



# योजना आयोग Planning Commission भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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*"No matter how carefully you plan your goals, they will never be more than pipe dreams unless you pursue them with gusto"*

*W. Clement stone*

## Polity

- **BJP rushes Union ministers to J&K on its Mission 44:** With Jammu and Kashmir high on its electoral agenda, the BJP is sending a large contingent of its Union ministers and senior leaders to the state in the run-up to the assembly polls as part of its ambitious Mission 44-plus target. J-K BJP sources said at least 30-35 Union ministers and senior BJP leaders have been asked to travel across the state in the coming days to communicate the party's development and governance agenda to the people. As part of the plan, home minister Rajnath Singh is likely to visit J-K on September 5 while his colleagues, including Arun Jaitley (finance and defence) and Najma Heptulla (minority affairs), have already returned from the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi too visited Ladakh and Kargil last month while BJP chief Amit Shah addressed a rally in Jammu region. "There is no doubt that first BJP government will be formed in J-K in coming elections. Since we are confident of a good show in Jammu, our focus is on Kashmir and Ladakh," a state leader said. To ensure maximum gains from Kashmir where the BJP has never won any seat in any election so far, the party is eyeing a tie-up with separatist-turned-politician Sajjad Lone. Lone heads the Peoples Conference, which was once a part of the Hurriyat Conference. Lone has influence in some pockets of north Kashmir though he lost the 2009 Lok Sabha elections from Baramulla. BJP leader Ashok Khajuria recently indicated that his party was ready to work with Lone. (Hindustan Times).

## Economy

- **GDP growth propels markets to historic highs:** Spurred by better economic growth in the April-June quarter of this financial year and sustained buying by foreign investors, the National Stock Exchange's (NSE's) Nifty on Monday closed above the 8,000 mark, for the first time ever. The index ended the day at 8,027.70, up 73.35 points (0.92 per cent) over its previous close. The BSE Sensex also scaled a new peak to close at 26,867.55, up 229.44 points (0.86 per cent). "The gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate returned to the five per cent -plus level. That boosted sentiment... We are probably in the second phase of a bull market and not close to the summit yet," said BSE Member Ramesh Damani. "The liquidity is strong globally and markets, as a result, are doing well. The momentum is there and does not seem to be easing anytime soon... cyclical companies should do well if growth and sentiment look up," said Ambit Investment Advisors Chief Executive Officer Andrew Holland. India's GDP, a measure of the country's economic output, grew at its fastest pace in over two years. It grew 5.7 per cent in the three-month period from April to June, according to figures released last week. Foreign institutional investors (also called foreign portfolio investors), were net-buyers to the tune of Rs 554.14 crore on Monday, according to provisional exchange figures. Domestic institutional investors net-sold Rs 561.69-crore shares. (Business Standard).

## Planning

- **WCD panels to frame action plans to trace missing Children:** In order to trace missing children, the Delhi Government has constituted three working groups to submit action plans and guidelines, besides fixing a timeline for tracing missing children. The committees, which will submit the guidelines in a month to the Department of Woman and Child Development (WCD), will have been assigned a three-point mandate, including developing strategic framework for making the police network more responsive and involved in tracing families of missing children in a time-bound manner, streamlining the processes being followed by Child Welfare Committees for restoration of children, reviewing the process of restoration in residential institutions being run by the Department, and developing modalities for expediting the same. Principal Secretary (Social Welfare and Woman & Child Development) Satbir Bedi said a series of meetings are being held by the WCD to review the existing restoration process and formulating the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for restoring children back to their families in an expeditious manner. "The SOPs developed for chalking out steps involved in the restoration process, and to specify a timeline for each and every action required to be carried out at various stages so that all work is carried out in a time-bound manner and responsibility is fixed for delays, if any," Ms. Bedi explained. (The Hindu)

