Union Minister for Railways, Coal, Finance and Corporate Affairs Piyush Goyal launching the Mobile App "Khan Prahari", at a function, in New Delhi. Secretary, Ministry of Coal Inderjit Singh and other dignitaries are also seen ---PIB

Cabinet okays record Rs 200/ quintal hike in MSP for paddy

NEW DELHI, JULY 4 /--/ The Union government Wednesday hiked the minimum support price for paddy by a record Rs 200 per quintal that will cost the exchequer over Rs 15,000 crore, and help fulfil its poll promise to give farmers 50 per cent more rate than their cost of production.

The decision, taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, comes less than a year before next general election. The previous highest hike in paddy MSP was Rs 170 a quintal in the 2012-13 crop year. In the last four years, the NDA government has raised the paddy MSP between Rs 50-80 per quintal. While the BJP had promised in 2014 to give farmers a price of 1.5 times of cost, an announcement to give effect to the promise was made in the government's fifth and final annual Budget presented on February 1 this year. Briefing about the CCEA decision, Home Minister Rajnath Singh said the Cabinet has approved the MSP of 14 kharif (summer-sown) crops for the 2018-19 season. The government's price advisory body CACP has calculated production cost of paddy at Rs 1,166 per quintal and the government has raised the MSP of paddy (common grade) by Rs 200 to Rs 1,750 per quintal for 2018-19 season, he said. The support price of Grade A variety of paddy has been raised by Rs 180 per quintal to Rs 1,770. The increase in paddy MSP is 50-51 per cent over its production cost.

"This will send a positive message to farmers and boost their confidence and end farm distress," Singh said. Terming it as a historic decision, the minister said the sharp increase in MSP was done after lot of consideration and "not in hurry". The hike in the MSP will cost the exchequer over Rs 15,000 crore, he added. "This will increase the income of farmers and purchasing capacity, which will have impact on wider economic activity". Replying to a queries on likely impact of MSP hike on price rise, Singh said, "We are concerned about inflation. It is not correct to say that inflation will go up. We have controlled inflation in last four years and will succeed in controlling it in future as well as". According to the government, the MSP of cotton (medium staple) has been raised to Rs 5,150 from Rs 4,020 and that of cotton (long staple) to Rs 5,450 from 4,320 per quintal. The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has pegged the production cost of medium staple cotton at Rs 3,433 per quintal and the MSP increase is 50 per cent over the cost. In pulses, tur MSP has been raised to Rs 5,675 per quintal from Rs 5,450, and that of moong to Rs 6,975 per quintal from Rs 5,575. Urad MSP has been hiked to Rs 5,600 from Rs 5,400 per quintal. The MSP of tur and urad has been raised by up to 66 per cent over their production cost. Among oilseeds, MSP of soyabean has been increased to Rs 3,399 per quintal from Rs 3,050, while that of groundnut (shell) to Rs 4,890 per quintal from Rs 4,450, sunflower seed to Rs 5,388 per quintal from Rs 4,100, Sesamum to Rs 6,249 per quintal from 5,300 and niger seed to Rs 5,877 per quintal from Rs 4,650.

There has been 50 per cent increase in the MSP of oilseeds over the cost of production. Asserting that farmers are biggest producers and consumers, Singh said, "After the country's independence, farmers have not got right price for their produce. Farmers were in despair and their plight was understood by the Prime Minister". (PTI)

Gujarat to get 19m tonnes coal in next 4 yrs: Minister

VADODARA, JULY 4 /--/ Union Railway and coal minister Piyush Goyal has approved the state government's demand to provide 19 million tonne of coal in the next four years for generation of an extra 4,000 megawatt (mw) of power, a top official said. Goyal has also approved providing extra rakes for transporting coal to the thermal plants in Ukai, Wanakbori and Gandhinagar, state's energy minister Saurabh Patel said.

"In addition to increase in rake for supply of coal to the thermal power plants, the state will also get additional 19 million tonne of coal for generating 4,000 mw of power in the next four years," Patel told PTI on phone on Wednesday. Goyal gave the assurance to Patel when he met him in New Delhi on Monday in an energy ministers' meet, he said. Thermal power plants in the state had been facing closure due to inadequate supply of coal in May and June when the demand for power had soared to about to a record 16,000 mw due to severe heat wave conditions. "So, the Gujarat Urja Vidyut Nigam (GUVNL) had started importing about 1.5 to 2 lakh tonne of coal for continuing and maintaining generation of power in the thermal power plants," a top official of Gujarat State Electricity Company (GSCL), a unit of GUVNL, told PTI on Wednesday.

