

REGION

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DR. BR AMBEDKAR'S STATUE DISFIGURED IN NOIDA, POLICE LAUNCH PROBE



CNG price hiked by Rs 2.5 per kg, piped cooking gas by Rs 4.25

New Delhi: Prices of CNG in the national capital on Thursday were hiked by Rs 2.50 per kg and that of piped cooking gas by Rs 4.25 per unit to record levels on the back of surge in raw material cost.

CNG in the national capital territory of Delhi now costs Rs 71.61 per kg, up from Rs 69.11 per kg, according to the information posted on the website of Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) — the firm which retails CNG and piped cooking gas in the national capital and adjoining cities.

This is the third price hike this month and the 11th since March 7.

In all, the CNG price has risen by Rs 15.6 per kg in less than six weeks. This includes a Rs 7.50 per kg hike in this month alone.

In the last one year, prices have increased by Rs 28.21 per kg or 60 per cent, according to data compiled by PTI.

Alongside, the rates of gas piped to household kitchens, called piped natural gas (PNG), were hiked by Rs 4.25



per cubic meters to cost Rs 45.86 per scm.

City gas distributors have been periodically raising prices since October last year when domestic as well as international gas prices started to climb as economies world over recovered from the pandemic-induced slowdown.

Prices rose by Rs 8.74 per

kg in the last three months of 2021, and from January there was a steady increase of about 50 paise a kg almost every week.

The rates have gone up after the government more than doubled the price of natural gas to USD 6.1 per million British thermal unit from April 1.

Natural gas when com-

pressed becomes CNG for use as fuel in automobiles. The same gas is piped to household kitchens and industries for cooking and other purposes.

On Wednesday, Mahanagar Gas Limited (MGL) raised Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) price by Rs 5 per kg to Rs 72 per kg in Mumbai. It also raised PNG price by Rs 4.50 to Rs 45.50 per scm.

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FRAUD BY HERO ELECTRIC VEHICLES PRIVATE LTD IN FAME2 SUBSIDY



Prices vary from city to city depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT.

The increase in CNG prices follows a Rs 10 per litre hike in petrol and diesel prices in 16 days and a Rs 50 per cylinder raise in the cooking gas LPG rates.

A record 137-day hiatus in petrol and diesel price revision ended on March 22. On the same day, the price of a 14.2-kg LPG cylinder was increased to Rs 949.50 in the national capital. In some places, the LPG price has touched Rs 1,000 per cylinder.

Petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze for the last eight days. The last price revision took place on April 6.

According to IGL, CNG will now cost Rs 74.61 per kg in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad and Rs 79.94 per kg in Gurugram, the cities adjoining Delhi.

PNG in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad will now cost Rs 45.96 per scm and Rs 44.06 in Gurugram.

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NEETU KAPOOR REMEMBERS RISHI KAPOOR ON THE WEDDING OF RANBIR-ALIA



India's March retail inflation at 17-month high of near 7 per cent

Higher cost of food items, as well as expensive fuel and manufactured goods like clothing and footwear, pushed India's retail inflation to a 17-month high in March 2022.

As per the data furnished by the National Statistical Office on Tuesday, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 6.95 % last month from 6.07 % in February 2022.

Similarly, on a YoY basis, last month's retail inflation rose at a faster rate than the 5.52 per cent increase in prices recorded for March 2021.

The trend assumes significance as retail inflation rate remained well above the target range of the Reserve Bank of India, which has a CPI target range of 2 to 6 %.

As per the NSO data, the rate of rise in the Consumer Food Price Index, which measures the changes in retail prices of food products, increased by 7.68 per cent last month from 5.85 % in February 2022 and 4.87 %



and light was higher by 7.52 %.

In addition, sub-group of clothing and footwear showed a price acceleration of 9.40 %. "The CPI inflation shot up well beyond our expectations, touching a 17-month high of 6.95 per cent in March 2022, led predominantly by a sharper than anticipated surge in some components of food and beverages such as meat and fish," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA.

In terms of CPI inflation rate, pulses and products' prices jumped by 2.57 % in March 2022 YoY. Besides, meat and fish prices rose by 9.63 %, eggs were dearer by 2.44 % and oils & fats prices rose 18.79 %.

Similarly, the overall price of food and beverages category was up 7.47 %.

Besides, vegetable prices were up by 11.64 % Furthermore, as per the official data, the inflation rate for fuel

Egypt approves India as wheat supplier, says Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said Egypt, which is one of the largest importers of wheat from Ukraine and Russia, has approved India as a wheat supplier.

There is a sharp decline in availability of wheat in the global markets due to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Both the nations are major producers and exporters of wheat. Egypt imported wheat worth about USD 1.8 billion from Russia and USD 610.8 million from Ukraine in 2020.

The African nation is looking to import 1 million tonne of wheat from India and would need 2,40,000 tonne in April.

Indian farmers are feeding the world. Egypt approves India as a wheat supplier. Modi Govt. steps in as the world looks for reliable alternate sources for steady food supply. Our farmers have ensured our granaries overflow and we are ready to serve the world, Goyal said in a tweet.

India's wheat exports increased to USD 1.74 billion in April-January 2021-22 as against USD 340.17 million in the same period last year.

In 2019-20, wheat exports were worth USD 61.84 million, which rose to USD 549.67 million in 2020-21.

India's wheat exports are



mainly to neighbouring countries with Bangladesh having the largest share of more than 54 per cent in both volume and value terms in 2020-21. It has entered new wheat markets such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Qatar and Indonesia.

The top ten countries importing Indian wheat in 2020-21 were Bangladesh, Nepal, the United Arab Emirates, Sri Lanka, Yemen, Afghanistan, Qatar, Indonesia, Oman and Malaysia.

India accounts for less than 1 % in the world's wheat export. However, its share has increased from 0.14 % in 2016 to 0.54 % in 2020. India is the second largest producer of wheat with a share of around 14.14 per cent in the world's total production in 2020.

India produces around 107.59 million tonne of wheat annually while a major chunk of it goes towards domestic consumption.

AGENCIES

Cong remembers Dr. BR Ambedkar, says Babasaheb gave India its strongest pillar of strength

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Thursday paid tributes to B R Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, with former party chief Rahul Gandhi saying he gave India its strongest pillar of strength the Constitution.

A key architect of India's Constitution, Ambedkar is regarded as an icon, especially by Dalits, for his relentless work for social reforms and empowerment of the disadvantaged sections of society.

"On the occasion of his 131st birth anniversary, my tributes to Babasaheb Dr BR Ambedkar, who gave India its strongest pillar of strength - our sacred Constitution," Gandhi said in a tweet.

On its official Twitter handle, the Congress said Babasaheb

Ambedkar remains a champion of equality, human rights and social justice.

"His life and actions have been a source of inspiration for crores all over the world. On his birth anniversary, we celebrate the legacy of the man who gave India her Constitution," the party said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra paid rich tributes to Ambedkar, saying that it was due to his efforts that the country got such a Constitution, in whose preamble there was the mantra for the strength of the country.

"Babasaheb gave the blueprint of nation building based on the ideas of justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, self-respect and unity and integrity of the



country these are our basic strengths," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

Various forces are attacking

these values ?? which have been acquired from history, Priyanka Gandhi said, adding that they are "weakening the Constitution". "In the honour of Babasaheb, we all have to stand firm and defend the Constitution and the values ??enshrined in it," she said.

Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress general secretary in-charge organisation, K C Venugopal, party's chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala, along with several other party leaders paid rich tributes to Ambedkar on his birth anniversary. Dr. BR Ambedkar was born in 1891 and was India's first law minister. He was given Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, in 1990.

Chief Justice of India NV Ramana visits Sri Harmandir Sahib



NEW DELHI: Chief Justice N V Ramana visited the Sri Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar on Wednesday on the occasion of Vaisakhi.

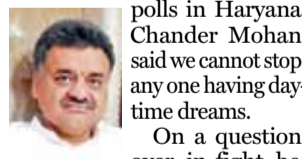
CJI Ramana was offered 'siropa' at the Golden Temple. He greeted the people on the occasion of Baisakhi and wished the people of Punjab peace and prosperity. "My good wishes for Baisakhi. I am very happy today, my lifetime dream came true as my family members and I reached the Golden Temple. I thank the managing committee, Ramana said. The CJI also visited the Border Security Force museum and the Attari-Vagah Border where he attended the Beating Retreat ceremony.

On the 103rd anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Ramana paid tributes to martyrs. The CJI is on a visit to Punjab with his family. He was received by Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann during his visit to the state.

No body can stop AAP having dreams to win 85 seats in 2024 Haryana VS polls Chander Mohan

SATISH HANDA
Ambala

While addressing media persons at Ambala on Sunday, former Deputy Chief Minister Haryana Chander Mohan son of former Haryana Chief Minister Late Ch. Bhajan Lal reminded the time his father was ruling in the Haryana when every hand in the state was having enough work to do, every resident was having own roof over head and every stomach was having enough both ends meal in the state. He assured people in the state to make available similar facilities for rvrty resident in the state once again after 2024 Vidhan Sabha polls when Congress



will be in power again in Haryana after wiping out ruling BJP-JJP government from the state. On the claims by Dr Sushil Gupta a Rajya Sabha member of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to win 85 seats in coming Vidhan Sabha polls in Haryana, Chander Mohan said we cannot stop any one having day-time dreams.

On a question over in-fight between senior Congress leaders in the state former Dy. CM said differences arrive in every family and solved, whereas all political leaders in Congress are one and contest coming polls together.

Centre should restore democratic process in J&K: Bukhari

JAMMU: Asserting that the current form of government has failed to deliver as per the expectations of the people in Jammu and Kashmir, Apni Party president Syed Mohammed Altaf Bukhari on Thursday strongly pitched for the start of democratic process in the union territory.

Bukhari was speaking at the party office here during a joining programme of several advocates organised by provincial president of the Jammu Legal Cell Vikram Rathore.

"There is a need to start the democratic process in J&K. In this situation of hopelessness, the government of India must start a democratic process by holding assembly polls in J&K as early as possible," he said.

He said the people have faced difficulties in the last three years as there was no elected government and the present form of government has also failed to deliver as per their expectations.

Bukhari expressed concerns over growing unemployment, and "loot" of natural resources, and assured that the party would protect the rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

AGENCIES

Hindu Sena puts up saffron flags outside JNU



NEWDELHI: Hindu Sena a right wing organisation on Friday morning put up saffron flags outside the Jawaharal Nehru University (JNU) campus in the national capital forcing the police to initiate legal action and remove the said flags from there.

It has come to notice that few flags and banners have been put on the road and adjoining areas near JNU. In view of recent incidents, these were promptly removed and suitable legal action is being taken," Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C said.

Hindu Sena national vice-president, Surjit Yadav said the saffron has been insulted all along by the anti-saffron people at Jawaharlal Nehru University. "The Hindu Sena warns them. We respect you, respect each and every religion and every thought process. But the way the saffron is being in-

Govt exempts all customs duty on Cotton imports till 30th Sep 2022

Union Government has decided to exempt all customs duty on import of cotton to lower the price of cotton in the public interest. This exemption would benefit the textile chain-yarn, fabric, garments and made ups and provide relief to textile industry and consumers.

Industry has been demanding for removal of 5% Basic Customs Duty (BCD) and 5% Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on raw cotton. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) notified the exemption from Customs duty and Agriculture Infrastructure development Cess for import of cotton.

AGENCIES

Coal Ministry Reviews Production from Captive Coal Blocks

The Nominated Authority, Ministry of Coal has reviewed the production of coal with allottees of captive coal blocks whose coal blocks have either commenced production or are likely to commence production during the financial year 2022-23. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary, Coal, Dr. Anil Kumar Jain. It was appreciated that coal production from captive coal blocks during 2021-22 was 85 Million Ton (MT), an increase of around 35% over 63 MT produced during the previous year 2020-21. The enhanced coal production helped in shortening the demand-supply gap in domestic market. The Ministry of Coal has taken consistent initiatives to increase the production of coal from captive mines like various amendments in laws & rules liberalizing the coal sector, regular review meetings with project proponents and State Govt. for operationalization of coal mines, appointment of a Project Management Unit for facilitating in obtaining various statutory clearances leading up to starting of coal mines etc. These initiatives have started yielding results now.

Presently, 106 coal blocks have been allocated by the Nominated Authority of the Ministry under CMSP Act, 2015 and mine opening permissions have been received for 47 coal blocks. It is expected to increase to 60 coal blocks during fiscal 2022-23. Annual peak rated capacity of operational coal blocks will be around 230 MT and coal production will be enhanced substantially to more than 140 million ton during FY 2022-23.

AGENCIES

Amazon adds 5 per cent 'Fuel & Inflation surcharge' to seller fees

Amazon is taking a step to offset its rising costs, announcing it will add a 5% fuel and inflation surcharge to fees it charges third-party sellers who use the e-commerce giant's fulfillment services.

The Seattle-based company said on its website that the added fees, which take effect April 28, are subject to change and will apply to both apparel and non-apparel items.

The latest fee hike follows one announced in November and went into effect in January. Amazon didn't immediately respond to a request for further details on the recent move. But in a notice sent to sellers Wednesday, the company said its costs had gone up since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic due to increases in hourly wages, the hiring of workers and construction of more warehouses.

It said it had absorbed costs whenever possible, and only increased fees to address permanent costs and to be competitive with other providers. Amazon competitors FedEx and UPS both have fuel surcharges.

Dr. BR Ambedkar's statue disfigured in Noida, Police launch probe

NOIDA: A statue of Dr. B R Ambedkar, the key architect of India's Constitution, was found disfigured in Uttar Pradesh's Noida on his birth anniversary Thursday, prompting police to launch a probe into the matter.

The disfigured statue is located in Chhijars village under the Sector 63 police station limits area and the incident was reported by locals in the morning, officials said.

A police spokesperson said a new statue was being installed to replace the disfigured one with the help of residents.

