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# Dubai residential markets start looking up

Our Dubai Correspondent

**D**UBAI's residential market ended 2021 on a high, recording 84,196 transactions worth AED 300 billion (\$81.68 billion), the highest-ever recorded, according to official Dubai Land Department statistics.

It carried the momentum into this year, with residential market transactions reaching 6,342 in April 2022, up 43 per cent from a year earlier, according to the latest data released by CBRE, a leading commercial real estate and investment organisation.

Dubai has always been a great option as one of the most popular destinations for investing overseas. Both transaction volume and value are expected to increase in 2022 compared to last year. The trend will gather steam and sustain itself through 2025 at least.

While traditionally more interested in the US property market, Chinese investors have recently reigned their keen interest in Dubai property.

Chinese investment in UAE property dipped during and after the pandemic but has been bouncing back,



according to industry experts. From a high of AED 3.97 billion pumped in during 2019, following strong investment of AED 1.7 billion in the first nine months of 2018 alone, China's love affair with Dubai property stalled in the wake of the global lockdown.

The country ranked as one of the top four foreign investors in the market, and data from Juval IQI suggest that Chinese demand for UAE properties has been returning since the second quarter of 2021.

With many Chinese companies

establishing permanent offices in Dubai and elsewhere in the UAE, residential property as an asset has grown in popularity.

China's Belt and Road Initiative and the strategic ties between the two countries may also be working in

for investment. Luxury branded apartments are in demand.

High-end luxury properties are the trend since 2021, especially for the new generation, who want a better and more luxurious lifestyle.

In terms of locations, Downtown Dubai has always been a favourite with the Chinese, but demand has grown for apartments at Emaar Creek Harbour, Business Bay and communities like Maydan and Dubai Hills.

Sales to Chinese investors are climbing due to the improving prospects of the Dubai real estate market, which Chinese investors would like to take advantage of.

Average property prices rose by 11 per cent in the year to April 2022, but properties are still cheaper than at the 2014 peak. In March 2022, average apartment prices in Dubai stood at AED 1,097 per square foot and average villa prices stood at AED 1,291 per square foot, according to CBRE data, which noted that these rates are 26.3 per cent and 10.6 per cent below the peak in 2014 for apartments and villas, respectively.

# UAE upgrades residency visa to golden visa for healthcare pros



Our UAE Correspondent

**T**HE UAE has started upgrading residency visas to golden visas for healthcare workers such as nurses, ambulance workers and frontline staff who served the healthcare department to handle the Covid-19 pandemic cases.

"Nurses, ambulance workers and frontline staff who helped

protect the country during the Covid-19 pandemic were surprised and delighted to find their residency automatically upgraded to the golden visa," said a report in *The National*.

Healthcare workers who cared for critically-ill Covid-19 patients in UAE hospitals said they were astonished to find two-year validity Emirates ID cards updated to 10 years after

checking their status on the Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship app.

This is in line with government announcements last year that frontline workers and their families would be issued golden visas for extraordinary efforts to protect the nation.

*The National* spoke to nurses in Dubai and Abu Dhabi who were among the first batch of

nursing staff whose visas were updated without them applying for golden visas.

The process is expected to be rolled out to staff in hospitals across the country as part of government initiative to acknowledge the work of medics and provide stability to frontline heroes and their families.

Authorities said earlier this year that the Emirates ID, the nation's identification card system, would contain details of residents' visa status.

Government departments were informed they could verify residency through the Emirates ID card and would no longer have residency visa stickers on passports.

Healthcare provider NMC confirmed that nurses, ambulance drivers and an IT staff in the health and safety department had received golden visas recently without applying for them. The total number of golden visas in all categories in NMC for nurses, doctors, pharmacists, laboratory, dialysis and anaesthesia technicians, radiographers, physiotherapists is about 1,000.

# \$400 mn tourism project in Saudi

Our Saudi Correspondent

**A**\$400 million hospitality project, Jumeirah The Red Sea luxury resort, is coming up on the Red Sea in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia's The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC), developer of The Red Sea project, announced that it has entered into its first joint venture (JV) with local investor Almutlaq Real Estate Investment Company (AREIC), a subsidiary of the Al Mutlaq Group (AMG) to develop 159-key Jumeirah The Red Sea luxury resort.

The JV with AREIC, valued at over 1.5 billion Saudi riyals (\$400 million), is TRSDC's first partnership with the private sector, the Public Investment Fund-owned company said in a press

statement.

