

Govt extends compulsory jute packaging for foodgrains, sugar

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 /-/- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) Wednesday extended the mandatory packaging of foodgrains and sugar products in jute bags for the year ending June 2018.

The move will help sustain the core demand for the jute sector and support the livelihood of the workers and farmers dependent on the sector in eastern and north-eastern regions of the country, particularly in West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura. "The CCEA has extended the mandatory packaging norms under the Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987", as per the official statement. As per the norms, it is compulsory to pack 90 per cent of foodgrains and 20 per cent of sugar products in jute bags. The decision also mandates, in the first instance, the entire



requirement for packing of foodgrains would be placed in jute bags thus, making a provision for 100 per cent packing of foodgrains in jute bags on import of jute goods to meet the requirement, the statement added. Jute industry is predominantly dependent on government, which purchases jute products worth more than Rs 5,500 crore every year. Considering nearly 3.7 lakh workers and approximately 40 lakh farmers are dependent for their livelihood on the jute sector, the government said it has been making concerted efforts for the development of the jute sector. With a view to boost demand in the jute sector, government has imposed Definitive Anti Dumping Duty on import of jute goods from Bangladesh and Nepal with effect from January 5, 2017, which has provided scope for additional demand of 2 lakh MT of jute goods in the domestic market for the Indian jute industry. (PTI)

Greaves Cotton to make new BS-IV engines for Piaggio

MUMBAI, JAN 3 /-/- Leading auto ancillary player Greaves Cotton has entered into an agreement with Italian two and three-wheeler maker Piaggio Vehicles India to develop new diesel and clean engines.

The new engines to be developed will be run on diesel and alternate fuels in the clean energy category. The deal was announced on Wednesday. Greaves Cotton engines is the market leader with close to 78 per cent market share in the diesel-driven 3-wheeler market and has recently crossed the 5-million engines powering various cargo and passenger vehicles in three-wheeler and micro four-wheeler space. Piaggio India started its association with Greaves Cotton in 1998-99 and has since then sold over 5 million engines to Italian major, which is also into four-wheelers with its micro-trucks in the under-1,000 kg load capacity.

Greaves has automotive engines plants in Aurangabad and Ranipet near Chennai while its R&D centres are in Aurangabad and Pune. It can be noted that the three-

wheeler segment has been down till the third quarter of this financial year. Greaves offers single cylinder diesel and CNG engines to the three-wheeler space. Speaking on the tie-up, Nagesh Basavanthi, managing director and chief executive of Greaves Cotton said his company is investing in new technologies and building capabilities to meet the autoware market by reducing solutions serving the last mile transportation market.

"Our new solutions will cover a range of fuels from diesel, petrol, CNG to electric which will continue to leverage our strengths," he said. The company had recently tied up with the California-based Pinnacle Technology to offer open-piston CNG engines which has since shown impressive results. With these BS-IV engines the company hopes to revolutionise the autoware market by reducing substantial fuel cost and total cost of ownership. The Rs 1,800-crore Greaves has sold over 3 lakh engines in fiscal 2017 before successfully transitioning to BS-IV compliant engines from April 2017. (PTI)

Mobile tower cos ask Punjab to frame uniform policy

CHANDIGARH, JAN 3 /-/- Telecom tower companies today urged the Punjab government to come up with a comprehensive policy in line with the telecom department's guidelines to remove bottlenecks in setting up of towers in the state. The Tower and Infrastructure Providers' Association (TAIPA) claimed that under the present policy, "abnormal charges and cumbersome processes" of local authorities are causing roadblocks to setting up of towers.

"Under the present Punjab tower policy, multiple fees and levies are imposed ranging from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000 with other additional annual charges, multiple documentations and NoCs from various departments and authorities etc," TAIPA Director General Tialk Raj Dua said. Apart from this, Dua claimed, due to the lack of a comprehensive uniform tower policy for the state, the local municipal authorities such as PTDA, Urban development trusts and panchayats follow their own guidelines sometimes leading to suo-moto coercive



action such as sealing or disconnecting electricity supply to towers. The central government has notified the Right of Way policy dated November, 2016 offering salient features for the installations of telecom infrastructure such as time bound clearances, reasonable one time administrative fees, appointment of Nodal officers, definite timelines for approvals and deemed approvals, he said. "Aligning the policy with Right of Way rules would lead to a faster roll-out of telecom infrastructure facilitating seamless network connectivity and overcoming the issues of Call drops, network congestion and smooth connectivity etc. Moreover, this infrastructure will facilitate the socio-

economic growth and inclusive development of the nation and state," Dua said. He said the industry has highlighted its concerns through number of representations and industry submissions to respective authorities for notifying a comprehensive tower policy which is aligned with the RoW rules. The DoT advisory guidelines, "States such as Haryana, Jharkhand, Assam, Rajasthan, Odisha, Kerala and few others have notified their tower policies which are aligned with the RoW policy. The policies have enabling features such as no restriction on location of telecom towers, single window clearance mechanism, defined time period for approvals and nominal administrative fees etc. (PTI)

'Saudi, UAE VAT to adversely affect majority of Indians'

HYDERABAD, JAN 3 /-/- Introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT) by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) would adversely affect the majority of Indians and reduce their remittances, says a former diplomat.