Police force has been deployed in the area and the matter is being investigated. All angles are being probed and action will be taken accordingly, the spokesperson said.

There was no law and order-related situation in the area



due to the incident, the police added.

Born in a Dalit family in Maharashtra in 1891, Ambedkar, a Bharat Ratna, was a jurist and economist who played an important role in India's freedom movement and became the country's first law minister.

Ambedkar championed the cause of the Dalit community which faced deep-rooted discrimination. He is regarded as a Dalit icon for his relentless work for social reforms and the empowerment of the disadvantaged sections of society. **AGENCIES**

BJP sweeps UP Council polls, Samajwadi Party draws a blank

LUCKNOW: The BJP scored a massive victory in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council polls on Tuesday by winning 33 of the 36 seats where voting were held through local bodies.

The Samajwadi Party suffered a humiliating defeat and could not win even a single seat.

Three seats were won by independent candidates. The Jansatta Dal, floated by Raghuraj Pratap Singh a.k.a. Raja Bhaiyya, retained the Pratapgarh seat where Akshay Pratap Singh Gopalji was the candidate.

Vikrant Singh Rishu, son of expelled BJP MLC Yashwant Singh, won the Azamgarh seat. In Varanasi, Annapurna Singh, an independent, won the seat. Annapurna Singh is the wife of jailed mafia don Brijesh Singh.

The BJP has already won nine seats unanimously in the elections.



This is for the first time that the ruling party has attained a thumping majority in the Legislative Council.

The chief minister said that the results proved that the people had immense faith in BJP and in the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"With a thumping majority in the Legislative Council as well as the state Assembly, the government will be able to do even better work in the interest of public welfare, women's safety and self-reliance, employment of youth, and farmers," he added. The chief minister said:

"We were able to form our government with two-thirds majority under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2017 and 2022 Assembly elections. This will be probably the first time that the ruling party will have a majority in the State Legislative Council." **AGENCIES**

Fire at carton factory in Noida, No one injured

NOIDA: A fire broke out at a corrugated cardboard box factory in Noida on Friday morning but no person was injured, officials said.

Twelve fire tenders were rushed to the spot and brought the blaze under control, they said.

According to the officials, the cause of the fire, which broke out around 7 am at the factory in Sector 65, was yet to be ascertained.

"The chief fire officer and his team reached the spot immediately. Twelve fire tenders were deployed and the blaze was controlled."

"Four fire tenders have been stationed at the spot in a precautionary measure," a police spokesperson said.

There was no immediate report of injury to any person, officials said. **AGENCIES**

Ice-cream vendor stabbed to death in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Ice-cream vendor aged 45- was allegedly stabbed to death by a few people near his house in northeast Delhi's Bhajanpura area, police said on Thursday.

The incident occurred late on Wednesday night in Shaitan Chowk near Bhajanpura, they said.

Damkeen, an ice-cream vendor by profession, was standing near his house when two to three men came on a motorcycle and started following him on foot. They then stabbed the victim and fled on the two-wheeler, a senior police officer said.

He was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared brought dead, the officer said.

"We have registered a case under section 302 (murder) and 34 (Acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention) of the Indian Penal Code. We have got some leads and are working on them to nab the culprits," he added.

The motive of the murder was not clear and all angles were being probed, the police said, adding CCTV cameras in the area were being scanned. The body will be handed over to the family of the deceased after post-mortem, they added.

Commission agent robbed of Rs 8 lakh in Noida



NOIDA: A collection agent was allegedly robbed of over Rs 8 lakh cash by four unidentified assailants here, officials said on Tuesday. According to police, the complainant Yogendra had been to the vegetable market near Sector 88 to collect payments on Monday evening.

While he was coming out of the market with around Rs 8 lakh cash, three-to-four unidentified assailants arrived on two motorcycles and hit him with a wooden stick, Joint Police Commissioner Love Kumar said.

The collection agent said he fell down because of the attack after which the assailants took

the cash and fled the scene. He added that no firearm was used in the incident, the senior IPS officer said.

An FIR has been lodged at the Phase 2 police station and four teams have been formed to solve the case, Kumar said.

Police are examining the CCTV footage at the crime spot and nearby areas to identify the assailants, the officer said. The collection agent worked for a private businessman who supplied material to vegetable vendors. He worked on a commission basis and was tasked with collecting payments from the vendors on behalf of his boss.

Minimum temperature in Delhi settles above normal

STRONG SURFACE WINDS WILL SWEEP ACROSS THE REGION DURING THE DAY TIME ON THURSDAY. THE MAXIMUM TEMPERATURE OF THE DAY IS LIKELY TO HOVER AROUND 40 DEGREES CELSIUS

NEW DELHI: Delhiites woke up to a warm morning as the minimum temperature of the city on Thursday was recorded at 26.2 degrees Celsius, five notches above normal even as the weather office predicted strong winds during the day.

The weather office also predicted that heatwave conditions are unlikely in the city for the next three days.

Strong surface winds will sweep across the region during the day time on Thurs-



day. The maximum temperature of the day is likely to hover around 40 degrees Celsius, officials of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

The maximum temperature of Wednesday has settled at 40.6 degrees Celsius, five notches above the season's average.

The relative humidity at 5.30 am was 35 per cent, the

IMD said. Delhi's air quality was in the poor category as the air quality index value stood at 273 at 9.05 am, the Central Pollution Control Board data showed.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered good, 51 and 100 satisfactory, 101 and 200 moderate, 201 and 300 poor, 301 and 400 very poor, and 401 and 500 severe.

Around 50 shanties gutted in a fire at transit camp of Delhi



NEW DELHI: Around 50 shanties were gutted in a fire that broke out at transit camp in Delhi's Anand Parbat area on Tuesday afternoon, police said.

No casualties have been reported so far, they said. "A call about a fire was received at 2.12 pm in transit

camp at Anand Parbat," said Atul Garg, Director, Delhi Fire Service.

A total of 18 fire tenders were rushed to the spot and the blaze was brought under control, he said, adding that around 50 shanties were gutted in the fire. The cause of fire is not known yet.

New party -Mission Ekta launched in Haryana aims to get the Constitution implemented



SATISH HANDA
Ambala

Mission Ekta Party's target is to get the Constitution fully implemented in the country, so that the countrymen rise above the discrimination of caste and religion and consider humanity as their duty. National President of Mission Ekta Party, Kanta Allaria said that when every Indian will feel pride in Constitution, then only the political leaders who discriminate people will be slapped in the face. With this, she announced the launch of her new political party - Mission Ekta Party during a press conference held today at Ambala City.

The party tagline is - «Na Jati Na Dharma Humanity Hi Karma».

ity. When humanity is there, crime will disappear automatically. Most of the political parties have exploited the people of India by making them religion minded so that their dictatorship continues and their empire remains intact.

Kanta said that if the leaders of these political parties had educated every citizen, then India would have become a superpower in the world. Targeting BJP, Congress and other parties, she said that these parties follow the principle of divide and rule. They become successful

Massive fire breaks out in west Delhi's Punjabi Bagh area

NEWDELHI: A massive fire broke out at a restaurant-cum-bar in west Delhi's Punjabi Bagh area on Thursday afternoon, Delhi Fire Service officials said. No casualties have been reported so far, they said. «We received a call about the fire at Troy Lounge and Bar on club road in Punjabi Bagh at 1.35 pm and three fire tenders were rushed to the spot», said AtulGarg, Director, Delhi Fire Service. Nine more fire tenders were rushed to the spot to control the fire.

in their plans because most of the people of the country are illiterate.

Kanta said that these politicians know that the day India's youth will be educated, from that day these leaders will get exposed. Her party has resolved that the founder of the Constitution Dr. Ambedkar, Jyotiba Phule, Sir Chhotu Ram and Shaheed Bhagat Singh liberated the country from slavery and advocated for equal rights. Her party workers will visit the birth places of such great men and take the soil from there to make people aware in rural areas of Haryana, so that the people of the state can become aware of the freedom struggle and ideals of these great persons.

Kanta said that it is a matter of regret that the present BJP government is selling national assets. When there will be no more government assets, schools and colleges will go into private hands, then how can a common person can even imagine of getting education. It is obvious that this is a plan to bind the youth with the chains of slavery, so that no youth can dare to demand their rights in front of the dictatorship.

Woman Jumps Off Metro Station In Delhi, Dies at Hospital

NEW DELHI: A young woman, in her early twenties, who jumped off a 40-foot high elevated platform of the Akshardham Metro station in Delhi on Thursday morning died at a city hospital later in the day.

In her early twenties, the woman was heroically caught by the security staff, but sustained serious injuries and died

during treatment at the hospital. The woman from Punjab's Hoshiarpur was noticed standing at the edge of platform 2 around 7:30 in the morning. Immediately, the security staff tried to talk her out of jumping.

"Madam, please come this side, madam, please listen, madam, please," the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)



personnel are heard telling the woman in the video, which is in wide circulation now. A team was rushed to the ground spot so that arrangements could be made to catch her.

The woman, ignoring the pleas, jumped off and was caught on a blanket stretched by CISF personnel and other people present there.

Action against government officers neglecting ministers, MLAs in Haryana: Khatter

SATISH HANDA

Chief Minister Haryana Manohar Lal Khatter on the complaints by ministers, MPs and large number of MLAs from BJP, JJP and different political parties in opposition in the state few months ago had warned all government officers in the state to improve their attitude, failing which ruling government will be compelled to take action against such officers. Most of MLAs in state has expressed deep concern over the attitude of such government officers including few senior IAS officers having no change in their behaviour towards them and taking no action to solve public grievances made by them, rather neglecting important matters referred to them as such people of their constituency are losing faith in them. Dis-satisfied senior political leaders as well as MLAs in the state said, most of senior officers working in different government offices even avoid to pick their telephone calls or avoid to reply back and situation turning bad to worst.

Chief Minister has again warned such government officers to extend full cooperation to all ministers, MPs, MLAs and senior party political leaders in



the state and try to solve public grievances immediately reported by them, repeating stern action against such government officers neglecting them will be taken and a list of such officers not extending cooperation in this regard, neglecting public grievances, not having satisfactory tuning with ministers, MPs and MLAs is under process. During recent Vidhan Sabha budget session MLAs made complaint against large number of government officers including senior bureaucrats neglecting them, besides allegations as regard large scale corruption in government offices in the state accepting bribe. Ministers, MPs and MLAs are of view that recent few scams exposed by State Vigilance Bureau reported in the state including frauds of value worth crores of rupees in government offices including PWD, Urban

Local Body, Haryana Lok Sewa Aayog & Haryana Staff Selection Commission, Public Health, Education, Panchayat and Revenue departments in which senior officers were caught red-handed while accepting bribe has tarnished the image of ruling government.

During recent BJP rally held at Tigan in Fatidabad district, Rajesh Nagar MLA in the presence of Union State Minister Krishan Pal Gurjar and Political Secretary to CM Ajay Gaur strongly condemned the neglecting attitude of government officers including few in the ranks of IAS in the state taking no action, rather delaying action on public grievances in their Vidhan Sabha constituencies as such they have lost public faith in them as such Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khatter felt hurt.

The issue was taken seriously by Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khatter became alert in view of AAP wiped out Congress government in the Punjab in recent Vidhan Sabha polls and now in touch with large number of dis-satisfied BJP political leaders as well as heavy weight political leaders of different political parties in opposition preparing a network to contest in 2024 Vidhan Sabha polls in Haryana.

Racket dealing in fake NCERT books busted



SATISH HANDA
Rohtak

Team of Chief Minister Flying Squad from Gurugram on a clue conducted raid at a books shop at Rewari while driver of a Eco Sports car supplying fake NCERT books. Arrested driver of vehicle identified as Narender Kuar a resident of village Baloud in Rohtak district told that the racket involved in supplying fake books all over in the area getting printed from Meerut operat-

ing from a godown at Naew Grain Market on Malgodam Road Rohtak.

Inspector Sube Singh told media persons that huge stocks of fake books along with the vehicle were seized and case registered against cheats involved in illegal printing and supply of books. The stocks of fake books were so huge police had to spend more than 18 hours in counting the stock. Officers from education department also arrived at the spot during raid.

Violence on campus will not be tolerated, no bar on serving non-veg food: JNU administration

NEW DELHI: The JNU administration on Monday warned students against indulging in any kind of violence on campus and said the clashes broke out on Sunday after some students objected to a 'hawan' conducted «peacefully» on the occasion of Ram Navami, an assertion also made by the RSS-affiliated ABVP.

However, the JNU Students Union (JNUSU), which is led by Left-affiliated outfits, has alleged that ABVP members attacked the students while opposing the serving of non-vegetarian food in the Kaveri Hostel mess on the Hindu festival. In a statement, the university clarified there is no bar on serving non-vegetarian food, stressing that the mess is run by the student committee and the administration has nothing to do with their menu.

Police said that 20 people were injured in the Sunday clashes between the two groups.

«Taking serious note of the incident, the Vice Chancellor, rector and other officials visited the hostel and met the students. The VC conveyed that



no violence will be tolerated on campus and appealed to the students to maintain peace and harmony.» the JNU Registrar said in an official appeal to the students. «JNU administration reiterates its resolve for zero tolerance towards any form of violence on campus. The students are also warned to refrain from involving in such incidents which disturb the peace and harmony on campus. If anyone is found indulging in such acts, they will be liable for disciplinary action as per university rules.» he added.

In the statement issued later in the day, the university said that there was a scuffle on the

campus on April 10 between student groups.

«It was the occasion of Rama Navami and Hawan was organised by the students in the Kaveri Hostel and there were who were objecting to this. The tolerance towards any form of violence towards any form of violence was concluded peacefully.

«Despite this, some group of students were not happy with this and soon after, at the time of dinner, a ruckus was created over there and heated arguments were followed by an altercation between both the groups in the Kaveri Hostel.» said the statement by JNU registrar.

