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# चेयरमैन पद के लिए नया विज्ञापन जारी

सरकार ने तेल एवं गैस नियामक पीएनजीआरबी के डेढ़ साल से खाली पड़े चेयरमैन पद पर नियुक्ति के लिए फिर से विज्ञापन निकाला है।

तेल मंत्रालय ने इस हफ्ते पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस नियामक बोर्ड (पीएनजीआरबी) के चेयरमैन पद के लिए नए सिरे से विज्ञापन जारी कर आवेदन आमंत्रित किए हैं।

पीएनजीआरबी के प्रमुख का पद दिसंबर, 2020 में दिनेश के सर्राफ के कार्यमुक्त होने के बाद से ही खाली पड़ा हुआ है। हालांकि तलाश एवं चयन समिति ने जून, 2021 में पूर्व ऊर्जा सचिव संजीव नंदन सहाय का इस पद पर चयन किया था लेकिन सरकार की तरफ से इस पर मुहर नहीं लगाई गई। इसके बाद नवंबर, 2021 में भी इस पद की

भर्ती के लिए विज्ञापन निकाला गया था। उसके बाद इस साल फरवरी में पूर्व पेट्रोलियम सचिव तरुण कपूर का नाम इस पद के लिए चयनित किया गया था लेकिन इनके नाम पर मंत्रिमंडल की नियुक्ति समिति की मुहर लगने के पहले ही कपूर को प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी का सलाहकार बना दिया गया। ऐसे में एक बार फिर विज्ञापन निकाला गया है।

योग्यता की शर्तें पूरी करने वाले अभ्यर्थी 21 जुलाई तक आवेदन कर सकते हैं। पेट्रोलियम मंत्रालय के एक अधिकारी ने कहा कि सरकार इस पद पर जल्द-से-जल्द नियुक्ति करना चाहती है। पिछली बार ओएनजीसी के पूर्व चेयरमैन एवं इंडियन ऑयल के पूर्व निदेशक समेत 13 लोगों ने आवेदन किए थे।

भाषा

## BP Pays UK \$127M in 2021 Tax for North Sea Business



BP paid tax on its UK North Sea business in 2021 for the first time in at least six years, according to the company's latest payments to governments report.

The news comes amid tension between the UK oil industry and the government over a new 25% windfall tax that will fund programs to ease the pain of high energy costs on households. The levy was introduced after several majors posted record profits.

The London-based major paid a total of \$127.3 million to the UK's HM Revenue and Customs, Crown Estate and Oil and Gas Authority. In 2020 the company received a tax refund of \$42 million.

**Bloomberg**



AHEAD OF VISITS BEGINNING TOMORROW

## Energy, Food Security Key Items on PM Agenda for Germany, UAE Trips

**Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury**  
@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** India's trading arrangements for crude oil procurement are based on national energy security consideration, foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said on Friday, ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to Germany and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) beginning Sunday.

Kwatra was answering a question on what will India's approach be if it faces criticism during the upcoming G7 summit in Germany for its procurement of Russian crude oil.

Energy and food security will be key items on the agenda of Modi's trip to both Germany and the UAE. The foreign secretary said India's consideration for crude oil purchases has been very well understood by the global community. Discounted oil purchases from Russia now constitute 10 per cent of India's total oil imports.

Modi will visit the Alpine castle of Schloss Elmau in southern Germany on June 26-27 to attend the annual summit of G7 countries as an invitee. He will be part of two sessions, including one on climate change. The PM is expected to speak in two sessions that include environment, energy, climate, food security, health, gender equality and democracy.

Modi will travel to the UAE on June 28 to pay his condolences on the passing away of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the former president of the Gulf nation.

"As far as the Prophet issue is concerned, almost all Gulf nations have an understanding of India's position. We have communicated our stand on various platforms. I don't think that will be taken forward anymore," Kwatra said when asked about the controversy over remarks about the Prophet by BJP spokespersons.

