

Ultra-clean petrol, diesel in Delhi from today

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ Ultra-clean Euro-VI grade petrol and diesel, at no additional price, will be supplied in the national capital from tomorrow in a bid to combat alarming levels of air pollution.

Delhi will be the first city in the country to leapfrog from Euro-IV grade petrol and diesel to Euro-VI. Cities in the national capital region like Noida, Ghaziabad, Gurugram and Faridabad as well as 13 major cities including Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune will switch over to cleaner Euro-VI grade fuel from January 1 next year. Rest of the country will follow suit from April 2020.

State-owned oil firms will begin supplying the BS-VI petrol and diesel (equivalent to fuel meeting Euro-VI emission norm) at all

their 391 petrol pumps in the national capital territory (NCT) from Sunday, said Indian Oil Corp (IOC) Director (Refineries) B V Rama Gopal. While the oil companies have invested heavily to produce cleaner fuel, the consumers are not being passed on any of the cost for the time being, he said. "Rest assured we don't have plans of passing on the cost to consumers. There are no plans to recover (the cost) from customers immediately," he told reporters here. Costing wise, the cleaner fuel should cost around 50 paise a litre more. He said a mechanism of recovering the cost when the whole country shifts to Euro-VI grade fuel would be worked out.

To meet Delhi's annual consumption of 9.6 lakh tonnes of petrol and 12.65 lakh tonnes of diesel, Mathura refinery in Uttar Pradesh, Panipat refinery in Haryana, Bina in Madhya Pradesh and Bhatinda in

Punjab have started producing Euro-VI grade fuel. About Rs 183 crore has been spent on Panipat refinery alone for producing cleaner fuel. Other refineries are in the process of being upgraded, he said. India had in 2015 decided to leapfrog to Euro-VI emission norm compliant petrol and diesel from April 2020, from the Euro-IV grade at present. While the deadline for the rest of the country stands, the same for Delhi, which is choking on thick toxic smog, was brought forward. Euro-VI grade fuel contains 10 parts per million (ppm) of sulphur as against 50 ppm in Euro-IV fuels.

Gopal said the cleaner Euro-VI fuel and lesser grade cars and two-wheelers, which are presently available in the country, would result in 10-20 per cent reduction in particulate emission but for full benefits, the vehicles too need to have Euro-VI engines. "BS-VI petrol and diesel supplies from tomorrow give comfort to automobiles manufacturers that supplies of cleaner fuel would not be a problem," the official said. (PTI)



Indian Oil Corp (IOC) Director (Refineries) B V Rama Gopal

Saudi govt decides to not confiscate passports of Indian airlines crew: Air India

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ The Saudi Arabian government has decided not to retain the passport of the Indian airline crew members on arrival in the country and issue a bar code instead, an Air India spokesperson confirmed. The move comes as a big relief to the crew of Air India and Jet Airways, the two Indian airlines who fly to that country. Indian authorities had taken up the issue with the Saudi authorities and the decision not to retain the passport of the crews of Indian airlines came into effect from mid-February this year, the Air India spokesperson said. The bar code given to the crew members will have a limited validity. The development also comes against the backdrop of Saudi Arabia allowing a newly introduced Air India flight from New Delhi to Tel Aviv fly over its airspace, seen as a major diplomatic development in West Asia. Jet Airways could not be contacted for a confirmation. For long, passports of Indian crew members arriving in the country were taken away and given back on return. This led to major problems for the crew members in the country. In July last year, four crew members of Air India were detained by the Saudi Arabian Police in Jeddah as they could not show them the original copies of their passport. According to an Air India pilot, crew members of all airlines are required to deposit their passports at the immigration office at Jeddah, which issues a certificate. Airline staff deposit this certificate at their hotel and keep a photocopy with themselves. Thus, the staffers only have photocopies of their travel documents during their stay in the country. The crew members were out for dinner a day after their flight from Mumbai landed in Jeddah when a police team approached them to check their travel papers. When the airline staff failed to provide the original documents they were put in a police van and their phones confiscated. (PTI)

Plea to impose safeguard duty on solar cells import

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ The Indian Solar Manufacturers Association (ISMA) has demanded imposition of safeguard duty on imports of solar cells and modules, saying it would be significant to the solar manufacturing industry.

