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**DELHI AIRPORT STARTS CONDUCTING TRIALS OF FULL-BODY SCANNER AT TERMINAL 2**

# GST collections up 56 pc to Rs 1.44 lakh cr in June

GST collections in June witnessed a 56 per cent year-on-year increase to over Rs 1.44 lakh crore on economic recovery and better anti-evasion measures, the finance ministry said on Friday.

Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections in June, 2021 stood at Rs 92,800 crore. Speaking at the GST Day

celebrations, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Rs 1.44 lakh crore is the "rough bottom line" for monthly GST revenue collections.

This is the fifth time that the monthly GST collections crossed the Rs 1.40-lakh-crore mark since inception of GST and fourth month at a stretch since March 2022,



the ministry said in a statement.

During June, revenues from import of goods were 55 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transactions (including import of services) were 56 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year.

The total number of e-way bills generated in the month of May 2022 was 7.3 crore, which is 2 per cent less than 7.4 crore e-way bills generated in the month of April 2022, the ministry added.

GST collections in May was Rs 1.41 lakh crore and in April hit a record high of Rs 1.68 lakh crore.

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**FINMIN ASKS BANKS TO EXPLORE FINTECH PARTNERSHIP, CO-LENDING OPPORTUNITIES**

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**ALIA BHATT AND RANBIR KAPOOR EXPECTING FIRST CHILD**

**Govt hikes gold import duty to 15 per cent**

The government has hiked gold import duty to 15 per cent from 10.75 per cent to check current account deficit (CAD) and rising import of the yellow metal. The duty changes came into effect from June 30.



Earlier, the basic customs duty on gold was 7.5 per cent, now it will be 12.5 per cent. Along with agriculture infrastructure development cess (AIDC) of 2.5 per cent, the effective gold customs duty will be 15 per cent. There has been a sudden surge in imports of gold. In the month of May, a total of 107 tonnes of gold was imported and in June also the imports have been significant. The surge in gold imports is putting pressure on the current account deficit, the finance ministry said.

**Encounter between ULFA(I)-security forces in Assam**

A suspected ULFA(I) cadre was killed in an encounter with security forces in Kapopathar area of Assam's Tinsukia district on Friday, a police officer said. Five members of the group managed to escape. Tinsukia superintendent of police Debojit Deuri said, There was a group of six militants holed up in a house. In a joint operation by the police and army, one militant has been killed. The deceased has been identified as ULFA(I) member Gyan Asom, Deuri said. Another official said the area near the house where the encounter took place had been cordoned off and a search operation was on for the militants who managed to flee.

**Forex reserves rise by USD 2.73 bln to USD 593.323 bln**

The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by USD 2.734 billion to USD 593.323 billion for the week ended June 24 on the back of a surge in the core currency assets, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had declined by USD 5.87 billion to USD 590.588 billion.

In the week ended June 24, the forex reserves swelled due to an increase in Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs), a major component of the overall reserves, and also in gold reserves, RBI said. FCA increased by USD 2.334 billion to USD 529.216 billion, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by RBI. Expressed in dollar terms, FCAs include the effect of ap-



preciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Value of the gold reserves

surged by USD 342 million to USD 40.926 billion. Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were up by USD 55 million to USD 18.21 billion for the week ended June 17, RBI said. The country's reserve position with IMF rose by USD 3 million to USD 4.97 billion in the reporting week.

**GST Council defers tax on casinos, lottery**

**CHANDIGARH:** The GST Council on Wednesday deferred decision on levying a 28 per cent tax on casinos, online gaming, horse racing and lottery pending more consultations with stakeholders, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

A group of ministers headed by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma has been asked to consider submissions of stakeholders again on the valuation mechanism and submit its report by July 15, she told reporters here.

The council will meet again in the first week of August to



decide on the issue, she said. A two-day meeting of the panel considered a report of the GoM but deferred a decision as Goa and some others wanted to make more submissions. The GoM had recommended that online gaming should be taxed at the full value of the consideration, including the contest entry fee paid by the player on participating in the game.

**Heavy rains in parts of Delhi**

Parts of Delhi received heavy rains on Thursday morning bringing respite from sweltering heat and humid weather, as the mercury settled at 27.6 degrees Celsius in the morning.

Delhi had reeled under sultry weather on Wednesday when the maximum temperature was recorded at 40.9 degrees Celsius, four notches above the season's average. Conditions are favourable for the monsoon to reach the capital either on Thursday or Friday, the India Meteorological Department earlier said.

According to the IMD, Delhi is likely to receive its first monsoon showers on Thursday or



Friday. On Tuesday, the minimum temperature had settled at 28.8 degrees Celsius. The national capital received rainfall in parts of south Delhi area like East of Kailash, Burari in northwest among others places, Shahdara, Patparganj in east Delhi and ITO crossing and India Gate in central Delhi.

**Udaipur murder: CM Gehlot to meet victim's family**

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot will meet family members of Kanhaiya Lal, who was brutally murdered in Udaipur on Tuesday, even as the curfew continued in the city on Thursday.

Mobile internet services also remained suspended. The chief minister is scheduled to arrive in Udaipur in a special plane at 1 pm. He will meet the family members, official sources said.

Gehlot will be accompanied by the minister of state for home Rajendra Yadav, chief secretary Usha Sharma, DGP ML Lather and other senior officials, the sources said. At the same time, members of Hindu outfits are planning to take out a rally from Town Hall to the Collectorate in protest against the gruesome murder. The call of the rally



has been given by 'Sarv Samaj'. Heavy deployment of police is there in Udaipur for maintaining law and order and two Additional Director General, one Deputy IG and other senior officials are camping in the city to monitor the situation. Kanhaiya was hacked to death by two Muslim men who entered his shop in the city's Dhan Mandi area posing as customers.

**Making me CM is masterstroke of Fadnavis: Eknath Shinde**

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has said his elevation to the top post is due to the masterstroke by BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis.

People thought that the BJP was desperate for power. But truly, this is a masterstroke by Devendra ji. To hand over power to another person despite having larger numbers (of MLAs) requires a big heart. With his decision, people of the state and the country got to see a new example of this large heartedness, Shinde said after he and Fadnavis were sworn in as CM and Deputy CM respectively at Raj Bhavan Thursday evening.

The party with the most numbers has the claim to the chief minister's post. But in this case, I would like to thank PM



Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, J P Nadda and specially Devendra Fadnavis, who showed a big heart and gave this chance to a Shiv Sainik, Shinde told a TV channel. Shinde said the previous stint of Fadnavis as chief minister will come in handy as he leads the state. Fadnavis joined this ministry due to the directives of his (party) seniors. I am happy for this because his experience will come in handy in speeding up developmental works in the state, Shinde said.

**Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain's judicial custody extended**



A court here on Monday extended by two weeks the judicial custody of Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain, arrested by the ED in a money laundering case. Special Judge Geetanji Goel passed the order on a plea moved by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) seeking extension of Jain's custody after the AAP leader, who is hospitalised, appeared through a video conference. Earlier during the day, the judge refused to entertain the plea noting that neither Jain nor any lawyer representing him was present before the court during the proceedings.

**Yashwant Sinha files nomination for prez poll**



**NEW DELHI:** Opposition presidential candidate Yashwant Sinha on Monday filed his nomination papers for the July 18 election, with a host of leaders including Rahul Gandhi, Sharad Pawar, Akhilesh Yadav and Farooq Abdullah accompanying him.

Significantly, TRS leader K T Rama Rao, the son of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrababhan Naidu was also present when Sinha filed his papers.

However, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha was not represented as Jharkhand's ruling party is yet to decide on whom to support in the presidential poll. Sinha handed over four sets of nomination papers to Rajya Sabha Secretary General P C

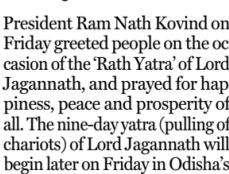
Mody, who is the returning officer for the presidential election.

After filing the nomination papers, Sinha paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi and B R Ambedkar at their statues inside Parliament complex.

Sinha, a former bureaucrat and a union minister during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, was decided as the joint candidate for the presidential election on June 21 at a meeting of several opposition leaders.

He is likely to launch his campaign from June 28 from Chennai in Tamil Nadu and will cover the southern states of Kerala and Karnataka as well during his first round of campaigning.

**Prez greets countrymen on Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra**



President Ram Nath Kovind on Friday greeted people on the occasion of the 'Rath Yatra' of Lord Jagannath, and prayed for happiness, peace and prosperity of all. The nine-day yatra (pulling of chariots) of Lord Jagannath will begin later on Friday in Odisha's Puri. Similar yatras will be taken out in other parts of the country. Hearty congratulations and best wishes to all the countrymen on the auspicious occasion of Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath. I wish that with the blessings of Mahaprabhu Jagannath, there should be happiness, peace and prosperity in everyone's life, Kovind tweeted in Hindi.

**PM Modi lauds GST on marking 5 years**

The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has lauded the GST on marking 5 years and said that this is a major tax reform that furthered 'Ease of Doing Business' and fulfilled the vision of 'One Nation, One Tax'. In response to a tweet by MyGovIndia, the Prime Minister said;

**Assam flood situation grim, over 30 lakh affected**



Assam's flood situation remained grim with eight more people losing their lives while a population of over 30 lakh are affected.

Most parts of Cachar district headquarter town Silchar remained waterlogged. The toll due to floods and landslides this year increased to 159 with eight more people dying in six districts Nagaon, Lakhimpur, Barpeta, Biswanath, Dhemaji and Morigaon, according to a bulletin issued by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

One person was also reported missing in Cachar district.

He also asked them to prepare lists of damage by July 15. We are committed to ensure relief and compensation to all affected people and no genuine person should be left out of the lists to be made by the deputy commissioners, he said.

The task force for damage assessment must also submit the list of affected livestock and other damage by August 8 so that compensation could be cleared by August 15, Sharma said.

Our government will also provide Rs 1,000 to students whose study materials were damaged by floodwaters, he said.

In Silchar, several areas are still waterlogged and the situation is still critical with a shortage of food, drinking water and medicines being faced by the affected people.

Cachar Deputy Commissioner Keerthi Jalli said that continuous work was going on to repair the damaged portion of the dyke breached at Bethukundi which led to the waterlogging in the town.

**SEBI fines Rs 11 cr on NSE, others in algo trading case**

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Thursday imposed penalties totalling Rs 11 crore on 8 entities, including National Stock Exchange (NSE) and its former chiefs Chitra Ramkrishna and Ravi Narain, in a case pertaining to software related to algorithmic trading.

The regulator has levied a fine of Rs 1 crore each on NSE, Ramkrishna and Narain. Also, a fine of Rs 1 crore has been imposed on Suprabhat Lal, who was a NSE official at the time of violation.

Also, the regulator slapped a penalty of Rs 3 crore on Ajay Shah, who was on the board of NSE's subsidiary NSSCL, Rs 2 crore on Infotech Financial Services Ltd, a company which was in the business of developing algorithmic software and selling it to market participants. A fine of Rs 1 crore each has been imposed on the latter's directors -- Sunita Thomas and Krishna Dagli. Sunita Thomas is the wife of Suprabhat Lal and sister-in-law of Ajay Shah.

The case relates to NSE not awarding the contract for com-



puting Liquidity Index (LIX) to its own specialised subsidiary, IISL. The contract was awarded to Infotech indicating the undue support provided by the exchange to Infotech and Ajay Shah.

Further, NSE and its then officials -- Narain and Ramkrishna -- failed to take cognizance of the issues of conflicts of interest with respect to Ajay Shah, Sunita Thomas, Suprabhat Lal and Infotech.

"Ajay Shah, Infotech, Sunita Thomas and Krishna Dagli have collusively worked to fulfil their commercial goals by fraudulently using the data that was obtained by them from NSE to develop algo trading software," Sebi said in its 86-page order.

**Army, Navy begin recruitment under Agnipath scheme**

**JOIN THE INDIAN ARMY. FULFILL YOUR DREAM OF SERVING THE COUNTRY AS AGNIVEER. REGISTRATION OPEN FOR AGNIPATH RECRUITMENT SCHEME FROM JULY 1**

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian Army and Navy began their recruitment processes under the Agnipath scheme on Friday, the defence ministry stated.

The Indian Air Force had on June 24 started its recruitment process under the scheme and it received 2.72 lakh applications till Thursday, the ministry said.

Violent protests against the scheme had rocked several states for nearly a week after it was unveiled on June 14 and opposition parties demanded its rollback. The Ministry of Defence on Friday said on Twitter, "Registration for Agniveers in Indian Navy begins from Friday."

"Join the Indian Army. Fulfill your dream of serving the

**LG invites heads of J&K political parties for meeting**

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has invited heads of all political parties of Jammu and Kashmir for a high-tea at Raj Bhawan in the evening today for discussions on the smooth conduct of Amarnath Yatra, which is commencing on June 30 and other issues.

The LG Sinha, a local news agency said, sent invitations to all political parties of the union territory for a meeting at 6 pm. Sinha was in Jammu to flag off the first batch of Amarnath Yatra pilgrims from Jammu base camp toward the cave shrine in Kashmir today morning. Those invited to the meeting include BJP state president, Ravinder Raina, NC president Dr Farooq Abdullah, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, People's Conference chairman Sajad Lone, Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari, CPI(M) leader Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, JKPC president G A Mir, PDF president Hakeem Mohammad Yaseen and several others.



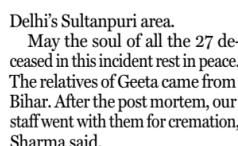
Over a month since a blaze ripped through a building in Mundka here killing 27 people, Geeta Devi, the victim last to be identified, was cremated by her relatives on Wednesday, a senior police officer said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer) Sameer Sharma said that last rites of Geeta Devi were performed in a cemetery in northwest

**Mundka fire: Last remaining victim cremated by relatives**

Delhi's Sultanpuri area. May the soul of all the 27 deceased in this incident rest in peace. The relatives of Geeta came from Bihar. After the post mortem, our staff went with them for cremation, Sharma said.

In a picture shared by police, a policeman is seen helping in the funeral of the deceased. Earlier, police had said that the



body of Geeta Devi was kept in the hospital, as she was an orphan and her husband too had died. She did not have any children.

The Forensic Science Lab had initially faced difficulty in confirming her identity due to unsatisfactory results from the blood samples collected from her "siblings", but at length she was connected with her relatives, who cremated her.



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# Delhi govt discontinues rebate on circle rates

Property transactions in the city will become costlier as the Delhi government has decided to discontinue the 20 per cent rebate on circle rates from July 1, officials said on Thursday.

The decision was taken by the government as the impact of the Covid pandemic has subsided and the economy of the city is recovering fast, they said.

"The competent authority has decided to discontinue the relaxation of 20 percent in circle rates beyond June 30. The circle rates notified on September 20, 2014 will be applicable from July 1," said an order issued by the revenue department of Delhi government. The Arvind Kejriwal government had introduced the rebate scheme in February 2021 to revive the economy and help people hit by the impact of the Covid lockdown.



June 30 by the government in December last year. According to revenue department officials, properties in Delhi are divided into eight categories from 'A' to 'H'. While posh areas fall under the 'A' category, the least developed areas come under the 'H' category. Under the government's rebate scheme, the existing circle rate of land in 'A'

category areas had gone down from Rs 7.74 lakh per square metre to Rs 6.19 lakh, the officials said.

