

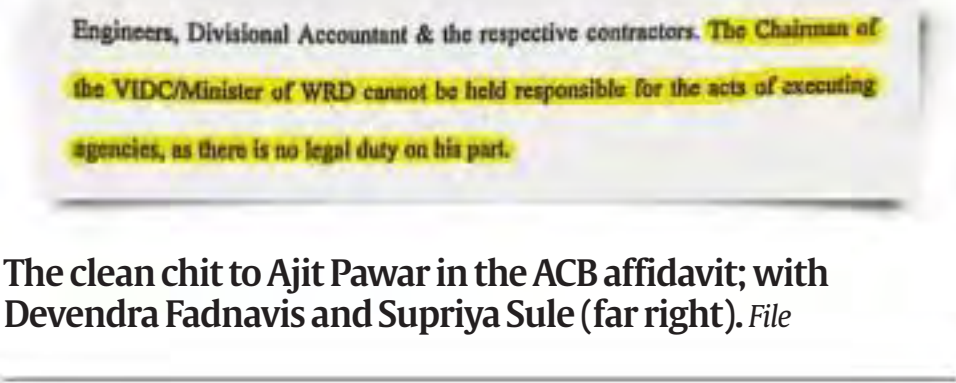
IRRIGATION SCAM: ACB FILED AFFIDAVIT AFTER SERIES OF ENQUIRIES DURING FADNAVIS-LED BJP-SENA GOVT

Ajit Pawar got clean chit — day after Fadnavis resigned, day before new govt was sworn in

VIVEK DESHPANDE
NAGPUR, DECEMBER 5

IN AN affidavit filed before the Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court just a day before the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress government was sworn in on November 28, Maharashtra's Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) exonerated former Water Resources Development Minister Ajit Pawar of the allegations he had been facing for the multi-crore irrigation scam that rocked the state about a decade ago.

In the 16-page November 27



The clean chit to Ajit Pawar in the ACB affidavit; with Devendra Fadnavis and Supriya Sule (far right). File

affidavit, Rashmi Nandedkar, ACB SP, Nagpur, stated, "The Chairman of the VIDC/Minister of WRD cannot be held responsible for the acts of executing agencies, as there is no legal duty on his part." Nandedkar was referring to Ajit Pawar's tenure

as Chairman, Vidarbha Irrigation Development Corporation and the Minister of Water Resources Department during the Congress-NCP government in the state.

This assumes significance because on November 25, a day



before Fadnavis and Pawar resigned as Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister, respectively, following a Supreme Court order for a floor test in the state Assembly, the ACB had closed nine "open enquiries" initiated into the alleged irrigation



scam. On November 28, the Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress government under Uddhav Thackeray was sworn in.

Ajit Pawar's exoneration was a result of enquiry processes that took place during the term of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



The victim was airlifted from Lucknow to Delhi. Vishal Srivastav

Unnao again: Rape victim set on fire by accused on bail

AVANEESH MISHRA
UNNAO, DECEMBER 5

A 23-YEAR-OLD woman, who was gangraped, is battling for life after she was set on fire with kerosene early Thursday morning in UP's Unnao district allegedly by five men, including two accused in the rape case of whom one was freed on bail a few days ago.

The woman's family said she was on her way to catch a train to Rae Bareilly in connection with the rape case when she was waylaid by the accused. Police said the woman, who was engulfed in flames, started running towards the nearest police station around 3 km from the spot near her house before local residents doused the fire and police rushed her to the local health centre.

She was then taken to the district hospital and referred to the Lucknow Civil Hospital. The UP government later flew her in an air ambulance to Delhi for treatment at Safdarjung Hospital where doctors said she had suffered "95 per cent burns" and was "critical". "She is in the ICU ward. The chances of her survival are dismal. We are monitoring her condition," said a senior doctor from the hospital.

Police said the accused were identified by the woman in her statement to the Sub Divisional Magistrate. Police have identified those arrested as Shivam Trivedi and his father Ram Kishore Trivedi, the village pradhan's son Shubham Trivedi and his father Hari Shankar Trivedi, and Shubham's neighbour Umesh Vajpayee.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

For contempt threat to senior lawyer, Justice Mishra sorry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 5

TWO DAYS after he warned a senior lawyer that he would initiate contempt proceedings against him, Justice Arun Mishra Thursday apologised to members of the Bar, saying he was ready for even a "dandvat pranam" (lying fully prostrate on the floor), and that he has "lived and will die for the Bar".

Justice Mishra's apology came when a battery of senior advocates sat in his court before the judges assembled and sought to intervene in connection with the heated exchange between Justice Mishra and senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan during a hearing on interpretation of provisions of the 2013 Land Acquisition Act.

Responding to concerns expressed by senior lawyers — those present included Kapil Sibal, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Mukul Rohatgi, Dushyant Dave, Vikas Singh, Supreme Court Bar Association president Rakesh Khanna and Solicitor General



Justice Arun Mishra

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

190 BASIS POINTS CUT IN TWO POLICY STATEMENTS

RBI slashes GDP growth forecast to 5% — deepest cut in a decade

As inflation concerns grow, central bank takes a pause, holds interest rates

SANDEEP SINGH & GEORGE MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MUMBAI, DECEMBER 5

THE CENTRAL bank slashed the GDP growth forecast by 190 basis points to 5 per cent over the last two policy statements in a matter of two months — its sharpest revision in at least a decade indicating its inability to foresee the deepening slow-down in the economy.