Kwatra said, "PM Modi's visit to UAE will focus on two main issues, first to pay condolences on the passing away of former UAE President and Abu Dhabi ruler Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and second to congratulate Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for becoming President of the UAE."

This will be the PM's first meeting with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan since his election as the new President of the UAE.

The foreign secretary also talked about India-UAE relations. He sa-

### CRUDE OIL ISSUE



**India's consideration for crude oil purchases has been very well understood by the global community: Foreign secretary**

id the relations are dynamic, robust and widespread. "Energy security is an important pillar of our relations. People-to-people connect is another aspect. Security, environment, education and investment are other areas of discussion between the two countries," he said. Kwatra said India's regular participation at G7 summits clearly points to increasing acceptance of the country's role to find solutions to solve key global challenges. Besides India, Germany has invited Argentina, Indonesia, Senegal and South Africa to the G7 Summit. During the visit, Modi will also hold bilateral meetings and discussions with the leaders of G7, as also the guest countries on the sidelines of the summit, said Kwatra.



# Europe must declare a war economy

As Russia turns off the gas, Europeans must become ants to avoid ending up grasshoppers

**THE NEXT STEP** in the conflict between the West and Russian President Vladimir Putin was supposed to be a European boycott on Russian coal, oil, and natural gas. It may instead be a gas embargo by Putin on Europe. The countries of the European Union must accept what some of them—notably Germany and Austria—spent years denying. It is that in the eyes of an amoral despot such as Putin, everything is a weapon of war. That includes nuclear and chemical arms, but also wheat, disinformation and, not least, energy. For decades, Putin has done his best to make European countries as dependent as possible on Siberian hydrocarbons to create vulnerabilities in the West. Now he is exploiting those weaknesses.

Since April, the Kremlin has been shutting off Russian flows of natural gas to a growing list of EU countries Putin deems hostile—first Poland and Bulgaria, then Finland, the Netherlands, and Denmark. He is now throttling the gas flowing through Nord Stream, a pipeline linking Russia to Germany. Downstream recipients, like Italy, are also affected. The International Energy Agency, based in Paris, warns that Putin could turn the gas tap completely off within months. He probably will, just because he can. One reason is that non-Western countries such as China and India are stepping in for the EU as buyers. Another is that soaring energy prices are making up for reduced volumes to Europe. As is his wont, Putin shrouds his aggression in subterfuge. Sometimes he blames the buyers—for not paying in roubles, for example, even though that is not stipulated in the contracts—or “technical” problems.



**ANDREAS  
 KLUTH**

Bloomberg

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi has called these Russian excuses what they are: “lies.” Putin loves the soaring energy prices these shortages are causing, which are hurting Western consumers, causing social tension and may yet test the EU’s resolve. Several German industrial companies, in sectors from chemicals to steel and glass, have already warned that they may have to curb production if energy gets dearer or scarcer. Austria, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark have already activated emergency plans. Germany and others are heading for rationing—a war economy. Austria has already had to restart a mothballed power plant running on coal. Germany is also firing up its coal generators. That

is bitter for a country that had instead been planning to exit coal power altogether.

Germany’s predicament is blowback for the cumulative policy mistakes of decades. Not only have successive governments—including all four mainstream parties at various times—naively made themselves dependent on Russian pipeline gas. They also rashly exited from nuclear power generation. In effect, previous German governments volunteered to become Putin’s energy hostage. The center-right parties in opposition and government want to keep the three remaining nuclear plants running. The center-left Social Democrats and Greens are still resisting. The late psychiatrist Elisabeth Kuebler-Ross believed that people must cycle through five stages of grief — denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. Germans, in particular, appear stuck in the first four.