## Editorial

- **Looking beyond 2015:** The moral and practical imperatives of creating an equitable world and a sustainable planet have increasingly become inescapable. These are not unattainable ideals either. This optimism is foregrounded in a blueprint produced by the United Nations Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The reason for the hope is based no less on the progress, though modest, achieved on the 2015 Millennium Development Goals — especially with regard to halving extreme poverty five years ahead of the stated deadline. In 2010, the world met the MDG target on potable water, as measured by access to improved sources of drinking water. But the target with respect to sanitation was not realised. The 69th session of the U.N. General Assembly is expected to consider the OWG's outcome document as part of the process of formulating the post-2015 agenda. The 17 objectives and 169 specific targets that the OWG zeroed in on, as compared with the eight that constituted the MDGs, in themselves may appear significant only in quantitative terms. The vision encompassing the outcome document put together by the 30-member team is clearly much wider in scope and far more ambitious than the objectives set out in its predecessor document. For instance, the MDGs had posited an end to extreme poverty and halving, by 2015, of the proportion of people living on less than \$1 a day. The broad objective for the future with regard to poverty is more ambitious. (The Hindu)



# India to get \$35 bn from Japan for infra projects

Tokyo, Sept 1

INDIA will get \$35 billion from Japan over the next five years for development projects, including building of smart cities and next generation infrastructure as also cleaning of the Ganga, as Premier Shinzo Abe on Monday pledged to partner PM Narendra Modi's "ambitious" vision of inclusive development.

The two sides also signed five pacts covering defence exchanges, cooperation in clean energy, roads and highways, healthcare and women while vowing to take their relationship to newer level.

"PM Abe affirmed a broader and stronger Japanese partnership for PM Modi's bold and ambitious vision for accelerating inclusive development in India, particularly by transforming the infrastructure and manufacturing sectors," said the Tokyo declaration for Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Abe expressed his intention to realise 3.5 trillion yen (₹2,10,000 crore, \$35 billion) of public and private investment and financing from Japan, including overseas development assistance (ODA), to India in five years, it said.

The fund will be used to fi-



PM Narendra Modi with Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe at a tea ceremony in Tokyo on Monday

PTI

nance public and private projects of mutual interest including in the areas of next generation infrastructure, connectivity, transport systems, smart cities, rejuvenation of Ganga and other rivers, manufacturing, clean energy, skill development, water security, food processing and agro industry, agricultural cold chain, and rural development.

In this connection, PM Abe pledged ODA loan of 50 billion yen to India Infrastructure Finance Company for a public-private partnership project in India.

Modi expressed deep appreciation for Japan's continuous support for India's eco-

nomie development and stated that "no country" has done more for modernising India's infrastructure.

The \$35 billion funding, at an average of \$7 billion a year, would be the highest from any country and Modi expressed gratitude to Abe for this. "There is no limit to our cooperation. There is nothing lacking in our will... There is new enthusiasm and expectation," Modi said, adding he had decided to put Japan in the "fast-track" channel.

Addressing the media jointly with Abe after talks, Modi said the financial help from Japan is not limited to one or the other sector. "PM

Abe understands my vision and agreed to help," he said.

Referring to his meeting with Abe, he said as soon as he mentioned the Ganga project, the Japanese PM told him to just spell out the expectations from him. "We have taken decisions which will strengthen cooperation. These include youth exchanges and language training," Modi said. "We will move with new hope and confidence," Modi said, adding closer cooperation between India and Japan will benefit not only the two countries but can be used in other Asian nations and elsewhere if the two countries have such "strategy and approach". PTI



# India, Japan to elevate ties, speed up N-deal

Tokyo, Sept 1

**I**NDIA and Japan on Monday agreed to enhance their defence and strategic cooperation to a new level during talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Shinzo Abe, who also decided to speed up negotiations on civil nuclear deal that could not be concluded now.

Striking good personal chemistry, the two leaders had "very fruitful" and "meaningful" exchanges after which Abe announced doubling of Japan's private and public investment in India to about \$35 billion over the next five years.

The talks at Akasaka Palace (State Guest House) came on the third day of Modi's first major bilateral visit outside South Asia. Abe had gone the extra mile in receiving his old friend in Kyoto on Saturday and spent the weekend with him on a tour of two ancient Buddhist



Industrialist Gautam Adani attends a business luncheon which was addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tokyo on Monday

PTI

temples apart from hosting a banquet.