Jumeirah The Red Sea is situated on The Red Sea destination's hub island, Shura, which is scheduled to open in 2024, the statement said, adding that it will comprise 11 luxury, premium

vestors under a similar framework to invest in The Red Sea Project's commercial assets, including hotels and resorts, leisure, and retail and dining experiences.

"We have been studying the



Giga projects for some time, and the Red Sea is achieving its vision. The destination is coming to life, and we look forward to welcoming our first guests in 2024," said Tariq Almutlaq, Chairman of AREIC.

# Kuwait to raise salary cap for sponsoring visa for kins

Our Kuwait Correspondent

**T**HE Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior announced the suspension of the issuance of entry visas to the country, family and tourist visit visas until further notice to prepare a new regulatory mechanism, the Kuwait News Agency KUNA reported.

The new mechanism includes raising the minimum salary requirement for expatriates who want to bring their wife and children on visit on family visas to KD 300 (₹ 77,400) and to KD 600 (₹ 1,54,800) for bringing parents on visit visa.

The Ministry of Interior said in a statement issued by the General Administration of Rela-

tions and Security Media that the decision was based on the directives of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior.

"This comes in light of preparing a new mechanism with regulations targeting the interest and development of work," the statement said.

The new mechanism will grant broad powers to directors of residency affairs departments in the six governorates, to ease the pressure on the General Administration of Residency Affairs in the Dajeej area, where the number of visitors reached about 1,000 per day due to the withdrawal of the powers of directors of departments.

Kuwait had suspended is-

surance of tourist visas against the background of receiving complaints about the failure to organise the work mechanism for granting family and tourist visit visas to expatriates.

The proposal for a salary cap as a condition for allowing the issuance of visit visas can be increased or decreased according to the Ministry's vision," said a statement.

The *Al-Rai* daily quoting informed sources said the decision to stop tourist and family visas came because people who entered the country during the past months have not left the country and this raised the number of violators by about 20,000.

The Ministry of Interior had

said that stopping the issuance of family and tourist visit visas was to prepare a new mechanism what the ministry called 'development of work'. The sources stated that the decision "does not include electronic visas that are granted directly to some nationalities upon arrival at the airport."

The sources indicated "the number of expatriates who entered the country on tourist and family visas during 2022 reached about 70,000," noting that work is being done to establish a strict mechanism and controls that guarantee the visitor's departure upon the expiry of visa, as well as not allowing the extension of the visit period which is for three months.

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+ GYM HELPER + SWIMMING HELPER

# DST will take up mentorship role to promote start-ups in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities

AAT News Service

THE Central and state government agencies, including the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Technology Development Board and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) should reach out to potential start-ups and support them, in addition to offering support to those who themselves reach us. This way, many deserving innovative minds whose start-ups initiative may not have taken off because of inadequate support or resources will not be missed out, said Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology.

Addressing students and faculty at an interaction meeting on 'Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE)' Scheme beneficiaries, in UP, Mr Singh said, there is a need to launch a massive countrywide hunt for innovative young minds and potential start-ups, as they are the ones who are going to shape India's future economy.

The INSPIRE Scheme is expanding the research and development base of the country by building a pipeline of quality human resources and cultivating a talent pool. India needs to attract talented young students into science and give them a supportive, creative, and challenging educational environment from their school days so that they can become successful entrepreneurs and job givers through innovative ventures.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's radio address 'Mann Ki Baat', Mr Singh said, "today India's start-up ecosystem is not limited to just big cities,

but entrepreneurs are emerging from smaller cities and towns as well which shows that in India, the one who has an innovative idea can create wealth. As per the various reports, about 50 per cent of start-ups hail from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, spanning many states and cities where opportunities and resources are comparatively less".

Taking a cue from Prime Min-



ister's call for right mentoring of start-ups, Mr Singh said, the department will take up the mentorship role to promote start-ups in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as wealth creators and problem solvers in varied areas like industries, agriculture, dairy sectors as well as in areas like e-commerce, fintech, edtech and biotech.

The department conceptualised, designed, developed, and is now implementing the INSPIRE Scheme to attract meritorious youth to study natural sciences subjects at the college and university level and to pursue research careers in both basic

and applied science areas, including engineering, medicine, agriculture, and veterinary sciences. The scheme caters to students in the age group of 10-32 years with several components.

Referring to INSPIRE Awards MANAK (Million Minds Augmenting National Aspiration and Knowledge) Scheme, Mr Singh said, this is a unique initiative to

by organising Science Camps either during summer or winter which provides them opportunity to interact with science icons from India and abroad, including Nobel Laureates, to experience the joys of scientific pursuit.

