

EPFO Trustees to meet today; rate cut talks likely to be on table

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

INTEREST RATE for over 6 crore active subscribers of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for the financial year 2019-20 will be decided in a meeting on Thursday...

Last year, the Finance Ministry had questioned the surplus level and the Employee Provident Fund's exposure to the now bankrupt IL&FS Ltd and similar risky entities, before granting its nod for the 8.65% interest rate

viewed closely against the backdrop of the economic slowdown and rising inflation. At its last bimonthly meeting in February, the Monetary Policy Committee of the Reserve Bank of India had maintained the status quo on its key policy rate.

scribers to 8.65 per cent for 2018-19 from a five-year low of 8.55 per cent in the previous financial year. As per the EPFO's estimates shared during the meeting in February last year, at 8.65 per cent, the estimated surplus was Rs 151.67 crore.

INVESTIGATION INTO 'FRAUD' AT IL&FS NCLAT dismisses plea by former auditors against impleadment

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

THE NATIONAL Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Wednesday dismissed a plea moved by audit firms Deloitte Haskins & Sells and KPMG arm BSR & Associates, as well as their independent directors, against impleadment in an ongoing investigation in their role in the alleged fraud at the debt-laden Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Limited (IL&FS).

NCLT JUDGMENT CAN'T BE TERMED 'ILLEGAL'

In its ruling, the NCLAT said that the National Company Law Tribunal judgment could not be termed as illegal and that the tribunal was empowered to pass order to implead the audit firms Deloitte Haskins & Sells and KPMG arm BSR & Associates, as well as their independent directors

subsidiaries was on account of "misrepresentation and falsehoods about the financial state of affairs" and that the auditors too must be held responsible for the same, the NCLAT had asked them to join the investigation.

Internet shutdowns: 314 times between 2017 & 2019; 95 lasted more than a day

AASHISH ARYAN NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

THE NUMBER of preventive internet shutdowns enforced by the central and the state governments in India saw a major spike between 2017 and 2019, and as many as 95 of these lasted for more than 24 hours. There were at least 147 instances over these three years for which there is no data on the duration of the shutdowns as there is lack of any form of communication on these blockades, according to data available in public domain and compiled by Software Freedom Law Centre (SFLC).

Explained: Fewer reactive shutdowns reported than preventive ones

DESPITE A rising number of preventive internet shutdowns, the number of reactive shutdowns, however, remained low over the three years, according to the data. Preventive shutdowns are defined as internet blockade by the state in anticipation of violence, unrest or disturbance, whereas reactive shutdowns are enforced to prevent further escalation of violence.

downs between 2012 and January 2020 lasted less than 24 hours, 74 lasted between 24 and 72 hours, 41 lasted for over 72 hours, while no information was available on the respective duration of the remaining 208 internet shutdowns," SFLC said in a report released in February.

Another rising trend, officials said, was to use Section 144 of the Code Of Criminal Procedure to justify the communications blockade and the continuance of it. "That can not be done. The use of 144 does not pass any muster under law. However, it is seldom challenged," an official said. A colonial era law, Section 144 gives a magistrate the powers to enforce a general shutdown of the area, if he or she believes that there could be violence in the area, arising from a certain tension between two or more groups of people.

ED files money laundering case against Naresh Goyal

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate (ED) has registered a case, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), against Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal. This is the first time the agency has booked Goyal for alleged money laundering.

Last year, the ED questioned Goyal and searched multiple premises associated with him, after registering a case under the Foreign Exchange Management Act. As per ED sources, Goyal has 19 privately held companies, of which 14 are in India and 5 abroad. The Directorate has alleged that Jet Airways executed aircraft lease agreements with offshore entities that made payments to firms, which allegedly "diverted" money to Goyal.

I-T detects TDS defaults worth 'hundreds of crores'

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

THE INCOME Tax Department has detected defaults on tax deducted at sources (TDS) by prominent companies, including a telecom operator, several large hospitals, a real estate group and a major oil company. The defaults run into hundreds of crores, the department said in a statement.

cal contracts worth Rs 4,000 crore. The amount is further liable to go up once the enquiry is completed," the department said in a statement, without naming the telco. Similarly, two premier hospitals with 2,500 and 700 bed capacity have committed TDS default of Rs 70 crore and Rs 20 crore, respectively. While one hospital was guilty of not making any TDS on construction contracts as statutorily required, the other one was deducting tax at the rate of 10 per cent only on salary paid to the doctors, instead of the present TDS rate of 30 per cent applicable for salary payments.

Under the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885, only the Home Secretary of the central or the state government can pass orders to enforce an internet shutdown in any area. The order must include the detailed reasons for the shutdown and must be sent to a review committee the next day. The committee shall, within five days, submit its report and only if the shutdown is justified even after that will the communications blockade continue, officials of the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) explained. "The Telegraph rules lay down many checks and balances, but that does not happen."

