market.

"The merger of ZEEL and SPNI would bring together two leading Indian media network businesses, benefiting consumers throughout India across content genres, from film to sports. The combined company is expected to benefit all stakeholders given strong synergies between ZEEL and SPNI," said SPNI in a statement. While in a separate statement ZEEL said, its board in a meeting held on Tuesday unanimously provided an in-principle approval for the merger between SPNI and the company. "The board concluded that the merger will be in the best interest of all the shareholders and stakeholders. The merger is in line with ZEEL's strategy of achieving higher growth and profitability as a leading media and entertainment company across South Asia," it said.

According to ZEEL, "With this corporate development, the merged entity will result into an accelerated growth and a significant opportunity to create tremendous value for all its stakeholders." **AGENCIES**

MG Motor India unveils Astor, with personal AI assistant and Autonomous (Level 2) technology

ASTOR IS DESIGNED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF EMOTIONAL DYNAMISM THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE WITH THE CAR

KULBIR SINGH KALSI Chandigarh

MG Motor India has unveiled MG Astor, India's first SUV with personal AI assistant and first-in-segment Autonomous (Level 2) technology. Astor is based on the MG's successful global platform, ZS. The SUV was unveiled simultaneously at MG dealerships of Krishna Motor Garage at Elante Mall here and Sec 82, Mohali.

Based on MG's design philosophy of Emotional Dynamism, Astor's contemporary style will

connect with consumers. It has a prominent Bold Celestial Grille that makes a solid on-road impression. The SUV poses an elegant and ready-for-action stance with a classic leopard jump shoulder line. Astor's nine crystal diamond elements in the LED headlamps make for a distinct hawk-eye expression with precise details.

The interiors are elegantly crafted with soft-touch and premium material. It will be coming in two engine options - the Brit Dynamic 220TURBO petrol engine with a 6-speed AT delivering a whopping 220 Nm of torque and 140ps of power. And the other - VTI Tech petrol engine with a manual transmission & an 8-speed CVT, delivering 144 Nm of torque and 110ps of power.



The much-awaited mid-size MG Astor will be on display at MG showrooms from 19th September and bookings will start soon thereafter Talking about the appeal of Astor, Carl Gotham, the Advanced Design Director at

the MG's Global Design Centre in London, UK, said, "The concept of Emotional Dynamism brings a premium feel to Astor. The mid-size SUV is a visual delight with an exceptional level of detailing and remarkable features. We

have placed design at the centre of creating the car to make it look as good as its technology. It takes forward the MG's brand's legacy with cutting-edge technology and design excellence. India can look forward to immersing into a seamless driving experience with personal AI assistance inside MG Astor."

Speaking at the unveiling of Astor, Rajeev Chaba, President and MD, MG Motor India, said, "We have introduced several industry-firsts with our SUVs to the Indian automotive market. This time we have Autonomous (Level 2), MG Astor, with a personal AI assistant. With its elegant exteriors, luxurious interiors, and futuristic technology, we believe that Astor is a desirable package that will strike a chord with the

customers."

MG Astor's personal AI assistant depicts human-like emotions and voice. The Paralympic athlete Deepa Malik has lent her voice to the personal AI assistant, thereby humanising the experience. The AI technology in Astor is developed around MG's vision of Car-as-a-Platform (CAAP) of possibilities, which will enable the users to personalise the services as per their requirements.

MG has partnered with BOSCH for ADAS (Advanced driver-assistance systems) in Astor. AI technology, six radars and five cameras equip the SUV to manage 14 advanced Autonomous Level 2 features. The car ensures a safer driving experience with 27 standard safety features like ESP, TCS and

HDC. Among its host of comfort, convenience and safety features include 6 airbags, 6-way power-adjustable driver seats, electric parking brake, heated ORVM, rain-sensing wiper, PM 2.5 filter, panoramic sky roof, rear AC vent and front and rear armrest, 10.1-inch HD infotainment system for the cinematic experience and full digital cluster with 7-inch embedded LCD screen

Astor has 80+ internet features residing on MG i-SMART technology. On top of it, building on CAAP (Car as a platform), MG Astor hosts subscriptions and services, including maps and navigation with MapMyIndia, Jio connectivity, the first-of-its-kind Blockchain-protected vehicle digital passport by KoineArth and more. MG car owners will also get access to music on the JioSaavn app, along with the industry-first feature of reserving a parking slot through a head unit (powered by Park +, select cities to begin with) and access to unlimited information with

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Need to mainstream green finance: RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao

NEW DELHI: RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao emphasized on the need to mainstream green finance and think of ways to incorporate the environmental impact into commercial lending decisions. He added that it is simultaneously important to balance the needs of credit expansion, economic growth and social development. Green finance can apparently be defined as financing of investments that deliver environmental benefits in the broader context of environmentally sustainable development.

Addressing the CAFRAL Virtual Conference on Green and Sustainable Finance, Rao said, «Climate risks can impact the financial sector through two broad channels; first - physical risks which mean economic costs and financial losses resulting from the increasing severity and frequency of extreme weather events and long-term climate change and second - transition risks which arise as we try to adjust towards a low-carbon economy.»