Acceptance means preparing now for the economic war against Putin. It means getting fossil fuels from other countries, fracking gas out of the ground underneath, and importing more of it in liquid form by ship. But above all, acceptance means cutting back. All Europeans must stop being the grasshopper in Aesop’s fable, who spent the summer making music and frolicking, but then had nothing in winter. They must instead become the fable’s ants—forbearing, abstaining, conserving, saving. Western Europeans have been lucky so far not to be in a shooting war as Ukrainians are. But they are already combatants in the economic war against Putin. It is time for sacrifice.

## ECONOMY, P2

FREE RATION SCHEME

**Expenditure dept**  
**cautions** against more  
steps burdening fisc



● BALANCING ACT

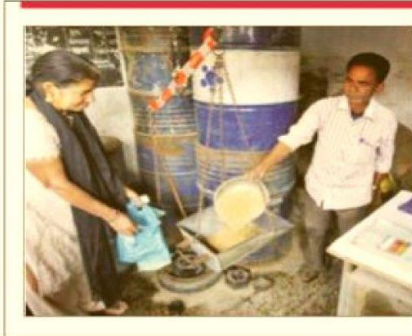
# Expenditure dept cautions against more steps burdening the fisc

**Says extension of free ration scheme beyond H1 and more tax cuts not advisable**

FE BUREAU  
New Delhi, June 24

**THE EXPENDITURE DEPARTMENT** in the finance ministry has cautioned against extension of the free ration scheme beyond September or reduction in any major tax rates. The country's fiscal health is already under stress due to additional subsidies on fertilisers, cooking gas and reduction in excise duty on auto fuels and any further relief poses serious adverse fiscal consequences, it said.

"It is vital that major subsidy increase/tax reductions are not done. In particular, it is not advisable to continue the PMGKAY beyond its present extension, both on grounds of food security and on fiscal grounds," the department wrote in its monthly summary report for May.



## NO MORE SOPS FOR CITIZENS LIKELY

■ The country's fiscal health is already under stress due to additional subsidies on fertilisers, LPG and reduction in excise duty on auto fuels

■ The government is scouting for additional revenues as extra expenditure over the Budget estimate is seen at about ₹2 trillion

"Recent decisions on continuation of PMGKAY, the huge increase in fertiliser subsidy burden (both urea & non-urea), re-introduction of subsidy on cooking gas, reduction of excise duty on petrol & diesel and customs duty on various products have created a serious fiscal situation. The budgeted fiscal deficit at 6.4% of GDP was itself extremely high by historical standards, and deterioration therein poses a risk of serious adverse consequences."

On March 26, the government extended the PMGKAY by six months till September

2022 at an additional cost of ₹80,000 crore. This was not factored into the Budget for FY23.

The department said each family is getting 50 kg of grains, 25 kg at a nominal price of ₹2/₹3, and 25 kg free. "This is far beyond the need at a non-pandemic time."

The government is scouting for additional revenues as extra expenditure over the Budget estimate is seen at about ₹2 trillion on account of higher subsidies on fertiliser, free grains scheme and LPG subsidy for Ujjwala beneficiaries in FY23. The excise duty

cuts on auto fuels and customs duty reduction on several items would also result in a revenue loss of about ₹1 trillion the current financial year.

Besides some extra borrowing, finance ministry officials are banking on additional tax revenues to cover the bulk of the extra expenditure and also partly by raising more resources via the government disinvestment programme in FY23.

The expenditure department's comment seems to dissuade the government from extending the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) beyond September.

An extension would mean that in the current financial year, it could end up spending a tidy sum of ₹1.6 trillion to run the scheme.

Until the end of FY22, the Centre had spent ₹2.6 trillion on PMGKAY, which was rolled out as a Covid-19 relief package for the low-income population in March 2020.

The scheme has yielded political dividends to the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in the recent Assembly elections in five states, including Uttar Pradesh. The supply of free grains as part of the PMGKAY scheme was initially launched for the April-June period of FY21 and it was later extended till November-end 2020.

In the wake of the second wave of the pandemic, it was reintroduced in May 2021 and then got extended till FY22-end.