"I would say 70 to 80 per cent of Indian community there will be adversely affected," the former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Om Prakash, told PTI. The size of the Indian community in Saudi Arabia and the UAE is three million and 2.8 million, respectively, he said. Of them, the lower middle class and middle class sections will get affected the most as they are already feeling the pressure on account of high cost of living, Ahmad said.

Coal India e-auction fetches 76% premium in Q3 FY18

KOLKATA, JAN 3 /-/- Riding on rising demand, Coal India e-auction premium from e-auction of coal rose to 76 per cent over the average notified price during the third quarter of FY18.

"In the Q3 period (October-December), the average premium over the average notified price was up 76 per cent against 23.6 per cent in the corresponding quarter of 2016-17," a senior Coal India official told PTI. The miner allotted 28.6 million tonne of the softlignite in the Q3 period of the current fiscal, marginally lower than the corresponding quarters quantity of 28.9 million tonne. October 2017 saw a drop of 40 per cent in coal offering in e-auction platform as there was diversion to power plants owing to sudden rise in demand. An official tracking Coal India e-auctions said that average realisation for November and December is working out at around Rs 2,656 and Rs 2,064 per tonne, respectively, till December. Coal India had offered around 80 million tonne of coal through spot and forward-auctions. However, with some indications of easing of power prices in power exchange, there may be some effect on the premium in e-auction. Coal India had earlier indicated that it was aiming for about 25 per cent more realisation from e-auctions. It is to be seen whether Coal India will be able to stem the declining trend of profitability in the last few quarters.

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News in Brief

Goa govt against coal handling expansion at Mormugao

PANAJI, JAN 3 /-/- Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar Wednesday said that the state government has objection to the coal handling capacity at Mormugao Port Trust. Parrikar today told reporters that the state government will be opposing the expansion of the coal handling capacity. "The issue is about increasing of coal handling facility, not about the expansion of the berth," he said adding that state's opposition for increasing the coal handling facility will not change.

New MD, CEO of Kia Motors India

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 /-/- South Korean auto maker Kia Motors Wednesday said it has appointed Kookhyun Shim as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of India operations. Shim will be responsible for driving Kia Motors expansion in the Indian market. Kia Motor India said in a statement. He will also oversee the construction of Kia Motors first manufacturing facility, which is coming up in Andhra Pradesh.

New launches boost Skoda volume

MUMBAI, JAN 3 /-/- Volkswagen Group company Skoda Wednesday said its sales spiked 30 per cent to 17,438 units in 2017 over the previous year, driven by the latest launch, the Kodiaq SUV, besides rollout of three refreshed versions of its popular sedans. The Czech carmaker's product portfolio here comprises the Superb, Octavia and the Rapid sedans and the 7-seater SUV Kodiaq which it launched in the last quarter of 2017. Skoda India recorded strong performance selling 17,438 cars in 2017, registering a growth of 30 per cent over the previous year, the company said in a statement. (PTI)

"This is on account of rent, medical expenses, school fees, transport and high cost of essential items. Therefore, cost of living has gone up to a significant extent in the last few years," he said. The adverse impact on the labour community which is provided accommodation by the employer and blue-collar workers who are "protected" by their companies will be less, he said. As it is, the cost of living there (Saudi Arabia and the UAE) is quite high," he said. "Obviously, the low paid Indian expatriates will be adversely affected." "I have a feeling, as it is because of the high cost of living, the remittances have already reduced in the last two or three years," Ahmad said. (PTI)

TRAI releases consultation paper on National Telecom Policy 2018

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 /-/- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) on Wednesday issued a consultation paper seeking stakeholders' view to formulate the National Telecom Policy 2018.

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT), through its letter dated August 21, 2017 requested the TRAI to suggest its policy inputs for formulation of National Telecom Policy 2018. The DoT, on its web-site, has stated that the new telecom policy will be governed by the key guiding principles of alignment with the national vision. Its major themes will be regulatory licensing framework, ensuring the telecom sector, connectivity for all, quality of services, ease of doing business, absorption of new technologies including 5G and Internet of Things (IoT). The policy has, "common Strategies to leapfrog India amongst top-50 nations in international rankings in terms of network readiness,



communications systems and services, to attract an investment of USD 100 billion in telecom infrastructure and to attain average speed of 20 Mbps for wireless and 50 Mbps for wired network connectivity." The government through the new telecom policy seeks to spur the socio-economic development up to the bottom of the pyramid by

ensuring voice, video and data connectivity for all, provide reliable and secured connectivity with assured quality of service. Stakeholders are requested to furnish their written comments by January 19, 2018. The Indian telecom sector is the second largest in the world by number of telephone subscribers with 1.2 billion subscribers as on October 31, 2017. India also

has the world's second-largest internet subscriber base with 340 million internet subscribers on October 31, 2017. It has one of the lowest tariffs for telecommunication services in the world. The mission of the policy is to fulfil the communication needs of the people, enterprises, and industries at affordable prices. Also to develop state-of-the-art secured communication services on internet and machines in urban as well as rural areas.