Significantly, at an interaction with business leaders, Modi deplored the "expansionist" tendencies among countries which "engage in encroachment" and "intrude" into the seas of others, comments seen as a veiled reference to China.

At the summit talks, the

two countries decided to elevate their ties to a Special Strategic Global Partnership, emphasising that a developed India and a prosperous Japan was important for Asia and for global peace and security.

"This is not just raising the relationship from one category to another... Our relationship is not only region-

al in its framework, but will have a global impact," Modi, who is on a five-day visit to Japan, said.

While agreeing on greater defence equipment and technology cooperation, the two sides decided to expedite discussions on modalities for the sale of Japanese US-2 amphibian aircraft.

PTI



## Modi for emulating Japan's education system

Special Correspondent

**TOKYO:** "India needs to learn from Japan in order to modernise its primary education system," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during a visit to the Taimei Elementary School on Monday morning.

Also, India needed to learn "moral education" and "discipline" from the Japanese system of education, especially the methods used towards these ends.

Calling on teachers here to come to India and teach Japanese, Mr. Modi said there was a dire shortage of Japanese language teachers in India.

The Prime Minister pointed out, that the Central Board of Secondary Education schools had



*Prime Minister Narendra Modi tries to play a soprano recorder before schoolchildren at a music class during a visit to the Taimei Elementary School in Tokyo on Monday. —*

**PHOTO: REUTERS**

started teaching Japanese in India. Mr. Modi was also of the view that Indian students would study Japanese language courses online if they were on offer.



# 'Mere blood mein money hai'

SHUBHAJIT ROY

TOKYO, SEPTEMBER 1

**PM Modi connects with Japanese industrialists, announces team under PMO to facilitate business**

**I**NVOKING his Gujarati roots and saying that "commerce is in my blood", Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday connected with Japanese industrialists and declared setting up of a Special Management Team under PMO to facilitate business from Japan.

"Commerce mere blood mein hai...mere blood mein money hai," he said and added, "Businesses do not need concessions. They only need the environment to grow. It is the responsibility of the government and the leader to frame policy so that things start to move. If policy decisions are in place, there can be no discrimination and all get equal treatment."

He said he was bringing a Japanese system in the PMO.

"To make the PMO more efficient, we have started Japanese Management System. Training is already underway under the Kaizen system (of management)," Modi said and added that the purpose of this was to ensure Japan-



Modi at Taimei elementary school in Tokyo on Monday. PTI

ese efficiency.

"India wants to emulate Japan in terms of quality, zero defect and delivery systems while carrying out skill development," the Prime Minister said.

Citing the recent growth figures of 5.7 per cent in the first

quarter of this financial year, he said, "See the work done in 100 days of my government. Earlier, the GDP used to hover around 5-5.4 per cent and led to an environment of disappointment... But in the first quarter of our government, there has been a growth of

5.7 per cent. It is a big jump. Now there is renewed hope."

Taking a dig at the last UPA government, he said the situation was bad for one decade. Inviting Japanese businesses, particularly to infrastructure and clean energy sectors, the Prime Minister asked them to keep in mind the "Gujarat" experience.

"I understand well the importance of coordination between government and industry," he said while noting that he wants to replicate the experiments he made in Gujarat at the national level. "Among the 125 crore people of India, there is an urge. They want a change in quality of life," he said.

He said the country wants to follow Japan's model of skill development and research in order to meet the global work force requirement by 2020.

The business luncheon meeting was attended by several top industrialists from India as well.



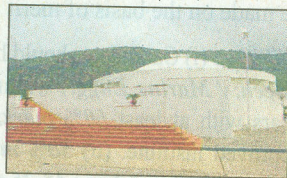
## Nalanda reopens after 800 years

Vithika Salomi | TNN

**Patna:** Nalanda University in Bihar's Rajgir district started its first academic session on Monday, nearly 800 years after the ancient education institution was destroyed. Students attended four sessions on the first day, 9am to 1.30pm.