In 'H' category areas, the circle rate was reduced from Rs 23,280 to Rs 18,624 per square metre, they said. The circle rates, in square per meter, of the eight categories as notified in 2014 are Rs 7.74 lakh for 'A', Rs 2.46 lakh

for 'B', Rs 1.60 lakh for 'C', Rs 1.28 lakh for 'D', Rs 70,080 for 'E', Rs 56,640 for 'F', Rs 46,200 for 'G' and Rs 23,280 for 'H' category.

"The revenue department was asked by the minister in-charge to suggest if the rebate needed to be extended or discontinued. It was found that the economy is recovering with all its segments returning back to the pre-Covid levels with increased revenue generation," said a senior government officer. The rebate of 20 per cent was allowed to all categories of properties in housing, commercial and industrial segments to revive the real estate sector and help recovery of industrial and trade activities, he said.

The scheme was successful as it raised the numbers of property transactions and increased stamp duty revenue despite the 20 per cent rebate on circle rates, officials said.

# First monsoon showers in Delhi



The first monsoon showers drenched Delhi on Thursday morning, providing respite from the oppressive heat.

However, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) is yet to declare the arrival of the monsoon in the capital.

"An official statement will be made after reviewing the rainfall data in the region," a senior IMD official said.

The MeT office had earlier said the monsoon would reach

the capital on Thursday or Friday.

ange alert, warning of heavy rainfall in some areas in the city on Thursday and moderate rainfall on Friday. The maximum temperature will come down to 34-35 degrees Celsius.

Last year, the IMD had forecast that the monsoon would arrive in Delhi nearly two weeks before its usual date. However, it reached the capital only on July 13, making it the most delayed in 19 years.

Weather experts say a gap of three to five days is considered normal.

According to IMD data, the monsoon covered Delhi 29 times in June and 33 times in July in the last 62 years.

The IMD had in 2020 revised the date of monsoon arrival in Delhi from June 29 to June 27.

Weather experts have said the monsoon is expected to yield good rainfall in Delhi in the first 10 days and help cover the rain deficit.

From June 1, Delhi has received just 24.5 mm of rainfall against the normal of 74.1 mm till Thursday morning.

# Delhi Police produces Md Zubair before court



Delhi police on Tuesday produced Alt News co-founder Mohammed Zubair before a court here in a case related to an objectionable tweet he had posted in 2018 against a Hindu deity. The police produced Zubair before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Snigdha Sarvaria on the expiry of his one-day custodial interrogation. The court is likely to begin hearing a police plea for Zubair's custody for five more days.

# Udaipur Tragedy: 32 IPS officers including Udaipur IG & SP transferred



In a major reshuffle in Rajasthan, 32 IPS officers including Inspector General (IG) and Superintendent of Police (SP) of Udaipur, where a tailor was brutally killed, have been transferred, according to the state department of personnel. Kanhaiya Lal was killed Tuesday afternoon by two cleaver-wielding men, Riaz Akhtari and Ghouse Mohammad, who posted a grisly video of the crime online claiming responsibility for the beheading. SPs of 10 districts including Udaipur have been transferred in the list issued by the department late on Thursday night. Udaipur IG Hinglaj Dan was removed and posted as IG civil rights. Praful Kumar, IG ATS was made the new IG of Udaipur. At the same time, SP Udaipur Manoj Kumar was transferred to second battalion of Rajasthan Armed Constabulary (RAC) in Kota. Vikas Kumar, who was Ajmer SP, will now take charge of the new SP in Udaipur. Jodhpur Police Commissioner Navjyoti Gogoi was transferred to Rajasthan Police Academy (RPA) as IG. Ravindutt Gaur, IG Kota, has been made the new Police Commissioner of Jodhpur.

# Agnipath rocks Bihar assembly

Bihar Assembly was adjourned till 2 pm, less than half an hour after commencement of proceedings on Monday, when the House plunged into turmoil over an adjournment motion against Agnipath moved by the opposition which also, called the scheme a dictatorial step by the Prime Minister. Proceedings began at 11 am, amid vociferous demands by opposition MLAs that the adjournment motion of Lalit Yadav (RJD) and Ajeet Sharma (Congress) be accepted right away. Speaker Vijay Kumar Sinha initially pleaded that the matter be raised after the Question Hour was over but allowed Yadav and Sharma to read out the text of the motion to pacify the opposition. Nonetheless, opposition MLAs, many of whom trooped into the well shouting slogans, remained adamant that legislative business for the day be put off and a debate be held on the new scheme of recruitment in armed forces. This met with disapproval from parliamentary affairs minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary who said "an adjournment motion is either accepted or rejected outright. You extended them a rare favour by allowing them to read out the text. Now this unruly behaviour leaves us bewildered". Slogan chanting continued and when some members shouted "down with the Prime Minister's dictatorship", Deputy CM Tarkishor Prasad rose in his chair to object.



# Delhi airport starts conducting trials of full-body scanner at Terminal 2



The Delhi airport started conducting trials of a full-body scanner, which detects objects on passengers without any pat-down search, at its Terminal 2 on Tuesday.

"Full-body scanners can detect non-metal objects, which

are hard to detect with the conventional door frame metal detector, Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) said in a statement.

DIAL has installed a full-body scanner at the security check area for trials, it said.

# Desire to become powerful by few leaders making Congress in Haryana weak



SATISH HANDA

Desire to become powerful as well as silent war between groups of senior party leaders making Congress weak in Haryana state day by day as such party high command unwillingly had to earlier replace former HPCC president Dr Ashok Tanwar with Kumari Shejla, followed by now replaced Shejla with Uday Bhan an active member of former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda's group which made Hooda group more powerful bringing Shejla on back foot but this dirty political game took another turn when Shejla once again have come to power with the appointment as member of All India Congress Committee by K.C. Venugopal AICC General Secretary as per new direction in party politics recently. People in Haryana state are well aware of leg pulling witnessed between senior Congress political leaders in the state since past few years due to conflict going on between Hooda and Shejla groups as a result Congress failed to win 2019 Vidhan Sabha polls and lost power again in the state with few seats and BJP had alliance with newly born political party Janhit Janta Party able to win 10 seats to form government in Haryana state. Congress lost 2019 polls due to rift between leaders of Hooda and Shejla groups when members of rival groups spoke against each other in poll rallies which not only attracted headlines in the newspapers but also proved harmful for the party when HPCC president Dr Ashok Tanwar had to say good bye to Congress but political war between senior Congress leaders continued resulting replacement of HPCC presidents Shejla also with Uday Bhan at present.

# Haryana Tourism introducing new techniques to keep alive its 44 tourist complex

SATISH HANDA

Most of the tourist complex in Haryana run by Haryana Tourism Corporation are struggling for life since past many years but the situation became bad to worst in past couple of years due to epidemic outbreak spread in the state as well as in the country due to limited number of visiting tourists in this period when most of these complex became almost sick when state government made proposal to lease out such units in private hands. Sources reveal, no satisfactory response against this proposal was received in spite of the fact all such complexes in the state are nicely constructed having high profile infrastructure due to overall severe slump in hotel industry in the country during this period when large number of



hotels were forced to close down their shutters.

According to Neeraj Kumar Director General Haryana Tourism Corporation, out of total number of 44 tourist complex in Haryana state 37 tourist complex are meeting expenses including salaries to the staff at their own at present and state tourism department has now introduced

several welfare schemes to attract visitors in Haryana tourism complexes and keep them alive. Overall scenario reveals that collapsing hotel industry has now started witnessing nearly 70% improvement in Haryana state and tourism complexes in the state, too, has started earning revenue to meet expenses including staff salaries.

# Moosewala case: Gangster's father says lawyer boycotting his son

Jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi's father on Monday moved the Supreme Court challenging various orders, including the transit remand order of a Delhi court, in the murder case of singer Sidhu Moosewala and also complained that lawyers in Punjab have boycotted his son and are not willing to represent him.

A vacation bench of Justices Surya Kant and JB Pardiwala was told by advocate Sangram Singh Saron that they have challenged the orders of the Punjab and Haryana High Court and of a Delhi court granting transit remand but since no lawyer in Mansa court in Punjab is taking up Bishnoi's case, he had approached the top court.

The bench said this is absolutely unjustified and the petitioner can approach the high court to provide Bishnoi legal aid counsel.

These legal aid counsels cannot refuse the case or they would be delisted from the panel, the bench said, asking the counsel to approach the Punjab and Haryana High Court to provide them legal aid counsel.

Saron submitted that he is challenging the order of Delhi court for transit remand as it is contrary to certain directions passed by the top court on Bishnoi's petition.

The bench said, Since the Punjab Police is investigating the case, it is at a very nascent stage. It would not be appropriate for this court to interfere at this stage. It noted the murder has tak-



en place in Mansa, Punjab and therefore it is the jurisdiction of Punjab Police to investigate the case and they can very well take him (Bishnoi) on remand. The bench agreed to hear the plea of Bishnoi's father on July 11.

On June 14, a Delhi court here had granted Punjab Police the transit remand of Bishnoi to take him to Punjab in the Moosewala killing case. The court had passed the order as Punjab Police produced Bishnoi before it after formally arresting him in the case.

It had directed the state police to produce Bishnoi before the Chief Judicial Magistrate in Mansa court in connection with the case. The Punjab Police had said the killing of Moosewala seemed to be the result of an inter-gang rivalry and that the Bishnoi gang was involved in it.

Moosewala was shot dead on May 29 by unidentified assailants in Punjab's Mansa district, a day after the state government curtailed his security cover. His cousin and a friend, who were travelling in a jeep with him, were also injured in the attack.

# Four nabbed with Rs 59L worth foreign currency at IGI



The CISF has apprehended four people and seized foreign currency worth Rs 59 lakh from them at the Delhi international airport.

The interception of three passengers and an accompanying visitor at the terminal-3 of the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport was done on June 28, a senior CISF officer said.

A total of 2,19,740 Saudi Riyals and USD 15,200 worth about Rs 59 lakh was recovered from a tiffin box kept in the registered baggage of the passengers who were travelling to Dubai.

The four were later handed over to customs officials for further investigation, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) officer said.

# NDMC bans road cutting in its area due to rainy season

New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has decided to ban road cutting in its area in view of the ensuing monsoon season, officials said on Friday. The ban will be enforced from July 1 to September 30. "We have decided to ban road cutting in NDMC area in view of the monsoon season. It will be applied to all the essential utilities except as required for emergency work with prior approval of the competent authority," a senior NDMC official said.

# Justice Sharma takes oath as CJ of Delhi HC



Justice Satish Chandra Sharma on Tuesday took oath as the Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court here. Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena administered the oath to Justice Sharma at a ceremony in the Raj Niwas, the L-G's secretariat. Justice Sharma had earlier served as the Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court.

# Woman duped of Rs 20 cr, accused nabbed



A 70-year-old man was arrested from Shahdara for allegedly duping a woman of Rs 20 crore in the grab of investing in his granite mine in Rajasthan, police said on Tuesday.

The accused has been identified as Pradeep Paliwal, a resident of Vasant Vihar, they said. He was also wanted in four other cases and duped people to the tune of around Rs 100 crore, police said.

In January 2014, Paliwal assured complainant Shakuntala to invest Rs 20 crore in his business of granite mining in Rajasthan and assured that he would pay her Rs 50 lakh per month, police said.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was executed between them on February 28,

2014. On March 3, 2014, Paliwal got executed a sale deed in respect of 1.4 hectares land in Bhilwara district, Rajasthan in favour of the complainant for consideration of Rs 21 lakh, a senior police officer said.

The accused failed to fulfill his promise to the complainant, following which a case was registered. Paliwal cheated the complainant of Rs 20 crore, the officer said.

During investigation, Paliwal was nabbed near Cross River Mall, Karkardooma in Shahdara, along with his associate Vinayak Bhatt.

Bhatt was handed over to CBI as he was wanted in a CBI case, Joint Commissioner of Police (EOW) Chhaya Sharma said.

# Big fishes likely to be trapped in vigilance net in Rs 200 crore fraud

SATISH HANDA

State Vigilance Bureau has written to higher authorities in the state seeking permission to take action against and arrest of senior bureaucrats including in the ranks of IAS and HPS allegedly involved in Rs 200 crore recent fraud in the office of Municipal Corporation Faridabad detected by vigilance team during investigation in the case in which police has already arrested two persons registering case against Raman Sharma Chief Engineer and Deepak a Junior Engineer both were arrested produced in the court and remanded to police remand for three days.



According to vigilance department officers, the involvement of few other senior officers has been suspected in this fraud and a letter has been written to higher authorities in the state seeking permission to take action against such bureaucrats also involved in this fraud. Investigation by state vigilance department team revealed that payments worth crores of rupees were released to the contractor as well as suppli-

ers by the Municipal Corporation officers on the basis of fake bills without work done or goods received by municipal corporation having no fear of consequences in this regard.

The issue was strongly raised in Vidhan Sabha session by Neeraj Sharma NIT Faridabad Congress MLA supported by other MLAs from different political parties in opposition in Vidhan Sabha raising a question over increasing corruption cases in government offices all over in the state and also referred nearly half dozen corruption cases in which embezzlements of funds was reported in construction of government building by PWD

(B&R) department officers released amount worth rupees hundreds crores on the basis of fake bills and ruling BJP-JJP government took no stern action for recovery of amount from alleged accused except their services suspended as such all these projects are lying incomplete half way causing huge loss to the state government. MLAs from political parties in opposition in Vidhan Sabha accuse ruling BJP-JJP government in the state taking no stern action against the accused involved in corrupt practices except related files are moving from one table to another and situation turning bad to worst.

# IIM Udaipur awards Post Graduate Diploma to 37 students at the 1st Annual Convocation



FW DESK

Indian Institute of Management Udaipur hosted the first Annual Convocation for its Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration for Working Executives - PGDBA-W (Batch of 2020-22) on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2022 at its pristine 300 acre campus at Balicha, Udaipur. The Convocation Address was delivered by Arun Mishra, CEO, Hindustan Zinc Limited, who was the Chief Guest of the Convocation. The concluding address was delivered by Prof Janat Shah, Director, IIM Udaipur.

# NITI Aayog Launches Report on India's Gig and Platform Economy

NITI Aayog today launched a report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy'. The report was released by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery, CEO Amitabh Kant and Special Secretary Dr. K Rajeswara Rao.

The report is a first-of-its-kind study that presents comprehensive perspectives and recommendations on the gig-platform economy in India. The report provides a scientific methodological approach to estimate the current size and job-generation potential of the sector. It highlights the opportunities and challenges of this

emerging sector and presents global best practices on initiatives for social security and delineates strategies for skill development and job creation for different categories of workers in the sector.

Speaking on the occasion, NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery said, "This report will become a valuable knowledge resource in understanding the potential of the sector and drive further research and analysis on gig and platform work." CEO Amitabh Kant highlighted the job creation potential of this sector given rising urbanization, widespread access to



internet, digital technologies and smartphones in India. He said, "The recommendations in this report will serve as a crucial resource for ministries, state governments, training provid-

ers, platform companies and other stakeholders to work in collaboration for promoting growth and employment opportunities in this sector."