Annually, 50,000 students who are among the top one per cent in their Class 10 Board Examination and pursuing Science in Class 11 are benefitted through these camps.

Scholarship for Higher Education (SHE) component of INSPIRE aims to encourage meritorious students to study basic and natural sciences at undergraduate level through attractive scholarship and mentorship opportunities. Selections are based on performance (top one per cent) in Class 12 examinations of State/Central School Examination Boards and/or in selected national-level competitive examinations like IIT-JEE etc.

The INSPIRE Fellowships component offers 1,000 fellowships every year to bright students in the age-group of 22-27 years to pursue PhD in basic and applied sciences, including engineering, medicine, agriculture and veterinary sciences.

The INSPIRE Faculty Fellowships component provides opportunities to 100 persons every year with PhD qualification in the age group of 27-32 years for five years to carry out post-doctoral research in both basic and applied science areas, including engineering, medicine, agriculture and veterinary sciences.

More than hundred students and beneficiaries of INSPIRE Fellowships, INSPIRE Scholarships and INSPIRE MANAK participated in the programme.

# New airport at Rajkot to be ready by March 2023



With the project cost of ₹ 1,405 crore, the airport is envisioned to be a transportation hub for people travelling abroad from Gujarat

AAT News Service

aircraft which will be capable of parking 14 aircraft at a time.

The terminal facade design is influenced from the existing palaces of Rajkot like the Ranjit Vilas Palace, integrating traditional elements into a contemporary form. An outer skin of traditional jalis of palaces is provided to minimise the heat gains inside the building.

The terminal will depict various art forms, including 'dandiya' dance through its dynamic external facade and splendid interiors. Rajkot is famous for its golden jewellery and filigree work and that has inspired the exterior panel work at the drop-off area of the city side kerb.

Spread over 2,534 acres, the airport has been planned with modern facilities and conveniences for the travellers with increased number of counters and other necessary facilities. The location of the new airport is approximately 30 kms from Rajkot city and on the Rajkot-Ahmedabad highway. With a total built-up area of 23,000 sqm excluding the basement, the terminal building will be capable of handling 1,800 passengers during peak hours.

The terminal will be equipped with state-of-the-art passenger facilities, four passenger boarding bridges, three conveyor belts and 20 check-in counters, along with modern firefighting and fire alarm systems. The city side area of the airport will also be developed for adequate parking facilities for cars, taxis and buses along with landscaping. Runway length is planned for 3,040 m for serving Airbus-A321 type of

the economy of India through its small scale and heavy industries, thus playing an important role in complex supply chains with global perspective, which is expected to grow exponentially.

Air connectivity to the international market will boost the industrial growth, which in turn will generate new employment opportunities. Apart from this, the new airport will come up with lots of commercial development. This will boost travel-logistics, hotel industry, restaurants, warehouse-cargo handling and clearing business etc.

In the PM GatiShakti's spirit of inclusive multimodal connectivity, the Hirasar Airport is accessed from the National Highway-27. A clover-leaf flyover is planned on the highway for unhindered access to the airport. Being located on Rajkot-Ahmedabad highway, this airport will aim to reduce time and cost related to logistics for multiple industries in the region. More importantly, the ceramic industry of Morbi and other industries of Jamnagar also depend on Rajkot for air connectivity.

The plans to modernise and beautify the ancient city of Rajkot are already in place and all such infrastructure development projects, including construction of greenfield airport will help promote the local business houses adding economic wealth to the country.

## Jal Shakti Ministry to fortify states' capacities for Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin II

AAT News Service

CAPACITY building of stakeholders is key to achieving open defecation free (ODF) Plus status in the country. The states and Union territories have targets to ensure that all their villages become ODF Plus during the Phase II of Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBM-G). More than 150 officials are working in the sanitation

maintenance of twin pit toilets. UNICEF is associated with the Mission because it contributes to the health and dignity of women and children, while preventing water-borne diseases. It also provides a great opportunity to strengthen building on the gains of Phase I.

UNICEF's support for capacity building has developed well-defined training modules for master trainers to empower gram panchayats. Till date about 1,232 master trainers have been developed in 12 states and engaged in ODF Plus training. UNICEF remains fully committed and accountable to help achieve the target to build capacities of sanitation workers, empower them, and raise awareness among communities, said Mr Osbert.

The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation intends to provide support for the training programmes through partner training agencies. The first round of training needs to be completed in the current financial year so that one trained resource person can be made available in all the villages, who will help prepare the Village Sanitation Plan of the villages/gram panchayats in the current year and monitor implementation of the same.