"The students had a chance to explore the neighbourhood during their three-day orientation programme earlier," vice-chancellor Gopa Sabharwal told **TOI**. The first batch of students is being called the 'Nalanda Pioneers'.

Nobel laureate and NU chancellor Amartya Sen was



The International Convention Centre where classes are held

the first to call and wish the students. At present, NU has two schools of the seven planned: ecology and environment studies and historical studies. There are 15 students and 11 faculty members and admissions are still on.

► Continued on P 14

## 'Interdisciplinary learning focus of Nalanda Univ'

► Continued from P 1

Besides professors from foreign nations, Nalanda University (NU) in Bihar's Rajgir district also has two students from Bhutan and Japan.

Members of the NU governing body, Wang Bangwei, Wang Gungwu, N K Singh, George Yeo and Anil Wadhwa, too, sent laudatory wishes to the students and faculty members.



Academic activities began at Nalanda University at Rajgir, Bihar, on Monday. **For steps to download & use the Alive app, see P 2**

"Congratulations. Indeed a moment of great satisfaction," Singh's message read.?

NU School of Ecology and Environment Studies associate professor Somnath Bandyopadhyay told **TOI**, "A combined class was held on Monday morning for the students where they were told about our focus on interdisciplinary learning."

The university's classes will be held at Rajgir's signature building, the International Convention Centre, until a makeshift campus near the Rajgir bus stand is ready.



# Forest areas restricted for coal mining demarcated

## Forest Survey of India's assessment does not consider forests important to preserve water resources

**NTIN SETHI**  
New Delhi, 1 September

In a report to the government, the Forest Survey of India (FSI) has demarcated forest areas that should not be mined, or inviolate forest-lands. But as forest patches critical to protecting India's water sources aren't factored in, the inviolate area demarcated in the report is less than previously thought.

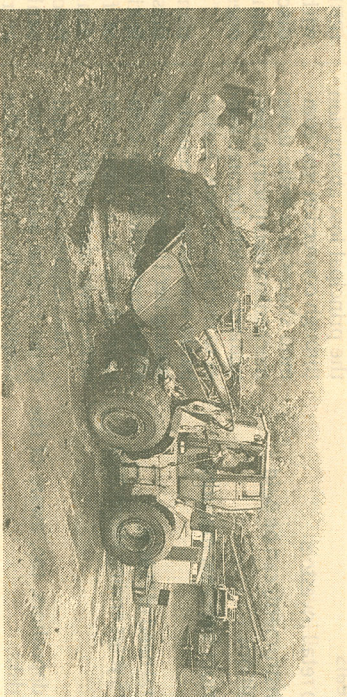
A source in the government said, it was now up to the ministry of environment and forests to take a decision.

The report on inviolate areas is an updated version of the go, no-go coal mining policy former environment minister Jairam Ramesh had initiated. After Ramesh's cabinet colleagues objected, the policy was put on hold. As the next environment minister, Jayanthi Natarajan tasked a committee to review the policy and develop scientific criteria to demarcate forests that shouldn't be mined. In its report in

January 2013, the committee stated the criteria to identify such forests. But the United Progressive Alliance government continued to clear coal blocks on a case-to-case basis. Meanwhile, the FSI was tasked with using the criteria stated to demarcate such forests.

Experts in the ministry had suggested using several parameters to identify forests that shouldn't be mined, including forest density, landscape integrity, biodiversity value and demarcation of legally protected wildlife zones. They had also recommended valuing forest areas important for hydrological purposes, or forests that were catchment areas for perennial and important seasonal rivers. But the FSI report does not take into account such forests.

Also, it doesn't factor in hydrological value of forests. Sources in the government said the ministry of water resources, the repository of such information, had conveyed it didn't have satellite-based data for



**GREEN STUDY** The Forest Survey of India has followed the instructions of the environment ministry and used a method that reduces the protected area in some parts of the country, sources said

BS FILE PHOTO

catchments of perennial rivers. Consequently, FSI was left with no option but dropping such evaluation. This has led to an increase in the area classified as open to mining.