AGENCIES

Govt making sincere efforts to bring positive changes in people's lives: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that his government is committed to the goal of providing houses to every needy family, asserting it is making sincere efforts to bring positive changes in the lives of citizens through various welfare schemes.

PM Modi wrote this in his reply to a beneficiary of the 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana', saying happiness of getting your own roof and house is priceless. The beneficiary, Sudhir Kumar Jain of Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh, in

a letter to Modi had described the housing scheme as a boon for homeless poor families, an official statement said. Jain said he had been living in a rented house and had changed houses many times. He also shared his pain of changing various welfare schemes.

PM Modi wrote this in his reply to a beneficiary of the 'Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana', saying happiness of getting your own roof and house is priceless. The beneficiary, Sudhir Kumar Jain of Sagar district in Madhya Pradesh, in



but also give the confidence of a better tomorrow.

«The dream of your own

house has come true through the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Your sense of satisfaction

after this achievement can easily be felt by your words in the letter. This house is like a new foundation for the dignified life of your family and a better future for both your children," he said. PM Modi noted that crores of beneficiaries have got 'pucca' houses under the scheme. In the letter to Sudhir Kumar Jain , the prime minister said these "memorable moments" in the lives of beneficiaries give him inspiration and energy to continue "working tirelessly and non-stop in the service of the nation".

AGENCIES

CBIC Chairman releases National Time Release Study, 2022



Vivek Johri, Chairman, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), presented a set of Time Release Studies (TRS) conducted by the department.

TRS are essentially a performance measurement tool for assessing the cargo clearance process of the international trade, as recommended by the World Trade Organization (WTO) under the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the World Customs Organization (WCO). It adopts average cargo release time, i.e. the time taken from the arrival of the cargo at the customs station to its eventual release for import or export, as the case may be.

The National Time Release

Study (NTRS) 2022 covered 15 major Customs formations, including four port categories - seaports, air cargo complexes (ACCs), inland container depot (ICDs) and integrated check posts (ICPs), which handle about 80 percent of the bills of entry (imports documents) and 70 percent of the shipping bills (export documents) and is based on the sample period between 1st-7th January 2022.

The NTRS 2022 has reported further improvement in the average cargo release time for all the four port categories in 2022 over corresponding period of the previous year: by 2 percent for ICPs to significantly higher 16 percent for ACCs. For the

sea cargo cleared through the sea port or inland container depots average release time has improved by 12 percent. With this improvement, the ICPs have achieved the National Trade Facilitation Action Plan (NTFAP) target release time to be achieved by 2023, whereas the other three port categories have reached 75 percent of NTFAP target.

NTRS 2022 and the Custom House Level Time Release Studies, which have been conducted using the same data set, obtained from the customs automated system and following the same methodology, have found strong affirmation for the four-fold path to promptness, namely: advance filing of import documents enabling pre-arrival processing, risk based facilitation of cargo, benefits of trusted client program - Authorized Economic Operators, and Direct Port Delivery (DPD) facility. In case of Exports, the Study noted that the documentary clearance of export consignments, measured by the time taken from arrival of the goods at the customs station to grant of Let Export Order has been significantly minimized, ranging from 4:04 hours in the case of ACCs to 47:41 hours in the case of ICDs. AGENCIES

J&K Delimitation Commission likely to submit report by the end of April



FW DESK

The Jammu and Kashmir Delimitation Commission which has enhanced J&K Assembly seats from 83 to 90 is likely to submit its report to the government by the end of April, according to sources.

Home Minister Amit Shah has already said that once the Commission submits its report, the Centre may take a call on holding the Assembly elections in the union territory.

Headed by Retired Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai and comprising Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sushil Chandra and State Election Commissioner (SEC) KK Sharma, the Commission was established on March 6, 2020 with a one-year term which

was extended by another year. While the term was due to expire on March 6, 2022, it was granted two months extension. The Commission is unlikely to get another extension.

The commission has proposed six new assembly constituencies in the Jammu region taking the number of Assembly seats in the region from 37 to 43. In Kashmir region, the commission has proposed just one more seat taking the number from 46 to 47.

J&K Delimitation Commission is headed by the former Supreme Court Justice Ranjana Desai, and comprises Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and State Election Commissioner K.K. Sharma. AGENCIES

Bihar receives Rs 817 Cr investment proposal for data centres

PATNA: Bihar has received an investment proposal of Rs 817 crore for setting up data centres across the state.

Data management firm VueNow, which is planning the investment, will develop a four-tier data centre of 100 racks with Patna as the master hub. Four other centers will come up in Dharbhanga, Bhagalpur, Purnea and Buxar in the first phase, said an official statement.

The investment proposal was discussed at a meeting chaired by Information Technology Minister Jibesh Kumar on Wednesday. «We are looking forward to finalisation of the proposal. After proper evaluation of the proposal, it will be sent to the Chief Minister's Office for final approval.» Kumar said. AGENCIES

Hyderabad gets 'Tree Cities of the World' tag

HYDERABAD: Hyderabad has been recognised as one of the 'Tree Cities of the World' by Arbor Day Foundation and Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations, a senior state government official tweeted on Tuesday. This is for the second consecutive year of this achievement. Matter of immense pride that #Hyderabad city is recognised, for the 2nd consecutive year, among the tree cities of the world by the Arbor Day Foundation @arborday & @FAO #UN, tweeted Arvind Kumar, Special Chief Secretary, Urban Development. As many as 3,50,56,635 trees have been planted over the last two years, according to the certification of recognition. AGENCIES

TRAI seeks views on monitoring cross media ownership



NEW DELHI: Broadcast regulator TRAI on Tuesday sought views from various stakeholders on the need for monitoring cross media ownership and control, mechanism and related issues in the wake of drastic changes in the sector with the advent of digital technology.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) released a consultation paper on 'Issues Relating to Media Ownership' after the government asked it to reconsider its recommendations made in 2014 in light of the changes in the media and entertainment industry with the advent of new digital technologies such as over-the-top (OTT) platforms.

«Considering (the) overall scenario, do you think there is a need for monitoring cross media ownership and control? Should there be a common mechanism to monitor ownership of print, television, radio, or other internet-based news media,» are some of the issues on which TRAI has sought views from the stakeholders.

TRAI has sought written comments on the issues raised in the consultation paper from the stakeholders by May 10, and counter-comments by

May 24. It observed that the digital media landscape was marked by the dominance of a limited number of very large players who have wherewithal to consolidate by acquiring smaller players. «This can reduce media pluralism by undermining the diversity of new age portals and online media,» the consultation paper read.

The paper also sought views on whether there was a need for any additional regulatory/monitoring mechanism.

«Do you think there is a need to monitor takeovers, acquisitions of media companies, especially the news media companies,» it asked.

TRAI also noted that with the emergence of social media platforms and apps which depend on user generated content, the news and facts do not depend upon any media organization for its conveyance to the public. TRAI had made recommendations to the government on issues relating to media ownership in August 2014. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting asked the TRAI last year to reconsider the recommendations in the wake of the advent of digital media. AGENCIES

PM Modi greets everyone on the occasion of Khalsa Saajna Diwas



The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi has greeted everyone especially the Sikhs on the special occasion of Khalsa Saajna Diwas. He said that the Khalsa Panth motivates countless people across the world. Inspired by it, Sikhs have distinguished themselves globally in diverse fields. In a tweet Prime Minister said: «Greetings to everyone, especially the Sikhs on the special occasion of Khalsa Saajna Diwas. The Khalsa Panth motivates countless people across the world. Inspired by it, Sikhs have distinguished themselves globally in diverse fields.» AGENCIES

India to get record number of doctors in next 10 years due to Govt push for medical education: PM

BHUJ: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the country will get a record number of doctors in the next 10 years due to the central government's policy of establishing at least one medical college in every district.

Speaking after dedicating to the nation a 200-bed K K Patel Multi-specialty Hospital in Bhuj in Gujarat's Kutch district via video-conferencing, he said coronavirus is still lurking and people should not take it easy and be watchful.

The modern health facility is the first charitable multi-specialty hospital in the Kutch region and it has been built by the Leuva Patel community of Bhuj with help from donors based in India and abroad.

The goal of having at least one medical college in every district and ensuring that medical education was in reach of everyone will result in the country getting a record numbers of doctors after 10 years, the PM said. He



said two decades ago, Gujarat had just nine medical colleges with around 1,100 MBBS seats, but the medical education scenario has improved vastly in the last 20 years. Now, the state has one AIIMS and over three dozen medical colleges. Earlier, only 1,000 students used to get admission in medical colleges of Gujarat, now around 6,000 students get admission in these colleges. AIIMS in Rajkot has started admitting 50 students from 2021, Modi said.

Stressing that coronavirus has still not gone away and peo-

NEWS BRIEF

OIL headquarter under cyber attack

DIBRUGARH: PSU major Oil India Limited's registered headquarter at Duliajan in Assam's Dibrugarh district is purportedly under a cyber attack which has led to the company shutting down all its computers and IT systems at the office, a company spokesman said on Tuesday. The systems have been on shut down since Monday and efforts are on to resolve the issue, OIL spokesperson Tridiv Hazarika said. We have been forced to withdraw all our computer system from LAN connection after it came to our knowledge that three to four computers were hit by a virus Monday. No computer at the headquarter now has access to internet connectivity, he said. The IT department is yet to ascertain the extent of damage. OIL is working on solving the issue. Previously too OIL faced such problems, but this time it seems to be a major IT-related crisis which will take time to resolve, Hazarika added. AGENCIES

Central teams unearth large hoardings of soybean and mustard seeds in Dewas, Shajapur & Guna districts of Madhya Pradesh

Inspections have revealed very large hoardings of soybean and mustard seeds in Dewas, Shajapur & Guna districts of Madhya Pradesh. These seeds were much above the stock limit prescribed by the Government. Hoarding of seeds have pushed up the prices of soybean oil. The State Government has been asked to step in to take necessary action under the EC Act, 1955.

In Maharashtra and Rajasthan, large quantities of edible oils were found in excess of the prescribed quantities of the control order. Wholesalers and Big Chain Retail outlets were the main violators. The State Governments have been requested to take corrective measures in accordance with the relevant sections of the EC Act.

Inspection is ongoing in the remaining five States. State Governments of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have also been requested to ensure that supply

chain is not affected while taking action under EC Act.

In order to ensure strict enforcement of the Central Order of 30th March 2022 and 3rd February 2022, Central teams from the Department of Food & Public Distribution have been deputed to conduct surprise inspections of the stocks of edible oils & oilseeds held by Retailers, Wholesalers, Big Chain Retailers and Processors in major oilseed producing and consuming States. Teams have been sent to Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Telangana, Gujarat & Delhi.

The Government of India has taken several proactive steps in the last few months to stabilize the prices of edible oils in the country, including declaration of stocks by all stockholders of edible oils and oilseeds under the Essential Commodities Act (EC Act), 1955.

VP Naidu calls for improving cotton yield and productivity, stresses priority of farmer incomes

Vice President, M. Venkaiah Naidu called upon all stakeholders to make concerted efforts to improve cotton yield and productivity in India to enhance farmers' incomes. Expressing his concern over the low yield of Indian cotton compared to other major cotton growers in the world, Naidu said that steps must be taken to guide the farmers through better research and by adopting best practices.

Naidu called for increasing the global competitiveness of Indian cotton textiles and «capitalize on our traditional strengths, shift to modern agronomic practices and consolidate our position as a global leader in the cotton industry».

Noting the importance of the textiles sector as the second-largest employer in the country after agriculture, Naidu emphasized on improving farm productivity, increasing mechanization, upskilling tex-

tile workers, and hand-holding small firms to give a boost to the sector. Naidu also suggested diversifying into specialty cottons such as the extra-long staple (ELS) cotton and organic cotton.

Vice President of India was inaugurating the CITI-CDRA Golden Jubilee Celebrations from Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi today. Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) is a leading industry chamber of the textile sector in India and the Cotton Development and Research Association (CDRA) is the extension arm of CITI, undertaking various seed development and extension activities in the cotton sector.

Referring to the importance of cotton to the Indian economy, the Vice President said that cotton also has a «great symbolic value to our civilizational heritage». He recalled that cotton played a crucial role in our freedom struggle,

starting with the 'Swadeshi Movement'. He said that by connecting all sections of society, «cotton was one of the most important binding factors for people to fight against the British Raj».

Naidu expressed his concern over that despite being the largest cotton producer (23%) in the world and having the highest area under cotton cultivation (39% of world area), the yield per hectare in India remained at a low of 460 kg lint per hectare when compared to the world average of 800 kg lint per hectare. To address this, he called for improving the planting density, taking up mechanization of cotton harvest and giving a thrust to agronomy research.

Recalling the benefits of the first Technology Mission on Cotton, the Vice President said there is every need to renew the Mission in an upgraded format.

