

CITY TALKS

2 **CENTRE DID POLITICS OVER OXYGEN CRISIS IN DELHI, TRIED TO HIDE DEATHS: SATYENDAR JAIN**



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.

Respective 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

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6 **NEED TO MAINSTREAM GREEN FINANCE: RBI DEPUTY GOVERNOR M RAJESHWAR RAO**



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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, including 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**

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 PCC 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".



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**

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**

NEWSBRIEF

Delhi diesel generator users asked to install emission control devices

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has directed all users of diesel generators of 125 KVA and above capacity in the capital to install emission control devices on their Diesel Generator sets by October end. In a reminder to an order issued on July 2, the pollution control authority said owners of such Diesel Generator sets will attract penal action if they don't comply with its directions within 120 days from the date of the first notice. It said the devices to be installed on Diesel Generator sets must be approved by one of the five Central Pollution Control Board-recognised laboratories and should capture at least 70 percent of the emissions. The users of such Diesel Generator sets also have the option to shift to gas-based generators. **AGENCIES**

Govt's mega PTM helped parents get involved in Children's Development Process: Research

NEW DELHI: The Delhi government's "Mega PTM" initiative has helped 97 percent of the parents increase their participation in the overall development of their children, according to an SCERT Delhi research, a statement said. Mega PTM was an initiative launched by the Arvind Kejriwal government in 2016 to increase parental engagement in its schools and connect the society with these institutions. Its purpose, the statement said, was to bridge the communication gap between parents and teachers. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said along with teacher training, SCERT Delhi was also playing an important role in the field of educational research. **AGENCIES**

BJP, Cong replaced their CMs out of fear of Kejriwal model: AAP

PANAJI: The fear of the Arvind Kejriwal "model" prompted Congress and BJP to replace their chief ministers in some states, where Assembly elections are due early next year, an Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) functionary said here. The comments of Goa AAP convener Rahul Mhambre came against the backdrop of the BJP replacing its chief minister Vijay Rupani in Gujarat last week and Congress appointing Charanjit Singh Channi as the new CM of Punjab after incumbent Amarinder Singh resigned a day before following a bitter power tussle. He said AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will arrive in Goa, where Assembly polls are due in February next year, on September 20. "BJP and Congress replaced their chief ministers in some states due to the fear of the Kejriwal model," Mhambre said. Kejriwal had announced that the AAP will provide up to 300 units of free electricity if voted to power in Goa during his earlier visit. He had also assured 24x7 uninterrupted electricity supply, Mhambre said. **AGENCIES**

Mhambre said Kejriwal's pre-election promises had forced Goa chief minister Pramod Sawant to announce schemes promising free water supply for people and doorstep services "which he blatantly copied from the Aam Aadmi Party". **AGENCIES**

Gurdwara Bangla Sahib shut: Delhi administration flayed



AMRITSAR: SGPC president Bibi Jagir Kaur termed the orders of Delhi administration to close Gurdwara Bangla Sahib as a "Nadirshahi" (dictatorial). "The orders to close Gurdwara Bangla Sahib are a testament to the dictatorial attitude of the Delhi Government, which the Sikh community cannot tolerate. These should be withdrawn immediately and the administration must apologise," she said. She said the contribution of gurdwaras in provided langar (food from community kitchen), oxygen, and other services to public during the Covid pandemic shouldn't be forgotten. Gurdwara body urges Delhi govt to stop painting Golden Temple on walls of underpass. New Delhi: Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) chief Manjinder Singh Sirsa wrote to PWD minister Satyendar Jain requesting him to stop the painting of Golden Temple on the walls on an under-construction underpass at Ashram Chowk here. Sirsa also termed the act as "disrespectful" to their religion according to the Sikh code of conduct. "We would like to draw your kind attention to the painting work of Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) that is being carried out by the PWD on the side walls of an underpass being constructed at Ashram Chowk, New Delhi. "For your kind information, as per the Sikh code of conduct, it is not permissible and considered as disrespectful to our religion. Delhi Sikh Sangat is taking serious objection to it," the letter read. "You are requested to kindly issue the necessary orders for immediate stopping of the painting work," it added. Sirsa also shared the letter in a Twitter post. "Painting Darbar Sahib on the walls of Underpass at Ashram Chowk is highly objectionable. We urge @SatyendarJain Ji to immediately pass the order of stopping this painting work. "As per the Sikh code of conduct, such a painting is considered disrespectful," he wrote. **AGENCIES**