Sources in the ministry said through the past week, several meetings were held to debate the report. One of the differences between the FSI and the ministry

the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing. Sources said a decision on the matter hadn't been taken yet, adding it was unlikely the government would put the data generated from the exercise in public domain for a third-party assessment.

The FSI's exercise was part of a larger programme of using satellite imagery-based assessment of forests for clearances. Earlier, the ministry had mandated it to ensure all project proponents seeking forest land should get the status of the land verified through satellite-based assessment. The FSI's report on inviolate areas comes at a time when the Supreme Court has termed the allocation of coal blocks since 1993 illegal and is to decide their fate soon. Earlier, industry and the coal ministry had objected to the use of 'go and no-go' criteria, kick-started by Coal India. They had cautioned it retrospectively impacted several coal projects already allocated to industry.



# One-time spectrum fee: DoT may seek transfer of pleas to apex court

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

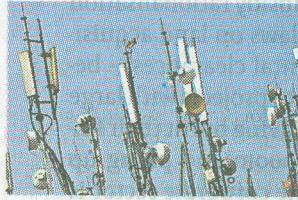
New Delhi, September 1

The Department of Telecom may seek legal opinion regarding filing a plea seeking transfer of writ petitions filed by mobile operators challenging levy of one-time spectrum charge in various high courts and TDSAT to the Supreme Court.

The DoT had issued orders regarding charging of one-time spectrum charge on December 28, 2012 and March 15, 2013 to various operators, including Bharti Airtel, Vodafone, Idea Cellular, RCom, Aircel, BSNL, MTNL and Tata Teleservices.

The DoT had issued a demand of ₹5,201.24 crore for Bharti Airtel, ₹3,599.40 crore for Vodafone, ₹1,882 crore for Idea Cellular, ₹1,351.51 crore for Aircel, ₹305.11 crore for Reliance Communications and ₹173.47 crore for Reliance Telecom.

The Department had also is-



sued demand of ₹6,911.86 crore for BSNL, ₹3,205.71 crore for MTNL, ₹232.29 crore for Tata Teleservices and ₹606.72 crore for BPL.

According to sources, DoT is of the view that nothing has moved since interim stay granted by high courts and the matters are pending before the various high courts as a "regular matter".

## Various writ petitions

The sources added that as the matter involved government revenue to the tune of thousands of crores of rupees and every effort needs to be made for speedy disposal of the

pending petitions in order to avoid huge loss to the public exchequer.

"As telecom service providers had filed writ petitions at various high courts, there may be possibility for pronouncement of conflicting judgments," the source said.

Airtel, Idea, Tata Teleservices and RCom had approached the Bombay High Court, Aircel the Madras High Court and Reliance Telecom the Calcutta High Court.

Vodafone and Loop Mobile had challenged the DoT order in TDSAT.

"In view of the facts and circumstances, it is proposed that we may request to Ministry of Law and Justice, Department of Legal Affairs for seeking legal opinion regarding transfer of writ petitions/petitions filed by telecom service providers from various High Courts/TDSAT to Supreme Court," the source said.



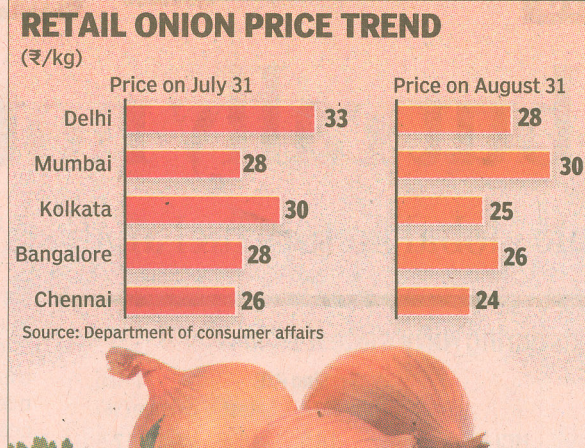
# Govt relaxes fumigation norm for onion import

fe Bureau  
New Delhi, Sept 1

**T**HE agriculture ministry has removed the requirement of mandatory fumigation for imported onion to boost supply of the commodity and keep its price from spiralling.