Special Secretary Dr. K

Rajeswara Rao presented the key findings and recommendations of the report. The report estimates that in 2020-21, 77 lakh (7.7 million) workers were engaged in the gig economy. They constituted 2.6% of the non-agricultural workforce or 1.5% of the total workforce by 2029-30. Gig workers are expected to expand to 2.35 crore (23.5 million) workers by 2029-30. Gig workers are expected to form 6.7% of the non-agricultural workforce or 4.1% of the total livelihood in India by 2029-30. At present, about 47% of the gig work is in medium skilled jobs, about 22%

in high skilled, and about 31% in low skilled jobs. Trend shows the concentration of workers in medium skills is gradually declining and that of the low skilled and high skilled is increasing.

To harness the potential of the gig-platform sector, the report recommends accelerating access to finance through products specifically designed for platform workers, linking self-employed individuals engaged in the business of selling regional and rural cuisine, street food, etc., with platforms to enable them to sell their produce to wider markets in towns and cities.

# Ban on single-use plastic kicks in from July 1

As the ban on certain single-use plastic items kicks in from Friday, state governments will initiate an enforcement campaign and close down units engaging in production, distribution, stocking and sale of such items, Union Environment ministry officials said.

Violation of the ban will invite punitive action, including a fine or a jail term or both, detailed under Section 15 of the Environment Protection Act (EPA) and under bylaws of respective municipal corporations, they said.

For effective enforcement of the ban, national and state-level control rooms have been set up and special enforcement teams formed to check illegal manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of banned SUP items, officials in the ministry said. States and Union Territories have been asked to set up border checkpoints to stop the interstate movement of any banned SUP items.

The Central Pollution Control Board has also launched a grievance redressal application to empower citizens to help curb the use of plastic. Officials said plastic used for packaging in the FMCG sector is not banned but will be covered under the



Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) guidelines. The EPR is a producer's responsibility to ensure environmentally-sound management of the product until the end of its life.

According to the CPCB, India generates around 2.4 lakh tonnes of SUP per annum. The per capita SUP production is 0.18 kg per year. On August 12 last year, the ministry had issued a notification prohibiting manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of identified SUP commodities, including polystyrene and expanded polystyrene from July 1, 2022.

The identified SUP items include earbuds, plastic sticks for balloons, flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocool), plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoons, knives, straws, trays, wrapping or packaging films around sweets boxes, invitation cards, cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners of less than 100 microns, and stirrers.

# ASSOCHAM observes 'National Doctors' Day to create awareness on transplant surgeries and organ donation

FW DESK  
New Delhi

The country's leading industry body, Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) marked National Doctors' Day with an awareness session: 'Transplant Surgeries & Organ Donation' which was attended by eminent doctors in the city. A part of the Illness to Wellness campaign, the main goals of the session was to spread awareness and provide accurate information about organ and tissue donation and transplant procedures to enable people to live healthier, happier, and more successful lives.

Anil Rajput, Chairperson of the ASSOCHAM CSR Council in his introductory remarks said, "tech innovations such as robot assisted kidney and liver transplant, path breaking innovations in various organ care along with modern medicines are pushing the boundaries of medical science in organ transplantation procedures which are not only supporting health-care systems to respond to this increasing demand but are also helping to save precious lives globally."



# Rahul Gandhi's 3-day Kerala visit from July 1



A week after activists of SFI, the students wing of ruling CPI(M), vandalised his office, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi will visit his constituency Wayanad on Friday, party sources said here.

During his three-day visit, Gandhi will attend various programmes in his constituency including inauguration of a farmers bank's building in Mananthavady and UDF Bahujana Sangamam in Sulthan Bathery, they said on Thursday.

Gandhi, who will reach Kannur International Airport on Friday morning, will be received by the Congress leaders led by KPCC Chief K Sudhakaran.

He will return to Delhi from Kozhikode on Sunday.

# Mild tremors felt again in Karnataka

Mild tremors were felt for the third day in a week at a few places in Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada district in the small hours of Friday, official sources said. Locals said they were woken up from their sleep at around 1.15 am by a loud noise accompanied by the earthquake. The tremors were felt in Sampaje, Guttigar, Ubaradka, Goonaka, Elimale, Sullia town and surrounding areas. The series of earthquakes in the area have panicked the local population. An earth quake with a magnitude of 2.3 on the Richter scale was recorded in the region on June 25, followed by a quake on June 28 which were felt twice on the day. The morning quake on June 28 was of 3.0 intensity on the Richter scale, while the other in the evening measured 1.8.

# Man gets 20 years RI for forcible sex on teen girl in Karnataka



A special fast-track court for Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases here has sentenced a man to undergo 20 years rigorous imprisonment for forcibly having a physical relationship with a 17-year-old girl. He was accused of promising to marry the girl and then forcibly having sex with her. The IIIrd additional fast-track court judge Ishrath Jehan, who pronounced the sentence recently, also found the man guilty of rape for which he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of Rs 5,000.

# Election for Vice President on Aug 6: EC

The election for the post of vice president will be held on August 6, the Election Commission said on Wednesday. The notification for the election to decide the successor of M Venkaiah Naidu will be issued on July 5 and the last date for filing of nomination papers will be July 19. The scrutiny of nomination papers will be done on July 20 and the last date for withdrawal of candidature is July 22. The election will be held on August 6 and the votes counted on the same day. Members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, including nominated members, form the electoral college for the vice presidential election.

# Keep the momentum intact till 2024 Lok Sabha election: Mayawati

Appreciating the performance of her party candidate in the bypoll in Azamgarh Lok Sabha seat, the BSP president Mayawati on Monday asked her party workers to keep the momentum till the general election in 2024.

She also asked her office bearers and workers to protect members of a particular community from being misled in the electoral battle of 2024.

"The determination and courage with which all the BSP workers, office bearers and party candidate Shah Alam alias Guddu Jamali have fought the Azamgarh Lok Sabha bypoll need to be maintained till 2024 Lok Sabha general elections as part of the resolve while maintaining election readiness," Mayawati said in a tweet in Hindi.

In another tweet, she said, not only Azamgarh, but BSP's struggle and efforts have to be continued in the entire UP to convert the groundwork into votes. In this sequence, it is also important to protect a particular community from being misled in the upcoming elections," she said.

Mayawati had on Sunday said that the outcome of the bypoll has proved that only BSP has the "ground force"



to defeat the BJP in the state. The UP bypoll results has once again proved that only BSP has the 'ground force' to defeat BJP here. The party's effort to prove this to the entire community will continue, so that the much awaited political change can take place in the state," the BSP chief said.

She tweeted, "The ruling party wins most of the bypolls, yet the tough fight the BSP has given to the ruling BJP and SP in Azamgarh is commendable. All the party workers have to move forward with more strength."

The BSP contested only in Azamgarh bypoll. Party's candidate Shah Alam alias Guddu Jamali stood third with 29.27 per cent votes there. BJP candidates won both the Azamgarh and Rampur seats in the bypoll, the counting for which were held recently.

# National Doctors' Day : Nation's health needs to be first priority: Mandaviya

"It is our duty to keep our nation's health as the first priority as envisioned by our prime minister," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on the occasion of National Doctors' Day on Friday.

Lauding the medical fraternity for its selfless service, Mandaviya, who chaired the Doctors' Day Celebration at Lady Hardinge Medical College, said, "Our physicians and medical professionals have played a crucial role in our lives. Celebrating this day on July 1 every year is one such effort to recognise their immense role."

As part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to celebrate India's 75th year of Independence, Man-



daviya said the government is also felicitating stalwarts from the medical fraternity, who are more than 75 years old, for their dedication and contribution, a health ministry statement said. Doctors' Day is observed in

honour of noted doctor and former West Bengal chief minister Bidhan Chandra Roy, whose birth and death anniversaries coincide on July 1. Calling upon the medical community to take inspiration from Dr Roy, Mandaviya said, "It is our pious duty to keep the health of our nation as the first priority." "Health is seen as a 'seva' (service) in our country and our medical professionals have followed our country's tradition of 'Seva bhav' and 'Seva Parmo Dharma' by working tirelessly and selflessly. This was the sole reason our Covid warriors rose to the occasion and performed their duty in a selfless manner," he added.

# 'More than 50% of patients delay cataract surgeries in India'

FW DESK

Cataract is the leading cause of vision loss in the country; however, it is treatable with a simple procedure with over 98% success rate. According to the research done by the National Eye Institute, it has been found that 9 out of 10 people who undergo cataract surgery get clear vision. Cataract also most commonly affects people in the age group of 40 and above. On the

occasion of Cataract Awareness Month, Pristyn Care has launched "The Great Indian Cataract Survey Report" which aims to create awareness and promote holistic eye-care. The survey was conducted with over 1000+ respondents across metros as well as the data analyzed by the Pristyn Care Data Lab on cataract surgeries performed till now.

According to the survey, more than 50% of Indians are de-

laying cataract surgeries. Most common misconceptions include losing eyesight, painful procedures, or a long recovery period when it comes to cataract surgery. Among the top criteria for undergoing cataract surgery, 52% of Indians choose specialized, highly experienced surgeons, 41% opt for advanced technology, and 26% make the decision based on the location of the surgery, i.e. Eye hospital and clinic.

# Second Phase of Goal Programme for uplifting tribal communities through digital entrepreneurship launched

Arjun Munda, Minister of Tribal Affairs launched the second phase of the Going Online As Leaders (GOAL) program. The programme is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Meta (Facebook). GOAL 2.0 initiative aims to digitally upskill 10 lakh youth by on promoting entrepreneurship amongst tribal communities of the country and opening up opportunities for them using digital technology.

Speaking on the occasion, Munda said that the people that



are being developed by GOAL programme are giving leadership to their communities and this programme is becoming a silent revolution. The Union Minister added that the resources held by our communities can now be harnessed with

modern tools to empower the tribal communities.

Arjun Munda said that connecting and skilling, developing potential and making a change in the lives of their communities - these are the basic goals of this programme. These are ambitious targets and would aim to reach and empower 10 lakh people directly and many more people through them, he added.

Through this program, the identified GOAL participants will have access to Meta Busi-

ness Coach - a WhatsApp based learning bot - that will give the participants an opportunity to learn skills on how to build and grow their business using Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. To empower the participants to play an active role in the digital economy, the program will also include Facebook Live sessions in 9 languages by master trainers on topics like Anti Scamming education, staying safe online, how to combat misinformation and being a good digital citizen.

# Cong pays tributes to Narasimha Rao on birth anniversary

The Congress on Tuesday paid tributes to former prime minister P V Narasimha Rao on his 101st birth anniversary, saying his contributions to the nation shall always be remembered.

Rao, a veteran Congress leader who served a full five year term after taking over as prime minister in 1991, is credited with liberalising the Indian economy and effecting transformational changes.

"On his birth anniversary, we honour the former Prime Minister of India, P. V. Narasimha Rao. He is credited with doing away with the Licence Raj in India, and ushered the country into an era of economic reforms. His contributions to the nation shall always be remembered," the Congress said on its official Twitter handle.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel also paid tributes to Rao and hailed his contribution to the country. Senior Congress leader and former Union minister Shashi Tharoor tweeted, "Change is the only constant": Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's catchphrase as he ushered in dramatic changes in India's foreign policy in the guise of continuity."



# SC to hear plea alleging attacks on Christian institutions, priests

The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear on "re-opening day itself" a plea alleging a rising number of attacks on Christian institutions and priests across the country and seeking the implementation of earlier apex court guidelines to curb hate crimes.

On an average, 45 to 50 violent attacks take place against Christian institutions and priests every month throughout the country, senior advocate Colin Gonsalves said. In May this year itself, 57 cases of violence and attacks on Christian



institutions and priests took place, he added.

What you are saying is unfortunate, if it is happening. What we can ensure is that your matter is listed on the re-

opening day itself," a vacation bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and J B Pardiwala said when Gonsalves mentioned the plea and sought its listing for urgent hearing.

# India's marine product exports record an all-time high in FY 2021-22

India shipped 13,69,264 MT of seafood worth Rs 57,586.48 crore (USD 7.76 billion) during 2021-22, despite heavy odds. During the FY 2021-22, the export improved in rupee terms by 31.71%, in USD terms by 30.26% and in quantity terms by 19.12%. In 2020-21, India had exported 11,49,510 MT of seafood worth Rs 43,720.98 crore (USD 5,956.93 million).

K N Raghavan, Chairman, Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), said India managed to do all time high exports worth US\$ 7.76 billion with volume of 13,69,264 MT of seafood, despite the several



challenges in its major export markets caused by the Covid pandemic.

Frozen shrimp remained the major export item in terms of quantity and value. Frozen shrimp, which earned Rs 42,706.04 crore (USD

5,828.59 million), accounted for a share of 53.18 per cent in quantity and 75.11 per cent of the total dollar earnings. Shrimp exports during the period increased by 31.68 per cent in USD value and 23.35 per cent in quantity.

# Natural disasters need a long-term planning

BY NARVIJAYYADAV

Some troubles catch us unprepared, while some natural disasters are well known to the state governments, central government, local administration, and common citizens also. Warnings are issued in advance, yet year after year natural disasters such as floods keep coming, devastating the states and its people. Assam - the largest state of Northeast India, suffers every year the tragedy of horrific rains and incessant floods. Everyone knows that there will be floods during the monsoon season. This has been happening for decades. The floods are also so severe that delivery of relief material becomes a big task for the armed forces and NDRF. Millions of people become homeless and get upset because every time their property gets ruined helplessly. Houses get submerged in the flood water, as is happening this time again in Assam and elsewhere. Floods continue to wreak havoc in 28 districts of the state of Assam, with Silchar district being the most affected, where more than one lakh people are trapped on the second or third floors of their houses, or on the roofs, as the lower floors are submerged in flood waters and are completely submerged. Moreover, thieves come stealthily in boats and flee after robbing closed shops and houses.

In Assam, the Indian Air Force is providing necessary help to citizens in flood-hit areas as part of a flood relief drive, but food packets and water bottles are running out as the demand is ever-growing. The Air Force is in need of more water bottles and food packets that are being dropped from helicopters. Relief materials are not reaching the needy people properly, who say that black marketing is at its peak in the area. There is a bottle of drinking water being sold at an exorbitant price of Rs 500 each, while a simple candle is selling at Rs 50 each. There is no electricity in the flood-



affected areas in Assam, so in the dark of night, the candle becomes the support of the suffering people. When the tragedy of floods repeats itself every year, and everyone knows about it, then why not some long-term plans are worked out to combat the misery? The state government should think about it along with the central government. So that the citizens there do not have to be a victim of floods every year.

Something similar is the case with Uttarakhand, where the Char Dham Yatra is at its peak, but some flaws have been found in the all-weather road built for this journey leading to Kedarnath and other spiritual destinations in the Himalayas. Geologists and other experts opine that several water bodies were buried under the debris. Due to which water is seeping into the huge stationary rocks and reaching inside, due to which there is a danger of the rocks slipping down. Now think for yourself that the vehicles which are passing through the all-weather road, including cars, buses, and others, are in maximum danger. Rocks can fall from above at any time and major accidents can happen at any time. Experts have warned the state government about this upcoming danger. Scientists know a lot about this. It seems that everything will continue like this until some major accident happens.