Rs 50,000 relief to be paid to kin of Covid victims: Centre to SC



NEW DELHI: The families of Covid victims, including those involved in relief operations, will be given Rs 50,000 compensation from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), the Centre told the Supreme Court. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has framed guidelines in this regard following directions issued by the top court. The families of those who died of Covid will have to apply for compensation in the Disaster Management Office of their respective district along with medical/death certificate mentioning 'death due to Covid'. The compensation will be paid against not only the deaths that have already occurred, but for future ones, the Centre said. The top court had on June 30 directed the NDMA to frame guidelines for payment of compensation to the kin of those who died due to Covid, saying the authority was statutorily mandated to provide minimum relief, including ex-gratia to the victims of the pandemic. Holding that by not providing an ex-gratia amount the NDMA had failed in discharging its statutory duty, a Bench led by Justice Ashok Bhushan had directed the NDMA to determine in six weeks the ex-gratia amount to be paid to the family of each Covid victim. However, it had said it won't be proper for the court to direct a particular amount to be paid. On September 3, it had expressed displeasure over delay in framing guidelines for issuance of death certificates to the families of victims. The order had come on PILs seeking an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh each to the kin of the deceased. The Centre had opposed it, contending that giving an ex-gratia amount of Rs 4 lakh each to kin of Covid victims wasn't possible due to limited resources as it would affect pandemic response on other aspects, leading to more damage than good. **AGENCIES**

Centre did politics over oxygen crisis in Delhi, tried to hide deaths: Satyendar Jain

NEW DELHI: Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain accused the Centre of doing politics over the issue of oxygen crisis here during the second wave of the Covid pandemic, and also trying to stop the formation of a city government's panel to probe deaths allegedly due to its shortage. His remarks in response to a question during a press conference came a day after the Delhi High Court said that it saw no difficulty in the constitution of a high-powered committee (HPC) by the AAP government to probe the deaths caused by the alleged medical oxygen shortage. The court, which was dealing with a plea to operationalise the HPC, noted the Delhi government's stand that the committee would not attribute any fault to any hospital and any compensation will be paid and absorbed by the government alone. Jain said the Delhi government had set up a four-member panel comprising medical experts in June and the files were sent to the Delhi Lt governor for approval. However, the Centre tried to stop it via the LG office, he alleged. "The Centre also did politics over the issue of oxygen crisis and even said in Parliament that no deaths due to oxygen shortage were reported," Jain further alleged. They did a "wrong thing" by "trying to hide deaths" that may have occurred due to shortage of the life-saving gas, Jain charged, and added that the court had now cleared the way for the formation of the panel. The high court had also recorded that as per the Delhi government, the criteria for determining compensation will be open to scrutiny and its task would not overlap with that of a sub-group constituted by the Supreme Court on allocation and utilisation of oxygen. "The job of this committee is to probe any death that any person claims has taken due to oxygen shortage, whether at home or a hospital. The panel will investigate and recommend a compensation of up to Rs 5 lakh accordingly. It will not probe any medical negligence, that is the job of the medical council," Jain told reporters. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had on July 21 charged the Centre with trying to "hide its fault" and alleged that its "mismanagement" and change in oxygen distribution policy after April 13 had caused shortage of oxygen in hospitals across the country, leading to a "disaster". Jain said several media channels were reporting live