According to an earlier official statement, consignments of imported onions arriving at Indian ports without fumigation were required to be fumigated by the importer through an accredited agency.

Sources told *FE* the removal of this requirement would reduce the time taken for imports of onion into the country. The government has already approved imports of about 3 lakh tonne in the next few weeks. However, the im-



ported consignment would be inspected thoroughly by quarantine officials and released only if found free from pests and diseases of concern to India, the official statement said.

A commerce ministry offi-

cial said mandatory fumigation is an India-specific requirement against pest control which many onion producing countries do not follow. "Indian importers have already contracted to import

onion mostly from Egypt, China and Afghanistan, which will arrive in ports in the next one month," the official said.

The government decided to import a small amount of onion because of delay in rain in key growing areas of Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Late monsoon means kharif arrivals would be delayed by a month, pushing up prices in the late September and October. "Besides, onion supply is likely to be hit in a few weeks as a portion of the summer crop was hit by hail in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh in March, thus impacting quality," an agriculture ministry official said.

"We want to avoid spike in prices in September-October by easing imports," the commerce ministry official said.



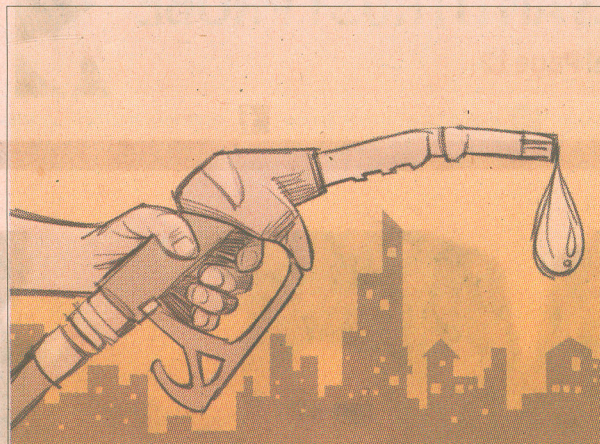
# Diesel under-recovery declines steeply, deregulation imminent

fe Bureau  
New Delhi, Sept 1

**T**HE difference between sale price of diesel and its market (non-subsidised) price fell to a historic low of 0.08 paisa/litre on Monday after a 50 paise hike in its price. With this, the deregulation of the fuel appears to be an eventual formality.

The development marks the culmination of the policy of monthly price increases for the fuel that had begun in January 2013, when the PSU oil marketers' "under-recovery" on the fuel stood at above ₹10/litre.

Even as the under-recovery on diesel is now nearly wiped out, the government is yet to take a decision on whether to announce the deregulation of the fuel's price (last Saturday, addressing a press conference here, finance minister Arun Jaitley hinted that once diesel price becomes market-deter-



mined, it could remain so). Petrol price was deregulated in June 2010.

Domestic diesel price could come on a par with international rates as early as next week if crude oil price continues to soften and the rupee doesn't weaken significantly against the dollar.

Brent crude hovered around \$103/barrel on Mon-

day. So there may not even be a need to effect another 50 paisa/litre due on October 1 as scheduled.

"There is lack of clarity on whether the government will completely deregulate the prices by authorising the oil-marketing companies (OMCs) to revise the prices of diesel with market conditions or the retail price in-

**The development marks the culmination of the policy of monthly price increases for the fuel that had begun in January 2013, when the PSU oil marketers' 'under-recovery' on the fuel stood at above ₹10/litre**

crease would be capped at 50 paisa per litre per month even if there is sudden increase in crude oil price or depreciation in rupee (against the dollar) demanding steeper price hike," said ICRA.

The petroleum ministry is believed to have prepared a note to be taken up by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) proposing

freeing diesel price. However, it is not immediately known whether CCPA is considering to take up the matter shortly.