He stated that the fight against climate change is certainly a task for the global economy, society, and its institutions - including central banks.

Commenting on sustainable finance and role of RBI in a dynamic world, he said, «The Reserve Bank of India's mission (Utkarsh 2022) state-

ment encompasses universal access to financial services and a robust, dynamic and responsive financial intermediation infrastructure and recognizes the importance of active and receptive financial intermediation. As the economy and financial system are not static, we need to appropriately respond to the changes around

us. We also need to proactively consider new and emerging risks and opportunities while delivering monetary and financial stability in a time consistent manner.»

He added that the Reserve Bank had already advised banks in 2007 to put in place an appropriate action plan towards making a meaningful

contribution to sustainable development. In 2012, RBI included loans sanctioned by banks directly to individuals for setting up off-grid solar and other off-grid renewable energy solutions for households and in 2015, the PSL (Priority Sector Lending) criteria was expanded to bank loans up to a limit of Rs 15 crore to borrowers for purposes like solar based power generators, biomass based power generators, wind mills, among others. In 2020, the above limit for bank loans was doubled to Rs 30 crore.»

The Reserve Bank Deputy Governor also mentioned that the global understanding of systemic impact of climate change on the economy and the financial system as also its resultant impact on financial stability is evolving and, accordingly, the responses of central banks and supervisors around the world have also been developing.

Rao further said that «the private and the public sector need to build on early progress.» **AGENCIES**

Greater funding in infrastructure sector to boost growth, says RBI Governor

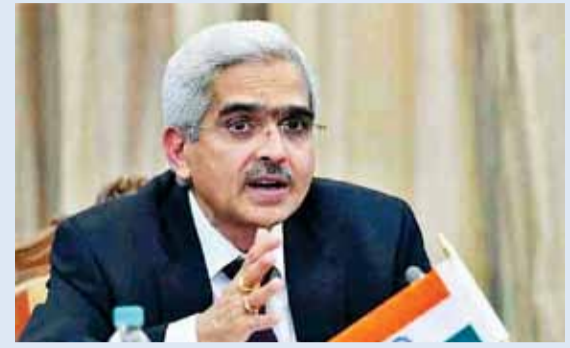
NEW DELHI: Greater reforms in the labour sector and the need to have enhanced investment in infrastructure will help in achieving sustainable growth in the post pandemic era, Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das said.

The central bank chief, who was addressing a convention organised by the All India Management Association (AIMA), listed sectors like healthcare education as well as digital and physical infrastructure which require greater investment.

This, he said, will help in ensuring not only growth but also facilitate employment generation.

«Our endeavour should be to ensure livable and sustainable growth in the post-pandemic future. Restoring the durability of private consumption, which has remained historically the mainstay of aggregate demand will be very crucial going forward,» he observed.

Speaking on life after the pandemic, Das said, «there are very few parallels of a



shock like Covid-19 in history which left policymakers with no template to navigate through the crisis. Both health systems and human endeavour to deal with the crisis were stretched to the limit. The pandemic is likely to leave indelible mark on the way economies and societies function.»

Das added that the pandemic has induced several structural changes like shift to work from home, due to which technology has gained potential to boost productivity by saving on travel time.

«As a result, consumption pattern is changing and companies are resetting their supply chains both globally as well as locally. These changes will have wider ramifications for the economy,» he noted.

Highlighting the need to bolster warehousing and supply chain infrastructure, which will be critical for enhancing productivity in the agriculture as well as horticulture sector, the RBI Governor said, «this will create employment opportunities in semi-urban and rural areas and promote inclusive growth. The demand for warehousing infrastructure has also gone up in tier-II and tier-III cities in the wake of steep jump in on-line trading.» **AGENCIES**

«Towards this objective, a big push to investment in healthcare, education, innovation, physical and digital infrastructure will be required. We should also continue with further reforms in labour and product markets to encourage competition and dynamism, and to benefit from the pandemic induced opportunities,» he said. In addition, the warehouse and supply-chain infrastructure will be critical to bolstering value addition and productivity in the agriculture and horticulture sector, he said. **AGENCIES**

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NEWS BRIEF

Former CAG Vinod Rai sacked as IDFC director

NEW DELHI: Irate shareholders of private financial company IDFC showed the door to former CAG Vinod Rai, who had sought to guide the destiny of Indian cricket and had landed the UPA government in a soup after his audit reports on the 2G and coal auctions. The die for Rai's removal was cast after he failed to satisfy shareholders of IDFC Ltd in his capacity as non-executive, non-independent director. Shareholders had then questioned the delay in unlocking value of the company. Rai in defence sought to explain that it is a huge task to unwind the complex corporate structure of the company but shareholders were unwilling to wait for a longer time as there had been considerable wealth destruction. The dissatisfaction with his innings led to Rai's removal as the non-executive director. As many as 62.3% votes went against the proposal for Vinod Rai's re-appointment as non-executive director. **AGENCIES**