Unsecured bank loans rise four-fold in FY15-18: Report

MUMBAI, JULY 4 /--/ Banks' unsecured loan book has grown four times the bank credit during the past three years, helped by a rise in discretionary spending, technology-driven disbursements and lower interest rates, says a report.

Unsecured loans are the loans where individual exposures are smaller and more distributed and given without any collaterals but banks get higher margins. Typically personal loan, education loans and credit card spends fall under this category of loans. "Between fiscals 2015 and 2018, unsecured credit - comprising personal, small and medium enterprise (SME), and credit card loans - clocked a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 27 per cent, or almost four times growth in bank credit," Crisil said in a report on Wednesday.

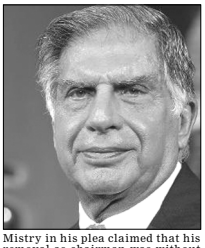
As of March 2018, outstanding unsecured loans stood at around Rs 5 trillion, accounting for 26 per cent of retail lending, compared to 21 per cent three years ago. Growth in unsecured loans is on account of a surge in discretionary spending, increased availability of customer data, faster disbursements driven by technology, and lower interest rates in some segments. The report said financiers are expected to focus more on this segment due to attractive yields.

Return on assets are 2.5-3 per cent for personal and SME loans, and 3-4 per cent for credit cards, compared to under 2 per cent for home loans and new passenger vehicle loans, it said, adding rising competition has led to lower rates in some segments such as personal loans.

Tata-Mistry case: NCLT order deferred to July 9

MUMBAI, JULY 4 /--/ The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) Wednesday deferred to July 9 its judgement on a petition filed by Cyrus Mistry challenging his ouster as chairman of the Tata Sons group.

NCLT Mumbai's special bench of B S V Prakash Kumar and V Nallasenapathy was expected to deliver its order in the case today but adjourned it to July 9 as the judgement was not ready. Mistry, in the petition filed under the Companies Act, claimed that his removal was due to a result of mismanagement by the board's trustees and oppression of minority shareholders of the group. He had taken over as the chairman of Tata Sons group in 2012 after Ratan Tata announced his retirement. Mistry, who was the sixth chairman of the Tata Sons, was ousted from the position in October 2016. Two months later, Mistry and his family-run investment firm, Cyrus Investments, approached the NCLT, as minority shareholders, against the corporate monolith and others including Ratan Tata alleging oppression and mismanagement.



Mistry in his plea claimed that his removal as chairman was without reason and amounted to the majority shareholders suppressing the right of the minority to ask questions about matters involving the company. As per the plea, Mistry was five months later also removed from the post of director of Tata Sons' Board for approaching NCLT. The Tata Group rebutted and said Mistry's removal was because the board had lost confidence in him. He (Mistry) intentionally and in bad faith leaked sensitive and confidential information causing loss in Tata Group's market value. He was appointed at the behest of Tata Trusts and his removal cannot be questioned by minority shareholders, the group's counsel, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, had argued before the tribunal. The Tata Group argued that the law clearly allows removal of a chairperson and director and Mistry was removed by a majority of 7 out of 9, as Mistry had not voted for his removal and another official had abstained. The first allegation by Mistry was that his removal as chairman and subsequently as director of the board Tata Sons was a result of oppression by promoters, who are in-turn owned by Tata Trusts that owns over 68 per cent in Tata Sons.

The second part of the plea focused on the alleged mismanagement by Tata Sons board and Ratan Tata which caused revenue loss for the group. (PTI)