The price of domestic diesel is linked to international price of the commodity as well as the rupee-dollar fluctuations. For example, the monthly increases had trimmed losses to less than ₹3 per litre in May last year before a fall in rupee value led to losses on diesel sale widening to ₹14.50 per litre in September 2013.

Losses on diesel stood at ₹8.37 per litre in March before BJP government took charge. When Modi government came to power in May, losses on diesel sales stood at ₹4.41 a litre. They fell to ₹1.62 a litre in the second half of June but doubled to ₹3.40 in first fortnight of July.

The losses fell to ₹2.49 in second half of July. They stood at ₹1.78 in second half of August.



# Diesel close to market price

Underrecovery declines on monthly hikes & softening global prices

KALPANA PATHAK  
Mumbai, 1 September

The retail price for diesel has almost touched the market rate, with only an eight paise a litre difference with the global benchmark price. Both regular monthly price increases and softening in international crude oil prices have helped the underrecovery decline. If the trend continues, this will bring the price on a par with international rates in about a week, not necessitating another monthly increase of 50p a litre, due on October 1.

However, whether the government will allow oil marketing companies (OMCs) the pricing freedom is not clear. Since January 2013, diesel prices have been raised every month by up to 50p a litre, a cumulative rise of ₹11.81 a litre in 19 instalments. Petrol price was market-linked in June 2010. OMCs are from this month incurring a combined daily underrecovery of about ₹195 crore on the sale of diesel, kerosene sold through ration shops (PDS kerosene) and cooking gas cylinders sold for home use (domestic LPG). This is lower than the ₹230 crore of

## Petro subsidy

Product-wise underrecoveries of public sector oil marketing companies

	Effective Sep 1, '14	Previous fortnight (effective Aug 16, '14)
Diesel ₹/litre	0.08	1.78
PDS kerosene* ₹/litre	32.67	32.98
Domestic LPG* ₹/cylinder	427.82	447.87

\*Additionally, subsidy of ₹0.82/litre on PDS kerosene and ₹22.58/cylinder on domestic LPG is provided by the government. The refinery-gate prices are fixed every month

Source: PPAC

daily underrecovery the previous fortnight. The underrecovery for 2014-15 is projected to be ₹91,665 crore; it was ₹139,869 crore in 2013-14. For PDS kerosene and domestic LPG in the first fortnight of this month, it will be ₹32.67 a litre (₹32.98 a litre in the past fortnight) and ₹427.82 a cylinder

(₹447.87 the past fortnight), respectively. The daily international crude oil price of the Indian basket was \$100.97 a barrel (bbl) on Friday, against \$101.07 on Thursday. ICRA Research, an associate of Moody's Investors Service, said: "There is lack of clarity whether the government will (now on) authorise OMCs to revise the prices of diesel with market conditions or the retail price increase would be capped at 50p a litre per month even if there is a sudden increase in crude oil prices or depreciation in the rupee demanding a steeper price hike."

For full reports, visit [www.business-standard.com](http://www.business-standard.com)



# Over half of Plan panel staff to be farmed out

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE  
New Delhi, 1 September

The think tank that will replace the 64-year-old Planning Commission might retain only 40 per cent of its 1,000 staff members. The rest are expected to be sent back to their parent cadres.

Among those set to return, decisions were pending on 250 for different reasons, officials in the know said. These include staff posted in offices attached to the Planning Commission except the Unique Identification Authority of India.

Officials said though the government was in wide-ranging talks on the structure of the new body to replace the commission, it had a broad picture in mind. The Union cabinet might soon consider a note on reorganisation of the commission.

According to the cabinet note, the majority of the 31 technical divisions of the Planning Commission will be attached to their respective ministries.

The technical divisions include those for agriculture, communications, information technology, health, family welfare and nutrition, and rural development. These

## IN THE WORKS

- New body to replace Plan panel might retain 40% of existing staff
- State plan division of Plan Panel to be shut and moved to finance
- Most of 31 technical

divisions of the Plan panel to be aligned with concerned ministries

- A Cabinet note on the proposed body might come up for discussion soon

divisions, comprising subject experts, give inputs for five-year plans and also on matters raised by ministries.