For the next two-three days, the Meteorological Department has issued a high alert regarding heavy rain in Uttarakhand, as there is a possibility of rain and storm. That is why those going on Char Dham Yatra are being stopped for two-three days at least. They

are being forbidden to go ahead and are being warned not to proceed on the path of Char Dham Yatra. Along with Uttarakhand, an alert of heavy rain and storm has also been issued in Himachal Pradesh. The possibility of incidents like heavy rains, landslides, stone-falls, road blockades, and power outages have increased across the state. Monsoon has almost arrived in the state and it is expected that from June 27, the monsoon will be fully active in Himachal Pradesh. That's why people have been asked to be careful.

Meanwhile, in the entertainment industry of India, there were no specific rules and regulations in place regarding the presence of young children in acting and shooting projects, which caused many kids the utmost inconveniences and troubles. Children used to suffer from mental stress and anxiety. For this, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has issued a draft paper, which states that the shooting of TV programs and feature films should not make young children work for more than 27 days a day, and 20 percent of their income should be deposited in fixed deposit (FD) accounts. Minor children who are acting, participating in TV, film, or reality shows, or participating in any entertainment show and are part of shooting often miss school classes, and their studies suffer a lot. Such children should be supported in their education by employing private tutors for them.

The writer is a senior journalist & columnist, views are personal

## Even after 5 years, GST remains a work in progress

The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council met over two days this week — its first ‘regular’ meeting after a nine-month break — with much on its plate, stemming from four ministerial groups’ recommendations to fix various aspects of the indirect tax regime that remains a work in progress five years on. It ratified three of the four reports, put off one for further deliberations based on concerns flagged by a State, with a commitment to reassemble and resolve the impasse holistically in little over a month. A new ministerial panel is being tasked with figuring out the long-pending constitution of an appellate tribunal for GST disputes, to move ahead. Based on an ‘interim’ report of a panel to rationalise tax rates, exemptions have been scrapped on several items and rates altered for others to correct inverted duty structures. This may translate into higher prices on many goods and services (and reductions for a few) from July 18, although their impact on inflation is difficult to ascertain. However, a larger restructuring of the GST’s multiple rates’ structure, with an increase in levies to bolster revenues that have fallen short of expectations, partly due to rate cuts earlier effected as electoral tools, has been put off. With inflation expected to remain buoyant, that exercise may have to wait longer. Apart from the fine print of the Council’s decisions, which include tighter norms on the horizon for registering new firms and closing of tax evasion loopholes, there is a more critical takeaway. That the deliberations were constructive and not combative, especially amid the brewing trust deficit between the Centre and States in the past few meetings and the prolonged pause since it last met, bodes well for the necessary next steps to make GST deliver on its original hopes. All said, the Centre and States need to plan their fiscal math better.

### LETTERBOX

Readers’ feedback adds value to the newspaper. Please email comments on reports, features and columns to [fwletters@gmail.com](mailto:fwletters@gmail.com). We will publish them on this page.

“Every day may not be good... but there is something good in every day.”

ALICE MORSE EARL

## THE FINANCIAL WORLD

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TARA KARTHA EXPLAINS HOW INTRA-AFGHAN TENSIONS MAY AFFECT INDIAN PROJECTS IN KABUL

## The challenges in Afghanistan

India’s record as a ‘first responder’ is improving by the day. Just 24 hours after a massive earthquake hit Afghanistan, the Indian Air Force moved in with tonnes of relief. That is impressive. It is also badly needed, given that the worst earthquake in 20 years hit a region that has been at war for decades. Desperate people are always open to adopting any means to survive. Apart from India, other countries will soon weigh in with aid. This might be the time to either make friends or renew hostility with old enemies.

The massive earthquake was centred around Khost along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, and measured 5.9 on the Richter Scale. Clearly, the Pakistan side would have suffered as well, though there has been no reportage on this in the Pakistani media. Like other news from the tribal areas, this one also appears to have been damped down. The proximity to the affected area also meant that Pakistan was able to send relief aid quickly. Trucks decked with banners entered Afghanistan declaring that the aid was from “the people of Pakistan”. Iran also sent relief material by air. Both these efforts and the Pakistan Foreign Ministry’s statement expressing condolences were reported by Xinhua. There was nothing about India’s effort. There was also nothing on Qatar, which is in negotiations to manage Kabul, Kandahar and Herat airports.

Stressing “historical and civilizational relationship ties” with the Afghan people, Delhi announced the arrival of a technical team to “closely monitor and coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders” for the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. This followed the arrival of a delegation led by a senior official to Afghanistan. Afghan officials welcomed not only aid, but called for the restarting of small projects across the country. Prior to this, there were reports that Indian aid was being hoarded and diverted back to Pakistan. This meant that only a fraction of some 50,000 MT of wheat



and medicines was actually reaching the country. Delhi seems to have asked for aid to flow through the Iranian route, instead of across Pakistan, so that it would reach Afghanistan. Iran is on board, as was evident during Foreign Minister Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian’s recent visit to Delhi, where issues discussed included provision of aid to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, countries are responding to the United Nations’ appeal for aid. That includes Taiwan, which has offered \$1 million despite not being a member of the world body due to Beijing’s objections. Japan, South Korea, and the UAE have also responded to the UN’s appeal. The U.S. and its primary agency, the United States Agency for International Development, made brief and similar statements without making any specific commitment. U.S. aid stands at \$512,208,314 in the current financial year, after the U.S. Treasury Department broadened the types of activities authorised under U.S. licences, and the UN Security Council allowed sanctions exemption for delivery of humanitarian aid. However, the U.S.’s response indicates the difficulties involved given the broken Afghan banking and financial systems and lack of infrastructure. A range of institutions is involved in actual aid delivery, and U.S. instructions

are that all aid should be in cash, since no banks will do business or accept letters of credit to the Afghan central bank (DAB). UN organisations also provide cash, and aid agencies have long had to use reliable local hawala networks for transfers. The main benefit to this is that money is spent within the country, rather than in physical aid sourced from the neighbourhood. The trouble is that a notoriously strait-jacketed Finance Ministry will never agree to large-scale Indian aid being spent in this manner. Cash transfers to the DAB are possible, but its own reach to the furthest parts of the country is doubtful.

While ‘buy local’ may work with food and immediate aid, the requirements for reconstruction, particularly in the present case, will have to be sourced from Pakistan. Pakistan cement companies such as Lucky Cement made their fortunes out of U.S. construction in Afghanistan, of everything from airfields to culverts, when operations were ongoing. A 2004 study reported not just the huge amounts of money being made by all those concerned, but also revealed that Afghan companies were being sidelined in favour of Turkish or Chinese ones in the country.

Also, most UN activity for Afghanistan is slotted through Pakistan. U.S. listings show that major UN agencies and the Interna-

tional Organization for Migration are present in Pakistan, where they are funded to source supplies. This includes smaller NGOs such as Red Crescent or the hundreds of others operating on the ground. Any Indian attempt at reconstruction has to take this reality on board. India also needs to encourage Afghan cement plants and related industries, and ensure optimal use of coal, which is now being exported to Pakistan at cheap prices.

Then there exists the ever-present issue of security, which was apparent from the recent attack on a gurdwara in Kabul, apparently by the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K). The IS-K is a group of many parts, with a presence in the north, along the Pakistan border, and in Kabul. In the north, the Russians accuse the Americans of assisting the group, while in Kabul, the IS-K’s worst attack was against withdrawing U.S. troops in August 2021. In recent times, IS-K has become strongly anti-India, along with al-Qaeda, which put out a video where chief Ayman Al Zawahari was seen praising a Karnataka girl for defending the hijab. Even more vicious language was used in the threat made against Nupur Sharma, former BJP spokesperson, for her controversial remarks against the Prophet. A recent UN report notes that both groups are operational, and may see increased recruitment of young men with no alternatives.

India has around 400 projects in all the 34 provinces of Afghanistan. With the Taliban offering protection to foreign embassies, and acting quickly in the recent gurdwara bombing, it is possible that the Indian effort will continue unimpeded. It is also important to remember that the Taliban have never actively been anti-India. Difficulties in implementation are more likely to arise from intra-Afghan tensions rather than any hostility to India.

Tara Kartha is former officer from the National Security Council Secretariat, where she served for nearly 20 years, working largely on Pakistan and Afghanistan. Views are personal



FAISAL C.K. EXPLAINS HOW THE IMMUNE SYSTEM OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA CAN BE REINVIGORATED

## A dose of humour & democracy is much needed

Humour is ubiquitous; it bursts out even in the face of death. Niccolò Machiavelli, Italian political mastermind, cracked a joke before his last breath: “I desire to go to Hell and not to Heaven. In the former I shall enjoy the company of popes, kings and princes, while in the latter are only beggars, monks and apostles!” As a double-edged sword, humour is capable of inducing light-hearted moments and heavy thoughts. It is a mighty weapon in political and social discourse, an example being Socrates and his subtle and scorching critiques of decaying Athenian society and politics.

Like the glory that was Greece fell apart, the wonder that is India is in danger of imploding. India’s constitutional cornerstone, which is the Rock of Gibraltar of the Republic, is being shaken. The darkness of totalitarianism seems to be falling upon the edifice of our Republic. We can either cry over the evidence of the downfall of the beloved country or crack jokes to detonate the darkness.

Arvind Narrain, in his book, India’s Undeclared Emergency: Constitutionalism and the Politics of Resistance, is of the opinion that India is slouching towards a totalitarian future. He observes: “the ambitions of a totalitarian government are far wider and its abilities far deeper than those of an authoritarian one. A totalitarian rule goes beyond retaining total control over the State to trying to ‘politicize the masses’ and shaping individuals in accordance with its ideology. It draws its strength and support not just from its control over the levers of the State but also from organizational



fronts which work at the societal level, aiming to transform society in terms of its ideology. A combination of these factors — of having an ideology as well as many organizational fronts — results in totalitarianism having an ‘appeal’, compared with the ‘generally passive acceptance of authoritarian regimes.’ India experienced an authoritarian regime during the Emergency. But the Republic’s metamorphosis into a totalitarian political system is a dark novelty that demands innovative paraphernalia for the politics of resistance.

In her Origins of Totalitarianism, Hannah Arendt discerned two contradictory popular responses towards totalitarianism — a mood of ‘reckless optimism’ and a belief in ‘unavoidable doom’. Arvind Narrain points out that in “India today, where the dominant mood in progressive circles is hardly one of ‘reckless optimism’, what one is left with is ‘reckless despair’. To find hope in the midst of this despair is difficult.” Here lies the weightiness of

humour. Humour can inspire hope, as hope is a powerful thing. It inspires us to do the impossible and helps us carry on during difficult times.

Three days after the Emergency, there was this obituary published among the classified advertisements in The Times of India, on June 28, 1975. It read: “O’Cracy, D.E.M., beloved husband of T. Ruth, loving father of L.I. Bertie, brother of Faith, Hope and Justicia, expired on June 26.” Journalist Ashok Mahadevan, then 26, punched the authoritarian regime with an obituary of 22 words that mourned the sad demise of democracy, along with its allied ideals of truth, liberty, faith, hope and justice. The death of democracy was duly dated in 1975.

In our times, constitutional democracy is inching towards a persistent vegetative state, a death without a date of demise, an obituary, mourning, and a funeral. ‘Operation Lotus’, a machination to torpedo elected governments in States, has become a quotidian affair and elections and democratic civility, in danger of becoming a black comedy. The citizenry cannot laugh at the Galloway speech of constitutional democracy; nor can it be a silent spectator.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “If I had no sense of humour, I would long ago have committed suicide.” He exposed the vanity and the pomp of the British Empire at the cost of India’s destitution by explaining why he had so little clothes on. In this example attributed to an event around the Round Table Conference in London, he said: “The king had enough [clothes] on for both of us”.

Anarchism and democracy are the anti-

theses and antidotes for totalitarianism. Anarchism conceives the state to be unnecessary and any form of government undesirable. It presumes that man is basically a rational, honest and just animal. Therefore, if society is organised properly, then there will be no room for any kind of coercion. It is a utopian ideology indeed but it has some practical relevance.

An anarchic vision of society is non-violent, self-managed and non-hierarchical. Anarchist thinkers hold dear to the ideal of democracy — rule by the people. “The State represents violence in a concentrated and organized form. The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence,” said Mahatma Gandhi, who was a blissful anarchist. Democracy would be perfected by imbuing some idyllic dreams from anarchism.

Anarchism and democracy espouse humour; whereas totalitarianism demands the silence of the grave. Works like The Good Soldier Švejk, by the Czech anarchist author, Jaroslav Hašek, which is a hilarious satire of military life, ridicules war and the state. So is Ivan the Fool by Leo Tolstoy who was a Christian anarchist, a pacifist who renounced the state as violent and deceitful. Charlie Chaplin’s film, The Great Dictator, and Sacha Baron Cohen’s film, The Dictator (2012), are black comedy films that underscore that humour can mercilessly humiliate totalitarian and authoritarian despots and debunk their larger-than-life image.

Faisal C.K. is an independent researcher interested in constitutional law and political philosophy. Views are personal

### BOOKS: REVIEW

## Chowringhee@60 defines popular Bengali fiction

The mobile phone that doubles as his headline kept ringing in novelist Mani Sankar Mukherjee aka Sankar’s first floor flat overlooking the busy Bondel Road, once an industrial suburb of the megacity and now a tony neighbourhood.

It’s just three days to go for the 60th-anniversary celebrations of his popular novel ‘Chowringhee’ and fans, fellow novelists and publishing executives have been calling up to ask about the iconic best-seller’s 122nd edition on the workings and intimate life behind the neon lights of a big city hotel in Kolkata, the quintessential cultural melting pot of the former British empire, which predated Arthur Hailey’s ‘Hotel’ by three years. The book, his second, which he

wrote some seven years after his debut novel, first came out as serialised fiction in the weekly Bengali magazine ‘Desh’ and was published on June 10, 1962 the day of his marriage, as a novel which over the decades has gripped the imagination of millions of readers not only in Bengali but also English, Hindi, Malayalam, French and Spanish. ‘Chowringhee’, Sankar told PTI was an “attempt to break the jinx and answer the taunt that I was just a one-book author”.

“I had for some time then been praying that the ‘one book author’ tag somehow be wiped off,” Sankar reminisced in an interview.

“Some said ‘one book authors’ are like potato plants nothing after the first harvest,” he said with a wry smile.

**‘The ditty stared me in the face... I discovered my ‘Chowringhee’ in my own experiences.’ the Sahitya Akademi award-winning author, who has used the little-known poem by AC Muffen as a starting point in his book’**

One day in the midst of a sudden shower as he stood in the awning of a book shop, Sankar kept looking at the bright neon signage of the Grand Hotel on Chowringhee Street and “it dawned upon me that



Chowringhee By Mani Sankar Mukherjee Atlantic Books; 416 pages; Rs 347

I knew the workings and intimate life of big hotels having interacted with virtually everyone at Kolkata’s Spence’s Hotel and Wilson’s Hotel where my former and late boss, the barrister Noel Barlow used to stay as a permanent guest”.

A short poem in one of the books he had bought also caught his attention - ‘Our life is but a winter’s day; Some only breakfast and away; Others to dinner and are full fed; The oldest man but sups and goes to bed; He that goes soonest has the least to pay.’