Aircel-Maxis: Court to consider chargesheet against Karti on July 6

NEW DELHI, JULY 4 /--/ A Delhi court will consider on Friday a charge sheet against former union minister P Chidambaram's son Karti in the Aircel-Maxis money laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The court, which was scheduled to take up the matter for consideration today, posted it as the concerned judge was on leave. In its prosecution complaint, equivalent to the charge sheet, the ED had alleged that Karti controlled two firms which allegedly received Rs 1.16 crore as bribe money in the case. Though the name of P Chidambaram, who was also quizzed recently by the CBI and the ED in the INX media and the Aircel-Maxis money laundering cases respectively, was mentioned in the charge sheet, the Congress veteran has not been arrayed as an accused in the probe report. The ED probe report had said the payments of Rs 26 lakh to Advantage Strategic Consultancies Private Limited (ASCPL) and Rs 90 lakh to Chess Management Services Pvt Limited (CMSPL) respectively were made as alleged bribe money by parent company of Aircel Ltd, namely Aircel Televentures Ltd (ATVL) and Maxis and its associate Malaysian companies respectively. The probe agency may file supplementary charge sheets in the case, apparently keeps open the chances of arraying more persons as accused. Apart from Karti, the agency has also named ASCPL and its directors Padma Bhaskararamana and Ravi Viswanathan, and CMSPL and its director Annamalai Palaniappa in the charge sheet under section 4 (punishment for money laundering) of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED had registered the case under the sections of PMLA on February 7, 2012 on basis of an FIR registered by the CBI. (PTI)

News In Brief

Demonetised currency seized

THANE (MAHA), JULY 4 /--/ The police has seized Rs 1.68 crore in demonetised currency notes from three people, who were later arrested. Acting on a tip-off, the police kept a watch at a garden near Parsik Reti Bunder in the district's Kalwa town on June 30 and spotted the three people who had apparently come there to dispose of the scrapped notes. The Crime Branch personnel seized Rs 1.68 crore in old notes in Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 denominations from the accused, the Thane police said in an official release on Tuesday.

Indian wins Dh 7m in raffle draw

DUBAI, JULY 4 /--/ An Indian man has hit a jackpot by winning a whopping USD 1.9 million in a monthly raffle in the UAE, hours before he was set to leave the country for good, a media report said on Wednesday. Tojo Mathew, 30, working as civil supervisor in the capital Abu Dhabi, had bought the ticket yesterday at the city's airport before boarding a flight to India.

Govt hikes annual maintenance cost of Air India's VVIP aircraft

NEW DELHI, JULY 4 /--/ In a relief to cash-strapped Air India, the Union government Wednesday approved a proposal to enhance the expenditure for operation and maintenance of the carrier's VVIP aircraft by nearly Rs 200 crore from Rs 336.24 crore. Air India engages the 'Special Extra Section Flights' (SESF) or VVIP aircraft such as the Boeing B747-400 for the President, the Vice President and the Prime Minister. The proposal was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help ease some of the financial burden of the airline facing "serious" financial and liquidity position, an official statement said. "The CCEA has given its approval to enhance the expenditure for 'Special Extra Section Flights' (SESF) operations from Rs 336.24 crore plus applicable taxes to Rs 534.38 crore plus applicable taxes for 2016-17 with built-in annual escalation of 10 per cent to compensate the cost of living index and exchange fluctuation for the maintenance of B747-400 aircraft," the statement said. The annual maintenance cost of Rs 336.24 crore was last fixed in 2011 by the CCEA for the aircraft maintenance. Since then, there has been a substantial increase in the expenditure incurred by Air India on maintenance of these aircraft because of increase in the cost of living index, depreciation of the rupee against the US dollar and increase in the material cost. "It is therefore necessary to review the estimates/ reimbursements provided to Air India since the year 2011-12 as the cost base has not been indexed to inflation. Since, AI is suffering financial losses, the airline cannot afford to provide any services below its cost," the statement said.

Total CSR spend may cross Rs 50k-cr by March 2019: Report

MUMBAI, JULY 4 /--/ The total corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending by the top 500 companies in the country since the applicability of mandatory CSR in 2014 is likely to cross Rs 50,000 crore by March 2019, said a report. The CSR compliance is also likely to improve and fall in the range of 97 to 98 per cent by financial year 2019-20, according to a research done by development sector platforms CSRBOX and NGOBOX.