Under the scheme, 814 million people are eligible for 5 kg free wheat/rice per person per month, ie, a family of five will receive about 25 kg grains free of cost in addition to 25 kg the family is entitled to receive at ₹2/kg under the National Food Security Act.

# Govt seeks chairman for oil regulator



THE GOVERNMENT HAS for a second time in as many years re-advertised the post of chairman of oil and gas regulator PNGRB, which has been lying vacant since December 2020. The oil ministry this week issued an advertisement inviting applications for the post of chairman of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB).



# 'India's consideration for crude oil purchases well understood'

India's trading arrangements for crude oil procurement are based on national energy security consideration, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said on Friday. He was replying to a question on what will be India's approach if New Delhi faces criticism during the upcoming G7 summit in Germany for its procurement of Russian crude oil. The foreign secretary said India's consideration for crude oil purchases has been very well understood by the global community. PM Modi will visit the Alpine castle of Schloss Elmau in southern Germany on June 26 and 27 to attend the annual summit of G7 countries.

PTI

● FIGHTING INFLATION

WILL INTERNATIONAL TRADE HELP REIN IN RAMPANT GLOBAL INFLATION AND BOOST RESILIENCE?

# International trade vs resilience

**L**EADING ECONOMIES HAVE been afflicted with new problems over the past year. The United States is struggling with both supply-chain blockages and a critical shortage of baby formula. The European Union faces the threat of scarce energy supplies, owing to sanctions on Russian fossil-fuel exports. And almost all countries are experiencing high inflation.

Some have blamed these problems on excessive dependence on international trade, that is, globalisation. Deglobalisation, fragmentation, reshoring, friend-shoring, decoupling, and resilience have become now-familiar buzzwords. There is a widespread sentiment that individual countries would have been less exposed to recent shocks had they been more self-sufficient.

The argument goes beyond observing that supply chains generate diminishing returns for private firms. Government policies that economists label as protectionist have gained political support – beginning, notably, with then-US President Donald Trump’s trade war in 2018. The impression is that trade barriers could help protect us all.

But the problems listed above are in fact examples of how trade barriers erected by governments have reduced resilience. In each case, liberalisation could help mitigate the problem.

Start with the bottlenecks in US shipping. The remedy here is to repeal the Jones Act, which requires that all shipping between US ports use American carriers and employ crews that are at least 75% American. This legislation was originally enacted in 1920, with the aim of enhancing US self-sufficiency and national security. But the US maritime industry’s inability to cope with sudden surges in demand, like for merchandise imports over the past year, has contributed to supply-chain delays. Without the Jones Act,

**JEFFREY FRANKEL**

Professor of capital formation and growth, Harvard University.



American firms could hire foreign-owned vessels to handle such a surge, and logistics would be more resilient.

As to US overland transport disruptions, a shortage of truck chassis has been part of the problem. The solution is to roll back the US tariff that impedes imports of chassis from abroad, which could help fill the gap.

The US baby formula shortage calls for a similar approach. Abbott Nutrition, one of only four major US producers of baby formula, recalled some of its products in February following the discovery of traces of bacteria in one factory. Recalls are common. But the resulting acute shortage illustrates how international trade could have made up most of the shortfall.

After all, there was no lack of infant formula on international markets. But the US has steep protectionist barriers against dairy imports. These include tariffs as well as unnecessarily restrictive administrative hurdles and “Buy American” rules that constrain the federal government’s Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), which distributes half of the infant formula consumed in the US. Trump even raised barriers on imports of infant formula from Canada when

he renegotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement. The US Food and Drug Administration recently agreed to cut some red tape to let in imports temporarily. But there should not be barriers in the first place.

One can draw a general conclusion from the baby-formula episode. It is true that exposure to international trade can sometimes be a source of volatility when shocks arise abroad. For

example, Germany’s willful increase in dependence on Russian natural gas over the past ten years made it highly vulnerable when Russia invaded Ukraine in February. But free trade can also mitigate volatility when the shock originates domestically.