Iqbal Singh Lalpura assumes charge as Chairperson of NCM



Iqbal Singh Lalpura has assumed charge as Chairperson of the National Commission for Minorities, NCM, in New Delhi after being re-nominated as Chairperson vide Ministry of Minority Affairs Notification dated 12.4.2022. During his previous term

as Chairperson, NCM, he worked tirelessly for the welfare of all the Minorities with a focused approach to ensure that the grievances of the Minorities are addressed and they avail the benefits of the Welfare schemes run by the Gove

Second arrest made in Hanskhali rape case

NADIA: A second suspect was arrested early on Tuesday in connection with alleged rape of a minor girl in Hanskhali area of West Bengal's Nadia district, a senior police officer said. He is a friend of the main suspect in the case, the officer said. Two others have also been detained for questioning, he stated. A minor girl was allegedly raped at a birthday party at the house of the main accused on April 9. She bled to death later that night, according to her parents who lodged a police complaint on April 9. The main accused, son of a TMC leader, was arrested shortly after the complaint was filed. «We have arrested another person this morning. He was present at the birthday party. His involvement is being investigated. We have found discrepancies in his versions of the incident. AGENCIES

Recovery stays ragged and vulnerable

The World Bank pared its 2022 growth projections for South Asian economies to 6.6 percent earlier this week, from an estimate of 7.6 percent released in January, emphasising that post-pandemic growth was already uneven and fragile before the Russia-Ukraine conflict triggered fresh challenges. The ripple effect of high oil and food prices that prevailed even before the war and were exacerbated since February 24, are key factors worrying the Bank as people's real incomes take a hit. India's GDP, the Bank reckons, may now grow by 8 percent in 2022-23, not 8.7 percent as it had earlier forecast, before dropping further to 7.1 percent in 2023-24. The Bank's chief economist has said that their overall assessment is that GDP growth could actually be 1.3 percentage points lower, or 7.4 percent, but they refrained from making an adjustment of that magnitude in their headline projection due to some positive surprises in recent data such as strong digital services exports. The tepid post-COVID recovery in India's household consumption will be further hemmed in by high inflation and the incomplete labour market revival. Monetary and fiscal policy mandarins need to address inflation more aggressively, lest it derails the recovery. There is a need to rethink growth engines as well — the pursuit of free trade agreements indicates a fresh stance. The shunning of RCEP needs a revisit, as advised by key ally Japan — lest rivals like Vietnam dent India's future exports in job-intensive sectors such as textiles. The farm sector, that has so far been resilient through the pandemic's worst phases and could now gain due to high global food prices, needs careful handling too. While the normal monsoon forecast bodes well for the kharif crop and hopefully, rural demand, the cost of inputs — be it fertilizers or chicken feed — is rising sharply for farmers too.

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.

Winning Your Goal is not the Toughest Victory, but, Winning Your Patience to Achieve that Goal is the Most Toughest one.

THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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SUSHANT SINGH EXPLAINS HOW RESETTING TIES WITH CHINA WILL ALTER INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH US

Beijing's move, India's turn



Looking at the long list of diplomats, officials, and ministers from across the globe rushing to New Delhi in the last few weeks, one would assume that India was playing an active role in resolving the crisis in Europe. Despite his ambitions to be hailed as a global statesman, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has scrupulously avoided engaging with the crisis. India has refused to condemn Russia's military invasion, continues to trade with Russia, and has abstained from voting on United Nations resolutions.

India is the centrepiece of the Joe Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy. Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers recently held the '2+2' meeting with their American counterparts. The Japanese Prime Minister was in New Delhi last month. The Australian Prime Minister held a virtual summit with Mr. Modi days before the two countries signed an interim trade deal. He had to then explain that he had not betrayed Ukraine by signing the deal with India.

Even as India's Quad partners (U.S., Japan, Australia) impose trade sanctions on Russia, condemn Russian President Vladimir Putin and provide military aid to Ukraine, India recently welcomed the Russian Foreign Minister to New Delhi. The signalling was unmistakable: he was the only visiting foreign official among the many in New Delhi to get a personal meeting with Mr. Modi.

A shift is nevertheless discernible: India has chosen to increase, rather than reduce, import of its meagre crude oil supplies from Russia, being offered at a discount. Despite a warning by the U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser Daleep Singh in New Delhi that there will be "consequences to countries that actively attempt to circumvent or backfill the sanctions," India and Russia are exploring ways of conducting bilateral trade by bypassing the dollar-based financial system.

India's Quad partners have been exceptionally sympathetic towards New Delhi's case so far, but the underlying stress in their ties with India will come to the surface as the crisis drags on. These tensions have been noted in Beijing, which has praised India for pursuing an independent foreign

policy. In recent years, Chinese officials had looked at Indian moves in the region through the prism of their U.S. policy, but India's stance on Ukraine has triggered a rethink in Beijing. Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to New Delhi in March was driven either by the need to wean India away from the Quad or as an exploratory step towards a larger strategic reset with New Delhi.

It would be erroneous to focus on the minimal outcome of the visit to deem it a failure. That the visit took place is itself a big success given that some 90,000 soldiers from both armies have been deployed in Ladakh for nearly two years now, after Chinese troops moved in to occupy certain territories that were hitherto in Indian control. Despite 15 rounds of negotiations between senior military commanders, China continues to occupy at least three such areas. From other such areas, both the armies have disengaged i.e., moved their soldiers a couple of miles behind, but there has been no de-escalation i.e., they have not moved the troops to their bases.

In his meetings with Mr. Wang, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar did not demand the restoration of status quo ante of April 2020 in Ladakh; disengagement from remaining "friction points" was the only precondition for return to normalcy in China-India ties. In a rush to declare the crisis as

resolved, India made further concessions to China by seeking disengagement only from Patrolling Point 15, suggesting that the other two areas — Depsang and Demchok — are "legacy issues". This is in keeping with Mr. Modi's stance since June 2020, when he first denied Chinese occupation of Indian territory in Ladakh and has since kept silent on the matter. Questions on the border crisis have been denied in Parliament. No official media briefings have taken place in two years. The government has thus successfully kept the truth of Chinese ingress hidden from the Indian public.

Mr. Modi's desire to downplay Chinese bellicosity was confirmed by former U.S. Ambassador to India, Kenneth Juster, when he said that the Indian government had instructed the U.S. officials to neither mention the Chinese aggression in any joint statement nor raise it in a strong manner otherwise. While New Delhi is being excessively accommodative of Beijing, China is unconcerned about Indian sensitivities. Before coming to New Delhi, Mr. Wang signed a provocative statement on Kashmir in Islamabad with the Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation countries and asserted China's strong ties with Pakistan. While it has allowed South Korean and Pakistani students to return to China, Beijing has not extended the same

courtesy to over 23,000 Indian students. If China is extending a handshake to India, it is only on its own terms.

Despite the border crisis, India's trade with China reached a record high of \$125 billion in 2021. India remains the biggest recipient of loans disbursed by the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. The Modi government did not criticise China's clampdown in Hong Kong and has never raised the issue of mistreatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang, although it may have been driven by a defensiveness about the criticism of its own strong-arm policies in Kashmir. The activities of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan community in India have been calibrated to remain within limits that do not provoke Beijing.

China is the glue that binds the Quad together. While Indian and American policies are at variance in countries such as Myanmar, Iran and Afghanistan, China is the one interest that aligns the two countries together. That basic premise of a collaborative partnership with India will be tested by these recent moves from Beijing towards New Delhi. Questions have always been raised in whispered tones in Washington about the relative power gap between the two Asian powers (China's economy is nearly six times India's size). This notwithstanding, it has been an article of faith in Washington in the past couple of years that having suffered from Chinese military aggression in 2020, India realises that it needs the U.S. to counter the threat from Beijing. This was the thrust of Mr. Singh's blunt counsel in New Delhi.

During Mr. Wang's visit, China offered to create a virtual G-2 in Asia by protecting India's traditional role and collaborating on developmental projects as 'China-India Plus' in South Asia. Once India's limited preconditions for declaring the border crisis resolved are met, the offer will seem more alluring and real than it does today. When Mr. Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat was denied a visa to travel to the U.S. owing to his association with the 2002 Gujarat riots, he made regular visits to China.

Sushant Singh is Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research. Views are personal.



DR KR ANTONY BELIEVES ADDRESSING UNDERNUTRITION IS KEY TO REDUCE TB AND MORTALITY IN INDIA

The food vaccine as right, more so for TB patients

In the past, there was a belief that every ill had a pill and the pill killed the germs that made you ill. That germ could be a bacteria, virus or a parasite. Factors such as genetic and metabolic causes, hormonal imbalance and altered neuro-chemical transmitters causing illnesses were less known then. But there was fairly good knowledge of how good air and nutrition reduced consumption illnesses such as tuberculosis (TB).

This is why sanatoriums/sanatoria were set up in mountain terrain, with fresh air, pure water and good food, in the quest for a cure for TB. There were no drugs for TB till the discovery of streptomycin in 1943. With improved wages, better living standards and the accompanying higher purchasing power for food, the TB mortality rate came down from 300 people per 1,00,000 population to 60 in England and Wales. TB disappeared from socio-economically developed countries long before the advent of chemotherapy. After the Second World War, in 1946 G.B. Leyton reported a 92% reduction in the incidence of TB among British soldiers who were fed an additional Red Cross diet of 1,000 calories plus 30 grams of protein when compared to Russian soldiers who were fed only a camp diet. This historical importance of good nutrition was ignored by the modern therapist who tried to control TB initially with streptomycin injection, isoniazid and para-aminosalicylic acid. In the ecstasy of finding antibiotics killing the germs, the social determinants of disease were ignored.

With more drug arsenals such as rifam-



picin, ethambutol, pyrazinamide, the fight against TB bacteria continued, which became multidrug resistant. Sharper bullets were fired into the frail body of patients. It was bacteria targeted, not patient-centric. The regimes and the mode of delivery of drugs were changed to plug the loopholes of alleged "non-compliance of illiterate and irresponsible patients". Blister packs of a multi-drug regime were provided at the doorstep, and the directly observed treatment/therapy (DOT) mechanism set up. There was little done to try to understand where patients lived, what work they did for a living, how much they could afford to buy food, and how much they ate.

Many of the poor discontinued blister-packaged free drugs thinking that these were "hot and strong" drugs not suited for the hunger pains they experienced every

night. They coughed up virulent bacteria from their emaciated body to infect many around them. It is no wonder that TB was never brought under control.

Let me narrate this example. I was defending a project proposal to provide nutritional supplementation of additional rice, dhal and cooking oil for TB patients in the tribal areas of Bastar-Chhattisgarh as part of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) plan in 2009-10. But it was rejected twice by the central technical team as "an intervention without proven benefit".

"The nutrition of the individual, is the most vital factor in the prevention in tuberculous disease," said Dr. J.B. McDougall of the World Health Organization (WHO), in 1949. And, Dr. René J. Dubos in the Journal of the American Medical Association, in 1960, said, "It is most unlikely that drugs alone, or drugs supplemented by vaccination, can control TB in the underprivileged countries of the world as long as their nutritional status has not been raised to a reasonable level."

The fact is that 90% of Indians exposed to TB remain dormant if their nutritional status and thereby the immune system, is good. When the infected person is immunocompromised, TB as a disease manifests itself in 10% of the infected. India has around 2.8 million active cases. It is a disease of the poor. And the poor are three times less likely to go for treatment and four times less likely to complete their treatment for TB, according to WHO, in 2002. Scientists like Rudolph Virchow (before 1902), Sir William Osler (before 1919) and Dr.

Dubos (from 1960) have been saying the same thing.

The work and the findings of a team at the Jan Swasthya Sahayog hospital at Ganiyari, Bilaspur in Chhattisgarh (led by Dr. Anurag and Madhavi Bhargava, Yogesh Jain, Biswaroop and Madhuri Chatterjee, Raman Kataria, Gajanand) established the association of poor nutritional status with a higher risk of TB. In the period 2004-09, among the 1,695 pulmonary TB patients they treated, men had an average body weight of 42.1 kg and a body mass index (BMI) of 16. For women, the average body weight was 34.1 kg and a BMI of 15. With these levels of undernutrition, there was a two to four-fold rise in the mortality associated with TB.

In 2014, research led by Dr. Anurag Bhargava (professor of medicine) showed that undernutrition in the adult population was the major driver of India's TB epidemic. Subsequently, the central TB division of the Ministry of Health came up with a "Guidance Document - Nutritional Care and Support for Patients with Tuberculosis in India" after a national workshop held in February 2016 at Yenapoya Medical College, Mangaluru, Karnataka. The 2019 Global TB report identified malnutrition as the single-most associated risk factor for the development of TB, accounting for more cases than four other risks, i.e., smoking, the harmful use of alcohol, diabetes and HIV.

Dr. K.R. Antony is a paediatrician at Kochi, Kerala and former Director of the State Health Resource Centre (SHRC) Chhattisgarh

BOOKS: REVIEW

New book features artefacts of Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum in Jaipur

The latest book in a series on the collections at the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, City Palace, Jaipur, brings to readers some of the most exquisite images of artefacts, paintings, monuments and historical treasures of the Jaipur Court.

A tribute to the Museum's collections, "Masterpieces at the Jaipur Court", published by Niyogi Books, also features contributions from several Indian and international scholars — who contributed two-thirds of the entries in this volume. It is edited by historians Giles Tillotson and Mrinalini Venkateswaran.

"This book is a fantastic testament to Jaipur's treasures, and the generosity of visiting scholars to the Museum who contributed

entries readily. We wanted their individual voices, and passion for these objects to connect with our readers and visitors, and hope it inspires others to learn more about, or research the collections.

"But it is also a beautiful book — almost gorgeous enough to eat, one person said to me — so it's meant to be enjoyed too, whether before or after a visit to Jaipur!" said Venkateswaran, museum consultant at the City Palace in Jaipur.

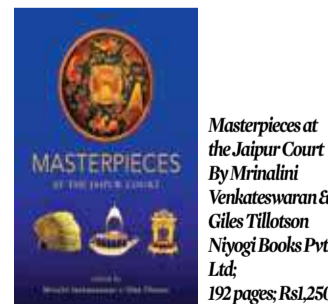
While previous books in the series covered one aspect of the collections, the new book showcases the highlights of the collection as a whole.

Other books in the series include "Festivals at the Jaipur Court", "Textiles & Garments at the Jaipur Court", "Arms & Armour at the

it is also a beautiful book — almost gorgeous enough to eat, one person said to me — so it's meant to be enjoyed too, whether before or after a visit to Jaipur!

Jaipur Court" and "Painting and Photography at the Jaipur Court".

"This book presents a selection of the finest objects from the City Palace across all categories — from paintings, textiles and arms, to manuscripts and photographs and the fine buildings that house them. Ideal as a souvenir for visitors and a great overview of the collections for those currently unable to visit



Masterpieces at the Jaipur Court By Mrinalini Venkateswaran & Giles Tillotson Niyogi Books Pvt. Ltd. 192 pages, Rs.250

us in person," said co-editor Tillotson, who is currently the senior vice-president of Museum Exhibitions for New Delhi-based art company DAG.