Uday Kotak's term as IL&FS chief extended

NEW DELHI: The government extended the term of Uday Kotak as non-executive chairman of debt-ridden IL&FS group by another six months. The government through a gazette notification extended the term of Kotak, who is also the MD and CEO of Kotak Mahindra Bank, till April 2, 2022. The notification was issued by the Department of Financial Services in the Ministry of Finance dated September 21, 2021. Last year, the government had extended his term by 12 months till October 2, 2021. The extended six-month term will commence from October 3, 2021. Under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, a bank cannot be managed by any person who is a director of any other company. He can be given a temporary exception for three months or nine months with the concurrence of the RBI. **AGENCIES**

India records 22% rise in export of agricultural, processed food products in April-August

NEW DELHI: India has registered a significant increase of 21.8% in export of agricultural and processed food products in the first five months of current fiscal year 2021-22 (April-August FY22) in comparison to the corresponding period of 2020-21 (FY21). «The overall export of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEEDA) products increased from \$6,485 million in April-August 2020 to \$7,902 million in April-August 2021,» the Ministry of Commerce & Industry stated in a release on Tuesday. The rise in exports has been achieved despite the Covid-19 restrictions, it added.

Rice exports, which recorded a positive growth of 13.7%, increased from \$3,359 million in April-August 2020 to \$3820 million in April-August 2021, the ministry noted.

As per the Centre's Quick Estimates, the ex-

ports of fresh fruits and vegetables registered a 6.1% growth in terms of dollar, while shipment of processed food products like cereals preparations and miscellaneous processed items reported a growth of 41.9%.

In April-August FY21, fresh fruits and vegetables were exported to the tune of \$1,013 million which rose to \$1,075 million in April-August FY22.

The ministry statement also highlighted that India reported a significant 142.1% jump in export of other cereals while the export of meat, dairy & poultry products witnessed an increase 31.1% in the first five months of the FY22).

The cashew export witnessed a growth of 28.5% in April-August FY21.

According to World Trade Organization's (WTO's) trade map, India is ranked at ninth position in the world ranking with the total agri-exports of \$37 billion in 2019. **AGENCIES**

HDFC announces home loan rates at 6.7% amid festive season

NEW DELHI: Leading mortgage lender Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) 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, according to a regulatory exchange by the company to the stock exchanges.

The festive season offer on home loans will be applicable to all new loan applications irrespective of the loan amount or the employment category, and this special rate is linked to the borrower's credit score. It is a close ended scheme and will be valid till October 31, 2021, added the premier housing finance company in its statement, September 21. Customers can visit the official website - <https://www.hdfc.com/>, to avail the home loan at the current interest rate.

«Housing is much more affordable today than it ever was. In the last couple of years, property prices have



more or less remained the same in major pockets across the country while income levels have gone up. Record low interest rates, subsidies under PMAY and the tax benefits have also helped,» said Renu Sud Karnad, Managing Director, HDFC Limited.

On September 21, shares of HDFC were last trading 0.25 per cent higher at Rs 2,750.30 apiece on the BSE. HDFC opened on the BSE at Rs 2,75.35, registering an intra day high of Rs 2,765.55

and an intra day low of Rs 2,730.05, in the trading session so far.

Recently, State Bank of India - the country's largest lender also lowered its home loan interest rate to 6.70 per cent, irrespective of the loan amount in a special festive season offer for customers. Kotak Mahindra Bank also slashed its home loan interest rate to an all-time low of 6.5 per cent in a limited period offer which will continue till November 8, 2021. **AGENCIES**

Retail inflation for agricultural, rural workers fell slightly in August

NEW DELHI: Retail inflation witnessed a marginal climb down in August 2021 for agricultural and rural labourers to 3.90 per cent and 3.97 per cent respectively, according to data released by the Ministry of Labour.

The consumer price index (CPI) numbers for agricultural and rural labourers in July 2021 had stood at 3.92 per cent and 4.09 per cent respectively.

Food inflation at the same time was at 2.13 per cent and 2.32 per cent in August 2021 for agricultural and rural labourers respectively. In July 2021, the food inflation numbers for agricultural and rural labourers were 2.66 per cent



and 2.74 per cent respectively. Overall, the CPI numbers for agricultural and rural labourers for August 2021, went up by 5 points and 4 points to stand at 1,066 and 1,074

points, respectively. The CPI for agricultural labourers and rural labourers were at 1,061 points and 1,070 points, respectively in July 2021. The main contributors for the increase in the general index of agricultural labourers and rural labourers were food groups, with 2.43 points and 2.28 points respectively.

This was basically due to rise in prices of milk, groundnut oil, milk, tea leaf and other items. Andhra Pradesh witnessed maximum increase in CPI numbers for agricultural and rural labourers while maximum decline was seen by Kerala in the same numbers for August 2021. **AGENCIES**

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Yes Bank partners with visa to issue credit cards



NEW DELHI: YES Bank entered into a partnership with Visa to issue credit cards to its customers on the payment platform, said the leading private sector bank in a recent statement. With the partnership, Yes Bank will begin the issuance of nine credit card variants - both consumer and commercial, on Visa's payment network.