The association has written to the Commerce ministry favouring the Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) recommendation of imposition of 70 per cent duty on imports of solar PV cells and modules. The DGS is mandated to investigate the existence of "serious injury" or "threat of serious injury" to the domestic industry as a consequence of increased import of an article into India. It also submitted its findings to the central government along with recom-

mendations regarding the amount and period of levy of safeguard duty to check injury or threat of injury to the domestic industry. "The consequences of not imposing the recommended duty, and in good time, are very



significant not only to the solar manufacturing industry, but also to the nation, considering the strategic nature of solar power to India and perpetuating dependence on China for imports of solar cells and modules," the

ISMA's letter said. It cited ways to check solar power tariff rise, which is expected due to the imposition of the duty. It is true that the imposition of safeguard duty will increase the prices of cells and modules, inherently because that is the objective of duty imposition, the association said. "However, we are convinced that safeguard duty will not result in any significant increase in solar power tariff. Additionally duty collected will be a revenue to Indian exchequer and can be redeployed in solar power development," the ISMA said. Adani Group, Vikram Solar and Tata Power are among the top few domestic solar manufacturers in India. India is targeting to 100 gigawatt (GW) solar capacity by 2022. (PTI)



Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc (R) greets Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Takehiko Nakao upon his arrival at the National Convention Center for the Greater Mekong Subregion Summit in Hanoi, Vietnam — Reuters

Videocon-ICICI loan: CBI questions bank officials

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ The CBI has questioned few ICICI bank officials as part of a preliminary enquiry to find if any quid pro quo was involved in the bank issuing a Rs 3,250 crore loan to the Videocon Group in 2012. Agency officials said they

are also studying relevant documents of the transaction and if they come across any evidence that indicates wrongdoing, ICICI bank MD and CEO Chanda Kochhar, her husband Deepak Kochhar along with others could be summoned for detailed questioning. They said the statements of nodal officers of the ICICI, who were part of processing the loan of about Rs 3,250 crore, have been recorded as part of the PE registered six weeks back. The PE has named Videocon group promoter Venugopal Dhoot, Deepak Kochhar and unknown others, they said. A PE is a precursor before the agency lodges an FIR to probe criminal charges on the basis of evidence collected during the former exercise. The deal recently made news after reports questioned the loan and linked it to a possible quid pro quo that Dhoot allegedly had with NuPower Renewables, a company founded by Deepak Kochhar. Earlier this week, the



ICICI Bank board came out in support of Chanda Kochhar, saying it has full faith and confidence in her and described certain reports against her regard-

in a statement. With regard to loans to the Videocon group, it said the banks current exposure is part of a syndicated consortium arrangement. "ICICI Bank was not the lead bank for this consortium and the bank only sanctioned its share of facilities aggregating approximately Rs 3,250 crore which was less than 10 per cent of the total consortium facility in April 2012," it added. (PTI)

GSFC to install Fertilisers vending machines

VADODARA, MARCH 31 /--/ Gujarat State Fertilisers Company (GSFC) Saturday said it has got permission from the Centre to install fertilisers vending machines (FVMs) in three states. The Union agriculture ministry has allowed the company to install fertilisers vending machines (FVMs) in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, GSFC Managing Director A M Tiwari said. Talking to PTI, Tiwari said the company had informed the Centre about developing machines which dispense fertilisers in smaller quantities to farmers. At present, agriculturists had to buy the key farm ingredient in 50 kg bags, he said. With these machines, cultivators can buy fertilisers in much smaller quantities, even one kg, Tiwari said. GSFC, whose headquarters are located on Vadodara's outskirts, has installed a vending machine in its premises as part of a pilot project. The project will be launched on April 15 in the presence of Bharathi Sivaswami Sihag, Secretary, Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers. After that 10 such machines will be installed in remote areas of Anand and Kheda districts, Tiwari said. The person operating the machine will accept payment and enter the quantity that will come out of the device within minutes, he said. Fertilisers like urea, ammonium phosphate and ammonium phosphate sulphate will be available for sale through these machines, Tiwari stated. Even people in urban areas, who have gardens in their home, can buy fertilisers from these machines, said the MD of GSFC, a Gujarat government-promoted company. FVMs will enable small and marginal farmers to purchase exact quantity of fertilisers that is required for specific crop, leading to proper nutrient management, higher yield and reduced wastage, he added.



Artist Adlan Yousif looks at metal scrap for his sculptures, in Khartoum, Sudan — Reuters

LED lights installations target met: Rlys

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ The railways Saturday said it had achieved its target of installing LED lights across its network yesterday, a move that would help the national transporter save Rs 50 crore per annum in electricity bills. Railway Minister Piyush Goyal had initially set the target of achieving 100-per cent LED lighting by March 31, 2019. Subsequently, the deadline was revised to March 31, 2018. "As per the direction and guidance of the MR (Minister of Railways), concerted effort of the Railway Board and Zonal Railways, Indian Railways has achieved 100 per cent provision of LED lights in all the stations on 30.3.18," a statement from the railway ministry said. It added that the move would help the railways save Rs 50 crore per annum in electricity bills and reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by 60,000 ton. "The target was completed one day before. South Central Railway was the first Railway to complete the work, followed by the other Zonal Railways," the statement said. (PTI)