on the oxygen crisis issue during the second wave of the pandemic in Delhi. Was it all wrong, he asked? The number of COVID-19 cumulative cases stood at 14,38,556. Over 14.13 lakh patients have recovered from the virus, while the death toll stands at 25,085. On the UK rules related to Covishield vaccine, the Delhi minister said the MEA will respond on this, but, "I feel there is no question of not recognising it," as it is the same vaccine used in the UK but with a different name of AstraZeneca. The UK government added Covishield to an updated international travel advisory. The move follows widespread condemnation of the Serum Institute of India manufactured vaccines not being included in a list of eligible COVID-19 vaccines recognised under Britain's reviewed international travel norms, effective from October 4.

to ply on the streets of the national capital which negatively impacts the efforts made by the city government, he said. He said no extension should be given to thermal power plants in NCR that are operating without emission control devices. "These TPPs are to be retrofitted with new technology to control emissions but they operate without it after paying a penalty. The gases they emit are the most harmful," Rai said. The minister said he also urged the neighbouring states to spray bio-decomposer on paddy straw as an "emergency measure" to prevent stubble burning. If they don't do it in time, Delhi and the entire north India will have to bear the brunt of stubble burning this year too, he said. "We have also suggested that Haryana and Uttar Pradesh constitute a task force for pollution hotspots in their areas surrounding Delhi for ground visits and focused work," he said. **AGENCIES**

Shift public transport vehicles in NCR to CNG: Delhi to neighbouring states



NEW DELHI: Delhi has suggested its surrounding states to shift their public transport vehicles in the National Capital Region to CNG and adopt a policy to promote electric vehicles, Environment Minister Gopal Rai said. It has also urged the neighbouring states to ban firecrackers to tackle pollution, he said. Rai made the suggestions during an online meeting of NCR states convened by Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav. M M Kutty, the chairman of the Centre's Commission for Air Quality Management, also attended the meeting. "Delhi has suggested that neighbouring states shift their public transport vehicles in the National Capital Region (NCR) to CNG and adopt an electric vehicle policy," Rai told a press conference after the meeting. Delhi's public transport fleet has already shifted to CNG, but diesel-operated vehicles from neighboring states continue

DU's first cut-off list likely to be announced on October 1: Sources

NEW DELHI: The Delhi University will release its first cut-off list on October 1 for undergraduate college courses and a special cut-off after the third list has been issued, according to sources. The schedule for the list was finalised in a meeting of admission committee members and college principals, they said. Nearly 70,000 seats under various courses are up for grabs and the admission process is online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. October 1 has been finalised as the date for the first cut-off list with the second cut-off likely to be released on October 8 or 9, the sources said. The varsity is likely to release the special cut-off after the third cut-off list has been issued, they said. Special cut-offs are released for those students who could not apply for the earlier lists, despite meeting the eligibility criteria. "When the admissions were held offline, the special cut-offs were released after every list but it is not possible in the case of online admission process. **AGENCIES**

5-star hotel chef arrested for snatching incidents in South Delhi

NEW DELHI: A chef of a five-star hotel was arrested in connection with multiple cases of snatching in South Delhi, police said. Based on a tip off, Harish (35) was arrested from Neb Sarai area where he had gone for more snatchings, they said. The accused, who holds degrees in BA and hotel management, worked at a five-star hotel near the IGI Airport and had a good salary but he took to snatching to pay off his gambling debts, the police said. A resident of Sangam Vihar, Harish especially targeted women going for a walk or travelling to offices near Saket Metro Station. Other times, he would lurk in the park adjoining the Metro station or at Ambedkar Nagar bus stand on Mehrauli-Badarpur (MB) Road, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Atul Kumar