The eminent scholars, whose contributions made it to the book, include names like Abhishek Kaicker, Allison Busch, Anjali Jain, Aparna Andhare, Audrey Truschke, Deepshikha Kalsi, Ebba Koch, Elaine Waisglass, Gayatri Sinha, Imre Bangha, Indira Vats, James Mallinson, and Jean Michel Delrie.

According to the publishers, "Masterpieces at the Jaipur Court" is a beautiful addition to the series

and will be of interest to both the expert and the general reader.

"It showcases a range of treasures from the Museum across its vast collection of exquisite artefacts. The pieces written by a range of eminent scholars make this book a true collector's item," said Trisha Niyogi, COO and director, Niyogi Books.

The book, priced at Rs 1,250, is currently available for sale on offline and online stores.

Masterpieces at the Jaipur Court is the sixth in a new series of books initiated by the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, City Palace, Jaipur. Written by leading specialists, they are designed to be accessible and attractive for a new generation of readers and researchers.

Each of the other volumes covers one aspect of the collections. But the need was felt for something handier, which would showcase the highlights of the collection as a whole.

NEWSBRIEFS

TCS shares gain nearly 1% after earnings announcement



NEW DELHI: Shares of Tata Consultancy Services on Tuesday gained nearly 1 per cent after the software services firm opened the fourth-quarter earnings season with a stellar set of numbers, crossing the Rs 50,000-crore revenue mark for the first time and recording 7.4% year-on-year growth in net profit. The market heavyweight stock opened the trade on a tepid note and later gained 0.73% to Rs 3,723.50 on the BSE. It hit a high of Rs 3,723.50 and a low of Rs 3,650.05 so far during the trade. At the NSE, it went up by 0.69% to Rs 3,722 after a muted opening.

The country's largest software services firm Tata Consultancy Services on Monday said it has crossed the Rs 50,000 crore revenue mark for the first time. The company said its revenue jumped 15.8 per cent to Rs 50,591 crore in the reporting quarter on an annualised basis.

TCS closed fiscal 2022 with a bang, crossing for the first time USD 25 billion annual revenue of Rs 1,91,754 crore, up 16.8 per cent, driven by the highest-ever incremental revenue of USD 3,533 billion and an all-time high order book.

Its annual profit jumped 14.8% to Rs 38,327 crore. "TCS results are in line and marginally above expectations. This can support IT stocks even if there is some profit booking," according to V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

AGENCIES

Factory output raises 1.7% in Feb: Govt data

NEW DELHI: Factory output rose 1.7% in February, mainly on account of rise in the mining sector and power generation. According to the government data released on Tuesday, the manufacturing sector recorded a growth of 0.8%. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had declined 3.2% in February 2021. The cumulative growth in April-February 2021-22 worked out to be 12.5%. In the year-ago period, there was a contraction of 11.1%. During the 11-month period, the manufacturing sector recorded a growth of 12.9% whereas it was a decline of 12.5% in the year-ago period.

AGENCIES

Mahindra & Mahindra hikes vehicle prices by 2.5 per cent

NEW DELHI: Mahindra & Mahindra on Thursday said it has increased prices of its entire model range by 2.5 per cent with immediate effect.

This will result in an increase of Rs 10,000 to Rs 63,000 on the ex-showroom prices across the range, depending upon the model and the variant, the home-grown auto major said in a statement.

The price revision is the result of a continuous increase in prices of key commodities such as steel, aluminium, palladium, etc, it added.



"The company has taken necessary initiatives to partially offset the unprecedented hike in commodity prices to absorb the impact, passing a minimal percentage of cost increase to customers through a price revision," M&M noted.

The company, which sells models like Thar and XUV700, is working with its sales and dealer network to communicate the new prices to the customers appropriately, it added.

Earlier this month, the country's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki India (MSI) has also announced an increase in prices of its entire model range amid rise in input costs. The company is yet to come out with the quantum of the price hike.

Over the past year, the cost of the company's vehicles continued to be adversely impacted due to increase in various input costs, Maruti Suzuki India had noted in a regulatory filing.

AGENCIES

Nearly 25% increase in rice export bring relief to Haryana farmers, exporters

SATISH HANDA

After heavy slump in export of rice in past about one and half years due to epidemic outbreak now farmers as well as rice exporters in Haryana state are having relief due to nearly 25% increase in rice export in past few weeks due to worldwide unrest as a result of war between Ukraine and Russia causing increase in demand of Indian rice. Information reveals, during year 2020-21 nearly 16% drop in export of rice to various countries was witnessed. Farmers in Haryana grain markets are selling 1121 variety rice at the rate of Rs 4400 per quintal, Basmati rice at the rate Rs 4000 per quintal and 1509 variety rice at the rate ranging between Es 1600-1700 per quintal which is being sold at the rate ranging between Rs 3200-3300 per quintal at present.

President of India Rice Exporters Association Vijay Setia



told that Haryana state had export between 16 to 17 lakh tonne of value worth Rs 16000 crore last year since there was nearly 16% drop in export due to unavoidable circumstances, whereas 25% growth in export has now been identified. Setia said in case Haryana state government had reduced market

fee from 4% to 1% similar to being charged in Ghaziabad and Narela grain markets the export of rice would have increased to 20000 ton this year. Chairman of Haryana Rice Millers Association Jwail Singh told that demand of Basmati, 1121 and 1509 varieties rice has suddenly increased all over in the world due to present

Ukraine-Russia war.

Districts situated on G.T. Road belt which including Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal, Panipat and Sonapat districts in Haryana are famous for production of paddy crop in the state in which Kurukshetra and Karnal districts are producing maximum quantity of Basmati,

1121 and 1509 variety rice being exported to large number of countries across the world including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Muscat, Dubai, Africa and Australia. Singla told that Saudi Arabia is biggest buyer of all types of rice from our country. He said, the prices of Basmati being sold earlier at the rate Rs 3300-3500 per quintal is now being sold at the rate Rs 4400 per quintal, whereas 1121 variety rice earlier sold at the rate Rs 3500-3700 per quintal presently being sold at the rate Rs 4100 per quintal. Similarly, 1509 variety rice earlier sold at the rate Rs 2500-2700 per quintal is available at the rate Rs Rs 4200 per quintal at present.

In view of fast declining water level in underground in Haryana state government is offering beneficial schemes in case of change of crop pattern from paddy requires huge quantity to alternate crops consuming less quantity of water offering incentive of Rs 7000 each acre area.

Shree Cement hands over sporting rights to East Bengal



KOLKATA: Shree Cement Limited on Tuesday officially ended their topsy-turvy two-year association with East Bengal by handing over the sporting rights to the Kolkata heavyweight side.

In a last ditch attempt by West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, the Hari Mohan Bangur-owned cement conglomerate bought a majority stake of 76% in the beleaguered East Bengal to help them enter India Super

League in 2020-21. The association did not go off well as the East Bengal executive committee refused to sign the final agreement, claiming discrepancies in the initial term. "The process to hand over the sporting rights was on for the last couple of days."

"They did not sign the final agreement and as per the term sheet the association was for two years, so it finally ended," he added. After coming on board, Shree Cement had

promised a long term association with the red-and-gold brigade but trouble started brewing before the second season regarding the term sheet.

"Shree Cement Limited (SCL) has now decided to terminate its sporting collaboration pursuant to the termination, the club shall transfer its entire shares held in SCEBF (SC East Bengal Foundation) at book value to SCL and simultaneously SCEBF also agrees to handover all the sporting rights to the club, the SCL said in the letter issued to the East Bengal club president on Tuesday while ending its obligations".

It was at the behest of CM Mamata Banerjee, Shree Cement had agreed to continue for the last ISL edition where the club went worse as they finished at the bottom of the table with just one win from 20 matches, losing 11 times and drawing on eight occasions.

AGENCIES

Gangar Eyenation to Expand in Several Tier II & III Cities

MUMBAI: Gangar Eyenation, one of India's leading branded eyewear retailers has announced its expansion plans in tier II & III states such as MP, Chhattisgarh, and Karnataka. The brand will invest up to 25 crores in opening new stores, while by the end of this financial year, the company is also expecting a large-scale tie-up with several brand partners to increase business in the existing and new markets.

Whether or not, the demand for offline stores is still relevant for today's tech-driven online shopper, Jigar Gangar, Director of Gangar Eyenation says, "The category of lenses and eyewear is paramedical and hence it is difficult to give prescriptions as eye testing is not advisable to conduct online. Moreover, every eyewear user has a different face shape and size so it becomes very tough to suggest the right product online which may not be comfortable for the buyer. And hence, offline testing and buying are still preferred and



advisable when it comes to eye-wear."

Speaking about diving into tier II & III markets which are dominated mostly by unorganized players, Jigar Gangar says, "Our industry as a whole is 20% organized and 80% unorganized. We plan on beating the competition by spreading awareness on eye health, and offering modern and effective solutions." Focusing on the brand's vision of spreading awareness and early detection, the stores will be equipped with modern eye-testing technology and quality customer service.

AGENCIES

Trade Agreements signed with Australia and UAE will open infinite opportunities for Indian Textiles - Piyush Goyal

NEW DELHI: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Piyush Goyal said that new Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreements with Australia and UAE would open infinite opportunities for Textiles, Handloom, Footwear etc. He said that Indian textile exports to Australia and UAE would now face zero



duty and expressed confidence that soon Europe, Canada, UK

and GCC countries would also welcome Indian textile exports

at zero duty. Piyush Goyal was delivering the Keynote address at the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the 'Confederation of Indian Textile Industry-Cotton Development and Research Association' (CITI- CDRA) in New Delhi today. The Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu was the chief guest at the celebration. Union Minister mentioned

that Trade Agreements would help in increasing exports from labor intensive industries. He added that India must also be open to receiving new technology, rare minerals, raw materials which are in short supply in India etc. from the world at reasonable costs. This will only increase our production, productivity and quality, which in turn will increase demand for our products all over the world, he said. Goyal also said that Indian textile industry has the potential to achieve USD 100 billion dollars in exports by 2030.

AGENCIES

Honda unveils City e:HEV sedan; launch next month

NEW DELHI: Japanese auto major Honda Cars on Thursday unveiled its new offering for the Indian market - City e:HEV sedan, marking its foray into the mainstream strong hybrid electric vehicle segment in the country.

The company, which is present in India through a wholly-owned subsidiary, has commenced the bookings of the model and plans to introduce it in the market next month.

As per the company, the model, an extension of its City model range, would feature self-charging two-motor strong hybrid system connected to a 1.5 litre petrol engine, entailing a peak power of 126 PS and fuel efficiency of 26.5 km per litre.

The model would also come with various safety features including a high-performance front camera with a wide-angle, far-reaching detection system to scan the road ahead and alert the driver to minimise risk of accidents and in some cases intervene to avoid a collision or lessen its severity.

In an interaction with PTI, the newly-appointed President & CEO of Honda



Cars India Takuya Tsumura noted that introduction of the model marks the start of the company's journey towards introduction of new-age electrified models in the country. "We are committing to electric vehicles and towards carbon neutrality by 2050 globally. That is the company's direction. In India we are starting with City e:HEV and of course based on Honda's direction we will see what is the best solution we can bring to the market here," he said.

Honda globally plans to launch 30 EV models by 2030, with an annual production volume of more than two million units. The auto major aims to invest around

USD 40 billion over the next 10 years in the EV space.

"The city e:HEV is a result of our consistent commitment to offer a product having reliable data with latest safety measures and which meets the environmental challenges of the future," Tsumura said.

The model is also in sync with the vision laid out by Honda global to realise carbon neutrality and zero collision fatalities by 2050, he added.

"We are all well aware of the environmental challenges of global warming and emissions. As a socially responsible enterprise, Honda is striving to sell two thirds of its global sales

through electrified models, like hybrid fuel cell vehicles and battery electric vehicles by 2030," Tsumura stated.

And by 2040, the company aims to achieve 100 per cent transition to EVs and fuel cell vehicles globally, he added.

"The government of India is also focused upon environmental and safety issues associated with mobility. And it brings us great joy and satisfaction to introduce the company's innovative products that contribute to this direction. We hold the firm belief that technology is for people and we have developed engine and mobility solutions that are designed to be beneficial for everyone," Tsumura said.

In order to offer advanced electrification products in India, the company is pleased to introduce the technology for Indian customers that uses energy more effectively while making everyone's daily lives more enjoyable, he said.

"At the heart of the City e:HEV, we have a self-charging highly efficient modern sports hybrid system, which offers a rare combination of accelerating driving experience as well as very low emission levels," Tsumura said.

AGENCIES

Infosys Q4 net profit up 12% at Rs 5686 Cr



NEW DELHI: India's second-largest software services company Infosys on Wednesday posted 12% year-on-year rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 5,686 Cr. for March quarter 2021-22.

Bengaluru-based company had registered a net profit (after minority interest) of Rs 5,076 crore in the corresponding period previous year, according to a regulatory filing. Infosys' revenue grew 22.7% to Rs 32,276 crore in the quarter from Rs 26,311 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

The IT services giant has pegged revenue growth outlook at 13-15% for 2022-23. In last fiscal year, Infosys' net profit was up 14.3% to Rs 22,110 crore, while revenue was higher 21% to Rs 1,21,641 crore compared to the previous fiscal year.

"We continue to gain

market share as a result of sustained clients' confidence in our ability to successfully navigate their digital journeys," Salil Parekh, CEO and MD of Infosys, said in a statement.

For 2021-22, Infosys board has recommended a final dividend of Rs 16 per share. "With a robust demand environment ahead, we envisage making appropriate long-term investments in capability building across sales, delivery and innovation. However, we plan to neutralize some of the impact through aggressive cost optimization programs and value-led pricing driven by service and brand differentiation. This, along with post-pandemic normalization of expenses, is reflected in the margin guidance," Nilanjana Roy, Chief Financial Officer said.