"Mandatory CSR has gradually formalised the corporate philanthropy with emphasis on impacts on the ground. With on an average Rs 12,000 crore funding annually, there is a lot that can be done in education, healthcare and rural development areas," said Bhomik Shah, chief executive officer, NGOBOX and CSRBOX. The government in 2014 made mandatory for companies to spend 2 per cent of their three-year average annual net profit on CSR activities in each financial year, starting from FY15. The norms are applicable to firms with at least Rs 5 crore net profit or Rs 1,000 crore turnover or Rs 500 crore net worth. The report also revealed that the top 20 corporations command over 45 per cent of the prescribed CSR in the country. In addition, the top 500 companies, which contribute to over 90 per cent of the total CSR spend, are estimated to spend over Rs 11,000 crore on social initiatives in FY19, the report said. In terms of sectors, education is expected to be the most favoured area of CSR investment in the coming years. In terms of states, Maharashtra receives the biggest chunk of the total CSR fund spent in the country, followed by Rajasthan, Karnataka and Gujarat, together accounting for one third of the country's total CSR spends, the report said. The north-eastern states of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have received lowest CSR funding so far. The report revealed that an upward trend was seen year after year when it comes to CSR compliance by companies, however, the size of funding for each initiative has shown downward movement, suggesting the fact that firms are looking at more number of projects to diversify their CSR portfolio.

No more 'Hindu meals' on Emirates flights

NEW DELHI, JULY 4 /--/ Gulf carrier Emirates has decided to discontinue serving 'Hindu meal' on its flights, saying Hindu customers can choose from a variety of "regionally-inspired vegetarian and special meals". The Dubai-based carrier operates a substantial number of flights to various Indian cities.

"As part of our continuous review of the products and services available to customers, Emirates can confirm that it will discontinue the Hindu meal option. "We constantly review our offering, taking into consideration customer uptake and feedback. This helps us improve service efficiencies," an airline spokesperson said in a statement. The spokesperson said its Hindu customers can order in advance from a wide variety of regionally-inspired vegetarian and special meals catering to specific dietary requirements in all classes of travel. "Emirates also offers options of religious meals like Vegetarian Jain Meal, Indian Vegetarian Meal, Kosher meals and Non-Beef non-vegetarian options as well," the spokesperson added. The airline used to provide the option of 'Non Vegetarian Hindu Meal' for passengers who follow Hindu customs. This meal is not vegetarian and prepared in Indian culinary style. It may contain lamb, chicken, fish, eggs, milk, dairy products, and cereals.

It does not contain veal, beef or beef by-products, or raw or smoked fish, according to an earlier link to the airline's website. Now, the carrier offers Vegetarian Jain Meal, Indian Vegetarian Meal and Kosher Meal, among other options. The airline has flights to Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Kochi, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram, according to its website.

Weather Report

	Min Temp.	Max Temp.	Weather
Gangtok			
05-Jul	18.0	22.0	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
06-Jul	18.0	23.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
07-Jul	19.0	23.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
08-Jul	19.0	23.0	Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain
09-Jul	19.0	22.0	Rain or Thundershowers
10-Jul	19.0	22.0	Rain or Thundershowers
Gyalsingh			
05-Jul	18.0	23.0	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
06-Jul	18.0	24.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
07-Jul	18.0	25.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
08-Jul	19.0	24.0	Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain
09-Jul	19.0	23.0	Rain or Thundershowers
10-Jul	19.0	24.0	Rain or Thundershowers
Mangan			
05-Jul	20.0	26.0	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
06-Jul	20.0	27.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
07-Jul	20.0	28.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
08-Jul	21.0	28.0	Generally cloudy sky with moderate rain
09-Jul	21.0	27.0	Rain or Thundershowers
Namchi			
05-Jul	20.0	26.0	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
06-Jul	20.0	27.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
07-Jul	20.0	28.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
08-Jul	21.0	27.0	Generally cloudy sky with a few spells of rain or thundershowers
09-Jul	21.0	27.0	Rain or Thundershowers
10-Jul	21.0	28.0	Rain or Thundershowers
Tadong			
05-Jul	20.0	28.0	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
06-Jul	20.0	29.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
07-Jul	21.0	29.0	Partly cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
08-Jul	21.0	28.0	Generally cloudy sky with a few spells of rain or thundershowers
09-Jul	21.0	27.0	Rain or Thundershowers
10-Jul	21.0	28.0	Rain or Thundershowers
Darjeeling			
05-Jul	15.0	20.0	Generally cloudy sky with Heavy rain
06-Jul	15.0	20.0	Generally cloudy sky with a few spells of rain or thundershowers
07-Jul	15.0	19.0	Generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers
08-Jul	14.0	18.0	Generally cloudy sky with Heavy rain
09-Jul	15.0	18.0	Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain or Thunderstorm
10-Jul	15.0	19.0	Partly cloudy sky with possibility of rain or Thunderstorm

Source: IMD