In July 2021, the department launched manuals that pertain to the key components of ODF Plus (Grey Water Management, Plastic Waste Management, Fecal Sludge Management, Biodegradable Waste Management and IEC). They provide detailed information on technologies, technical specifications of assets, estimated costs and possible O&M arrangements to support states, districts, and rural local bodies to implement solid and liquid waste management initiatives.



The Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Vini Mahajan, addressing the national workshop on 'Capacity Building for ODF Plus', in New Delhi section across the country, said Vini Mahajan, Secretary, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Addressing the national workshop on 'Capacity Building for ODF Plus', jointly organised by the ministry and UNICEF, in New Delhi, Ms Mahajan said "we have a unique and historic opportunity to make a difference in people's lives. Work done over the years has given us the momentum, and today we are equipped with the technical knowledge of what and how needs to be done for rural sanitation. If we want to deliver rural

AAT News Service

FIFTEEN villages in different parts of the country may soon be seamlessly connected through a next-generation networking solution that can address congestion issues in 4G infrastructure and provide high-tech and affordable internet connectivity.

The network solution called GigaMesh wirelessly provides fibre-like backhaul capacity and paves the road for 5G. The solution has been developed by Astrome, a deep-tech start-up expediting the implementation of 5G and rural telecommunications infrastructure through its patented millimetre wave E-band radios and satellite communication solutions. They have signed a contract with the Department of Telecommunications to start the pilot with 15 villages in India.

The start-up is supported by AI & Robotics Technology Park (ARTPARK), the technology innovation hub at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, which aims to chart the future for millimetre wave wireless communication on Earth and in space.

ARTPARK is a not-for-profit foundation promoted by the IISc, Bengaluru, with support from the artificial intelligence (AI) Foundry in a public-private collaborative model to promote technology innovations in AI & Robotics with seed funding from the Department of Science and Technology, under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems and from the Karnataka government. It is

designed to bring about a collaborative consortium of partners from industry, academia, and government bodies.

GigaMesh, developed by Astrome, supported by ARTPARK, is the world's first multi-beam

the dense urban networks and extending rural coverage. With India's huge population in the rural segment, Astrome can help improve domestic internet connectivity.

Major OEMs (original equip-

## AI boosts rural connectivity



E-band radio that is able to communicate from one tower to multiple towers simultaneously while delivering multi-Gbps throughput to each of these towers. A single GigaMesh device can provide up to 40 links with 2+ Gbps capacity, communicating up to a range of 10 kms.

This flexibility in range makes it suitable for both decongesting

ment manufacturers) like Ericsson, Siklu, Huawei and NEC Corporation have developed E-band products. While all of these products can only do point-to-point communication, requiring a large number of devices which increases the cost of deployment, GigaMesh by ARTPARK's start-up features multiple point-to-point communication in E-band,

driven by software to make it easy to deploy, maintain and repair remotely, thus lowering cost.

Besides this, AI researchers at ARTPARK, in collaboration with HealthTech start-up Niramai Health Analytix and the IISc, Bengaluru have also developed XraySetu, a platform that can interpret chest X-rays with 98.86 per cent sensitivity towards

**The network solution called GigaMesh wirelessly provides fibre-like backhaul capacity and paves the road for 5G. Govt plans to scale the activity to more rural parts of India on pilot basis**

Covid-19 within few seconds.

ARTPARK also organised the ARTPARK Innovation Summit that brought industry, academia and the government under one roof to discuss important topics, such as how to create next-generation connectivity in rural areas, health AI for Bharat, connecting Bharat with drones, inclusive learning for the future and building AI and research ecosystem.

Apart from this, they participated in an unmanned ground vehicle experiment of the Indian Army and showcased India's only Legged Robotic Dog.

## Mission Vatsalya Scheme Guidelines

AAT News Service

THE Central government is taking various initiatives for welfare and rehabilitation of children in the country. In the year 2009, the Ministry of Women and Child Development launched a Centrally-sponsored scheme Mission Vatsalya, with an objective to secure a healthy and happy childhood for every

child in the country.

To further the improvements in the scheme, the ministry has issued detailed guidelines of the scheme. The scheme also ensures opportunities to enable children to discover their full potential and assist them in flourishing in all respects, in a sustained manner, foster a sensitive, supportive and synchronised ecosystem for their development,

assist states/UTs in delivering the mandate of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and achieve the SDG (Sustainable Development Goals).