AGENCIES

La Tim Metal & Industries announces a Stock Split

MUMBAI: La Tim Metal & Industries, a listed company in the steel trade since 1987, dealing with Colour Coated Steel Sheets, announced that subsequent to their Board of Directors meeting held on 8th April 2022, they have considered and approved a stock split.

Pursuant to regulation 30(2) of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 the board has recommended a proposal of sub-division of the company's equity share of face value of Rs. 10 each into 10 equity shares of Re.1 each. The record date for the Split/ Sub-Division of nominal value will be intimated in due course subject to compliance of necessary laws. The proposal for consequential alteration of the Capital Clause (Clause V) of the Companies Act 2013, in the Memorandum of Association of the Company, was also approved by the Board subject to the final approval of the shareholders.



Brief details of amendments in Memorandum of Association of the Company: The Authorized Share Capital of the Company shall be Rs. 20,00,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Crores only) divided into 19,50,00,000 (Nineteen Crores and Fifty Lacs) Equity Shares of Re. 1/- (Rupee One only) each amounting to Rs. 19,50,00,000/- (Rupees Nineteen Crores and Fifty Lacs) and 5,00,000 (Five Lacs) Redeemable Preference shares of Rs. 10/- (Rupee Ten only) each amounting to Rs.50,00,000/- (Rupees Fifty Lacs). The Board also considered and approved the date for calling Extra Ordinary General Meeting for the approval of the above amendments to be scheduled on May 09, 2022. About La Tim Group: The La Tim Group is also in the business of Real Estate and Hospitality. Its real estate division, La Tim Lifestyle & Resorts, initiated land trading and real estate development from Panvel and its surrounding areas in Raigad district, Maharashtra. Currently, La Tim has a land bank more than 1000 acres spread out along the Khopoli Pali Road (State Highway 92), which is approximately 90 kms from Mumbai and 95 kms from Pune.

AGENCIES

Godrej Industries announces launch of Godrej Capital

MUMBAI: With the aim of scaling up its ambition in the financial services sector, Godrej Industries Limited (GIL) announced the launch of Godrej Capital Limited (GCL). GCL is a subsidiary of GIL and is the holding entity for Godrej Housing Finance (an HFC) and Godrej Finance Limited (an NBFC). With the ultimate aim of building a world class retail financial services business and a near term aim of building an INR 30,000 crore balance sheet by 2026, GIL has committed to invest INR 1,500 crore in capital in GCL.

Godrej Capital currently has its footprint across Mumbai, Bengaluru, Delhi NCR, Ahmedabad, and Pune and will soon be operational in six new cities, i.e., Jaipur, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Chennai, Indore and Surat. Speaking on the development, Pirojsha Godrej, Chairman, Godrej Capital, said, "Godrej Capital will form a key pillar in the overall growth of the Godrej Group. We started with home loans in select geographies in 2020. Having seen strong customer acceptance of our offering, we are very optimistic about the prospects of our financial services venture and will be entering new markets and enhancing our reach across key target sectors and consumer segments." The company will continue maintaining focus on the growth of secured loans consisting of home loans and Loans Against Property (LAP). Additionally, to fulfil business and geographic aspirations, the business aims to grow its team by 50% to approximately 500 people in this financial year.

Manish Shah, MD & CEO, Godrej Capital, said, "We have successfully implemented a digital-first approach at Godrej Housing Finance through innovative products such as Design Your EMI and end-to-end contactless solutions delivered digitally. This has inspired us to grow our footprint and to broaden our service offerings to different customer segments through affordable housing loans and unsecured loans."

AGENCIES

Lawyered eyes 150 million revenue through partnerships

LAWYERED IS LOOKING FORWARD TO RAISING USD 1 MILLION FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF THE BUSINESS.

Spending from the amount raised will be bifurcated to strengthen the operations teams. Through this partnership, Lawyered is looking forward to supporting its clients in their claim settlement process.

Currently, Lawyered is on a mission to ensure that every citizen has the Right Legal Support. And Lawyered is



also solving users problems of Access, Awareness and Affordability.

Lawyered has partnered with 350+ accelerators, co-working spaces and incubators. As part of the association each of the startups working out of or incubated in these spaces will become eligible for Lawyered's Membership for Startups and Business.

Lawyered's Membership is a subscription offering for Startups and businesses. It's an annual subscription plan. As part of the subscription members get access to free consulting and guidance across all their legal and compliance needs.

Lawyered is a legal tech initiative designed to change the way people interact with and within the legal industry. Founder and CEO of Lawyered Himanshu Gupta says, "we are here to make you legally empowered and on a mission to ensure that every citizen has access to the right legal support"

Lawyered currently attends to 95% of all district courts in India. Cumulatively lawyered has already solved 20,000 plus legal issues on its platform. Lawyered also has customers based out of the logistics sector like Bharat Logistics, Express Roadways Pvt Ltd, Om Logistics and more. **AGENCIES**

RBI credit policy strikes a fine balance between inflation taming and sustainable growth: ASSOCHAM

NEW DELHI: Welcoming the RBI's decision to maintain the accommodative policy Repo rate of four per cent, ASSOCHAM today said, the Monetary Policy Committee has struck a fine balance with a nuanced approach to encourage growth while calibrating inflationary pressures and defend the Indian economy by navigating the current geopolitical storm with resolute response.

"The best thing about the Credit Policy review by the MPC is that the RBI is continuously trying various monetary tools to face the unfolding global challenges of elevated commodity and crude prices to limit the inflationary impact on the Indian economy without giving any jerk to a growth trajectory which is on a steady upward move," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood.

Deepak Sood said, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das must be complimented for the way the RBI has helped the Indian economy sail through the last two years marked by an unprecedented global pandemic. "Together with the Finance Ministry, the RBI held its ground of maintaining the accommodative interest rates, helping the country deal with the problem of the twin balance sheets. We are largely through this issue with the balance sheets of the banks and corporations looking a lot better. RBI and fiscal authorities deserve to be congratulated for the same."



Deepak Sood said now that the new challenge of global inflation and heightening of interest rates has resurfaced, the RBI has chosen a pragmatic path of gradual withdrawal of extra liquidity in the system, which was necessitated by the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. Even the bias towards inflation taming is being done by protecting growth so that a sustainable economic expansion is ensured. One of the key highlights of the policy is to help the government with its borrowing programme for FY' 23 so that the government continues to lead the economic growth, to be followed by private consumption and investment.

ASSOCHAM Secretary General said RBI's latest growth projection of 7.2% and inflation forecast of 5.7% for the current financial year have to be understood in the backdrop of uncertainty in the global economy and a continuing Ukraine-Russia war disrupting the supply chain. So far, India has managed the fast-evolving situation with a lot of maturity, courage and policy support.

The chamber noted that the decision to continue with a liberalised risk weightage for individual housing loans by banks till March 31, 2023 is a major positive for the housing sector. Measures like interoperable card-less cash withdrawals at the bank ATMs would enhance cyber security. Similarly, move towards improvement in customer service by banks through RBI guidelines would help both banks and customers.

Retail inflation shoots up to 6.95% in March

NEW DELHI: Consumer price-based inflation jumped to 6.95 per cent in March, mainly on account of costlier food items, according to government data released on Tuesday. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation was 6.07 per cent in February. The inflation in the food basket was 7.68 per cent in March, up from 5.85 per cent in the preceding month. It is for the third straight month that the retail inflation remained above the Reserve Bank of India's comfort zone. RBI, which mainly factors in the retail inflation while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, has been tasked by the government to keep the inflation between 2 and 6 per cent. **AGENCIES**

ADB Financing to Support Urban Development in Nagaland

The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank today signed a \$2 million Project Readiness Financing (PRF) Loan for designing climate resilient urban infrastructure, strengthening institutional capacity and improving municipal resource mobilization in 16 district headquarter towns (DHTs) in Nagaland.

The signatories to the PRF for the proposed Nagaland Urban Infrastructure Development Project were Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance who signed for the Government of India, and Shri Takeo Konishi, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission who signed for ADB.

After signing the Agreement, Shri Mishra said that the facility would support key



preparatory activities for the ensuing project aimed at improving urban infrastructure and services in Nagaland to help the state realize its economic potential. He said that the Government of India is committed for development of NE region.

"The ADB financing will ensure high readiness of the ensuing project through preparing an urban sector strategy, undertaking feasibility

studies and detailed engineering designs of selected subprojects and building capacity of state level agencies in project implementation, resource mobilization and anchoring reforms", said Mr. Konishi.

Nagaland's towns and cities face the long-term challenges of climate change, lack of basic amenities, poor connectivity. Major transport routes around urban areas are severely af-

ected by landslides during the monsoon season. Urban roads are in poor condition without proper stormwater drainage. Most cities face acute water shortage and except Dimapur have inadequate sewerage or seepage management system. All these issues constrain economic development of the state.

The PRF loan will help design water supply, sanitation, solid waste management and urban roads in 16 DHTs with climate resilient features and improved access to poor and vulnerable. Capacity building of state agencies will help augment own-resource mobilization by urban local bodies (ULBs), improve their readiness for implementing the ensuing project and initiating sector and institutional reforms. **AGENCIES**

Duty free import of raw cotton to push exports of value added textiles: FIEO

NEW DELHI: Government's decision to waive customs duty on cotton imports will help boost exports of value added products of textiles, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President A Sakthivel said on Thursday. The move, he said, will promote exports of apparel and made-ups sectors significantly by softening the prices of yarn and fabrics as well. The finance ministry on Wednesday waived customs duty on cotton imports till September 30, a move which will benefit the textile industry and lower prices for consumers. Currently, cotton imports attract 5 per cent Basic Customs Duty (BCD) and 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC). The industry had been demanding a duty waiver to lower domestic prices. The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) notified the exemption from customs duty and AIDC for import of cotton. Cotton textile exports will get further boost as the high prices of cotton were blunting the competitive edge, Sakthivel said.

The government has provided all support to the textile sector and we should endeavour to reach USD 100 billion of textile exports by 2030, he added. **AGENCIES**

CBI gets govt nod to prosecute Aakar Patel

NEW DELHI: The Centre has given the go ahead to the CBI to prosecute Amnesty International India and its former chief Aakar Patel for alleged violations of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), paving way for a special court to take cognisance of its charge sheet filed on December 31, 2021, officials said on Tuesday.

The CBI had sought the sanction of the government to prosecute the international human rights organisation because of mandatory clause of Section 40 of the FCRA.

Section 40 bars any court to take cognisance of offence under the FCRA without the previous sanction of the Cen-

tral Government or any officer authorised by that Government in this behalf.

The charge sheet was filed on December 31, 2021 by the agency in the Special CBI Court at Rouse Avenue against Patel and Amnesty International India under Section 11 read with Sections 35 and 39 of the Act after a two-year probe into alleged violations, they said.

The court will take cognisance of charges on April 18, they said.

Following the charge sheet the agency had issued a Look Out Circular against Amnesty International India Chair Patel on the basis of which he was stopped from leaving Bengaluru



Airport for the US where he was scheduled to deliver academic lectures in various universities.

A magistrate court had allowed withdrawal of the LOC but the order was overturned last Friday by a Special Judge who had asked Patel to not leave the country without its

permission.

The case was registered against Amnesty International India Pvt Ltd (AIPL), Indians For Amnesty International Trust (IAIT), Amnesty International India Foundation Trust (AIIFT), Amnesty International South Asia Foundation (AISAF) and others in November, 2019.

It was alleged that the provision of the FCRA and IPC were contravened by the aforesaid entities by receiving foreign contributions from Amnesty International UK through AIPL even though prior registration or permissions were denied to AIIFT and other trusts under FCRA, the officials said. **AGENCIES**

75 investors duped of Rs 3.61 cr in Nagpur

NAGPUR: As many as 75 people in Nagpur were allegedly duped of more than Rs 3.61 Cr by a private investment firm which collected money promising them huge returns, but reneged on its assurance, police said on Tuesday. 7 people, including directors and employees of the company, were booked after the fraud came to light, they said. Police said one of the 75 victims, aged 40, lodged a complaint that the accused promised him and other investors 30 per cent to 40 per cent returns on their investments. Between November 1, 2021, and April 11, 2022, he invested Rs 10 lakh in schemes launched by the company, the complainant told the police. In all, the victims invested Rs 3,61,74,000 in different schemes of the company expecting high returns. **AGENCIES**



components/vehicles within the country. The Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) defined under the FAME2 subsidy scheme mandates 100% or majority of the components to be manufactured in India for Electric 2W, who avail the subsidy scheme. The policy documents are attached with this mail.

The department of heavy industries (DHI) is currently disbursing subsidies to all such EV 2W OEMs who are submitting declarations or undertakings of compliance with the above policy guidelines. However, in matters of utilization of public funds, the old adage of "Caesar's Wife Must be above Suspicion" is highly relevant.

It is indeed baffling then how the leading electric two wheeler OEM in the country is perpetuating a daylight fraud by claiming the subsidy amount through falsified representation of being compliant with the PMP norms, even though a careful reading of their audited financial statements of FY21, reveals a completely opposite picture, and the same is attached along with this mail.

On the key financials and the Cost of Goods Sold (On Page 6 of 245 of audited financial statements of FY 21), it is declared as below:



Particulars	(in INR Lacs)	
	For the year ended March 31, 2021	For the year ended* March 31, 2020
Revenue from Operations	31,564.05	24,379.45
Cost of Materials Consumed	22,999.68	20,005.42

On the Imports Components C.I.F Value (On Page 11 of 245 of audited financial statements of FY 21), it is declared as below:

Particulars	(in INR Lacs)	
	For the year ended 31.03.2021	For the year ended 31.03.2020
Raw Materials & Components	23,341.84	16,359.82

Thus, strongly confirming the fraud that in FY 21, the domestic purchases by Hero Electric Pvt Ltd are insignificant and entire raw material to manufacture their electric scooters is being met through Chinese imports.

Further, a prima facie analysis of the imports declaration filed in the various bill of entries over the last 24 months, with the customs department (CBIT&C) including declared packing lists, business profile of the declared exporting Chinese company to Hero Electric, and the customs duty rates availed for the imports under the said declared bill of entries, reveals the exact nature of this fraud, to wrongfully claim the FAME2 subsidy benefits.