“The ditty stared me in the face... I discovered my ‘Chowringhee’ in

my own experiences,” the Sahitya Akademi award-winning author, who has used the little-known poem by AC Muffen as a starting point in his book, said.

Revolving around the larger-than-life Greek hotelier Marco Polo, debonair receptionist ‘Sata’ Bose, Scottish stripper Connie, the Goanese musician Gomez, Jimmy the steward, the author himself as a hotel clerk and hostess Kaberi at the fictional ‘Shahjahan’ hotel, it gave a peep into the lives and business intrigues of Kolkata’s top industrial families who stayed or entertained there, attaining cult status.

Ultimately the hotel where the rich and famous cut deals, had illicit affairs, met charlatans as they sipped Manhattans and watched cabaret artistes clothed only in balloons, changed hands with a business tycoon Aggarwala taking over the property. Sankar is among those who have to march out, replaced by an “attractive girl” at the front desk.

# Mukesh Ambani's Daughter Isha in a big role, after Son Akash Takes Over Jio

FW DESK

Isha Ambani is set to be named Chairman of the Reliance conglomerate's retail unit in another sign that her father, Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani, is pushing ahead with a plan for succession in one of Asia's richest families.

An announcement of Isha Ambani's elevation could come as early as Wednesday, according to people with knowledge of the matter, who asked not to be identified ahead of a formal statement. She is currently director of Reliance Retail



Ventures Ltd.

A representative for the group declined to comment. Isha Ambani's promo-

tion follows that of her twin brother, Akash Ambani, who was appointed on Tuesday as chairman of the telecom unit,

Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd. Isha and Akash have both been part of teams that negotiated Meta Platforms Inc.'s investment in the group.

Isha, 30, is an alumna of Yale University. The twins have a younger brother, Anant, 27.

Reliance Retail and Reliance Jio are subsidiaries of the family's oil-to-telecom conglomerate, of which the \$217 billion Reliance Industries Ltd. is the flagship firm. Mukesh Ambani is chairman and managing director of Reliance Industries.

# Toyota Kirloskar Motor gets 'TERI Water Sustainability Award'

KULBIR SINGH KALSI

Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM), well known in the corporate world for adhering to best industry practices and corporate social responsibilities (CSR), has added one more feather in its cap. TKM has been honoured with the prestigious 'TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute) Water Sustainability Award-2022' under 'Water Users in Industrial Sector' category. The award is a collaborative initiative of the IWA (International Water Association) and UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) India.

Expressing his delight over the recognition, Vivek Datta CEO and MD, Globe Toyota, said: "For us at Globe Toyota,



community around us. The increasing population and dependence on industrial products are causing a water crisis and since water is a shared resource, we all have a responsibility to use it consciously and conserve it."

Over the years, TKM has adopted sustainable business practices and transformed from a carmaker to a mobility company. In sync with our principle of 'Respect for the Planet,' Toyota globally announced the 'Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050' (TEC 2050) in October 2015 comprising six environmental challenges, he said.

Toyota's interventions are driven by community involvement, ownership, and awareness, the seeds of which are planted in their holistic engagement model.

# Indian direct selling industry crosses USD 3.25 Billion retail sales in 2021, ranks 12th globally



FW DESK

The Indian direct selling industry maintained its 12th place in global rankings with retail sales of over USD 3.25 billion in 2021, a report released by the Washington DC based World Federation of Direct Selling Associations (WFDSA) said.

India, besides, having an estimated a retail size of sales of over 3259 million also registered the highest CAGR of over 15.70 percent, over the last three years, among the top 15 direct selling countries. The country, despite of the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has shown to be resilient and sustainable and could realise an annualised growth of nearly 7.7 percent, the highest amongst the countries having estimated retail sales over USD 3 Billion, highlights the report.

Reports indicate that India, while at 12th place in the global rankings, placed 6th in the Asia Pacific region, while the top five positions are held by Korea, China, Japan, Malaysia and Taiwan. The United States continues to lead the list in the global direct selling industry with a 23 percent share, with sales of USD 42.67 Billion. Korea overtook Germany for second place, while the latter slid to third place. China, which ranked second in 2020, tumbles to fourth place due to COVID-19 and some other unrelated events. Japan, Malaysia, Brazil, Mexico, France, Taiwan and Canada are in the other top places above India respectively.

# Moody's changes Tata Steel's outlook to positive from stable



Moody's Investors Service has changed Tata Steel's outlook to positive from stable. The outlook change to positive shows the domestic steel giant's track record of delivering a solid operating performance while maintaining conservative financial policies and the likelihood that upward rating pressure will build over the next 12 months if the recent performance and credit metrics improvements are sustained. "Moody's Investors Service has changed the rating outlook on Tata Steel Ltd (Tata Steel) to positive from stable," the global rating agency has said in a statement. "Tata Steel's well-laid-out capital allocation policy that prioritises debt reduction over capital expenditure and new investments underscores our positive outlook," Kaustubh Chhabal a Moody's Senior Vice President said.

# Utkarsh Classes & Edutech to hire 500 people in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities



FW DESK

Utkarsh Classes & Edutech, one of India's premier e-learning platforms, has announced aggressive hiring plans for tier 2 & tier 3 cities by the end of FY22-23.

The company plans to recruit 500 people including senior leadership, educators, and people for their new sales and customer service team. The development is a part of its strategy which begins by providing quality and affordable education to young learners, preparing them for various competitive exams and school education courses, and finally creating potential job opportunities.

Utkarsh is aggressively focussed on hiring from Hindi-speaking states including Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh, and generating employment opportunities in smaller towns and cities.

# SP Group's Pallonji Mistry dies at 93

Shapoorji Pallonji Group's head Pallonji Mistry died at his residence here, company officials said on Tuesday. Mistry, the largest individual shareholder in the Tata Group with



a 18.4 per cent holding in the conglomerate, was 93. He died mid-sleep at his south Mumbai residence on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday, the officials said.

# AirAsia India to conduct recruitment drive for Cabin Crew in Uttar Pradesh

FW DESK

In line with AirAsia India's network expansion to Lucknow with daily direct flights connecting Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Goa, the airline announced a recruitment drive for Cabin Crew in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. Inviting applicants with a passion for delivering exceptional customer service, the airline has invited registra-



tions on website and social media handles. The recruitment drive

will take place at Taj Mahal, Lucknow on Sunday, 3rd July 2022. The recruitment drive

# Cosmo Films appoints Justin Glass as President for N-America operations

FW DESK

Cosmo Films Limited, a Global Leader in Films for Packaging, Labelling, Lamination and Synthetic Paper and an emerging player in Specialty Chemicals, Polymers & Pet care, appointed Justin Glass as President for their business operations across North America. In his new role, Justin will be responsible for devising growth strategies and expanding business in the North American region for the organisation.

In this new role, Justin will report to Kulbhushan Malik, Sr. Vice President and Head of International Operations, Cosmo Films Limited.

A seasoned business leader with over 25 years of experience, Justin comes to Cosmo Films with diverse experience and expertise in plastics and packaging industry. Justin started his career in plastic industry as a Process Engineer for Bi-axially oriented polypropylene (BOPP) tape films in the



extrusion & coating functions and moved on to various technical functions across several primary polymer markets. Justin holds 15 years of exper-

ience in handling commercial & finance related business strategies and planned execution for large multinational packaging manufacturers serving the food, consumer packaging, pharmaceutical & medical packaging verticals. In his past tenures, he has been associated with DS Smith as Director Commercial Operations; Klöckner Pentaplast as Commercial Director Americas - Food & Consumer packaging; and other organizations.

# Cabinet approves Deregulation of Sale of Domestically Produced Crude Oil

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved 'Deregulation of Sale of Domestically Produced Crude Oil', whereby Government has decided to cease allocation of crude oil and condensate w.e.f. 01.10.2022. This will ensure marketing freedom for all Exploration and Production (E&P) operators. The condition in the Production Sharing Contracts (PSCs) to sell crude oil to Government or its Nominee or Government Companies shall accordingly be waived off. All E&P companies will now be free to sell crude oil from their fields in domestic market. Government revenues like Royalty, cess, etc. will continue to be calculated on uniform basis across all Contracts. As earlier, exports will not be permissible.

This decision will further spur economic activities, incentivize making investments in upstream



oil and gas sector and builds on a series of targeted transformative reforms rolled out since 2014. The policies relating to production, infrastructure and marketing of oil and gas have been made more transparent with a focus on ease of doing business and facilitating more operational flexibility to operators/industry. Government has carried out several progressive reforms in Exploration and Production (E&P) Sector in last eight years such as pricing and marketing freedom for gas, discovery of gas price through competitive e-bidding process, introduction of Revenue Sharing Contracts under Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP), etc.

# CBI raid at DRM office, 2 officers arrested taking Rs 1.5 lakh bribe

SATISH HANDA  
Ambala

Corrupt officers have not spared even railways department. CBI investigation team from Chandigarh conducted surprise raid at the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) office Ambala Cantt which continued for 13 hours till late night on Tuesday in which two officers including Indian Railway Service of Signal Engineer (IRSSSE) Vivek Kumar and his Chief Office Superintendent Praveen Kumar were arrested allegedly demanded and accepted Rs 1.5 lakh bribe from a contractor for release of payment against his bill. The complainant had produced video call recording demanding bribe prior to release of payment along with the complaint to CBI. However, CBI officer refused to say anything to media persons or allowed to collect photographs of arrested accuse. Both arrested accuse were produced in CBI court Chandigarh on Wednesday. According to information, a



complaint along with telephone recording had with Paveen Kumar demanding bribe for release of payment against bill was made to CBI which constituted a plan to trap IRSSSE officers in CBI net and handed over the amount to complainant enabling to arrest corrupt railway officers red handed while accepting bribe amount. CBI team first arrested Praveen Kumar, followed by the arrest of his boss Vivek Kumar and succeeded in their plan. CBI team seized all record files, copy of bills submitted by the contractor and all other files related to signal and tele call department. There was a complete silence in entire DRM office complex during CBI raid. According to information, few other railway officers are also suspected involved in this case.

# After 5 months, ONGC finally gets a director on HPCL board

After over five months, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has finally got a director appointed on the board of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd -- a firm it had acquired for Rs 36,915 crore.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on June 22, conveyed its consent for the appointment of Pankaj Kumar, Director (Offshore), ONGC as a director on the board of HPCL, according to regulatory filings by HPCL.

For over five months, ONGC had no representative on the board of HPCL -- a company in which it owns a 51.11 per cent stake since January 2018. HPCL for over one-and-a-half years -- between January 2018 and August 2019 -- did not recognise ONGC as its promoter despite the government selling its entire 51.11 per cent stake in the company to the oil explorer. It relented only after a rap from market regulator SEBI. ONGC got the right to appoint one director who HPCL called 'Government Nominee Director (Representative of ONGC)'. "Pankaj Kumar has been appointed as Government Director on the Board of



the company effective June 22, 2022," HPCL said in the filing.

Officials said ONGC has been nominating one of its directors as the nominee director. Prior to the latest appointment, its last nominee director was Alka Mittal, Director (HR) who was appointed to the HPCL board in April 2021. In January this year, Mittal was given additional charge of chairman and managing director of ONGC after the retirement of the incumbent. And following the past practice of the company that the chairman could only sit on the board of a subsidiary in the capacity as chairman and not as a director, Mittal resigned from the board of HPCL and Kumar was

nominated. HPCL promptly took note of it. In a filing on January 6, 2022, HPCL said: "Alka Mittal has tendered resignation from the position of the Government Nominee Director (Representative of ONGC) of the company effective January 05, 2022."

Officials said as per rules, Mittal also sent her resignation from the HPCL board to the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas -- the parent ministry of ONGC and HPCL. The ministry, however, rejected the resignation and asked Mittal to continue on the HPCL board for "strategic reasons", they said. ONGC thereafter approached HPCL for reinstatement but the company

# ONGC chopper falls into sea; 4 dead

Four persons, including 3 ONGC employees, died when a Pawan Hans helicopter with two pilots and seven others onboard fell into the Arabian Sea about 50 nautical miles from the Mumbai coast. The helicopter managed to stay afloat with the help of the attached floaters for some time, helping rescuers pull out all the nine people, a company official said. Four of them were unconscious and were airlifted in a Navy chopper to a hospital in Mumbai, where they were declared dead, he added.

said it wanted written instructions from the ministry as it had already accepted Mittal's resignation and changed its books, officials said, adding while the firms went into letter writing, HPCL's annual accounts for fiscal 2021-22, were approved without a nominee of its principal promoter.

# NTPC commissions India's largest floating solar plant in Telangana



FW DESK

NTPC Limited India's largest integrated energy company, has declared the commercial operation of the last part capacity of 20 MW out of 100 MW Ramagundam Floating Solar PV Project. Ramagundam Floating Solar PV Project is India's largest Floating Solar Plant commissioned by NTPC. The final part capacity of 20 MW out of 100 MW Ramagundam Floating Solar PV Project was declared commercial operation with effect from 00:00 hours of July 01, 2022. With this, the 100 MW floating solar power project is fully operational and is now the largest in the segment in the country. On achieving the milestone, Regional Executive Director (South) Naresh Anand congratulated Team Ramagundam and reiterated NTPC's commitment for renewable energy.

# 15 more firms selected under PLI scheme for white goods

As many as 15 companies, including Adani Copper Tubes, LG Electronics and Wipro Enterprises, with committed investment of Rs 1,368 crore, have been selected as beneficiaries under the PLI scheme for the white goods sector, the government said on Tuesday.

In March, the commerce and industry ministry had reopened the application window for its Rs 6,238-crore PLI scheme for white goods -- air-conditioners (ACs) and LED lights-- with an aim to accommodate more players as several firms had expressed interest in the initiative. Last year, as many as 46 firms, including Daikin, Panasonic, Syska and Havells, with committed investment of Rs 5,264 crore were selected in the first round of the scheme. In the second round, 19 companies had applied.

"After evaluation of the 19 applications received in the second round...15 applicants with committed investment of Rs 1,368 crore have been provisionally selected as beneficiaries,"



the commerce and industry ministry said. Four applicants -- Zeo Aircon with a committed investment of Rs 100 crore; EMM ESS Aircon (Rs 52 crore); Speedoffer India (Rs 18 crore); and SIMOCO Telecommunications (South Asia) Ltd (Rs 10.63 crore) -- are being referred to the Committee of Experts (CoE) for examination and its recommendations, it added.

The 15 firms selected include six for manufacturing AC components with committed investments of Rs 908 crore and nine

for LED light components with committed investments of Rs 460 crore. "These 15 companies will have total production worth Rs 25,583 crore over five years and generate additional direct employment of 4,000 persons," it said. The production linked incentive (PLI) scheme on white goods is designed to create a complete component ecosystem for ACs and LED light industry in India and make India an integral part of the global supply chains.

The ministry said the scheme is expected to lead to total production of AC and LED lights components of about Rs 1,22,671 crore over five years.

Briefing media on this, Anil Agrawal, Additional Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said that as a result of PLI, the domestic value addition in these segments is expected to grow from the current 15-20 per cent to 75-80 per cent.

He said the scheme and other regulatory measures including quality control orders, standards and labels had given a big boost to Make In India and Atmanirbhar Bharat in ACs and LEDs. The ministry said for ACs, companies will be manufacturing copper tubing, compressors, control assemblies, heat exchangers, among others. Similarly, for LED lights, chip packaging, drivers, light management systems and metalized films for capacitors will be manufactured in India.