It consists of nine credit card variants on the Visa platform that service all segments, including business cards, consumer cards, and corporate cards across YES Premia, YES First, and YES Prosperity, according to the statement by the full service commercial bank. The transition has been achieved within less than 60 days, for the convenience of customers across segments.

The Visa co-branded cards offer loyalty programs, under which the reward points never expire and can also be transferred or shared to the credit card holders of YES Bank. «At a time when consumers

are turning to credit offerings for daily as well as discretionary spends, we are now extending an already strong relationship with the Bank - across debit, digital and acceptance solutions - to a wide range of credit offerings,» said Sujai Raina, Head - Business Development, India, Visa.

«Keeping in mind the varied consumers, businesses and corporate clients that the bank caters to, Visa aims to help expand access and enable inclusion to digital payments across these segments,» added Raina.

YES Bank is also in the process of completing a technology integration with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and plans to issue Rupay branded credit cards at a later stage.

On September 22, shares of YES bank were last trading 2.46 per cent higher at Rs 13.21 on the BSE. YES Bank opened on the BSE at Rs 13.09, swinging to an intra day high of Rs 13.36 and an intra day low of Rs 13.09, in the trading session so far. **AGENCIES**

Trojan posing as I-T refund found attacking Android users

NEW DELHI: A banking Trojan malware has been detected in the Indian cyberspace that is lurking to attack bank customers using Android phones, the country's federal cyber security agency, CERT-In, said in an advisory.

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) said, the malware has already targeted customers of over 27 public and private sector banks.

The phishing (a social engineering computer virus attack to steal personal data) malware is masquerading as an «income tax refund» and it can «effectively jeopardise the privacy of

sensitive customer data and result in large-scale attacks and financial frauds,» the CERT-In said, adding: «It has been observed that Indian banking customers are being targeted by a new type of mobile banking campaign using Drinik Android malware.»

Cyber security agency issues advisory Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) said the malware has already targeted customers from more than 27 public and private sector banks. It said the phishing malware is masquerading as an «income tax refund» and it can «effectively jeopardise



the privacy of sensitive customer data and result in large-scale attacks and financial frauds» Describing the attack process, the agency said,

the victim receives an SMS containing a link to a phishing website (similar to the website of the Income Tax Department) where they are asked to enter personal information and download and install the malicious APK file in order to complete the required verification.

«If the user does not enter any information on the website, the same screen with the form is displayed in the Android application and the user is asked to fill in to proceed,» it said, adding the data to be filled includes full name, PAN, Aadhaar number, address, date of birth, mobile

number, email address and financial details such as account number, IFS code, CIF number, debit card number, expiry date, CVV and PIN.

Once these details are entered by the user, it said, the application states that there is a refund amount that could be transferred to the user's bank account and when the user enters the amount and clicks «transfer», the application shows an error and demonstrates a fake update screen. While the screen for installing update is shown, Trojan in the backend sends the user's details to the attacker's machine. **AGENCIES**

NEWSBRIEF

India scores 46th rank in Global Innovation Index

NEW DELHI: India has climbed two spots and has been ranked 46th by the World Intellectual Property Organization in the Global Innovation Index 2021 rankings, an official statement said. According to the statement, the consistent improvement in the GII ranking is owing to the immense knowledge capital, the vibrant startup ecosystem and the amazing work done by the public and the private research organisations. **AGENCIES**

JBM auto surges 17% on receiving orders for CNG, electric buses

NEW DELHI: Shares of bus maker - JBM Auto - rose as much as 17 per cent to hit fresh 52-week high of Rs 537 after the company informed exchanges that it has received orders for supply of electric and compressed natural gas (CNG) buses. JBM Auto received order for supply of 500 CNG and electric buses from various entities. JBM Auto received one order for supply of BS VI CNG buses for Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Limited (DIMTSL), JBM Auto said in an exchange filing. Other orders included supply of electric buses to Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL), electric buses for Jhansi - Smart City and electric buses for multiple corporate clients. JBM Auto shares have so far this year advanced nearly 100 per cent outperforming the Nifty which has gained over 26 per cent during the same period of time. The Gurugram-based, JBM Auto sells buses under the brand name Citylife. As of 12:33 pm, JBM Auto shares traded 11.47 per cent higher at Rs 512.20, outperforming the Sensex which was up 1.7 per cent. **AGENCIES**

Adani takes on Ambani, to pump in \$20 bn in renewable energy

NEW DELHI: Unveiling his infrastructure conglomerate's green vision, billionaire Gautam Adani said his group will invest \$20 billion over the next 10 years in renewable energy generation and component manufacturing and will produce the world's cheapest green electron.

The port-to-energy conglomerate plans to triple its renewable power generation capacity over the next four years, foray into green hydrogen production, power all data centres with renewable energy, turn its ports into net carbon zero by 2025, and plans to spend over 75% of capital expenditure until 2025 in green technologies, he said.