Meanwhile, the EU and the US want to substitute renewable energy sources for fossil fuels, especially those purchased from Russia. One policy that could help further reduce the cost of solar and wind power is to lift the barriers in place to restrict imports of solar panels and wind turbines.

On June 6, US President Joe Biden’s administration announced a two-year pause on pending new tariffs on imports of solar panels. That is good for both the environment and America’s ability to cope with higher global

energy prices. But the US has the old tariffs to this day.

So does the EU, where cutting demand for Russian fossil fuels will be much more difficult. Rolling back tariffs and other barriers to importing renewable energy equipment would be a step in the right direction.

Finally, one remedy for the current inflation problem is to lower import barriers generally. What is true of truck chassis, infant formula, and solar panels is also true of tradable goods as a whole – commodities as well as manufactured goods. Tariffs on US imports of softwood lumber from Canada have exacerbated the rising cost of housing construction. Trump’s tariffs on steel and aluminum have increased the prices paid by US firms, which in turn have contributed to higher prices paid by consumers for nails, automobiles, and many other products containing the two metals.

In a recent study, the Peterson Institute for International Economics estimated that a feasible package of trade liberalisation could deliver a one-time reduction in US consumer price index inflation of around 1.3 percentage points, amounting to \$797 per US household. The Biden administration is reportedly now considering rolling back some of Trump’s tariffs on imports from China in particular, as one of the few concrete steps it can take that would immediately help alleviate inflation. The effect on inflation will be less than 1.3 percentage points, because the full “feasible package” will not be adopted. But it would be an encouraging step.

To be sure, trade liberalisation will not be nearly enough to eliminate inflation. But the broader lesson is the same as for baby formula, transport bottlenecks, and energy security: Openness to trade can be a source of resilience.

**One remedy for the current inflation problem is to lower import barriers generally. What is true of infant formula and solar panels is also true of tradable goods as a whole—commodities and manufactured goods**

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# Oil rises 2%; still set for a weekly decline

LAURA SANICOLA

June 24

**OIL ROSE BY** more than 2% on Friday supported by tight supply, although crude was heading for a second weekly fall on concern that rising interest rates could push the world economy into recession. Brent crude was up \$2.78, or 2.5%, at \$112.83 a barrel by 12:10 pm EDT (1610 GMT), while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI)

crude gained \$3.02, or 2.9%, to \$107.29.

“There Fed was talking very hawkish which was undermining the oil rally, but the sentiment is changing a little, especially on strong economic data,” said John Kilduff, partner at Again Capital LLC in New York.

A survey on Friday, however, showed that the US consumer sentiment hit a record low in June even as the outlook for inflation improved slightly.

Oil came close this year to an all-time high of \$147 reached in 2008 as Russia's invasion of Ukraine exacerbated tight supplies just as demand has been recovering from the COVID pandemic.

Crude has gained support from the almost total shutdown of output in OPEC member Libya due to unrest. —REUTERS

## Citings

# Oil: The Boil Tends to Roil

**BETH MITCHELL**

The global economy urgently needs to be transformed to a far lower carbon version. The challenges this will pose for the oil and gas sector are immense — and could even prove existential for some companies....

The debate is often couched in ethical terms, in the form 'since, by implication, it is all — or largely — the sector's fault, the oil and gas companies should become renewables companies to deliver the solution'. However, the bulk of changes will have to be on the demand side, throughout the economy: this should be demanded of all companies, institutions and the public. In other words, there needs to be an acknowledgement that the oil and gas sector cannot, by itself, provide all the answers....

Negotiating the results of changes in the demand profile for oil and gas will be an exercise in capital allocation and risk management, in the face of extreme change and uncertainty. Other industries have faced such challenges, but this sector's are exacerbated by the very long life cycles of projects. The presence of national oil companies in producing countries that are, in some cases, extremely dependent on oil and gas revenues — with different pressures, options and time horizons — adds further complexity and uncertainty.