On April 7, 2021, the Union Cabinet gave its approval to the scheme for these goods, to be

implemented over 2021-22 to 2028-29 with an outlay of Rs 6,238 crore.

The scheme extends an incentive of 6-4 per cent on a reducing basis on incremental sales for a period of five years subsequent to the base year and one year of gestation period. Applicants provisionally selected for the scheme include Adani Copper Tubes (with committed investment of Rs 408 crore), LG Electronics India (Rs 300 crore), Mitsubishi Electric India and Kaynes Technology India (Rs 50 crore each). The list also includes Jindal Poly Films (Rs 360 crore), Sahara Semiconductors Pvt Ltd (Rs 20 crore), Wipro Enterprises (Rs 12 crore), and Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals (Rs 10.15 crore). All the 61 applicants approved in both the rounds are expected to bring investments in component manufacturing ecosystem of ACs and LED Lights industry to the tune of Rs 6,632 crore and generate about 46,368 direct employment opportunities.

India needs to form Green Hydrogen Corridors: NITI Aayog

India needs to form Green Hydrogen Corridors and governments can look at providing grants to startups as well as support entrepreneurs to promote green hydrogen, NITI Aayog said on Wednesday. In a report titled 'Harnessing Green Hydrogen - Opportunities for Deep Decarbonisation in India', the Aayog also suggested that there is a need to facilitate investment through demand aggregation and dollar-based bidding for green hydrogen. "Three hydrogen corridors should be developed across the country based on state grand challenges... The governments can provide grants and loans to startups and projects, support entrepreneurs through incubators and investor networks, and put in place regulations that manage first-mover risks," the report said. The government can also use public procurement and purchase incentives (for green hydrogen) to create demand in niche markets and crowd in private investment, it added. The report suggested that the government should promote export of green hydrogen and green hydrogen-embedded products through a global hydrogen alliance. Green Hydrogen/Green Ammonia is defined as hydrogen/ ammonia produced by way of electrolysis of water using renewable energy, including renewable energy which has been banked and the hydrogen/ammonia produced from biomass. Most large economies including India have committed to net zero targets. The report predicted that hydrogen demand in India could grow more than four-fold by 2050, representing almost 10 per cent of global hydrogen demand.

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# FinMin asks banks to explore fintech partnership, co-lending opportunities

The Finance Ministry has asked public sector banks to explore fintech partnerships and co-lending opportunities to expand their business.

In the recently concluded performance review of PSBs by the Finance Ministry, sources said, lenders were asked to focus on technology and data analytics to push their lending.

The ministry also urged the heads of the public sector lenders to strengthen IT security systems and cybersecurity to check fraud. According to the sources, banks were asked to sanction loans for productive sectors to accelerate the revival of the economy facing headwinds, including the Russia-Ukraine war.

As per the RBI's latest data,



growth in lending by PSBs has improved significantly to 7.8 per cent in March 2022 from 3.6 per cent a year ago. Some of the PSBs recorded 26 per cent growth. Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) recorded a 26 per cent increase in gross advances to Rs 1,35,240 crore at the end of

March 2022. It was followed by the State Bank of India and Union Bank of India with 10.27 per cent and 9.66 per cent growth, respectively.

The Pune-headquartered BoM witnessed a 16.26 per cent deposit growth and mobilised Rs 2,02,294 crore

## No decision on extending GST compensation to states

The GST Council on Wednesday took no decision on extending beyond this month the compensation paid to states for revenue lost from the implementation of GST. Puducherry finance minister K Lakshminarayanan said all states sought an extension of the compensation mechanism, but no decision has been taken. A final decision is likely to be taken at the next meeting of the council in August. When a nationwide Goods and Services Tax (GST) subsumed 17 central and state levies from July 1, 2017, it was decided that states will be compensated for any loss of revenue from the new tax for five years.

at the end of March 2022. Union Bank of India was the second with an 11.99 per cent growth in deposits (Rs 10,32,102 crore), while Indian Bank recorded a 10 per cent rise to Rs 5,84,661 crore. The sources said banks were asked to expedite non-performing

assets (NPAs) resolution and focus on the recovery of bad loans. The meeting took stock of asset quality and business growth plans of banks, the sources said, adding that non-performing assets (NPAs) of Rs 100 crore and the recovery status were also discussed.

# Cabinet approves Computerization of Primary Agriculture Credit Societies

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved Computerization of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with the objective of increasing efficiency of PACS, bringing transparency and accountability in their operations; facilitating PACS to diversify their business and undertake multiple activities/ services. This project proposes computerization of about 63,000 functional PACS over a period of 5 years with a total budget outlay of Rs. 2516 crore with Government of India share of Rs. 1528 crore.

The Primary Agricultural Cooperative credit societies (PACS) constitute the lowest tier of the three-tier Short-term cooperative credit (STCC) in the country comprising of approx. 13 Cr. farmers as its members, which is crucial for the development of the rural economy. PACS account for 41% (3.01 Cr. farmers) of the KCC loans given by all entities in the Country and 95% of these KCC loans (2.95 Cr. farmers) through PACS are to the Small and Marginal farmers. The other two tiers viz. State Cooperative Banks (SCBs) and District Central Cooperative Banks (DCCBs) have already been automated by the NABARD and brought on Common Banking Software



(CBS).

However, majority of PACS have so far been not computerized and still functioning manually resulting in inefficiency and trust deficit. In some of the states, stand-alone and partial computerization of PACS has been done. There is no uniformity in the software being used by them and they are not interconnected with the DCCBs and STCCs. Under the able guidance of Shri Amit Shah, Honble Minister of Home and Cooperation, it has been proposed to computerize all the PACS throughout the Country and bring them on a common platform at National level and have a Common Accounting System (CAS) for their day to day business.

Computerization of PACS, besides serving the purpose of

financial inclusion and strengthening service delivery to farmers especially Small & Marginal Farmers (SMFs) will also become nodal service delivery point for various services and provision of inputs like fertilizers, seeds etc. The project will help in improving the outreach of the PACS as outlets for banking activities as well as non-banking activities apart from improving digitalisation in rural areas. The DCCBs can then enrol themselves as one of the important options for taking up various government schemes (where credit and subsidy is involved) which can be implemented through PACS. It will ensure speedy disposal of loans, lower transition cost, faster audit and reduction in imbalances in payments and accounting with State.

## Public Debt Management report for the quarter of January-March 2022

Since Apr-June (Q1) 2010-11, Public Debt Management Cell (PDMC), Budget Division, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, has been bringing out a quarterly report on debt management on a regular basis. The current report pertains to the quarter January-March (Q4 FY22).

During Q4 of FY22, the Central Government raised an amount through dated securities worth Rs 1,37,025 crore as against Rs 3,20,349 crore in Q4 of FY21, while repayments were at Rs 49,721.87 crore. The weighted average yield of primary issuances hardened to 6.66 per cent in Q4 FY22 from 6.33 per cent in Q3 of FY22. The weighted average maturity of new issuances of dated securities was higher at 17.56 years in Q4 of FY22 as compared to 16.88 years in Q3 of FY22. During January-March 2022, the Central Government did not raise any amount through the Cash Management Bills. The Reserve Bank did not conduct Open Market operations for government securities during the quarter. The net daily average liquidity absorption by RBI under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) including Marginal Standing Facility and Special Liquidity Facility was at Rs 6,44,100.99 crore during the quarter.

Total liabilities (including liabilities under the 'Public Account') of the Government, as per provisional data, increased to Rs 1,33,22,727.03 crore at end-March 2022 from Rs 1,28,41,996 crore at end-December 2021.

## Credit card spend crosses Rs 1.13 lakh cr in May: RBI

Credit card spending has crossed Rs 1.13 lakh crore in May compared to Rs 1.05 lakh crore in the previous month according to official data.

The month-on-month rise in spending through cards indicates a pick-up in economic activity. The latest data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) showed that 7.68 crore credit card holders spent about Rs 71,429 crore for buying online, while the amount was spent through swipes at Point of Sale (PoS) machines stood



at Rs 42,266 crore in May. In terms of the number of transactions, credit card payments were marginally lower online at 11.5 crore against 12.2 crore offline or at PoS machines. The trend also indicates that

cardholders are making higher value transactions online on an average than through offline means.

Credit card holders spent Rs 65,652 crore for buying online, while the amount spent through Point of Sale (PoS) machines was Rs 39,806 crore in April. As far as the debit card is concerned, the spending through PoS and online together was Rs 65,957 crore during the month. The spending through PoS was Rs 44,305 crore against e-commerce

spending of Rs 21,104 crore through the debit card in May. During the month, there has been an addition of about 20 lakh credit cards. The number of the card was 7.51 crore in April. HDFC Bank had the highest number of credit cards at 1.72 crore in May as the RBI lifted the ban on the issuance of new credit cards in March.

In terms of credit cards, HDFC Bank was followed by the State Bank of India (1.41 crore) and ICICI Bank (1.33 crore) at the end of May 2022.

## GST amongst most transformative tax reforms in India: ASSOCHAM



FW DESK

With completion of five years of introduction of the Goods and Services Tax, ASSOCHAM today said the GST is one of the most transformative tax reforms in India which has made life easier for tax-payers, removed tax-on-tax layers, helped the consumers and is steadily moving on a path of tax buoyancy as well. "Subsuming a slew of Central and state taxes and cesses, the GST has largely brought in the concept of single uniform tax throughout India, reaching a stable regime after traversing a five-year journey of learning and adapting to the unfolding requirements," ASSOCHAM Secretary General Deepak Sood said.

Sood added, "GST has proved to be a seminal reform that has resulted in a single and seamless market in different states of India for a vast majority of goods and services. In an economic legislation of such transformation, five years is not a long time and it is still work-in-progress, but GST reflects a true cooperative federalism amongst states with a wide diversity in economic and social conditions."

The ASSOCHAM leadership has been working closely with the Centre and the states right from the initial stages of the GST roll-out and continues to engage with the tax administrative authorities and the Finance Ministry for further refinement in the regime.

"Bringing states on board, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi showed a rare conviction to launch the GST on July 1, 2017 transforming the way India does business. One of the most transformative aspects of this taxation is formalisation of the entire value chain," Sood said.

## 47th GST Council: All rate changes will be made effective from 18th July, 2022



**CHANDIGARH:** The 47th GST Council met under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman here in Chandigarh today. The meeting was also at-

tended by Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Choudhary besides Finance Ministers of States & UTs and senior officers of the Ministry of Finance & States and UTs.

## Rupee gains 12 paise to close at 78.94 against US dollar

The rupee rebounded from its all-time low to close 12 paise higher at 78.94 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 78.99 against the greenback and fell to an intra-day low of 79.12.

It finally settled at 78.94, a rise of 12 paise over its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee had slipped 3 paise to close at a fresh lifetime low of 79.06 against the US dollar.

"The Indian government's effort of tightening exports of oil and imports of gold fell short to change the market mood as the participants re-



mained worried about capital outflows, risk-off sentiments and widening deficit," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

The recent decline in rupee has been roughly in line with other regional currencies.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 111.01 points or 0.21 per cent lower at 52,907.93, while the broader NSE Nifty declined 28.20 points or 0.18 per cent to 15,752.05.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was up 0.30 per cent at 105.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.79 per cent to USD 110.98 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors remained net sellers in the capital market on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,138.05 crore, as per stock exchange data.

## Gold jumps Rs 1,088 amid import duty hike

Gold in the national capital on Friday rose by Rs 1,088 to Rs 51,458 per 10 grams, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal finished at Rs 50,370 per 10 grams. Silver, however, fell by Rs

411 to Rs 58,159 per kg from Rs 58,570 per kg in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24-carat gold in Delhi surged by Rs 1,088 after India raised import duty on gold by 5 per cent," said Tapan Patel, Senior Analyst (Commodities) at HDFC Securities. In the international market, gold was quoting lower at USD 1,794 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 19.76 per ounce.



## PM extends best wishes to all Chartered Accountants on 'CA Day'

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has extended his best wishes to all Chartered Accountants on CA Day. Modi has also shared a video in which he had expressed his views on the importance of Chartered Accountants in the field of Economics. The Prime Minister tweeted, "A Chartered Accountant has an important role in our economy. On CA Day, best wishes to all Chartered Accountants. May they keep working hard in furthering growth and transparency in the economy."

## Core sector output expands by 18.1 per cent in May

The growth of eight core infrastructure sectors expanded by 18.1 per cent in May against 16.4 per cent in the year-ago period, according to official data released on Thursday.

The output of eight infrastructure sectors of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity had expanded by 9.3 per cent in April 2022, the data showed. In May, the output of coal, crude oil, refinery products, fertiliser, cement and electricity rose by 25.1 per cent, 4.6 per cent, 16.7 per cent, 22.8 per cent, 26.3 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively. Growth rate in the production of natural gas and steel slowed down by 7 per cent and 15 per cent in the month under review as compared to 20.1 per cent and 55.2 per cent, respectively in May 2021.

Cumulatively, during April-May 2022-23, the output of these eight sectors declined to 13.6 per cent as compared to 36.3 per cent during April-May 2021-22.

# Govt Imposes Cess of Rs 23,250 per Tonne on Export of Petrol & Diesel

Union government today slapped an export tax on petrol, diesel and jet fuel (ATF) shipped overseas by both private companies and imposed a windfall tax on crude oil produced locally by both private and state-owned companies.

"Special additional excise duty/cess has been imposed on exports of petrol and diesel at the rate of Rs 6 per litre on petrol and Rs 13 per litre on diesel," the government said. Crude prices have risen sharply in recent months and domestic crude producers sell crude to domestic refineries at international parity prices. As a result, domestic crude producers are making windfall gains.

Taking this into account, a cess of Rs 23,250 per tonne has been imposed on crude. Import of crude would not be subject to this cess, the government said. Crude is sold by domestic



producers at international parity price. This cess will have no adverse impact, whatsoever, on domestic petroleum products or fuel prices, the government said.

Further, small producers, whose annual production of crude in the preceding financial year is less than two million barrels will be exempt from this cess. Also, to incentivise an additional production over

the preceding year, no cess will be imposed on such quantity of crude that is produced in excess of last year's production by a crude producer.

The move comes as companies have been making a killing in exporting fuel to deficit regions such as Europe and the US in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The refiners are said to have processed

Russian crude oil available at a discount after it was shunned by the west, and exported fuel produced from it to Europe and the US.

The government further said that while crude prices have increased sharply in recent months, the prices of HSD and Petrol have shown a sharper increase. The refiners export these products at globally prevailing prices, which are very high. As exports are becoming highly remunerative, it has been seen that certain refiners are drying out their pumps in the domestic market, particularly in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

"In view of this, cesses equal to Rs 6 per litre on petrol and Rs 13 per litre on diesel have been imposed on their exports. These cesses would apply to any export of diesel and Petrol from the country," an official statement said.

## 423 infra projects show cost overruns of Rs 4.95 lakh cr

As many as 423 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overruns of more than Rs 4.95 lakh crore, as per a report.

According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, which monitors infrastructure projects of Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,568 projects, 423 reported cost overruns and as many as 721 projects were delayed.