The scheme promotes family-based non-institutional care of children in difficult circumstances based on the principle of institutionalisation of children as a measure of last resort. The main features of the scheme

are to: Improve functioning of statutory bodies; strengthen service delivery structures; upscale institutional care and services; encourage non-institutional community-based care; emergency outreach services; and training and capacity building.

Detailed guidelines of Mission Vatsalya Scheme are available at: <https://wcd.nic.in/acts/guidelines-mission-vatsalya>.

# Govt launches revised schemes of award to SPORTSPERSONS

The revised schemes will provide more transparency and accountability to give benefit to sportspersons in record time: Anurag Thakur



AAT News Service

DIGITAL India is empowering citizens and reducing the gap between government and citizens, system and facilities, problems and solutions and taking forward the vision of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi of minimum government and maximum governance, said the Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Singh Thakur.

Launching the revised Schemes of cash awards, national welfare and pension to sportspersons, Web portal for Schemes of Department of Sports and National Sports Development Fund website, in New Delhi, Mr Thakur said, these revised schemes will provide more transparency and accountability

to give benefit to sportspersons in record time.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has brought out several important amendments to Scheme of Cash Award to Medal Winners in International Sports Events and their Coaches, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare for Sportspersons (PDUNWFS) and Pension to Meritorious Sportsperson Scheme of Department of Sports with a vision to make these schemes more user-friendly, easy to access and transparent.

Now, any individual sportsperson can directly apply for all three schemes as per his/her eligibility. "Earlier the proposals were received through Sports Federations/Sports Authority of India (SAI), which used to take considerable time for

submission of the proposals. Sometimes it used to take more than one to two years to approve the proposal. To ensure timely submission and subsequent approval of cash award, applicant now needs to apply online for cash award scheme within six months from the last date of closing of the particular event," he said.

Verification process in all three schemes has been eased to a great extent to reduce the processing time. To ensure that the coaches get their cash award in a timely manner, required changes have been made in the scheme. Pension benefits have been extended to the athletes of Deaflympics also.

To implement the above features in these schemes, the Department of Sports has developed

oped web portal <dbtys-sports.gov.in> to facilitate sportspersons in applying to seek benefits under the above schemes of Department of Sports.

This online portal will facilitate real-time tracking of applications by the sportspersons and authentication through one time password (OTP) sent on their registered mobile number. Physical submission of applications by the applicants to the ministry would now be no longer required. The portal has also been integrated with direct benefit transfer (DBT-MIS) which will enable transfer of funds to the sportspersons directly into their bank accounts to fulfil the objectives of DBT mission of the government, said Mr Thakur.

The portal will not only help the department in quick disposal of all applications in a time-bound manner but will also be used to generate different types of required reports and data management of the sportspersons. The online portal would be further upgraded from time to time to suit the requirement of the sportspersons and the prevalent scenarios.

The department has also developed a dedicated interactive website <nsdf.yas.gov.in> for National Sports Development Fund (NSDF). This fund is based on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions from Central and state governments, public sector undertakings, private companies, and individuals etc. for promotion and development of sports in the country.

Individual, institution and corporate organisations can now directly contribute for players, sports facilities, and sports events through the portal. The NSDF corpus is used for Target Olympic Podium (TOP) scheme, Infrastructure development by eminent sportspersons and sports organisations etc.

"This dedicated website will provide easy and transparent access not only to the sportspersons but also to the CSR contributors. The website will help us in making NSDF a great success for the development of sports in the country," he added.



The Union Minister for Defence, Rajnath Singh, felicitating students for providing innovative ideas on futuristic artificial intelligence solutions, during 'Artificial Intelligence in Defence' exhibition and symposium, in New Delhi

## India elected in UNESCO's Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

AAT News Service

NDIA has been elected as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage for the 2022-2026 cycle. The elections for the intergovernmental committee took place during the 9th General Assembly of the 2003 Convention held at UNESCO headquarters, Paris.

The announcement to this effect was made by Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, G K Reddy.

Against the four seats falling vacant within the Asia-Pacific group, six countries, namely, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand had presented their candidature. India received 110 votes from the 155 state parties that were present and voting.

The intergovernmental committee of the 2003 Convention consists of 24 members and is elected in the general assembly of the convention according to the principles of equitable geographical representation and rotation. States members to the committee are elected for a term of four years.

Some of the core functions of the intergovernmental committee include promoting the objectives of the convention, providing guidance on best practices, and making recommendations on measures for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

The committee also examines requests submitted by state parties for the inscription of intangible heritage on the lists as well as proposals for programmes and projects.