Gold smugglers adopt novel methods: Customs official

KOCHI, MARCH 31 /--/ Smugglers have adopted new methods of smuggling gold and other valuable items through the airport here by converting the yellow metal into powder and compounds in paste form, a top Customs official said on Saturday. The Customs Commissioner Sumit Kumar said, "The smugglers have resorted to neo-age alchemy, by converting the gold into powder and compounds in paste form." He said the sleuths, despite limited manpower, have effectively curbed the crime. During the last six months (from October 2017 till date), sleuths have seized 61 kg of gold worth around Rs 19 crore and registered 211 cases, he said. (PTI)

News In Brief

IOC to double refining capacity

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ India's biggest oil firm IOC Saturday said it plans to invest about Rs 1.43 lakh crore to nearly double its oil refining capacity to 150 million tonnes and boost petrochemical production by 2030. While Indian Oil Corp (IOC) is expanding refining capacity to meet fuel demand, which is expected to nearly double by 2040, it does not want to remain "a refining company alone and is thus venturing into petrochemicals and alternative fuels as well," company's Director (Refineries) B V Rama Gopal told reporters here.

Apollo Pharmacy opens 3,000th outlet

CHENNAI, MARCH 31 /--/ Apollo Pharmacy, a unit of health care service provider Apollo Hospitals Enterprise, has set up new retail unit in the city, taking the total to 3,000 such outlets present across the country. The 3,000th outlet has been set up at Seevaram, Thuraiyakkam recently, a press release said. "Apollo Pharmacy is not just Asia's first and largest branded pharmacy network, but it has pioneered value-added services like free home delivery, refill reminder programmes..." Apollo Hospitals Joint Vice-Chairman Shobana Kamineni said. (PTI)

Beef export flourishing under Modi's regime: K'taka minister

BENGALURU, MARCH 31 /--/ Taking a dig at the BJP over its "double standard" on the ban of cow slaughter, Karnataka minister Ramalinga Reddy on Saturday alleged that the country's beef export was flourishing under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime. Recalling the statements of BJP president Amit Shah and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during their visits to Karnataka that they would ban cow slaughter in the state after coming to power, Reddy said killing of any animal was not right. "They (BJP) say that they will ban cow slaughter if they come to power in Karnataka, while our country exports cow meat, beef to other countries...it has been four years since they came to power, why have they not stopped these exports," he asked. Speaking to reporters here, the state home minister noted, "If they have real love for cows, they

will have to first stop the exports." Reddy also alleged that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's regime, the country has attained second position in the global beef exports, from the third place it enjoyed earlier. Brazil currently holds the first position, while Australia is third. The Congress minister said the income earned by the country during 2015-16 from beef exports stood at Rs 26,682 crore. "Does this mean for Rs 26,000 crore, they (BJP) are exporting beef and not banning it? If their sentiment about cow is true, let them stop it," he said. Citing data by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy data, Reddy said under the Modi regime, beef exports have seen a growth of about 14 per cent every year. BJP-ruled Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh have large number of beef processing and exporting companies, he said, adding there were allegations

that BJP leaders were partners in these beef exporting companies in Uttar Pradesh. The Karnataka minister said in BJP-ruled Goa, 30 to 50 tonnes of beef is used every day, adding in many northeastern states where the BJP is in power, they are not ready for a ban on cow slaughter for "political reasons". "...they (BJP) are playing a drama...if they want to ban, let them ban every where and all animals. I will completely support it...let them first leave their double standard out," he said. Reddy also termed Shah's visit to temples, Swami jis (seers) and royal family of Mysuru in Karnataka as "politically motivated" ahead of the May 12 state assembly election. Hitting out at Shah's statement that BJP would bring the culprits involved in killings of RSS and BJP activists to justice, Reddy asked, "Who are they to bring them to justice when we have already done the job." (PTI)

SpiceJet crew accuse airline of strip search

NEW DELHI, MARCH 31 /--/ A video showing an angry bunch of SpiceJet air hostesses accusing the airline of strip searching them at Chennai airport has gone viral, with the airline denying the claims.

The crew alleged that they were searched after de-boarding on the suspicion that they were swindling cash collected from the sale of food and other items on-board. While SpiceJet confirmed that their security teams undertook "random pat down searches" at few of the stations

on the night of March 28 and March 29 as part of security and safety standard operating procedures (SOP), the airline rejected the allegation that the crew was strip searched. The budget carrier said the allegations regarding deviation from SOPs were being investigated and strict action would be taken if anybody was found guilty. One of the objectives of this search is to ensure that there is no pilferage of company money/goods, smuggling or any illegal activity that an employee may be lured

into. This also ensures security and safety of our passengers, employees and assets. This search is essentially the same as what any passenger goes through at any of the Indian airports, said a SpiceJet spokesperson. He said the searches were conducted as per the laid down procedures in closed rooms by well-trained employees of same gender. During the searches on March 28 and March 29, a few cases of pilferages were detected and appropriate disciplinary action was initiated, the spokesperson added. (PTI)