It is the first reaction. One good example is Rajasthan, where there has been a regime change, but number of shutdowns is on the rise," an official said. Rajasthan, however, is also the only state that provides a formal order for nearly all internet shutdowns it enforces, officials said. In 2017, for instance, of the 79 instances of internet shutdown across the country, there were 51 where the authorities cut connectivity to mobile phone, while there were seven instances where connections to both mobiles and landlines were severed. Similarly, in 2018, authorities suspended mobile phone connectivity 126 times, and 100 times in 2019. "Of the 381 internet shut-

'Co-working operators leased 10.8 mn sq ft area last year'

In 2019, co-working operators leased 10.8 million square feet (sq ft) area, up 26 per cent from the previous year, CBRE said in its report 'India Flexible Space Digest - 2019'



10-12 million sq ft: Expected area that could be leased this year, riding on sustained demand for flexible workspace, rising from about 14 per cent in 2019 to 16-20 per cent in 2020

Over 50%: SHARE OF FLEXIBLE SPACE LEASING ACCOUNTED FOR BENGALURU AND HYDERABAD WITHIN TOTAL SPACE LEASED IN 2019

DISTRIBUTION OF FLEXIBLE SPACE LEASING IN 2019: Hybrid spaces and managed space: 77% Co-working and business centres: 23%

60%: RISE IN OVERALL STOCK IN FLEXIBLE SPACE MARKET, FROM ABOUT 19 MILLION SQ FT IN 2018 TO TOUCH 30 MILLION SQ FT IN 2019

... corporates are beginning to explore various workplace solutions which could result in capex reduction and increased agility of their RE portfolio. ANSHUMAN MAGAZINE CHAIRMAN AND CEO-INDIA, SOUTH EAST ASIA, MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA, CBRE

U.P. State Road Transport Corporation, Head Quarter Parvahan Bhawan, Tehri Kothi, Lucknow - 226001. U.P.S.R.T.C. is inviting E-tenders from only eligible sources (Eligibility for participating in tender is given in Detailed Bill of quantity, Eligibility for participating in tender. Other terms and conditions of the tender and calendaring of the tender may be seen on Govt. e-portal tender.up.nic.in

TAMIL NADU TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD. NOTICE INVITING TENDERS (E-TENDERING PROCESS) Sl. No Tender Inviting Authority Specification No. Total 1 SE/Transmission-IV T-2141 1 2 SE/Transmission-III T-2139, T-2140, T-2142 3

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF HARYANA Mahendargarh - 123031 (Haryana) Tender Notice Tenders (Technical + Financial) in separate sealed envelopes are invited for the procurement of following equipments for setting of Central Instrumentation Centre at Central University of Haryana: 1. Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) 2. Scanning Probe Microscope (SPM)

Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department Notice Inviting Tenders for supply of Ordinary Portland Cement (OPC) 43 Grade for the year 2019-20 1. For full details, visit www.tntenders.gov.in 2. e-Bids are invited by the Project Director, DRDA of all Districts of Tamil Nadu state under two cover system, for supply of (OPC) 43 grade cement for the year 2019-20.

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD (A Government of India Undertaking) Head Office, Udhamapur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link Project, Satsyam Complex, Marble Market, Greater Kailash, P.O. Sainik Colony, Jammu - 180011, Jammu & Kashmir, Tel: +91 - 191 - 2484778 OPEN e-TENDER Tender Notice No.: KR/PD/JK/EL/T-1/2020 Dtd.: 29.02.2020 Konknan Railway Corporation Ltd. invites "Open e-Tender" in "Two Packet System" from experienced contractors for "Provision of E&M system which includes supply, erection, testing and commissioning of 33 KV and 11 KV HT power cable network, GIS substation, DG sets, Tunnel ventilation system, Tunnel Lighting, SCADA System and fire-fighting system etc. for tunnel T-3 & T-5 between Km 39 to 52 on Katra - Dhararam section of Udhamapur - Srinagar - Baramulla Rail Link Project".

Hindustan Zinc divestment: SC asks if CBI can share report with petitioners

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday asked the Centre to inform whether a copy of the closure report filed by the Central Bureau of Investigation, which probed the divestment of PSU Hindustan Zinc Ltd, can be shared with the petitioners who had challenged the divestment process. A bench of Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices BR Gavai and Surya Kant asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta to appraise it by March 6. Appearing for the petitioner National Confederation of Officers Association of Central Public Sector Enterprises, advocate Prashant Bhushan said that the SC had in the case of proposed divestment of HPLCL and BPCL held that government cannot offload its stake in such a matter that its share goes below 51 per cent. He added that knowing this well, the government had still gone ahead and divested Hindustan Zinc in 2014. Appearing for the Centre, SC Mehta said the company was already divested in 2002 and government share brought down to 49 percent. ENS

India plagued with slowing economy, lack of finance: Blackstone chief

INDIA IS plagued with a slowing economy and lack of finance currently, Blackstone's chairman Stephen Schwarzman said, hinting that the global private equity major may be interested in distressed asset play in the country. Speaking to reporters at the IIT-Bombay, he also said the country is lacking the robustness in financial institutions. Blackstone has been present in India since 2006 and has invested \$15 billion in the country, including private equity play in enterprises and also bets on realty. Schwarzman, who is also the chief executive and co-founder of Blackstone, said his company is "bullish" on India, but from a long term perspective. To a question on distressed asset investing, which a lot of its global peers have entered into, he said, "issues with India are more about slowing economic growth and limited credit extension by the banking system and neobanks and that should create more need for owners of companies to look for other sources of liquidity."

'Cryptocurrency sector can now work with regulated entities'

THE INTERNET and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), which represents the cryptocurrency exchanges in India, said it is looking forward to working jointly with the Reserve Bank of India and the government on a constructive policy framework for cryptocurrencies to support innovation along with suitable measures to keep the risk under control. Welcoming the Supreme Court's judgment on allowing cryptocurrency exchanges to use banking facilities, IAMAI said the development comes as a major relief for the cryptocurrency sector as the exchanges can now work with regulated entities for facilitating banking transactions. Nischal Shetty, founder & chief executive officer, WazirX and member of Blockchain and Cryptocurrency Committee of IAMAI, said, "This positive judgement will open doors to massive crypto adoption in India. It proves we can now innovate, and the entire country can participate in the blockchain revolution."

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU MUMBAI, MARCH 4



Stephen Schwarzman (left) with Infosys chairman Nandan Nilekani in Mumbai, on Wednesday. PTI