*From 'Climate Change, All Change?', KPMG*



# Pak slaps 10% super tax on big industries to trim deficit

Tough decisions needed to save economy: Pak PM

REUTERS  
24 June

Pakistan will impose an extra one-time 10% tax on large scale industry for one year to raise over 400 billion Pakistani rupees (\$1.93 billion) to clinch a crucial deal from the International Monetary Fund, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said on Friday.

The announcement comes ahead of what Pakistan hopes will be an agreement to unlock a new tranche of IMF funds which are needed to avert a balance of payment crisis.

"Let me share this good news that this country isn't heading toward a default anymore," the finance minister told parliament in his concluding budget speech that brought in the new taxes.

"We've taken very difficult decisions," he said. Ismail called it a super tax, pleading with large scale industry to bear with it for just one year to help shore up revenues urgently required to cut the fiscal deficit.

He said tax will be levied on 13 big industries, companies and corporations, including sugar, steel, cement, oil and gas, fertilizer, cigarettes, chemical, automobiles, banks, textile, LNG terminals and beverages, which have earnings exceeding 300 million Pakistani rupee (\$1.45 million).

"So, their tax rates will go from 29% to 39%," he clarified separately in a tweet.

But, he said there will be a blanket 4% super tax on all industry.

## REINING IN

▶ Pakistan pledged an increased tax collection from PKR 7 trillion to PKR 7.4 trillion in the next fiscal year

▶ 10% 'super tax' will be imposed on cement, steel, sugar, oil and gas, fertilisers, LNG terminals, textile, banking, automobile, cigarettes, beverages, chemicals

**Poverty alleviation tax on annual income**  
(In Pakistani rupee)

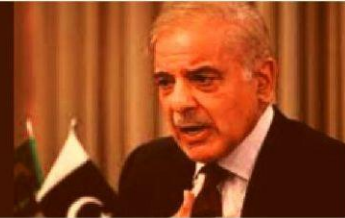
1% > 150 million | 2% > 200 million | 3% > 250 million | 4% > 300 million

## STEEP FALL



**"OUR FIRST MOTIVE IS TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO THE MASSES AND TO REDUCE THE BURDEN OF INFLATION ON THE PEOPLE AND FACILITATE THEM"**

**Shehbaz Sharif,**  
Pakistan PM



"Please, contribute your share just for one year. We desperately need it this year," Ismail appealed to the industrialists in his parliament speech.

Pakistan's KSE 100 share index fell 4.8% on Friday after the government announced the tax rise.

Ismail said a revised budget will raise the revenue collection target to 7.4 trillion rupees from 7 trillion rupees after the tax imposition. He said a one-time tax slab from 10% to 40% will also be introduced on individual earnings from 150 million rupees to 400 million rupees a year.

# Energy security understood by all nations: Kwatra

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■**  
NEW DELHI

India is procuring crude oil from Russia to ensure its national energy security and this position is well understood by many countries, Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said here on Friday.

His assertion came days ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi travelling to Germany to take part in the G-7 summit on June 26-27. The ongoing military action by Russia in Ukraine is likely to come up during the deliberations.

Many western nations have imposed sanctions against Russia. Kwatra justified India's position while replying to a question on what will be India's approach if New Delhi faces criticism during the upcoming



G-7 summit for its procurement of Russian crude oil. The Foreign Secretary said India's consideration for crude oil purchases has been very well understood by the global community. "India's consideration for crude oil purchases is very well understood. It is appreciated across the countries. I do not see that as any point of assuming any pressure," the Foreign Secretary

said. Kwatra also said "whatever are the trading arrangements that India puts in place with regard to the purchase of crude oil all over the world is determined purely by the consideration of energy security in India." Modi will visit the Alpine castle of Schloss Elmau in southern Germany on June 26 and 27 to attend the annual summit of G7 countries.