Speaking at JP Morgan India Investor Summit, Adani Group chairman said the \$20 billion investment will be in renewable energy generation, component manufacturing, transmission and distribution.

Adani Group's "integrated value chain, our scale, and experience puts us on the path



to be the producer of the least expensive green electron anywhere in the world," he said.

The announcement came weeks after India's richest man Mukesh Ambani announced an investment of Rs 75,000 crore

(\$10 billion) in clean power and hydrogen fuel over three years.

Many have seen the June 24 announcement as the petrochemical czar's direct competition with the country's second-wealthiest man, Adani who has

HIGHLIGHTS

- THE ANNOUNCEMENT CAME WEEKS AFTER INDIA'S RICHEST MAN MUKESH AMBANI ANNOUNCED AN INVESTMENT OF RS 75,000 CRORE (\$10 BILLION) IN CLEAN POWER AND HYDROGEN FUEL OVER THREE YEARS.
- MANY HAVE SEEN THE JUNE 24 ANNOUNCEMENT AS THE PETROCHEMICAL CZAR'S DIRECT COMPETITION WITH THE COUNTRY'S SECOND-WEALTHIEST MAN, ADANI WHO HAS HAD A STRONG PRESENCE IN THE RENEWABLE SPACE FOR MANY YEARS

had a strong presence in the renewable space for many years.

This month, Ambani said hydrogen can be made from renewable energy at \$1 per kilogram in a decade's time. Hydrogen has no carbon emissions and can be used as fuel in industry and automobiles.

Adani outlined his vision with an investment size of \$20 billion and the cheapest green electron.

He said no company in the world is building a renewable power portfolio on the scale the Adani group is doing. The group currently has 4,920 MW of operational renewable energy generation capacity and another 5,124 MW under execution. It has a confirmed pipeline of 9,750 MW and another 4,500 MW where it is likely to win contracts. **AGENCIES**

India, UAE to commence trade talks, aim to conclude negotiations by December

NEW DELHI: India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have formally launched negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said. The first round of CEPA talks will be held from September 23. «Both sides will aim to conclude negotiations by December 2021 and sign a formal agreement in March 2022.» Ministry of Commerce & Industry stated in a notification.

This was communicated at a joint briefing by Goyal and his UAE counterpart Thani

bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi. «India and the UAE will hold talks aimed at improving bilateral economic relations, including expanding the existing trade and investment relationship,» the ministry added.

In a joint statement, both the ministers emphasized that CEPA will create new jobs, raise living standards, and provide wider social and economic opportunities in both nations. «A new strategic economic agreement is expected to increase bilateral trade in goods to \$100 billion within five years of the

signed agreement and increase trade in services to \$15 billion,» the statement read.

Currently, the UAE is India's third-largest trading partner with bilateral trade in 2019-2020 valued at \$59 billion. The Arab nation is also India's second-largest export destination after the US, with exports valued at \$29 billion in 2019-2020. India was the UAE's second-largest trading partner in 2019, with bilateral non-oil trade valued at \$41 billion. And, the UAE is the eighth-largest investor in India, having invested \$11

billion between April 2000 and March 2021, while investment by Indian companies in the UAE is estimated to be over \$85 billion. In 2019-2020, India imported \$10.9 billion of crude oil from the UAE.

In the joint statement, both the ministers underlined the need to coordinate and promote cooperation under the framework of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in January 2017 between the two nations for cooperation on trade remedy measures. **AGENCIES**

ADB slashes India's GDP growth forecast

NEW DELHI: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has lowered India's growth projections for the current financial year by a percentage point to 10%, mainly due to disruptions in economic activity caused by the second wave of the Covid pandemic. In April, ADB had projected a growth rate of 11% in 2021-22 for India.

In its update of the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) released, the multilateral lending agency has also trimmed the growth forecast for Asia as a region from 7.3% to 7.1% for 2021, though it retained the growth projections for China at 8.1%.

«The growth forecast for India in fiscal year 2021 (ending March 2022) is revised down, as May's spike in Covid dented the recovery. The outbreak, however, dissipated faster than anticipated, resulting in several states easing lockdown measures and returning to more normal travel patterns,» said the ADO Update (ADOU) 2021. **AGENCIES**

Agriculture real strength supporting India's fuel energy security: Gadkari

NEW DELHI: Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari referred agriculture as India's real strength and stated that the government intends to diversify it into the energy and power sector. While addressing the Bio-Energy Summit 2021, Gadkari said, «India's fuel energy security can be well supported by agriculture as it provides opportunities for concepts such as waste to wealth and waste to energy and ultimately leading to the benefit of all.»

He mentioned that the target will be achieved through a five-phased strategy: adopting biofuels and renewables, implementing energy efficiency norms, improving refinery processes, increasing domestic production and achieving demand substitution.

Gadkari said the five-phased strategy uses a role for biofuels in the Indian energy basket.