Officials said the note also indicates the state plan division, which frames annual plans of state governments, is expected to be wound up and moved to the finance ministry.

"All these proposals are expected to be considered by the Union cabinet soon," an official said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his maiden Independence Day speech had announced the abolition of the Planning Commission. An open forum was created on the government's website inviting suggestions on the new body that should replace it.

The government has also held a high-level consultative meeting on the issue. Among those who participated were

former ministers Yashwant Sinha and Y K Alagh, former Planning Commission members Bimal Jalan, Saumitra Chaudhuri, Bharatiya Janata Party leader M J Akbar, former Chief Economic Advisor Shankar N Acharya, Chairman of Business Standard Ltd T N Ninan, Chairman of the National Statistical Commission Pronab Sen, senior journalist TCA Srinivasa-Raghavan, former finance secretary Sumit Bose, economist Surjit Bhalla, chairman of the Centre for Policy Research Pratap Bhanu Mehta and ICRIER Director Rajat Kathuria.

Officials said experts at the meeting arrived at a broad consensus that allocation of plan funds should be handed over to the finance ministry as and when the new body was created.



# Cashing in on UPA schemes, NDA takes them a step further

RUHI TEWARI

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 1

PUTTING to rest speculation that the UPA government's most ambitious scheme — issuing Aadhaar cards and linking all government benefits to this unique identity — the BJP-led government has given it a decisive push with Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself taking a keen interest in its rollout.

At a high-level meeting in July itself, Modi set a target of one billion Aadhaar enrolments "at the earliest". The current enrolment is 700 million. He also endorsed Aadhaar-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes, including for LPG, which the previous government had scrapped. Simultaneously, he asked government departments to implement the DBT scheme on priority in 300 districts where Aadhaar enrolment is over 80 per cent.

The NDA government has taken it seriously, given the impact the DBT scheme can have on its

subsidy programme. The Prime Minister's Office is studying a report prepared by the Planning Commission on utilising Aadhaar identification for transfer of benefits to the accounts of beneficiaries under the MN-REGA, pension, scholarship, public distribution system and LPG subsidies in the 300 districts.

Using Aadhaar further, the government has also made it the basis of several fresh proposals. It will soon introduce Aadhaar-based biometric systems to keep a watch on attendance of central government employees. The government is also studying enrolment of all prisoners using Aadhaar and linking the recently-launched e-passport system with Aadhaar by retrieving biometric data collected under the UID scheme.

In fact, Modi's ambitious financial inclusion plan, the Jan Dhan Yojana will also be based on Aad-



haar. Essentially, bank accounts under the scheme will be opened using Aadhaar to satisfy the KYC norms. Clearly, the Modi government has sensed an opportunity to make the most of the ground-

work already in place.

Aadhaar and DBT are big-ticket reforms initiated by the Congress-led UPA government and received personal attention of Congress president Sonia Gandhi and vice-president Rahul Gandhi. Nandan Nilekani, then Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) chairman, met them every month to update them on the progress of the scheme.

Officials said that the importance of Aadhaar for avoiding duplications, eliminating ghost beneficiaries and ensuring better targeting is not lost on this government. The UPA government's mistake was in launching the DBT scheme towards the end of its

tenure, and attempting to expedite its implementation with an eye on electoral benefits. However, inadequate groundwork and poor monitoring wrecked its plans. Further, there were serious differences over Aadhaar within the UPA government itself.

The Modi government started work on Aadhaar/DBT within the first 100 days of coming to power and the PMO is monitoring the schemes closely. So, there is every likelihood that the loopholes will be identified and plugged and the schemes will be implemented systematically.

There may be a hurdle or two still, including the BJP and RSS's opposition to Aadhaar for including all residents in the country and not just Indian nationals. When the UPA initiated Aadhaar, the BJP had expressed fears all illegal immigrants, including those from Bangladesh, may end up with the Aadhaar cards and become eligible for cash benefits. The MHA is yet to take a final decision on this.