In the past, India has served two terms as a member of the intergovernmental committee of this convention. One from 2006 to 2010 and the other from 2014 to 2018.

For its 2022-2026 term, India has formulated a clear vision for the protection and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Some of the priority areas that India will focus upon include fostering community participation, strengthening international co-operation through intangible heritage, promoting academic research on intangible cultural heritage, and aligning the work of the convention with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This vision was also shared with the other state parties of the convention prior to the elections.

India ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in September 2005. As one of the earliest state parties to ratify the convention, India has shown great commitment towards matters related to intangible heritage and has actively encouraged other state parties to ratify it.



The Union Minister for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri, felicitating the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) official at the 168th foundation day of CPWD, in New Delhi

## Joint efforts of India, Germany vital to improve product quality

AAT News Service

UALITY Infrastructure (QI) is a system that covers everything needed to ensure safe, high-quality products and services: from standardisation, conformity assessment (testing, inspection and certification) and accreditation to metrology and market surveillance. These elements form the system and processes that protect people, health and the environment. Quality infrastructure plays a vital role for business, innovation and trade – both nationally and across borders.

It is therefore important for a country to have a well-designed and coherent QI system which is also in line with international best practices to play a vital role in global trade. They reduce time, cost and business uncertainty for companies as well as ensure consumer safety.

The Department of Consumer Affairs and German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) recently organised an event on QI.

of Consumer Affairs, Rohit Kumar Singh, underlined the importance of Indo-German partnership, which was emphasised with the visit of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi to the G7 meeting.

He also underscored the importance of consumer protection through standards and certification processes. Joint efforts are necessary to improve product quality and safety, such as through the various technical exchanges during the Indo-German QI-days.

The Secretary welcomed the focus on emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, smart farming and circular economy, which are priorities for the Indian government. He urged involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the discussions on the various aspects of QI, to contribute to the success and the tangible results of this co-operation.

Ole Janssen, Deputy Director General for Innovation and Technology Policy at BMWK, the co-chair from the German delegation, in his address, highlighted the importance of the bilateral co-operation on quality infra-

structure and noted that the Indo-German QI-days provided an important platform for dialogues to share information and expertise on issues of mutual interest to support bilateral trade and economic activities.

Mr Janssen emphasised that the delegation visit to India has underlined the strategic partnership between Germany and India for innovation, and digital and green transformation.

The visit of the delegation from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action to India underlines the importance of Indo-German Working Group on Quality Infrastructure for trade, product safety and consumer protection and provides an excellent opportunity to the experts from both the sides to improve mutual understanding of the German and Indian approaches to quality infrastructure.

The event witnessed an expert exchange on market surveillance wherein both the sides exchanged different aspects for a robust market surveillance system.

## Health Min calls for multilevel collaboration for elimination of vector-borne diseases

AAT News Service

HE Union Minister for Health, Mansukh Mandaviya, exhorted states to launch Jan Abhiyan with people's participation to enthuse and engage citizens and communities to ensure that their homes, premises and neighbourhoods are free of mosquitoes.

"Let us start with our own homes and communities to ensure there is no vector breeding in our neighbourhoods," said Mr Mandaviya, while reviewing the preparedness for prevention and control of vector-borne diseases (VBDs) with 13 high burden states (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura, Delhi, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu), through video conference.

Highlighting that the issue of vector control and elimination is cross-cutting and requires close collaboration with several other departments, the minister exhorted states to ensure intersectoral co-ordination and work closely with other related departments such as for tribal welfare, urban development (for enforcement of civic laws), rural development (for construction of pucca houses under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G), water and sanitation, animal husbandry etc.

The states were advised to involve Ayushman Bharat-Health & Wellness Centres for notification of cases, case management, ensuring community engagement through information, education, and communication (IEC)/social mobilisation campaign for observation of dry day,

use of personal protective measures, etc. They were also asked to ensure timely availability and effective distribution of drug/diagnostics along with insecticides, fogging machines etc. States also need to pay attention for formation of rapid response teams (RRTs) to effectively address any outbreak.

The Health Minister suggested working in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), support agencies through micro plans with time-bound outcomes. "Let us engage Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) and anganwadi workers for door-to-door campaigns for awareness enhancement, community mobilisation and distribution of kits, medicines and other services," he said.

Joint efforts by the states and Central government hold the key towards effectively lowering and eliminating the burden of VBDs across the country. "Well laid out micro-level action

plans at village, block, district, state and national levels with effective reviewing shall go a long way in meeting the targets," said the minister.