It is evident that on one side through their Audited Financial Statements, Hero Electric Pvt Ltd is importing (directly or indirectly) majority of their components,



while fraudulently availing the FAME 2 subsidy amount by claiming majority of the components as being domestically manufactured (as per the PMP norms) through wrongful declarations with DHI.

It alleges that this is indeed a daylight fraud being perpetrated by Hero Electric for wrongful claims under the FAME2 subsidy policy.

The following key numbers can be noted from the analysis of the limited data :

The total value of imports C.I.F done by Hero Electric Pvt Ltd is as follows:

FY21 (1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021): INR 233.4 Crore (as per Financial Statements)

FY22 (1st April 2021 to 28th February 2022): INR 565 Crores (Approximate)

The total value of the Lithium Ion Battery Packs imported (C.I.F) by Hero Electric Pvt Ltd is as follows:

FY21 (1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021): INR 120 Crores (Approximate)

FY22 (1st April 2021 to 28th February 2022): INR 251 Crores (Approximate)

In FY21, around 75,000 Lithium Ion battery packswere imported, and in FY 22 (11 month data) more than 1,40,000 Lithium Ion Battery packswere imported from China by Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt Ltd.

This is indeed a severe violation of the PMP norms considering that the deadline for imports of fully assembled Lithium battery packs has expired long ago in 2019 and Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt Ltd has neither built any in-house battery manufacturing capability nor purchased these Lithium batteries from domestic battery pack manufacturing companies. 93% of the overall imports are just from two Chinese trading companies, thus showing significant over dependence on Chinese trading firms. Approximately more than 1,45,000 (One Lakh Forty Five Thousand) DC Motors and INR 200 Croresworth of mechanical, lighting and body related components have been imported from China within 11 months of FY 22, and all these are in 100% violation of the PMP norms.

While the above data and analysis which captures only the direct imports of Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt Ltd fully establishes the fraudulent claims in the FAME2 subsidy,



said they were «a law abiding and responsible company.»

«We give paramount importance to the laws of the land. We are fully compliant with all the regulations and are confident of the same. We are cooperating with authorities with their ongoing investigation to ensure they have all the requisite information,» the spokesperson said.

Proceedings under the FEMA are civil in nature and the final penalty, post adjudication, can be at least three times the amount contravened under the law. Xiaomi and few other Chinese mobile manufacturing companies were raided by the Income Tax Department in December last year on charges of tax evasion.

Fraud by Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt Ltd in FAME2 Subsidy

When the Income Tax Department raided the premises of Hero Motocorp and allegedly found alleged illegal business expenses of over Rs 800 crore, Rs 60 crore "unaccounted" cash used to purchase land in Delhi and role of some shell companies, little did it know that the alleged fraud would be so huge.

A complaint sent on April 12 to Cabinet Minister for Road Transport Highways and Shipping Nitin Gadkari by Chartered Accountants, Akash Sharma and Hiren Shah lists several other financial regularities.

It says that FAME2 is a central government funded Electric Vehicle Subsidy program for the promotion of the sales and domestic manufacturing of EV components/vehicles within the country. The Phased Manufacturing Program (PMP) defined under the FAME2 subsidy scheme mandates 100% or majority of the components to be manufactured in India for Electric 2W, who avail the subsidy scheme. The policy documents are attached with this mail.

The department of heavy industries (DHI) is currently disbursing subsidies to all such EV 2W OEMs who are submitting declarations or undertakings of compliance with the above policy guidelines. However, in matters of utilization of public funds, the old adage of "Caesar's Wife Must be above Suspicion" is highly relevant.

It is indeed baffling then how the leading electric two wheeler OEM in the country is perpetuating a daylight fraud by claiming the subsidy amount through falsified representation of being compliant with the PMP norms, even though a careful reading of their audited financial statements of FY21, reveals a completely opposite picture, and the same is attached along with this mail.

On the key financials and the Cost of Goods Sold (On Page 6 of 245 of audited financial statements of FY 21), it is declared as below:

however, their indirect imports of critical components through trading agents in India, also further needs to be analyzed with the chain link establishment between the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 suppliers list declared by Hero Electric Pvt Ltd to DHI and checking the further direct imports data linked with the IEC registration of these trading firms.

Being a leading EV2W company in the country, the onus indeed lies strongly with Hero Electric Vehicles Pvt Ltd to come clean on this matter and offer a formal explanation to the relevant authorities which should be made public not only for protecting the integrity and stature of the FAME 2 subsidy, but also in the larger interest of safeguarding the reputation of Union Govt of India in-front of the International Investment Community, who have been showing significant interest in the recent times to deploy large PE funds in Indian EV start-up and components manufacturing eco-system.

It may be recalled that raids were conducted on March 23 at its offices in Delhi and nearby Gurugram, apart from the residence of its chairman and CEO Pawan Munjal. The CBDT issued a statement later saying the operation was carried out covering more than 35 premise, "Incriminating documents and digital evidence have been found and seized indicating that the expenses ostensibly shown to have been claimed towards business purposes are not fully supported by evidences. "Expenditure aggregating to more than Rs 800 crore has been booked in the guise of purchase of services from a specific event management entity," the policy-making body for the tax department said.

Company version While a statement from the company on the CBDT statement is awaited, it had said in a regulatory filing that it was a "law-abiding corporate, with robust internal financial controls" and its "financial statements are duly audited".

However, in the case of the real estate business entity, the CBDT said "several incriminating documents" have been unearthed from the premises of persons involved.



INTERNATIONAL

President Joe Biden approves \$800M in new military assistance for Ukraine

In anticipation of a new Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine, President Joe Biden has approved an 800 million package of military assistance, including additional helicopters and the first provision of American artillery.

The Ukrainians also will receive armored personnel carriers, armored Humvees, naval drone vessels used in coastal defense, and gear and equipment used to protect soldiers in chemical, biological, nuclear and radiological attacks.

This new package of assistance will contain many of the highly effective weapons systems we have already provided and new capabilities tailored to the wider assault we expect Russia to launch in eastern Ukraine, Biden said in a statement.

The steady supply of weapons the United States and its allies and partners have provided to Ukraine has been critical in



sustaining its fight against the Russian invasion, Biden added. It has helped ensure that (Russia President Vladimir) Putin failed in his initial war aims to conquer and control Ukraine. We cannot rest now.

US President Biden announced the aid after a call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. It is the latest in a series of U.S. security assistance packages valued at a combined 2.6 billion that has been com-

mitted to Ukraine since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. The weaponry and support material has played an important role in Ukraine's successful defense thus far.

Biden is under pressure from members of both parties in Congress to expand and accelerate U.S. aid.

Robert Gates, a former CIA director and defense secretary, said Wednesday he believes the administration needs to push

hard for weapon donations by NATO members in Eastern Europe, whose arsenals include Soviet-era tanks and other weaponry and equipment that could help Ukraine immediately.

The United States ought to be acting, 24/7 how do we mobilize the equipment and how do we get it into Ukraine and into the hands of the Ukrainians, Gates said in an online forum sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

It's critically important and critically urgent, and we ought to be sort of ransacking the arsenals of those states, and I think they would be cooperative, particularly if they are given assurances that the Pentagon will provide American replacements for the donated weapons.

The Pentagon said the 800 million package announced by Biden includes weapons and equipment that will require

some training for a Ukrainian military not fully accustomed to American military technology. U.S. and allied forces had been present inside Ukraine to provide training for eight years before pulling out in advance of the Russia's latest invasion.

The new arms package includes 18 of the U.S. Army's 155mm howitzers and 40,000 artillery rounds, two air surveillance radars, 300 Switchblade kamikaze armed drones, and 500 Javelin missiles designed to knock out tanks and other armor. Also included are 10 counter-artillery radars used to track incoming artillery and other projectiles to determine their point of origin for counter attacks.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said delivery of the material will be expedited, but he offered no specific timetable. **AGENCIES**

India probably buys less oil from Russia: Jaishankar

India's total purchase of oil from Russia in a month is probably less than what Europe does in an afternoon, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

"I noticed you refer to oil purchases. If you are looking at energy purchases from Russia, I would suggest that your attention should be focused on Europe. We do buy some energy, which is necessary for our energy security. But I suspect looking at the figures, probably our total purchases for the month would be less than what Europe does in an afternoon," Jaishankar told a reporter when asked about India's oil purchase from Russia.

Jaishankar was addressing a joint news conference with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with their American counterparts Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, after the conclusion of the 2+2 Ministerial on Monday.

Jaishankar said India has made a number of statements (on the Russia-Ukraine war) which outline its position in the United Nations, in the Indian Parliament, and in other forums.

"And briefly, what those positions state is that we are against the conflict. We are for dialogue and diplomacy. We



are for urgent cessation of violence, and we are prepared to contribute in whatever way to these objectives," he asserted.

The White House too came to India's defence on the issue of oil purchase noting that its total purchase is less than one and two per cent as against 10 per cent from the United States. "Did the President get a commitment from Prime Minister Modi not to accelerate or increase imports of Russian energy? White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki was asked during her daily news conference.

"I'll let Prime Minister Modi and the Indians speak to that. Again, it's 1 to 2 per cent at this point in time. They import 10 per cent from the United

States. It is not a violation of any sanctions or anything along those lines. It was a constructive, direct conversation. But I will let them speak for themselves," she said.

During the virtual summit earlier in the day, President Joe Biden conveyed that the United States is here to help India to diversify its means of importing oil.

"The imports from the United States are already significant -- or much bigger than the imports that they get from Russia. And we, of course -- the President conveyed very clearly that it is not in their interest to increase that. But beyond that, I would let the Indian leaders speak for themselves," she said. **AGENCIES**

US values its long standing cooperation with Pakistan says White House

United States values its long-standing cooperation with Islamabad and has always viewed that a prosperous and democratic Pakistan is critical to the American interests in the region, the White House said on Monday, as Opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif was sworn-in as the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Responding to a series of questions on major political developments in Pakistan and the election of Sharif as the new Prime Minister after Imran Khan was ousted in a no-confidence vote in the National Assembly on Sunday, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said the US value its long standing cooperation with Islamabad.

We value our long standing cooperation with Pakistan and have always viewed a prosperous and democratic Pakistan critical to US interests. That remains unchanged regardless of who the leadership is, she told reporters at her daily news conference.

However, Psaki refrained from responding to questions on the possibility of a phone call between President Joe Biden and Sharif.

I don't have a prediction of a call at this point of time. Obviously, those are assessments made day by day and especially after new leaders are elected. Of course, we have a long, strong and abiding relationship with Pakistan, an important security relationship and that will continue under new leaders, Psaki said.

President Biden, who was inaugurated in January 2021, did not make a call to former prime minister Khan during his tenure. Before his ouster, Khan has alleged that there was a "foreign conspiracy" hatched in Washington to remove his government from power. **AGENCIES**

India, US to restart commercial dialogue, CEO forum later this year: Blinken

India and the US are restarting their bilateral commercial dialogue and the CEO's forum later this year to deepen their bilateral trade and investment relationship, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has announced. Blinken made this announcement at a joint news conference with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin along with their Indian counterparts -- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh after the 2+2 Ministerial here on Monday.

During the 2+2 Ministerial, the two sides discussed their goal of driving inclusive economic growth in the two countries and across the region, said the secretary of State. India and the US already trade to the tune of more than USD 150 billion each year, he said. We are deepening that relationship by restarting the US-India commercial dialogue and the US-India CEO forum



later this year, where our private sector partners can offer recommendations to strengthen even more our trade and investment relationship, Blinken said.

Earlier during a virtual meeting, Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed President Joe Biden's Indo-Pacific Economic Framework Initiative. It can allow us to increase our collaboration across more issues including

digital trade, supply chain resilience, infrastructure, and tax policy, Blinken said.

The last meeting of the India-US Commercial Dialogue was held on July 2020 through a telephonic conference. The CEO forum also last met virtually in July 2020. The forum is an effective platform to highlight key issues that affect business entities and to identify areas for closer collaboration for

mutual benefit of both economies. And our countries are working together to tackle the climate crisis. The United States is supporting India's ambitious COP26 clean energy commitments by investing in renewable energy projects and mobilising private sector financing, Blinken said. The 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference is commonly referred to as COP26. **AGENCIES**

World Bank reduces Pakistan's growth forecast to 4.3%

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank has slashed Pakistan's economic growth rate forecast for the current fiscal year to 4.3 per cent, down by almost one per cent against last year, and said the last ditch energy subsidies by the outgoing government put an additional burden on budget and threaten the International Monetary Fund programme.

Launching its latest 'South Asia Economic Focus Reshaping Norms: A New Way Forward' on Wednesday, the World Bank's Chief Economist for South Asia Region Hans Timmer said Pakistan had earlier followed its agreement with the IMF to remove



tax exemptions and increase the tax on fuels.

However, rising energy prices domestically and challenges from political opposition forced the government to offer electricity and fuel price relief in February.

While these measures can help reduce fluctuations in domestic prices, they also constitute a direct burden or

hidden liability on the government's budget, which could increase fiscal vulnerabilities going forward, Timmer was quoted as saying in a Dawn News report on Thursday.

GDP growth is expected to slow to 4.3 pc in FY22 (against 5.6pc last year) and to 4pc in FY23, he said.

In January, Pakistan's GDP growth was put at 5.2 per cent which has since been changed.

"This comes amid monetary tightening measures that began in September 2021, high base effects from the previous year, and continued high inflation eroding real private consumption growth, the Bank said. **AGENCIES**

Mark Zuckerberg money won't be in next round of aid for elections

The non-profit that distributed most of the 350 million in donations from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg to election offices in 2020 said Monday that it won't disburse similar donations this year after backlash from conservatives suspicious that the contributions tilted the outcome of the presidential race toward Joe Biden.