"Total original cost of implementation of the 1,568 projects was Rs 21,59,802.67 crore and their anticipated completion cost is ...Rs 26,54,818.05 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,95,015.38 crore (22.92 per cent of original cost)," the ministry's latest report for May 2022 said.



According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till May 2022 is Rs 13,42,535.22 crore, which is 50.57 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. However, the number of delayed projects

decreases to 563 if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion. Further, it showed that for 569 projects, neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported. Out of the 721 delayed projects, 113 have overall delays in the range of 1-12 months, 121 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 350 projects for 25-60 months and 137 projects have been delayed for 61 months and above. The average time overrun in these 721 delayed projects is 43.34 months. Reasons for time overruns

as reported by various project implementing agencies include delay in land acquisition, delay in obtaining forest and environment clearances, and lack of infrastructure support and log-ages. Delay in tie-up for project financing, delay in finalisation of detailed engineering, change in scope, delay in tendering, ordering and equipment supply, and law and order problems are among the other reasons. The report also cited state-wise lockdowns due to COVID-19 as a reason for the delay in implementation of these projects.

# INTERNATIONAL

## PM Modi and President of the UAE, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan holds meeting during a brief stopover at Abu Dhabi

Prime Minister made a brief stopover at Abu Dhabi on his return from Munich today. Prime Minister called on President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. This was the first in-person meeting between the two leaders since August 2019 when Prime Minister visited Abu Dhabi last.

The main purpose of the visit was for Prime Minister to convey his personal condolences on the passing away of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan last month. Prime Minister conveyed his heartfelt condolences to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan as well as family members including H.H. Sheikh



Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan, National Security Advisor, H.H. Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Dy Prime Minister, H.H. Sheikh Hamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, MD, Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, H.H. Sheikh Abdullah

Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation among others. Prime Minister also congratulated Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on his election as the third President of the UAE and

becoming the Ruler of Abu Dhabi. Both leaders reviewed various aspects of India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership which they have carefully nurtured over the past few years. During their Virtual Summit on 18 February, both countries signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, which has since entered into force on 01 May. CEPA is expected to further boost trade and investment between both countries. Bilateral trade in FY 2021-22 was about USD 72 billion. UAE is India's third largest trade partner and second largest export destination. UAE FDI in India has continuously increased over the past few years and currently

stands at over USD 12 billion. During the Virtual Summit, both leaders had also released a Vision Statement which has laid the roadmap for bilateral cooperation in coming years in diverse areas including trade, investment, energy including renewable energy, food security, health, defence, skills, education, culture and people-to-people ties. Both leaders expressed satisfaction that India and UAE continue to forge closer partnership in these areas building on their close and friendly relations and historical people-to-people connect. India-UAE have a strong energy partnership which is now acquiring new focus on renewable energy.

## Defence Secretary & Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Defence for Strategic Affairs discuss ways to enhance bilateral defence cooperation

Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Defence for Strategic Affairs Ahmed A Aseeri called on Defence Secretary Dr Ajay Kumar in New Delhi on June 30, 2022. They discussed ways to enhance defence cooperation between the two countries. The Deputy Minister briefed the Defence Secretary about the 5th meeting of India - Saudi Arabia Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation (JCDC) that was held on June 29, 2022. The JCDC meeting was co-chaired by Joint Secretary (Armed Forces) Dinesh Kumar and Ahmed A Aseeri. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed the progress made in military-to-military engagements, including joint exercises, expert exchanges and industry cooperation. It was decided to



identify new avenues and examine areas of mutual interest for Joint Venture in order to enhance defence industry cooperation. Enhancing the scope and complexities of the existing joint naval exercises and expanding bilateral exercises in other domains were also discussed. It was agreed to hold the next meeting of JCDC in Saudi Arabia on mutually convenient dates in 2023. The JCDC is the apex body

between the Defence Ministries of India and Saudi Arabia to comprehensively review & guide all aspects of bilateral defence cooperation. The Deputy Minister also interacted with the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC). A Defence Industry interaction was also organised for the delegation in which a number of Indian defence industries participated.

## US abortion ruling could mean loss of other rights: Justin Trudeau

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warned Saturday that the US Supreme Court decision to overturn a constitutional right to abortion could lead to the loss of other rights and indicated his country would continue to allow Americans to get abortions in Canada. Trudeau called the court's decision "horrific" and voiced concern that the ruling could someday allow a rollback of legal protections for gay relationships, including the right for same-sex couples to marry. "We know that this is an extremely, not just scary, but disheartening time for so many women," Trudeau said at a news conference in Kigali, Rwanda, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

"Women for generations have fought for more rights in the United States, (only) to see this setback, to worry as well about how this can be expanded to more rights be taken away in the United States," he said. "This is a reminder of how we need to be



unequivocal in our defense of people's rights, in not taking anything for granted, in staying vigilant, and always standing up for woman's rights, for LGBT rights, for the rights of people who are disenfranchised and marginalized," he added. Asked if his government would help American women seeking abortions in Canada, Trudeau did not directly respond, but said: "Everyday Americans who find themselves in Canada access our health care system in Canada and that's certainly something that will continue" However the cost, the need to travel and to have a passport make that prohibitive for some Americans.

The ruling is likely to lead to abortion bans in roughly half of American states. Thirteen states, mainly in the South and Midwest, already had laws to ban abortion in the event Roe was overturned. Another half-dozen states have near-total bans or prohibitions after six weeks, before many women know they are pregnant. Trudeau vowed to continue to stand up for woman's rights in the U.S. and elsewhere.

"We have a commitment in Canada to ensure, first of all, that every woman has full, safe legal access to the full suite of sexual health and reproductive services, including safe and legal abortions and we've been working hard to increase access to women across the country," Trudeau said.

## As summit host, Spain urges NATO to watch its southern flank



members were not paying their due featured heavily in summit talks. Fast forward a dozen years, and the view looks very different from NATO headquarters in Brussels.

After Russia brought war close to NATO's eastern borders, the alliance has worked to provide Ukraine with an assortment of more powerful weapons and to avoid the very real risk of getting drawn into the fighting. But there appears to be a consensus among NATO members heading into the Madrid summit that while Russia remains concern No. 1, the alliance must continue to widen its view globally. Spain's position for an increased focus on the South is shared by Britain, France and Italy. In their view, the security challenges in Africa arise from a Putin apparently dead-set on restoring the imperial glories of Russia as well as from an expansive China.

Russia has gained traction thanks to the presence of its mercenaries in the Sahel region, a semi-arid expanse stretching from Senegal to Sudan that suffers from political strife, terrorism and drought. Each time I meet with NATO ministers, the support of the allies is total due to the instability that we see on the alliance's southern frontier and especially the situation in the Sahel region right now, Spanish Foreign Minister Jos Albares said. The Kremlin denies links to the Wagner Group, a mercenary force with an increasing presence in central and North Africa and the Middle East. The private military company, which has also participated in the war in Ukraine, has developed footholds in Libya, Mali, Sudan and Central African Republic.

It did not explicitly mention concerns about instability in Africa. At the time, the alliance viewed apathy as its biggest military threat; U.S. complaints that some European

## Biden, G-7 leaders huddle on energy, inflation, Ukraine war

President Joe Biden and his Group of Seven allies will huddle Sunday on strategies to secure energy supplies and tackle inflation, aiming to keep the fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine from splintering the global coalition working to punish Moscow.

Biden arrived in Germany's picturesque Bavarian alps early Sunday morning for the annual meeting of the leading democratic economies, where the reverberations from the brutal war in Ukraine will be front and centre in the discussion.

He and the allies aim to present a united front in support of Ukraine as the conflict enters its fourth month.

Biden will open his visit with a bilateral meeting with the sum-



mit's host, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, before spending the afternoon in both formal and informal settings with the leaders of Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the European Union.

John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said the summit will address problems such as

inflation and other challenges in the global economy as a result of Mr. Putin's war but also how to continue to hold Mr. Putin accountable and subject to constant consequences.

There will be some muscle movements, Kirby said from Air Force One as Biden flew to Germany. He declined to preview any announcements before the leaders met.

Among the issues to be discussed are price caps on energy, meant to limit Russian oil and gas profits that Moscow can put to use in its war effort. The idea has been championed by U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen.

A senior German official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with department

rules, said the U.S. idea of price caps was being discussed intensely, in terms of how it would work exactly and how it would fit with the U.S., EU, British, Canadian and Japanese sanctions regimes.

Officials were also to discuss how to maintain commitments to address climate change while also solving critical energy supply needs as a result of the war.

There's no watering down of climate commitments, Kirby said.

Biden is also set to formally launch on Sunday a global infrastructure partnership meant to counter China's influence in the developing world, which he had named Build Back Better World and introduced at last year's G-7 summit.

## Trade agreements with UAE and Australia are big opportunities for artisans: Goyal

The handicrafts sectors needs a fresh, ambitious vision that takes it new heights with ambitious targets, and the country should not be satisfied with the 29% increase in exports achieved in 2021-22, said Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Textiles, Commerce & Industry and Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution while delivering the address at the 23rd Handicrafts Export Awards Function here today.

Goyal said the increase in exports of handicrafts from 25,680 crore in 2020-21 to Rs. 33,253 crore in 2021-22 shouldn't be the benchmark as the sector has tremendous capacity to strengthen its export targets further. He called upon the award winners to stress on quality, consistency, design and branding to create an ecosystem where multifold increase in the sector could be made possible. Citing a number of examples including that of solar charkha, the textile minister urged the exporters to focus on innovation to drive the growth in the sector. He cited the rapid rise of Tiruppur, which had grown dramatically in recent decades and said exports of handicrafts could take a quantum leap.

He emphasized that Prime Minister, Narendra Modi is the brand ambassador of India's handloom sector as he is seen wearing some of the artistically woven clothes. He said that during PM's visit to other nations, mostly Indian handicraft products are gifted. Similar practice is being followed by nearly 200 Indian Missions abroad.

Goyal said that the Ministry of



Textiles has a database of 30 lakh artisans and if we could focus on increasing the income of the artisan by even Rs. 1000 per month, it could lead to transformation in their lives. He suggested that artisans can be linked with GeM. Also, the mandatory clause of GST registration could be worked upon so as to bring the artisans on board on e-commerce platforms. Emphasizing the big opportunity created by Free Trade Agreements with UAE and Australia, the textile minister suggested that the artisans could be provided a platform in the Dubai Expo Centre for showcasing their products and organizing buyer-seller meets.

He also complimented EPCH work for past three and a half decades to promote & boost exports.

The award function recognise exporters for their outstanding performance during the years 2017-18 and 2018-19. The evening saw a huge gathering of India's handicraft exporters from all parts of India along with Raj K Malhotra, Chairman, EPCH; Vice Chairman, EPCH - Kamal Soni; Rakesh Kumar, Director General, EPCH and Chairman, India Exposition Mart Ltd.; members of EPCH's Committee of Administration.

## Prime Minister Modi meets President of European Commission at G-7 Summit



Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the President of the European Commission, H.E. Ms. Ursula von der Leyen, on 27 June 2022 on the sidelines of the G-7 Summit in Schloss Elmau, Germany.

Prime Minister recalled President Von Der Leyen's productive visit to Delhi in April 2022 during the Raisina Dialogue. The leaders

## Prime Minister Modi meets President of European Commission at G-7 Summit

expressed happiness on the resumption of negotiations on the Trade, Investment and GI Agreements between India and EU. They reviewed India-EU engagements in various sectors, including digital cooperation, climate action and technology & innovation. Both leaders also exchanged views on contemporary global and regional developments.

## Prime Minister Modi holds meeting with Chancellor of Germany on the sidelines of G-7 Summit

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, H.E. Mr. Olaf Scholz, on 27 June 2022 on the sidelines of the G-7 Summit in Schloss Elmau, Germany.

This was the second meeting between two leaders this year; the previous meeting took place during PM's visit to Berlin on 2 May 2022 for the India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations. Prime Minister thanked Chancellor



Scholz for the invitation to the G7 Summit.

Continuing their discussions from last month, the two

## Russia strikes Kyiv as troops consolidate gains in the east

Russia attacked the Ukrainian capital in the early hours of Sunday morning, striking at least two residential buildings, Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said, as elsewhere Russian troops consolidated their gains in the east.

Associated Press journalists in Kyiv saw rescue services battling flames and rescuing civilians. Klitschko said two people were hospitalized with injuries.

Ukraine Member of Parliament Oleksiy Goncharenko wrote on the Telegram messaging app that according to preliminary data 14 missiles were launched against Kyiv region and Kyiv. Before Sunday's early morning attack, Kyiv had not faced any such Russian airstrikes since June 5.

Meanwhile, Russian forces have been seeking to swallow up the last remaining Ukrainian stronghold in the eastern Luhansk region, pressing their momentum after taking full control Saturday of the charred ruins of Sievierodonetsk and the chemical plant where hundreds of Ukrainian troops and civilians had been holed up.

On 25th June, Russia also launched dozens of missiles on several areas across the country far from the heart of the eastern battles. Some of the missiles were fired from Russian long-range Tu-22 bombers deployed from Belarus for the first time, Ukraine's air command said.

The bombardment preceded a meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, during which Putin announced that Russia planned to supply Belarus with the Iskander-M missile system.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov



said late Saturday that Russian and Moscow-backed separatist forces now control Sievierodonetsk and the villages surrounding it. He said the attempt by Ukrainian forces to turn the Azot plant into a stubborn center of resistance had been thwarted.

Serhiy Haidai, the governor of the Luhansk province, said Friday that Ukrainian troops were retreating from Sievierodonetsk after weeks of bombardment and house-to-house fighting. He confirmed Saturday that the city had fallen to Russian and separatist fighters, who he said were now trying to blockade the neighbouring city of Lysychansk from the south. The city lies across the river just to the west of Sievierodonetsk.

Russia's Interfax news agency quoted a spokesman for the separatist forces, Andrei Marochko, as saying Russian troops and separatist fighters had entered Lysychansk and that fighting was taking place in the heart of the city.

There was no immediate comment on the claim from the Ukrainian side.

Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk have been the focal point of a Russian offensive aimed at capturing all of the Donbas and destroying the Ukrainian military defending it the most capable and battle-hardened segment of the country's armed forces.

## Nepali rape victims produced before POCSO judge in UP



BALRAMPUR: The two Nepali girls who were allegedly raped here were produced in a local court on Tuesday for recording of their testimonies, police said.

The two girls, both minors, had come to a weekly market in the Haraiyya area of the district on Sunday, and were allegedly raped. Additional Superintendent of Police Namrata Srivastava said that the girls were produced before a Special POCSO Judge, where they recorded their statements.

Four men were arrested on Monday in connection with the rape. Balrampur Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar said that the arrested persons have been identified as Ramchandra, Rajendra, Rakesh, and Pintu.

On Sunday, two girls from Nepal's Dong district had come to the weekly Manipur Bazar on India-Nepal border area, police said. The four accused stopped them on the way and allegedly took them to a forest and raped them there.

The girls returned to their homes and narrated the ordeal to their family members, they said.

## Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh holds a bilateral meeting with the Minister for Climate & Environment of Norway Espen Barth Eide

India's Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Dr Jitendra Singh held a bilateral meeting with the Minister for Climate and Environment of Norway Espen Barth Eide on the side-lines of the UN Ocean Conference Lisbon, Portugal and discussed several issues of mutual interest.