Neel Sarai area. "Finding himself trapped, the accused took out his country-made pistol but the police personnel overpowered him and snatched the firearm from his hand," he said. After his arrest, Harish disclosed that he had sold three snatched gold chains to a goldsmith in Sangam Vihar area. On the basis of his testimony, police arrested Rajender Aggarwal for buying the stolen property, the DCP added. "During interrogation, he (Harish) disclosed that around two years ago, he started gambling through an online app 'Satta King'. "Initially, he succeeded, but later suffered losses and incurred huge debts. He then chose to make money by snatching gold chains and mobile phones, preying on soft targets in the morning and evening hours," Thakur said. **AGENCIES**

Thakur said. After snatching valuables from his victims, he would usually shout "Pakdo-pakdo" or "Chor-chor" to give an impression that he was chasing the culprit and would run like a trained athlete, he said. Thakur said that for more than a month, his team scrutinised hundreds of CCTV footage and analysed the timings and specific area of incidents to nab the suspect. Based on a tip-off, the team laid a trap on the MB Road in

HC stays trial court proceedings against Gautam Gambhir in drug hoarding case

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court stayed the proceedings in the trial court against cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir, his foundation and others in a case related to the alleged illegal stocking and distribution of Covid-19 drugs. Justice Rajnish Bhatnagar sought response from the Delhi Drug Control Authority on the petition by the Gautam Gambhir foundation, Gambhir and other accused, assailing the criminal complaint and the summoning order passed by the trial court in the case. Listing the matter for further hearing on December 8, the judge said, "Till then the proceedings are stayed."



Section 18(C) prohibits manufacture, sale distribution of drugs without a licence and Section 27(b)(ii) makes sale, distribution without valid licence punishable with imprisonment for a term, not be less than three years but which may extend to five years and with fine. The trial court noted that complainant has been able to prima-facie prove the commission of the offence. The trial court in its July 26 order had recorded that the prosecution case is that Gautam Gambhir and others from the foundation allegedly stocked and distributed drugs namely Favipiravir tablets and Medical Oxygen during a medical camp held from April 22, 2021 to May 18, 2021.

Last month, the trial court had listed the case against the foundation for further hearing on February 7, 2022. On June 3, Delhi's drug controller had told the Delhi High Court that Gambhir Foundation was found guilty of unauthorised stocking, procuring and distributing fabifu medicine to Covid-19 patients. The high court had deprecated the manner in which a huge quantity of the drug was procured and said that the genuine patients who needed the medicine at that particular time could not get it as the bulk stock was taken away by Gambhir. The drug controller also submitted that action will be taken without delay against the foundation. **AGENCIES**

7 towns in Haryana among 50 highly polluted cities in the world

SATISH HANDA Chandigarh

According to World Air Quality 2020 Report, seven towns Gurugram, Faridabad, Rohtak, Hisar, Fatehabad, Jind and Yamunanagar in Haryana state have been identified among 50 highly polluted cities in the world. Among those seven polluted towns include Gurugram prominent IT hub in the world tops, followed by biggest industrial town in the state Faridabad ranking second position. According to health experts, increasing pollution is a matter of concern causing adverse effect on the health of residents in the area causing asthma, allergy, heart and lungs diseases. According to health experts, a person consumes nearly three litre oxygen with the help of respiration 22000 times in a day. Information reveals, as regard pollution Gurugram hold 7th position, Faridabad hold 11th position, Jind hold 13th position and Hisar hold 14th position in the world. Drop in pollution was recorded during first phase of COVID-19 in the state last year which witnessed rise during second phase of COVID-19 this