Instead, the Center for Technology and Civic Life is launching a different program. Dubbed the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence, the 80-million, five-year effort is intended to create a network for the nation's thousands of local election officials, who can apply for aid to improve their technology and processes. Unfortunately, years of underinvestment means many local election departments often have limited capacity and training. The U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence is bringing together world-class partners so that local election officials no longer have to go it alone, said Tiana Epps-Johnson, CTCL's executive director, who announced the new program at the TED2022 conference. **AGENCIES**



Shehbaz Sharif elected as new PM of Pakistan



ISLAMABAD: Shehbaz Sharif, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president, was elected unopposed as the new Prime Minister of Pakistan by Parliament on Monday after rival candidate Shah Mahmood Qureshi announced that his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party will boycott the voting and staged a walkout.

Shehbaz, Sharif 70, was the only candidate left in the race after Qureshi's boycott of the election in the National Assembly. In the House of 342, the winning candidate should get support of at least 172 lawmakers. Shehbaz, the younger brother of former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, received 174 votes - two more than the simple majority of

172. He is the 23rd prime minister of Pakistan.

He has served as chief minister of the country's most populous and politically crucial Punjab province thrice.

Former president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-chair Asif Ali Zardari had proposed Shehbaz's name for prime minister's position in a joint opposition's meeting to replace Imran Khan through a no-confidence motion.

The process of electing the new leader of the House began on Sunday after Prime Minister Imran Khan was removed from office through the no-confidence vote, becoming the first premier in the country's history to be sent home after losing the trust of the House.

Pakistan has struggled with political instability since its formation in 1947 with multiple regime changes and military coups. No prime minister has ever completed a full five-year term. **AGENCIES**

US-Russia clash over cause of food price rises

UNITED NATIONS: U.S. ambassador to the United Nations accused Russia on Thursday of making the precarious food situation in Yemen and elsewhere even worse by invading Ukraine, calling it just another grim example of the ripple effect Russia's unprovoked, unjust, unconscionable war is having on the world's most vulnerable.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a U.N. Security Council meeting on war-torn Yemen that the World Food Program identified the Arab world's poorest nation as one of the countries most affected by wheat price increases and lack of imports from Ukraine.

Russia's deputy U.N. ambassador Dmitry Polyanski shot back saying: The main factor for instability and the source of the problem today is not the Russian special military operation in Ukraine, but sanctions measures imposed on our country seeking to cut off any supplies from Russia and the supply chain, apart from those supplies that those countries in the West need, in other words energy. If you really want to help the world avoid a food crisis you should lift the



sanctions that you yourselves imposed, your sanctions of choice indeed, and poor countries will immediately feel the difference, he said. And if you're not prepared to do that, then don't get involved in demagoguery, and don't mislead everybody.

The sharp exchange took place a day after a U.N. task force warned that the war threatens to devastate the economies of many developing countries that are now facing even higher food and energy costs and increasingly difficult financial conditions.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched their report saying, As many as 1.7 billion people -- one-third of whom are already living in poverty -- are now highly exposed to

disruptions in food, energy and finance systems that are triggering increases in poverty and hunger. Thirty-six countries rely on Russia and Ukraine for more than half their wheat imports, including some of the world's poorest countries, he said, and wheat and corn prices have risen 30% just since the start of the year.

Rebecca Grynspan, secretary-general of the U.N. agency promoting trade and development who coordinated the task force, said the 1.7 billion people live in 107 countries that have severe exposure to at least one dimension of the crisis -- rising food prices, increasing energy prices and tightening financial conditions. **AGENCIES**

Jaishankar meets UN chief Guterres, discusses key issues including Ukraine situation

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has held a wide ranging discussion with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and exchanged views on the global impact of the Ukraine conflict as well as the situation in Afghanistan and Myanmar.

Jaishankar arrived here on Wednesday evening following his visit to Washington.

A wide ranging discussion with UNSG @antonioguterres. Exchanged views on the global impact of the Ukraine conflict, especially on food and energy security. Implications for developing countries are serious, Jaishankar tweeted on Thursday. Spoke about latest developments in respect of Afghanistan



and Myanmar. Appreciate his interest in working with India to effectively address important contemporary challenges, he said.

The Taliban seized power in Afghanistan on August 15, two

weeks before the US' complete troop withdrawal on August 31 after a costly two-decade war. This forced Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, who was backed by the US-led West, to flee the country to the UAE. **AGENCIES**

Meenakshi Lekhi leads the All Women Ambassadors' Group meet in Delhi



In a unique initiative, the Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture, Meenakshi Lekhi led the first introductory meeting of All Women Ambassadors' Group in New Delhi.

All the Female Ambassadors to India, spouses of male ambassadors and female Charge d'Affaires of all embassies attended the meeting. The other attendees of the event included female officers from both the Ministries of External Affairs and Culture. The event was organized as a joint initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of External Affairs to celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The intention to form this group lies in the keen desire to realize the universal theme of sisterhood and stand in solidarity with each other and for each other. The request to form an All-Women Ambassadors' Groups was floated to the Minister by H.E. Ritva Koukkuronde, Ambassador of Finland to India.

The formation of the group is of immense significance in the light of limited representation of women in the international diplomatic arena. Through periodic meetings and discussions, the group aims to gain an insight into female leadership and gender equality in political and private sector. Lekhi underscored the im-

portance of this network as a means to facilitate communication and create a support web for all Women Ambassadors to India. Lekhi spoke on Gender equality which according to her is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. She also highlighted the need to realize the Sustainable Development Goal 5 i.e. Gender Equality through Women Empowerment to create an inclusive and just society. The event also provided a cultural touch of India to all the Ambassadors as there were cultural performances organized by the Ministry of Culture.

The Kathak virtuoso Padma Shri Shovana Narayan presented a beautiful dance presentation which was followed by a presentation from Papiba Desai and dance troupe on "Dances of India" highlighting the kaleidoscopic diversity of dance forms of India - Garba, Dandiya, Giddah among many others.

Meenakshi Lekhi highlighted the importance of the timing of the formation of the All-Women Ambassadors' Group in the background of the just concluded Navaratri celebrations. She also informed the Ambassadors of the rituals and practices associated with the festival. **AGENCIES**



Youths perform the traditional Punjab folk dance "Bhangra" at a wheat field on the outskirts of Amritsar on festival of harvest of Vaisakhi. PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL



Sikh devotees pay respects on the occasion of Vaisakhi at Sri Harmandir Sahib in on Thursday. Vaisakhi celebrate as a harvest festival and Khalsa Saajna Diwas (Foundation Day-1699) PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

POTPOURRI

Saina Nehwal decides to skip selection trials for CWG, Asian Games



NEW DELHI: Saina Nehwal's chances of defending her title at the Commonwealth Games looks bleak as she has decided to skip the selection trials for the upcoming multi-sport events.

The big-ticket events include the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and the Hangzhou Asian Games.

The selection trials are scheduled here from April 15 to 20. The 32-year-old Hisar-born shuttler, a two-time CWG gold medalist and 2012 London Olympics bronze medallist, has informed the Badminton Association of India (BAI) about her decision to skip the trials.

"Saina has written to BAI, informing her decision to not play in the trials which will be the only tournament to pick players for CWG, Asiad and Thomas and Uber Cup."

The CWG squad will consist of 10 members with equal number of men and women, while the Asian Games and Thomas & Uber Cup contingents will have 20 members each, including 10 men and 10 women. **AGENCIES**

4 Indian girl students bag bronze at Mathematical Olympiad in Hungary



All four contestants who represented India at the 11th European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad held in Eger, Hungary, during April 6-12, 2022, have won bronze medals. 12th standard students

Ananya Rajas Ranade from Pune, Anushka Aggarwal from Delhi and Sanika Amol Borade from Nashik and tenth standard student Gunjan Aggarwal from Delhi are the winners from the country.

Anushka and Gunjan are sisters to represent India at the EGMO 2022. Both Ananya and Anushka missed silver by 1 point. This year India participated in full-strength onsite after a hiatus of two years forced by the pandemic. **AGENCIES**

Kangana Ranaut's 'DHAAKAD' to release on May 20

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut-starrer "Dhaakad" will be released theatrically on May 20, the makers announced on Tuesday.

The action movie is directed by Razneesh Razy Ghai and produced by Deepak Mukut and Sohel Maklai.

The 35-year-old actor stars in the movie as Agent Agni. I enjoyed the love and admiration that came my way for the way I pulled off the action scenes in 'Manikarnika: The Queen of Jhansi'. In our cinema, we rarely have heroines performing action scenes in the real sense.

When 'Dhaakad' came my way, I felt happy to see that someone had dared to visualise a woman in a hardcore commercial film as an action heroine. I'm all for dare-devilry and



doing something that pushes the envelope. There's nothing that does it like a good commercial film," the 35-year-old actor said in a statement.

The film also features Saswata Chatterjee, Arjun Rampal and Divya Dutta in pivotal roles.

Razy Ghai lauded the National Award-winning actor, saying that she has worked hard

mind space of the character wonderfully," the director said.

Mukut said he hopes "Dhaakad" sets new standards in how women-led actioners are designed in Bollywood.

We wanted a slick and engaging action thriller and we went all out to just make that with full gusto and all heart. The film has a sensitive subject at its core and I laud at how it's been rendered on screen. It's entertaining and a rollercoaster ride that I relished making," the producer said.

Maklai said he is happy that Ranaut has taken the film to the heights that the team had envisioned. "Dhaakad" is presented by Soham Rockstar Entertainment Pvt Ltd in association with Kamal Mukut, Sohel Maklai Productions and Asylum films. **AGENCIES**

Ishaan Khatter wraps war drama 'PIPPA'



MUMBAI: Bollywood Actor Ishaan Khatter on Monday said he has finished filming for his upcoming war drama movie "Pippa". Backed by producers Ronnie Screwvala and Siddharth Roy Kapur, the film is directed by Raja Krishna Menon of "Airlift" fame.

"Pippa" is billed as a heroic tank battle film that underscores the bravery of Brigadier Balram Singh Mehta (Khatter), a veteran of the 45th Cavalry tank squadron, who, along with his siblings, fought on the eastern front during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971.

KRISTEN STEWART to star in romantic thriller 'Love Lies Bleeding'

Hollywood star Kristen Stewart is set to top line a romantic thriller film from director Rose Glass.

Titled "Love Lies Bleeding", the film has been set up at Hollywood studio A24 and examines a romance fueled by ego, desire and the American Dream.

Glass, best known for her 2019 indie hit "Saint Maud", is directing from the script she co-wrote with Weronika Tofilska. The story centers on the extreme qualities it takes to succeed in the competitive world of bodybuilding. Stewart will take on the co-lead part, the protective lover of a female bodybuilder.

Neetu remembers Rishi on the wedding of Ranbir-Alia

MUMBAI: Veteran actor Neetu Kapoor on Friday penned a heartfelt note for late husband Rishi Kapoor following son Ranbir Kapoor's marriage to Alia Bhatt in a private ceremony.

Congratulatory messages continue to pour for the star couple, who tied the knot after five years of dating at their 'Vastu' apartment in Bandra on Thursday in presence of Kapoor and Bhatt family, besides close friends such as Karan Johar, Ayan Mukherji, Akash Ambani and Shloka Ambani. **AGENCIES**

England's MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi pays obeisance at Harmandar Sahib with family



AMRITSAR: England's Sikh Member of Parliament Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi paid obeisance at Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib with his family members including wife Bibi Manveen Kaur Dhesi, sons

Jogad Singh Dhesi and Toshab Singh Dhesi and listened to the divine Gurbani Kirtan.

Tanmanjeet Singh said that he got an opportunity to pay obeisance at the Guru's house with his blessings and while congratulating the Sikh Sangat for Khalsa Sajna Diwas appealed the youth to connect to their heritage. He said this day is a symbol of the glory of dastar (turban) and the entire Sikh youth should move forward in the country and world while staying Sabat Soorat (in Sikh appearance with unshorn hair).

On this occasion, SGPC assistant secretary Tejinder Singh, information officer Jaswinder Singh Jassi honoured Tanmanjeet Singh and his family members with Siropaos (robes of honour) and a photo of Sachkhand Sri Harmandar Sahib.

Pop star Britney Spears pregnant with third child

Pop star Britney Spears has announced that she is expecting her third child. The singer, who got engaged to her longtime boyfriend Sam Asghari in September, shared the news on Instagram on Tuesday.

Spears, 40, who had previously expressed her desire to have a "family Asghari", said she had taken a pregnancy test after her partner teased her about being food pregnant. "So I got a pregnancy test and uhhhhh well I am having a baby, she posted on the social media platform. Spears said she "won't be going out as much" to avoid paparazzi photographers, adding that the pregnancy would likely be "hard" as she had previously gone through perinatal depression.

The news comes over six months after a judge released Spears from a conservatorship arrangement that dominated her life for nearly 14 years. In June last year, the musician had told the judge that her conservatorship prevented her from marrying or removing her birth control.

Hollywood Actor Frank Langella fired from Netflix show after sexual misconduct probe

Hollywood veteran Frank Langella has been fired by Netflix from its upcoming limited series "The Fall Of The House Of Usher" following an investigation into his alleged misconduct on set.

The 84-year-old actor was cast to play Roderick Usher in the eight-episode horror project, inspired by multiple Edgar Allan Poe tales.

However, the role will be recast, even though the show was about halfway through production. The scenes that were filmed with Langella will now be reshot, reported Deadline. Netflix and Langella have not yet commented on the investigation or the allegation that was levelled against the actor.



Family members of martyrs of the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre pay their tribute on the 103rd anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre at the memorial in Amritsar on Wednesday. The Amritsar massacre, also known as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, where on April 13, 1919, British Indian Army soldiers opened fire on an unarmed gathering, killed at least 379 men, women and children according to official records. **PHOTO-PRABHJOT GILL**



Chief Justice of India N. V. Ramana visits the Partition Museum in Amritsar on 14th April. PHOTOS-PRABHJOT GILL

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