The meeting comes close on the heels of the 5th India-Norway Task Force meet in New Delhi last week on Blue Economy between Norwegian Ambassador to India, Hans Jacob Frydenlund and the Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences Secretary Dr M Ravichandran. The Task Force Meet agreed on new projects and a roadmap for connecting ocean industries on both sides.



Both the Countries agreed to explore more cooperation on Green Maritime, Sustainable Ocean Management, Deep Ocean Technology and Off-shore Wind.

Dr Jitendra Singh and Espen Barth Eide expressed

satisfaction over the progress made so far in the 5th India-Norway Task Force meet. The two sides also reviewed the dialogue and progress on issues like integrated ocean management, marine pollution, green shipping, ocean

energy, green hydrogen, solar and wind projects, green shipping, fisheries, water management, rainwater harvesting, space cooperation, long term Infrastructure investment, health and culture.

Dr Jitendra Singh also referred to a pilot project between the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur (IIT KGP) agreed in January this year to improve interdisciplinary skills, digital literacy, and critical thinking of undergraduate students. The Indian Minister emphasised that these skills are highly needed with the growing demand for new technologies and innovative solutions in the maritime sector.

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# Alia Bhatt, Ranbir Kapoor expecting first child



Bollywood star Alia Bhatt on Monday announced that she and actor-husband Ranbir Kapoor will soon welcome their first child. Alia, 29, took to Instagram to share the news as she posted a picture from an ultrasound session at a hospital with Kapoor, 39. "Our baby... coming soon," the "Gangubai Kathiawadi" star captioned the photo. The couple,

who got married in an intimate ceremony in April this year, is also set to share screen space for the first time in "Brahmastra: Part One Shiva", scheduled to be released on September 9. At a press conference for his upcoming film "Shamshera" last week, Ranbir said he couldn't have asked for a better life partner than Alia. "It is a very big year for

me. It is a great year for me, I got married, it is a beautiful thing that has happened in my life... My life with Alia is the best," he said. The couple's family, including veteran actors Neetu Kapoor and Soni Razdan as well as Riddhima Kapoor Sahni, showered them with love and blessings post the announcement. Neetu Kapoor, who was filming for a reality show

here on Monday, was congratulated by the paparazzi present on the set, to which she replied with a big smile and "Thank you". "My babies are having a baby. I love you both so much," Ranbir's sister Riddhima Kapoor Sahni wrote on Instagram Stories alongside the couple's photograph.

Alia's mother Soni Razdan shared her daughter's post on her Instagram Stories, calling it the "best news ever". "Our cup runneth over," she wrote.

Father Mahesh Bhatt told ETimes, "My baby is going to have a baby! I am so happy for Ranbir and Alia. May our tribe increase. And now I have to prepare for the most important role of my life: The role of a Grandfather. This is going to be a grand debut."

On the work front, Alia will be next seen in Karan Johar's directorial venture "Rocky Aur Rani Ki Prem Kahani" and "Darlings", which marks her debut as a producer. She also shot for her Hollywood debut "Heart of Stone" in London recently.

## DEFAMATION CASE:

### Kangana Ranaut to appear before Mumbai court on July 4



Actor Kangana Ranaut will appear before a metropolitan magistrate court here on July 4 in connection with a defamation complaint filed against her by Bollywood lyricist Javed Akhtar. As the matter came up for hearing before the Andheri metropolitan magistrate's court

on Monday, her lawyer sought an exemption from the actor's personal appearance for the day. The court then directed Ranaut's legal team to file Pursis (written statement/information given to the court pertaining to any matter pending before it), stating that the

accused will remain present on the next date of hearing (July 4). The court granted an exemption for the day after the Pursis was filed by Ranaut's lawyer.

The court also reserved the hearing on a plea seeking the issuance of a warrant against Ranaut till the next hearing. Akhtar (76) had filed the complaint in court in November 2020, claiming that Ranaut had made defamatory statements against him in a television interview, which allegedly damaged his reputation. In his complaint, Akhtar claimed that Ranaut dragged his name during the interview while referring to a 'coterie' existing in Bollywood, following the alleged suicide by actor Sushant Singh Rajput in June last year.

### Aamir Khan lends financial aid to flood-hit Assam, CM expresses gratitude

Assam witnesses one of the deadliest floods in its history, Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan, who is awaiting the release of his upcoming film 'Laal Singh Chaddha', recently extended help towards the CM Relief Fund for Assam.

Currently, over 29 lakh people continue to remain in distress under the impact of the deluge. Taking to his social media, Assam Chief

Minister Himanta Biswas Sarma shared a gratitude note dedicated to Aamir.

He wrote, "Eminent Bollywood actor Aamir Khan extended a helping hand to the flood-affected people of our State by making a generous contribution of

Rs 25 lakh towards CM Relief Fund. My sincere gratitude for his concern and act of generosity."

In the wake of ravaging surges, several Indian philanthropists are coming ahead to lend help. With their homes and fields submerged, several families in Assam have no option but to inadvertently risk conflict with wildlife in an elephant corridor in Nellie's Khulihat Forest.

## POTPOURRI

### Military drama 'Shoorveer' to premiere on Disney+ Hotstar on July 15



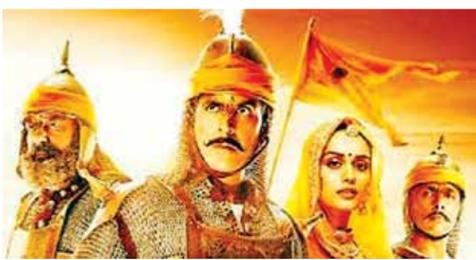
Streaming platform Disney+ Hotstar on Monday announced that its military drama series "Shoorveer" will premiere on July 15.

According to the makers, the show traces "the journey of the creation of an elite task force in India" as they undergo specialised training to become the nation's first responder team against national threats. Backed by Juggernaut Productions, the series is created by Samar Khan and directed by Kanishk Varma. "Shoorveer" was visualised

with the idea of presenting an intense drama of actions and emotions. The show carries characters that have a strong emotional connection which I feel is a very critical element of our armed forces," Khan said in a statement. "It's been a dream to make a show that brings all the three forces together, and with Shoorveer, Disney+ Hotstar gave us that opportunity. I am so looking forward to see how the audience will react to Shoorveer and we were fortunate to have such a strong cast that came together for the show," he added.

"Shoorveer" stars Makarand Deshpande, Manish Chaudhari, Regina Cassandra, Armaan Rahman, Aadil Khan, Abhishek Saha, Anjali Barot, Kuldeep Sareen, Arif Zakaria, Faisal Rashid, Sahil Mehta and Shivya Pathani.

### Akshay Kumar-starrer 'Prithviraj' to stream on Prime Video



Amazon Prime Video on Tuesday announced the streaming premiere of Akshay Kumar-starrer historical drama "Samrat Prithviraj".

The film, which released theatrically on June 3, will be available to Prime Video subscribers in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, starting from July 1.

Directed by Chandraprakash Dwivedi and produced by Yash Raj Films, the film features an ensemble cast including Kumar, Manushi Chhillar, Sanjay Dutt, Sonu Sood, Manav Vij, Ashutosh Rana, and Sakshi Tanwar.

Kumar, who played the titular hero of Prithviraj Chauhan of the Chahamanya dynasty in the historical drama based on poet Chand Vardai's epic poem "Prithviraj Raso", said he was looking forward to share the

story with "every household" with its release on the streaming platform.

"In my career spanning three decades, I have never played such a huge historic role, said Akshay Kumar.

"I feel honoured to be able to essay the role of Samrat Prithviraj Chauhan on screen. I'm excited to bring this epic saga to every household now with Amazon Prime Video from July 1 and I'm glad that through this medium the inspiring story of a great Indian warrior and a mighty king, Samrat Prithviraj Chauhan, will reach across the globe," the actor said.

Following "Bunty Aur Babli 2" and "Jayeshbhai Jordaar", "Samrat Prithviraj" is the third film to be premiered on Prime Video from the licensing deal with Yash Raj Films (YRF).

## Goa Heralds Monsoon Tourism with Festive San Joao, Well-diving, Pinyata

BY DOMINICK RODRIGUES Panjim

The wells in Goa echoed to the sounds of splashes and crowd roars on the occasion of the famed San Joao feast, that is a popular tourist draw with people flocking in from around the country and the world.

Even as this feast is celebrated in Goa in a big way, besides abroad in the UK and Middle East, locals and tourists dressed in their festive best thronged the State's popular venues of Siolim and Aldona along with various other sites, for three days to participate or just watch the swimmers



take a leap into the deep well waters that have been fed by the continuous monsoon rains.

The feast celebrations began with bonfires being lit the previous night, where the colourfully-clad villagers danced around it singing songs and

also distributed to the gathering free snacks like sannas, boiled grams and a variety of fruits like jackfruit, pineapples, papaya, pears, moira bananas and mangoes, even as the tourists encouraged the swimmers to dive numerously into the

water. Some villages highlighted on-the-spot competitions to see which divers could make the biggest splash, even as the crowd too got drenched in the process.

The festive activity then changed sites from the wells to the streets as musicians led processions to their homes to continue the merriment with booming music and "dancing in the streets" the +rain dance+ amidst falling rain and a shower of waterspray from the host's garden hose.

However, what stole the limelight was the popular venue of Siolim in North Goa, which has been featured much

on the Goa Tourism's tourist attraction calendar

This year's event witnessed canoes colourfully-decorated with beautifully-dressed women and men vying for the gathered-tourists attention and the prizes that were being offered on the occasion.

Even as the event compere encouraged the participants to greater song-and-dance in their boats, the festive spirit was evident in the crowds which even cheered on a boatload of competing performers that had overturned with their occupants getting completely drenched in the shallow waters of the Siolim River.

### Olympic medallist hockey player Varinder Singh dies

Olympic and World Cup medallist Varinder Singh, who was an integral part of some of India's memorable victories in the 1970s, died in Jalandhar on Tuesday morning.

He was 75. Singh was part of the gold-medal winning Indian team at the 1975 men's Hockey World Cup in Kuala Lumpur. This remains India's only gold medal at the prestigious tournament where the country had beaten arch-rivals Pakistan 2-1 in



the final. Singh was also part of the bronze medal-winning team at the 1972 Munich Olympics and silver medal at 1973 World Cup in Amsterdam.

He also had to his credit a silver medal at the 1974 and 1978 Asian Games, respectively. The Indian hockey stalwart also featured in the 1975 Montreal Olympics.

In 2007, Varinder was conferred with the prestigious Dhyani Chand Lifetime Achievement Award.

Hockey India mourned the death of Singh. In a statement said "Varinder Singh's achievements will be remembered by the hockey fraternity worldwide.

### IOA seeks entry for six more participants in CWG

The Indian Olympic Association has requested the Commonwealth Games Federation to increase the country's quota of sportspersons to accommodate six more participants in the quadrennial multidiscipline event next month. Hearing on a writ petition by national record holder high jumper Tejaswin Shankar, the Delhi High Court has earlier directed the IOA

### Options in drag-flick hands India advantage over others in world hockey: Sandeep

The emergence of a number of penalty corner specialists in the national team gives India an edge over the other sides, according to former hockey captain Sandeep Singh, who knows the "difficult art" of drag-flicking like the back of his hands.

The Birmingham Commonwealth Games-bound Indian team has as many as three specialist drag-flickers in Harmanpreet Singh, Varun Kumar and Amit Rohidas.

And with junior players like Sanjay, Arajjeet Singh Hundal and Sudeep Chirmako waiting in the wings, India are well placed as far as the penalty corner department is concerned.

Drag-flick is a difficult art which takes years of practice to master. It is a very technical thing, where besides brute power, you need fast hands and quick bodyweight transfer, said Sandeep.

Having options in drag-



flick gives any team an advantage and we are lucky that we have many penalty corner specialists in the team now. It adds variety. Harmanpreet is a world-class flicker, added Sandeep, who is nicknamed Flicker Singh' for his exploits with the goal-scoring technique during his playing days.

Sandeep, a fiery drag-flicker in his heydays, said the current national team under Manpreet Singh has the wherewithal to break its gold medal jinx at the Birmingham Games, starting next month.

### Rohit Sharma can be relieved as captain from T20s : Sehwag

Former India opener Virender Sehwag reckons that skipper Rohit Sharma could be relieved from captaincy duties in the T20 format which would allow him to manage his workload better.

Rohit has not been able to feature in all of India's matches since taking over as captain due to injuries and workload management.

"If the Indian team management has someone else in mind as captain in the T20 format, then I think, Rohit (Sharma) could be relieved and the fol-



lowing can be taken into consideration going forward," Sehwag told PTI in an interview. "One, that would allow Rohit to manage his workload and mental fatigue, given his age.

"Two, once someone new is appointed as captain in T20s, it

would also allow Rohit to take breaks and rejuvenate himself to lead India in both Tests and ODIs," he said in an interaction arranged by Sony Sports, the official broadcaster of the India-England series.

However, Sehwag maintained that if the team management sticks with its current policy of having one captain to lead India across the three formats, then Sharma is still an ideal choice.

"If the Indian think-tank still wants to pursue with the same policy, which is, to let one man leading India in all the three formats, then I still believe, Rohit Sharma is the best man for it."

### Katrina Kaif-starrer 'Phone Bhoot' to hit screens in October

"Phone Bhoot", starring Katrina Kaif, Ishaan Khatter, and Sidhant Chaturvedi, will be released in theatres on October 7.

The supernatural-comedy is directed by Gurmmeet Singh of "Mirzapur" fame and produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's banner Excel Entertainment. On Tuesday, the production house shared the film's release announcement on its official Twitter page.

"#PhoneBhoot ki duniya mein aapka swagat hai. Arriving on 7th Oct, 2022 at cinemas



near you," the tweet read. The film also stars Jackie Shroff, Sheeba Chaddha, Nidhi Bishit and Surender Thakur.

Written by Ravi Shankaran and Jwinder Singh Bath, "Phone Booth" was previously scheduled to be released in cinema halls on July 15.

## Russell Crowe to lead supernatural thriller 'The Pope's Exorcist'



Actor Russell Crowe is set to star in filmmaker Julius Avery's film "The Pope's Exorcist", set at Screen Gems.

According to Deadline, the supernatural thriller will feature the Academy Award winner in the role of Father Gabriele Am-

orth, the legendary Italian priest who performed over 100,000 exorcisms for the Vatican

The film is based on his international bestselling memoirs "An Exorcist Tells His Story" and "An Exorcist: More Stories".

Two years after Father Amorth's death in 2016, Screen Gems acquired his life rights for the film adaptation, along with rights to his memoirs.

Evan Spiliotopoulos has penned the latest draft of the script, with revisions by Chuck

MacLean.

Doug Belgrad of 2.0 Entertainment will produce the film along with Michael Patrick Kaczmarek for Jesus & Mary, Jeff Katz of Worldwide Katz and Loyola Productions' president Eddie Siebert.



Supporters of SAD (Amritsar) candidate Simranjit Singh Mann celebrate after his victory in the Sangrur Lok Sabha bypolls, in Sangrur. PHOTOS-PRABHUJOT GILL



Punjab Finance minister Harpal Singh Cheema presents the Budget 2022-2023 at Punjab Assembly on June 27, 2022 in Chandigarh. PHOTOS-PRABHUJOT GILL

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