India is committed to meet the Paris Climate Agreement, where efforts are centered to reduce carbon emissions by 33 to 35% by 2030, Gadkari stated. He also said that necessary steps are being taken to decarbonize the transport



sector by reducing the harmful Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. India aims for an eminently achievable clean energy-based economy, through an annual road-map for production, supply of ethanol till 2025-26, Gadkari further said.

In another set of development, Gadkari said that the government has been at the forefront of creating a business-friendly environment.

He said the India's highways sector has been at the forefront of performance and innovation and the Centre has successfully rolled out several projects to speed up the construction of roads in the country by renewing the interest of private developers. **AGENCIES**

FDI inflows jump 62% to \$27.37 billion in April-July 2021-22

NEW DELHI: The government said that investment facilitation and ease of doing business taken on account of FDI policy reforms have resulted in increased inflows during the first four months of this financial year (April to July FY 2021-22). «India has attracted total FDI inflow of \$27.37 billion during first four months of FY22 which is 62% higher as compared to corresponding period of FY 2020-21 at \$16.92 billion,» the Ministry of Commerce & Industry stated in a notification.

The current Foreign Direct Investment status puts India as a preferred investment destination amongst global investors, it added.

FDI equity inflow grew at a faster pace during April to July 2021-22. The equity inflow increased by 112% in the first

four months of FY22 to \$20.42 billion compared to the year ago period (\$9.61 billion), the ministry stated. Total FDI comprises equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital.

It also highlighted that the automobile industry emerged as the top sector during the first four months of FY22 with 23% share of the total FDI equity inflow followed by computer software & hardware (18%) and services sector (10%) respectively. Under the auto sector, majority of FDI Equity inflow (87%) was reported in Karnataka during the first four months of FY22.

Karnataka is the top recipient during the FY22 (up to July, 2021) with 45% share of the total FDI equity inflows followed by Maharashtra (23%) and Delhi (12%). **AGENCIES**

Finance Ministry suggests restarting decades-old apprenticeship scheme in Railways



NEW DELHI: The Finance Ministry has recommended the railways restart a 94-year-old apprenticeship scheme, which was discontinued in 2015, to "catch the talent young" and tailor them to meet the requirements of the rail transport sector.

The Special Class Railway Apprentice (SCRA) programme was conceived in 1927 under which candidates were selected by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to train in the undergraduate program in mechanical engineering at the Indian Railways Institute of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Jamalpur.

The scheme was discontinued in 2015. In its report on the rationalisation of railways, the Finance Ministry has recommended the Railway Ministry reintroduce the programme, which involves hands-on training in the specialised field of technology used in the railways.

The proposal is part of a report from the Finance Ministry which has made a slew of recommendations including the merger of rail PSUs and also of IT organisations like RailTel, CRIS and IRCTC into one entity. The report has also recommended the streamlining of the Railway Board and a review of non-core activities like running schools, hospitals catering -- most of which have been recommended by the Bibek Debroy Committee earlier.

The report prepared by the Finance Ministry's principal economic advisor has recommended the apprenticeship scheme be reintroduced in the railways at the National Rail and Transportation Institute (NRTI), Varodara.

Explaining the rationale behind its recommendation, the finance ministry has said the pres-

“The report has proposed that NRTI should certify apprenticeship scheme on similar lines of the National Defence Academy and Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology”

ent practice of taking graduates from regular academic institutions and spending resources to retrain them in rail-specific technology leads to a «drain of industry resources» as well as delays the induction of such specialised manpower.

Stating that the railways require specialised training and skills beyond what is part of a regular classroom graduation program offered by normal academic institutes, the report suggested it is imperative to reintroduce the apprenticeship scheme which involves hands-on training in the specialised field of technology used in railways.

«The report has proposed that NRTI should certify apprenticeship scheme on similar lines of the National Defence Academy and Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology.»

«Under the scheme, short-listed (UPSC to conduct separate examination) school graduates (Class 12 students) will be offered structured tech and diploma level programs where the course curriculum is suitably tailored to meet the requirements of the rail transport sector,» the report said. **AGENCIES**

Strong feedback will lead to robust e-commerce rules: Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI: Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal said that "strong feedback" will help in preparing a robust e-commerce policy even as he termed reports of differences within the government on the proposed policy as efforts to "sensationalise any feedback".

Stating that it is elementary to get feedback on the draft rules, the minister said, "this speaks of the robust way of the working of the government which is willing to engage with stakeholders and take different points of view on board and come up with a successful policy".

"We welcome all feedback because with strong feedback, we will be able to come up with a more robust and good policy that is helpful to all stakeholders," he said.

Goyal was replying to a query on media reports on difference of opinion among various ministries and government think-tank Niti Aayog on the draft e-commerce rules.

Earlier in the day, a government official had said that there is "significant difference of opinion within the government" on the draft rules and flagged con-



cerns that continuous change of the policy causes a great deal of uncertainty.

Currently, the consumer affairs ministry is examining the public comments on ban on fraudulent flash sales and mis-selling as well as appointment of chief compliance officer or grievance redressal officer, which are among the key amendments proposed to the Consumer Protection (e-commerce) Rules, 2020.