year. According to scientists, pollution spreads by smoke released from automobiles, municipal solid waste, industrial chimneys, brick kilns, thermal plants and during crop harvesting season when farmers burn crop remains in open. Cutting trees is another prominent reason for increasing pollution in the state. A fully developed tree on an average consumes nearly 5000 polluted particles. According to National Forest Policy there should be minimum one third forest area in every district in the state for a healthy and pollution free environments. During year 2006, State government Haryana had constituted a policy to have nearly 20% forest area in every district but Forest Survey of India specified that hardly between 1.5 to 2% area in most of the towns in the state have greenery. Expressing deep concern, Independent MLA in Gurugram district Rakesh Daulatbad also Chairman Haryana State Agro Industries Corporation expressed deep concern over fast increasing pollution in most of the towns in the state and suggested Urban Development Department in the state to cultivate minimum 10 lakh plants in Gurugram district declared highly polluted town the state in coming three years. According to information, Government of Haryana had plans to cultivate two crore plants in Haryana state every year during rainy season in coming three years in order to make state pollution free. It is generally seen, political leaders of ruling government announce plantation programmes every rainy season to attract publicity on newspapers headlines but in the absence of care maximum number of these plants die and none of the political leader or bureaucrat has ever tried to find out the reason for collapsing of plants and take action against those responsible for neglect. Daulatbad said, in past two years more than six lakh plants were cultivated at Gurugram, whereas the town is having nearly two crore automobile vehicles and population over 40 lakh in the district which will have hardly any effect to control increasing pollution.

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

FIVE OBSERVATIONS

CONGRESS ON CHOOSING A NEW CM OF PUNJAB

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

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

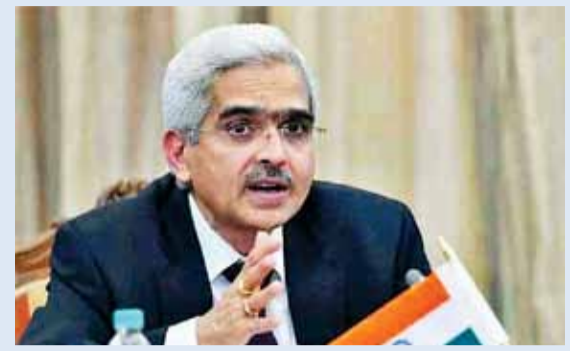
NEW DELHI: Greater reforms in the labour sector and the need to have enhanced investment in infrastructure will help in achieving sustainable growth in the post pandemic era, Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das said.

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**

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 2,753.35, 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**

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**

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**



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**

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**

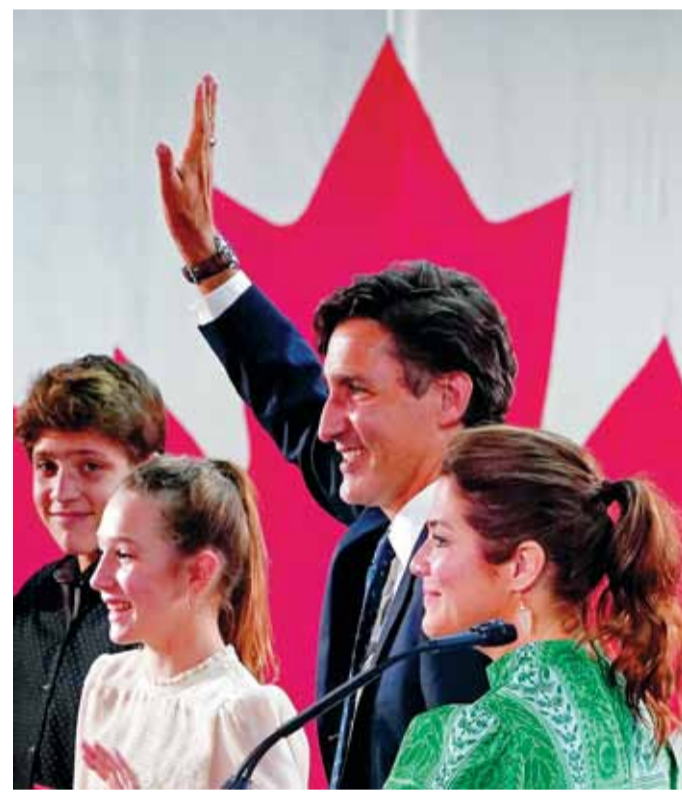


Accept it, move on: Virat Kohli's pep talk after RCB's loss to KKR

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**

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