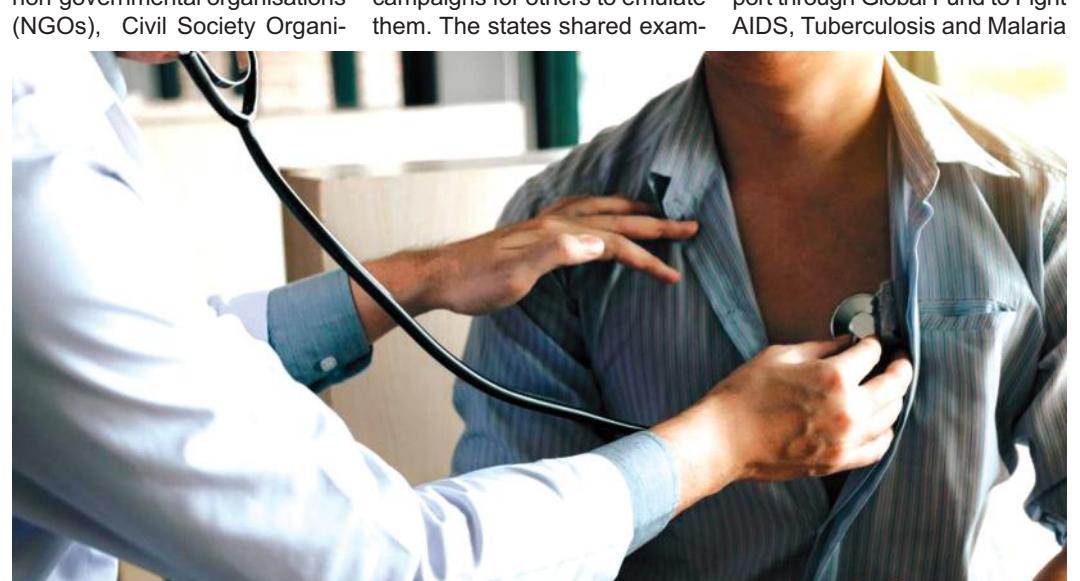
Various states that have performed notably in reducing the burden and eliminating it in various districts were commended by the Health Minister. Further, he invited the states to share their best practices and special campaigns for others to emulate them. The states shared exam-

ples of special campaigns and initiatives taken up for community mobilisation and participation, mass awareness, timely surveillance and treatment.

States were informed of the state-wise burden of various vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue, chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis (JE), lymphatic filariasis and kala-azar. The month-wise seasonality with high level of prevalence across various states was also presented. The government is dedicated to curb these diseases and has the target of eliminating

malaria by 2030, lymphatic filariasis by 2030 and kala-azar by 2023.

Government is providing technical support through guidelines, advisories, epidemiological reports on outbreak preparedness, financial support through budget under National Health Mission (NHM), monitoring and supervision, awareness through IEC campaigns, additional support through Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria



(GFTAM) to 10 states. VBDs are seasonal and outbreak prone with all except lymphatic filariasis showing outbreaks during monsoon and post-monsoon period generally. National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control (NCVBDC) formulates policies/guidelines and provides technical, financial assistance (as per National Health Mission norms) to the states/UTs for prevention and control of six VBDs (malaria, dengue, chikungunya, Japanese encephalitis, lymphatic filariasis and kala-azar).



AAT News Service

**T**HE Central government is pursuing a robust strategy to promote locally produced agricultural products in North Eastern (NE) states to the international markets. The NE region (NER) is geopolitically important as it shares international boundaries with China, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh making it the potential hub for the export of agricultural produce to neighbouring countries as well as other foreign destinations.

As a result, there has been a significant increase in the export of agricultural produce from NE states like Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Meghalaya in the last few years. The NE region witnessed 85.34 per cent growth in the export of agricultural products in the last six years as it increased from \$2.52 million in 2016-17 to \$17.2 million in 2021-22. The major destination of export has been Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Middle East, the United Kingdom and Europe.

To provide potential market linkages, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, organised field visits of importers to have first-hand information about the qualitative cultivation practices being followed by farmers. Importers were mostly the Middle East, far Eastern countries, and European nations and Australia, etc.

In the last three years, APEDA organised 136 capacity-building programmes on export awareness across different parts of NER. Highest, 62 capacity-building programmes were held in NER in 2019-20, while 21 in 2020-21 and 53 such programmes were organised by

APEDA in the year 2021-22. Apart from capacity-building initiatives, the Authority facilitated 22 International buyer-seller meets as well as trade fairs in NER in the last three years.