From Germany, Modi will travel to the United Arab Emirates(UAE) on June 28 to pay his condolences on the passing away of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the former president of the Gulf nation.

Giving details of the Prime Minister's schedule at a media briefing, Kwatra said India's regular participation at G-7 summits clearly points to increasing acceptance of the

country's role to find a solution to solve key global challenges. The Foreign Secretary said Russia-Ukraine situation has generated food security crisis over the world.

India has taken a proactive stance that food security of vulnerable countries is addressed and India's food security is also not impacted. There has been an appreciation of India's position.

On the Prime Minister's visit to the UAE on way back to India, Kwatra said India and UAE relations are dynamic, robust and widespread. "Energy security is an important pillar of our relations. People-to-people connect is another aspect.

Security, environment, education and investment are other areas of discussion between the two countries," he

said. The Foreign Secretary said Modi's visit to the UAE will focus on two main issues. Firstly to pay condolences on the passing away of former UAE President and Abu Dhabi Ruler Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

Secondly, to congratulate Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan for becoming President of the UAE.

On the issue of controversial remarks against Prophet Mohammad leading to protests in many Gulf countries, Kwatra said almost all Middle East countries have an understanding of India's position.

"We have communicated our stand on various platforms. I do not think that will be taken forward anymore," he added. Modi is visiting the country for the first time after the controversy.



# Govt advertises top post of oil regulator, 2nd in as many years

*New Delhi:* The Centre has for a second time in as many years re-advertised the post of chairman of oil and gas regulator Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), which has been lying vacant since December 2020.

It sought applications by July 21 from those who fulfill the qualifications and are not more than 62 years of age, according to an advertisement. The post has been lying vacant since December 4, 2020, when Dinesh K Sarraf completed his three-year term.

A search-cum-selection committee headed by V K Saraswat, Member (S&T), NITI Aayog in June 2021 picked former power secretary Sanjeev Nandan Sahai. But that appointment was not confirmed by the Centre and so it was re-advertised in November 2021. The panel, in February, picked former Oil Secretary Tarun Kapoor. But whilst his name was sent to the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet for approval, the 1987-batch IAS officer was named as an advisor to the PM in May. **PTI**

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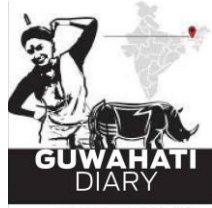
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### Ambubachi Mela returns after 2 years

The Ambubachi Mela returned to the historic Kamakhya temple in Guwahati after a gap of two years. It will go on till June 26. The authorities have enforced certain restrictions given the ongoing flood situation in the state and the Covid-19 pandemic. Lodging in close proximity to the temple and unauthorised food distribution services are not allowed. In the last two years during Ambubachi, only religious rituals were performed. Usually, lakhs of devotees from all over the country throng the temple during the mela. The temple was reconstructed in 1565 during the reign of Nara Narayan of the Koch dynasty.

### NGO grieves death of dog squad member

Conservation organisation Aaranyak lost a precious member of its elite anti-poaching K9 dog squad, Babli, a well-trained female Belgian Malinois. Babli was a prized frontline staff of the Aaranyak, deployed in the Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve since August 11, 2018. During her association with K9 since 2014, Babli had been instrumental in augmenting anti-poaching measures in the park which boasts of a treasure trove of one-horned rhinos. "We, all in the Aaranyak family, are deeply saddened by the loss of Babli. She breathed her last due to illness," said Aaranyak's chief executive officer Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar.



### OIL's skills institute coming up in city

The Oil India Limited (OIL) will set up an office-cum-skills development institute in Guwahati. The state government has allotted land to the oil major through a long-term lease. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma laid the foundation stone and unveiled a plaque in the presence of Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Rameshwar Teli. The OIL said the process for the setting up of infrastructure started in right earnest. The OIL has its pipeline headquarters in Guwahati. The upcoming skills institute is expected to provide ample opportunities to the local youth to develop skills in various trades.