"I am very amused with all that has been going in the newspapers... I am amazed by some of the reports that I read, trying to sensationalise any feedback

that you get," Goyal told reporters after launching the National Single Window System portal here.

A draft policy is framed to get public feedback, which is a process of stakeholders' consultation, he said, adding that every section has to survive and grow.

The consumer affairs ministry, which has received wide and varied comments on the draft rules, is examining the comments seriously as maximum consumer complaints received at the government's National Consumer Helpline were related to the e-commerce sector. **AGENCIES**

TN eyes \$100 billion exports by 2030, signs MoUs worth Rs 2,120.54 cr

CHENNAI: The Tamil Nadu government signed Memorandum of Understanding for 24 projects worth Rs 2,120.54 crore, while Chief Minister M K Stalin said the government's goal is to increase the state's exports to \$100 billion by 2030.

The state government's Micro Small and Medium Enterprises Trade and Investment Promotion Bureau (M-TIPB) entered into a MoU with Flipkart/Walmart for promotion of e-commerce among MSMEs in Tamil Nadu through a supplier development programme.

This initiative envisages expanding the capabilities of MSMEs through intensive training and support and equip them to scale up their businesses and become part of domestic and global supply chains.

M-TIPB and The Indo Ger-

man Chamber of Commerce entered into an MoU for collaboration between MSMEs in the state and businesses in Germany. The MoU would facilitate linkages, interaction, technology collaboration programmes and export opportunities for MSMEs in the state.

Presided by Chief Minister Stalin, the inaugural of the Tamil Nadu Exports Conclave, organized by the departments of the state and central governments to showcase the strengths of Tamil Nadu in exports, was held here today.

The conclave is part of nationwide events to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Indian Independence (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav).



As part of the event, Stalin released Tamil Nadu Exports Promotion Policy (TNEPP) and MSME Exporters Handbook and inaugurated an Ex-

port Exhibition, which saw the participation of 21 export units, export promotion centres and government departments.

On behalf of the Industries Department, 14 MoUs were signed with the 100 per cent

Govt cuts patent fees for academic institutions by 80 per cent

NEW DELHI: In a significant move, the government has reduced the fees for filing patents by 80 per cent for educational institutions. The new fee structure has come into effect from September 21, 2021. The decision is aimed at encouraging a conducive environment for innovation in academic circles and institutions across the country, official sources said.

The Patents (Amendment) Rules 2021 have been notified for this purpose, a statement issued by the Commerce Ministry said.

While applying for patents, innovators have to do so in the name of the institution they represent and these institutions have to pay the patent fees for a large number of ap-



plicants, which burdens them financially.

Therefore in order to incentivise institutions into applying for patents in greater numbers, the decision to reduce the patent fees significantly has been taken, sources said further.

The government is keen to promote greater collaboration between industry and

academia, which it says, can be done by facilitating commercialisation of research conducted by institutions.

The various new technologies which are developed by innovators in educational institutions across the country need to be patented and since there are often multiple applications for patents from several educational bodies, the fees which is entailed for this purpose runs into a huge amount.

High patenting fees were acting as a restriction for academia in developing newer technologies, and with the government keen on promoting innovators and startups through its various schemes like Startup India, the decision to reduce patent fees was taken, sources said. **AGENCIES**

To help attain the goal, public and private sector companies should work in cohesion, he said. The state shall adopt a two-pronged approach of export promotion and export diversification to achieve this objective, a key aspect of the TNEPP.

The government has also planned developing two «Export Enclaves» at Manallore and Tuticorin with world class infrastructure amenities for exporters, the CM said.

The government has identified 10 export hubs and would strengthen export related common infrastructure projects in these places by reimbursing 25 per cent of the project cost, subject to a ceiling of Rs 10 crore per hub. The 10 identified locations are Chennai, Coimbatore, Hosur, Kancheepuram, Tirupur, Karur, Madurai, Ambur, Tuticorin and Pollachi, the CM said.

Schemes have also been formulated to incentivize production of value added products (Special Package Incentives) by exporters. Such initiatives are part of the TNEPP. Every district produces several unique products and to market them globally, Export Centres are being set up in every district. Similar to the «Made in India» tagline, «Made in Tamil Nadu» should echo and «this is not only our desire, it is our goal too and our journey will be towards that goal,» he said. **AGENCIES**



Raj Kundra back home after 2 months in jail

Businessman Raj Kundra, who was released from jail in a pornography case on September 21, returned to his home after two months. He reunited with his wife Shilpa Shetty and arrived at his Juhu bungalow in a black Mercedes car.

As husband walked out of the Mumbai jail, actor Shilpa Shetty posted a motivational message on bouncing back in life. Taking to Instagram, Shetty posted a picture of herself along with a quote from Chinese philosopher Confucius.

The quote read: "Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall".

In the caption, the 46-year-old actor wrote, "There are always going to be moments that push you to the ground. In times like these, I truly believe that if you fall seven times, make yourself strong enough to be able to stand back up eight times."