To establish India as global hub for internet and data communication systems and services in a net-neutral environment. To aim for self-sufficiency in telecom equipment manufacturing. The consultation paper said. It has the objective to increase rural tele-density to 100 per cent. To leapfrog India amongst top-50 nations in international rankings in terms of network readiness, communications systems, and services."

India has cancelled \$ 500m defence deal, says Israeli arms co

JERUSALEM, JAN 3 /-/- A top Israeli arms firm has confirmed that India cancelled a \$500 million deal for the Spike anti-tank guided missiles and expressed "regret" over the decision just ahead of the company's visit to the country.

Rafael has now recanted its earlier notification from India's Ministry of Defence concerning the cancellation of the Spike deal. Ishai David, a spokesman for the Rafael Advance Defence Systems Ltd, told PTI here. The company, which works in countries around the world, is said to have been selected by India after a long and rigorous process. The cancellation comes days before Netanyahu's four-day visit to India starting January 14 and is likely to be taken up for discussion during the visit.

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engaged in with its Indian partners". As per the original proposal, India had planned to acquire the ATGMs for the Army at a cost of \$500 million. The defence ministry has been strongly pushing for transfer of technology in procuring various weapons and other platforms from foreign defence majors as part of its broad policy initiative to encourage domestic defence industry. Official sources in New Delhi had earlier indicated that the proposal to acquire the missile system faced hurdles when Israel said apparently expressed reservations in ensuring full transfer of technology as per the provisions of the Make in India initiative. (PTI)

work in an important market, as it has for more than two decades, to provide India with the most advanced and innovative systems." It added that the company did not give a reason for the cancellation of the deal.

India imposes antidumping duty on 98 products from China

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 /-/- India has imposed antidumping duty on as many as 98 products, as on December 27 last year, imported from China. Parliament was informed on Wednesday. The products on which the duty was imposed include flax fabrics, vitamin C, certain fibres and chemicals, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry CR Chaudhary said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha. He also said trade deficit with China stood at USD 36.73 billion during April-October this fiscal.

"Increasing trade deficit with China can be attributed primarily to the fact that Chinese exports to India rely strongly on manufactured items to meet the demand of fast expanding sectors like telecom and power," he said. Countries initiate antidumping probes to determine if the domestic industry has been hurt by a surge in below-cost imports. As a counter measure, they impose duties under the multilateral WTO regime. Antidumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry. They are not a measure to restrict imports or cause an unjustified increase in cost of products. (PTI)

Unsparring consumer for a protected consumers' rights in 2017

NEW DELHI, JAN 3 /-/- The motto of 'consumer is the king' remained the sole guiding light in 2017 for consumer fora which were unsparring while putting to task auto majors, realtors, airlines, banks, hospitals and government agencies like Railways for unfair, deficient and deceptive trade practices and services.

Consumer fora led by National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) played a proactive role in ameliorating miseries and plight of citizens which included an order of the apex consumer forum asking aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), to formulate a rational policy to prevent harassment of passengers left out from over-booked flights. In cases of medical negligence, a much-debated issue, too came before consumer fora which also put to task the real estate major for failing to deliver possession of flats in time to hassled homebuyers. Railways bore the burnt in the year gone-by as consumer fora, in their several orders, directed it to pay compensation to many

passengers for deficiencies, including theft of luggage onboard and asking it to restrain unauthorised persons from entering reserved coaches to ensure safety of genuine travellers. Be it national or international brands, the fora stood firm in protecting the consumers rights and this was evident when luxury car maker was directed to pay over Rs 10 lakh to a customer for faulty airbags, prompting the global car manufacturer to knock the doors of the Supreme Court for reliefs.

Meanwhile, the fight of homebuyers against real estate companies stole the limelight as realty majors like Unitech, Supertech and Sahara had to face the ire of the apex consumer panel for their failure to hand over flats on time. The embattled Sahara group had to pay over Rs 1.43 crore to a home buyer for its failure to give possession of a bungalow in one of its housing projects near Nagpur. The apex consumer commission also directed Unitech HI-Tech Developers Ltd to pay over Rs 3.33 crore to a couple for failing to give them the possession of an apartment block under one of its housing projects at Noida in

2010. Unitech Ltd was also asked to pay heavy amount in various other cases. The fora came down heavily on the state-owned Rajasthan Housing Board for twice cancelling allocation of a property to a buyer under its schemes and said that the government agencies have no right to accept money from public unless they were ready with a housing scheme for which allotment can be made within a reasonable time. The aviation forum was also not spared by NCDRC which made a castigating remark that airlines do not showing up at the time of boarding aircrafts. This observation had come while directing Jet Airways to pay compensation to a foreigner (around Rs 42,000) to a Kolkata resident who was not allowed to travel in a New Delhi-bound flight from London by the airline staff on the ground that she had come late for boarding. Foreign airline like Mexico-based Aeromexico was asked to pay over Rs 5 lakh to an Indian citizen for mishandling his bag on a trip to Miami in the USA.