Also, as inflation concerns grew, the RBI's monetary policy committee took a pause, leaving the repo rate — the rate at which RBI lends to commercial banks — untouched at 5.15 per cent for the first time in 10 months.

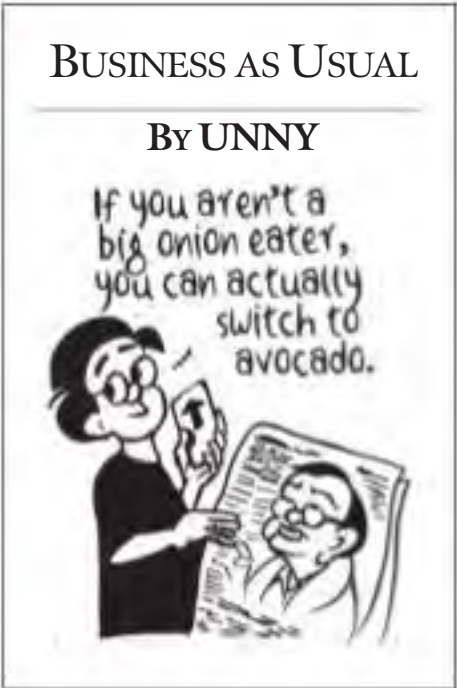
While the RBI revised its GDP projection by 1.9 percentage point in a matter of two months, it has brought down its projection by 2.4 per cent for the year, in a matter of 10 months or five monetary policy reviews.

Even in the year 2008-09 — the year of the global financial

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das with his deputies in Mumbai on Thursday. Ganesh Shirsekar



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Revenue down, states should look at hiking GST cess: Sushil Modi

Options: Cess on sin list could go up, list could be expanded

AANCHAL MAGAZINE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 5

AS THE slugfest over delayed compensation payment under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime escalates, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council could look at increasing the number of items on which cess is levied.

Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Sushil Kumar Modi said it was time states looked at measures to boost their compensation kitty, including bringing in more items into the ambit of the compensation cess under the indirect tax regime.

If an upward revision in GST levies is resorted to by the Council

to shore up revenues, it would be the first time that a hike will kick in since the indirect tax regime was introduced in July 2017.

"States should think about how to increase their compensation kitty. They should start thinking about what other items can be brought into the ambit of cess (under GST). As per the GST

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

THE EDITORIAL PAGE

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BY MUKULIKA BANERJEE
PAGE 14

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PAGE 16

Govt clueless on economy, look at numbers: Chidambaram, day after

KRISHN KAUSHIK
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 5

A DAY after his release from jail, Congress leader P Chidambaram launched an aggressive attack against the Centre on the state of the economy, saying that the BJP-led government was "clueless" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had left it to his ministers to indulge in "bluff and bluster".



'My spine, neck and head stronger'. Anil Sharma

Asked about his 106 days in prison, he said: "Sleeping on a wooden board without a pillow strengthens your neck, spine and back. My spine is stronger, my neck is stronger and my head is stronger." He refused to comment on the cases against him, saying the matter was subjective, but added that "my record as minister and my conscience are absolutely clear".

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

WORLD



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Top Indian animal safaris: Lions of Gir, tigers of Ranthambore, rhinos of Kaziranga... cows of UP?

MAULSHREE SETH
LUCKNOW, DECEMBER 5

THE LIONS of Gir, the tigers of Ranthambore, the rhinos of Kaziranga and, if a UP Minister has his way, the cows of UP.

This new addition to the list of famous Indian safaris is the dream of UP Dairy Development and Animal Husbandry Minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary. A "cow safari", he says, will have twin benefits: solve the problem of stray cattle, which has ballooned since the BJP government banned slaughter houses, and present a tourism opportunity.

"We have some big cattle

farms, like in Maharajganj district, which is spread over 1,000 acres. The idea is to turn such farms, where 15,000 to 25,000 cows can be kept, into cow safaris. All facilities will be provided under one roof and arrangements made to ensure that cows can move freely," Chaudhary told *The Indian Express*.

"There will be arrangements for bullock carts and other such facilities for tourists, too," he said. If the safari takes off, Chaudhary is sure that "others will follow our model". "We will look at the idea of having more than one cow safari. Officers have been asked to identify farms and shelters that can be



Will solve problem of stray cattle, boost tourism: UP Minister

transformed to house about 25,000 cows," he said. It's not the first time that a cow safari has been proposed in

the country. In June 2018, members of a foundation that runs a cow rehabilitation centre near Jaipur had

announced plans to start a safari where visitors would learn about "indigenous breeds". It's yet to start, though, with organisers now claiming a January launch.

Chaudhary, meanwhile, is working on other plans for the welfare of his state's cattle. "Instructions have been given to have bonfires for cattle at shelters during the winter, and ensure mats and blankets," he said.

That's not all. "The government is moving in the direction of providing specified semen to ensure the birth of female calves. With the birth of more female calves and more milk generation, farmers will not abandon their cattle," the Minister said.

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