It takes a "lot of courage, grit, will-power, and strength" to get back up during the "difficult moments", Shetty added. **AGENCIES**



Saif Ali Khan lauds Bhoot Police cast

Actor Saif Ali Khan is overwhelmed with all the love coming his way for his performance in Bhoot Police. He says success is measured in strange and different ways, and that in a pandemic it can be called a feather in his cap. Saif said, "There are certain scripts that you read and fall in love with immediately because you see the potential they hold. You find it important that it gets made in a certain way because you have a lot of hope with that kind of script. Bhoot Police is certainly one of them."

He added, "I would also like to thank my co-actors Arjun, Yami and Jacqueline — Arjun especially, because we were in it together from the beginning and it was a lot of fun jamming with him on our scenes together." Saif said that horror and comedy are genres that are best viewed collectively in a group. "This is a family movie and you can watch it with your young children without them getting scared and that's always lovely. We are very happy with the enormous traction the movie has received," he said. **AGENCIES**

Accept it, move on: Virat Kohli's pep talk after RCB's loss to KKR

Royal Challengers Bangalore's loss came as a disappointment for their fans, but Captain Virat Kohli wants the team to accept it and move forward. "We are better off accepting it immediately and being at peace with it," he told a dressing room full of his teammates after his team's rather forgettable performance against the Kolkata Knight Riders. "Not meaning that we don't look forward to the next one but, it should give us more hunger to get on to the field again. And play the cricket that we have already played in this tournament," Kohli said. The franchise shared a video of a pep talk that both Kohli and head coach Mike Hesson gave the team to keep them motivated. **AGENCIES**

Justin Trudeau party wins but falls short of majority

TORONTO: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party secured victory in parliamentary elections but failed to get the majority he wanted in a vote that focused on the coronavirus pandemic but that many Canadians saw as unnecessary.

Trudeau entered election leading a stable minority government that wasn't under threat of being toppled — but he was hoping Canadians would reward him with a majority for navigating the pandemic better than many other leaders. Still, Trudeau struggled to justify why he called the election early given the virus, and the opposition was relentless in accusing him of holding the vote two years before the deadline for his own personal ambition. The Liberal Party was leading or elected in 158 seats — one more than they won 2019, and 12 short of the 170 needed for a majority in the 338-seat Parliament. **AGENCIES**



Chandigarh Air Force organises Air Show, enthralled many at Sukhna Lake

CHANDIGARH: The Indian Air Force's freshly introduced Rafale fighter aircraft wowed hundreds of spectators who flocked to the Sukhna Lake.

The Chinook heavy-lift helicopter airlifted heavy underslung loads as well as inducted special forces for offensive operations showing its versatility in war and peace time.

Due to bad weather, however, the display of Surya Kiran, the aerobatics demonstration team of the Indian Air Force (IAF), was not carried out.

The air show was organised by the Chandigarh Air Force Station in association with the UT administration to mark Swarnim Vijay Diwas of the 1971 War. The event also coincided with the celebration of the diamond jubilee year of the air force station, which was established in 1961.

Punjab governor Banwari Lal Purohit, Haryana governor Bandaru Dattatreya, Himachal Pradesh governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar, and chief justice of Punjab and Haryana high court Ravi Shankar Jha attended the event.

Striking through the blue skies with blazing contrails just a few hundred feet above the ground, the tight formation of brightly painted red and white Hawk trainer jets of the Indian Air Force is an exhilarating sight as they execute a series of loops, barrel rolls and other breathtak-



ing aerial manoeuvres. The team, considered among the top three nine-aircraft aerobatic formations in the world, has left audiences across the country as well as in several countries, spellbound with its performance. Nine is the highest number of aircraft in an aerobatic team anywhere. But behind the glamour and glitz of close formation flying — the ultimate test of a fighter pilot's abilities of concentration, coordination and unflinching nerves—lies a tough regimen of careful selection, extensive training, diligence and spectacular teamwork. In addition is the meticulous technical evaluation of its all manoeuvres and flying procedures that have to be ratified and approved by the IAF's Tactics and Air Combat

Development Establishment before they can be put into practice.

To be a member of the SKAT, volunteers must be fighter pilots, have eight years of service and a minimum of 1,000 hours of flying and be qualified flying instructors. Volunteers are invited to fly with the team, where their performance and personality traits are evaluated. Over the next six months or so, selected pilots then fly 70-75 sorties practising various manoeuvres before they get into the formation flying team.

Pilots have a tenure of about three years with the team. Generally, two new pilots join the team every six months. Starting off at high altitude with a single aircraft sortie, flying with the team leader or the deputy team leader, the fresh inductee moves on to two-aircraft and then three-aircraft formation flying. After mastering the skill of flying with two aircraft on either side, the fresher then goes in for four-aircraft and six-aircraft sorties before finally graduating to nine-aircraft sorties. All types of rolls, loops, dives and formations are flown at various training stages.

Although the organisers had asked visitors to maintain social distancing, protocols went for a toss amid crowding at the venue. **AGENCIES**

A complete **KNOWLEDGE CAPSULE**

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