APEDA also organised con-

ferences on the Export Potential of Natural, Organic and Geographical Indications (GI) agro products in Guwahati to tap the abundant export potential of organic agricultural products from Assam and neighbouring states of NER.

It aims at creating a platform

in Assam for the exporters to get the products directly from the producer group and the processors. The platform will link the producers and processors of Assam and exporters from other parts of the country that

University, Jorhat to conduct various training programmes on pre-harvest and post-harvest management and other research activities for the promotion of export from the region.

The Authority promoted GI

Assam to different countries.

"Assam and the other states of NER have a favourable climate condition and soil type is also good for growing almost all agricultural and horticultural crops. As most of NER's bound-

preneurs to utilise local produce for value addition and export. Training programmes are being held in different states of the North East in association with the Central Food Technology Research Institute (CFTRI), Mysore and Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT).

APEDA also facilitated a workshop on Food Quality and Safety Management for Export of Processed Food Products from NER at Ri Bhoi in Meghalaya and Dibrugarh in Assam for boosting exports of agricultural and processed food products from NER through sustainable food value chain development.

With APEDA's intervention, Tripura's jackfruit was exported to London, and Nagaland's king chilli to London through a local exporter for the first time. Also, Assam's local fruit called leteku (Burmese grape) was exported to Dubai and Assam's betel leaves have been regularly exported to London.

Tapping the export potential of pork and pork products, it assisted the Assam government in setting up a modern pork processing facility at Nazira which has a slaughtering capacity of 400 animals per day. The unit is ready and set to be commissioned soon.

APEDA organised a training programme on the promotion of organic pork export from Sikkim, which is an organic state of India, in association with the State Animal Husbandry Department. The Authority has also developed guidelines for the export of fresh and processed pork with the help of National Research Centre (NRC) on pigs located at Rani, which is near Guwahati.

APEDA also extended its support for branding and promotion of North East products such as Kiwi wine, processed foods, carrying out a wet sampling of joha rice pulao, black rice kheer, etc.

As part of capacity building, the Authority organised skill development programmes for manufacturers, exporters and entre-

## Govt formulates strategy to promote NE region AS AGRI EXPORT HUB



**Bangladesh, Bhutan, the UK, the Middle East, Europe are major destinations for export of products from the region**

ganise skill development and training in food processing, value addition on horticultural produce, etc.

It has also planned to facilitate capacity building to officials of the Assam agriculture department and selected officials would be sent in batches to Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

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As part of capacity building, the Authority organised skill development programmes for manufacturers, exporters and entre-

## Fashion Corner



## India witnessing urban renaissance: Puri

AAT News Service

INDIA is witnessing an urban renaissance and the architectural wonders of Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi and various other monuments are a testimony to the country's architectural expertise of pre-independent India, said the Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri. He was addressing the 168<sup>th</sup> annual day celebration of Central Public Works Department (CPWD), in New Delhi.

The Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Manoj Joshi; the Director General, CPWD, Shailendra Sharma and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

CPWD has steered impor-

tant public works over the years, and has become a leading enterprise in the field of construction management. As one of the oldest-serving government department, it has witnessed many seismic shifts in the socio-political landscape of the capital region and other parts of the country, said Mr Puri.

From the days of British rule to post-Independence, and now to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, CPWD has been a constant and reassuring presence. The true character of an institution is reflected in how well it adapts itself with time. Since its inception, CPWD has continuously evolved to meet the needs of the nation, he said.

CPWD developed the National Capital Region in New Delhi with the execution of proj-

ects such as Rashtrapati Bhavan, North and South Block, and Parliament House, among other equally iconic projects. Even today, it is making a significant contribution to governance through the rejuvenation of Central Vista project, with the development of the New Parliament Building, VP Enclave, and Common Central Secretariat.

CPWD's good work has even transcended national boundaries: the Afghanistan Parliament was constructed by CPWD, and it remains a sign of India's unwavering friendship with the Afghan people, said the minister.

There is a visible and demonstrated improvement in the role of CPWD in nation building. Whenever there is an improvement and reform, there will be certain difficulties as well and they come from people who have vested interests in the activities. "Today we are not constructing for today and tomorrow, we are constructing for next 250 years. Therefore, any slippage on quality will cost us a lot and you must have same level of commitment and responsibility in building the nation," he said.

Saying India successfully transitions into a post-pandemic world, construction will play a key role in moving India towards a resilient, sustainable and inclusive future.

CPWD is prioritising environment-friendly and sustainable structures by using technologies that minimise carbon footprint across the construction lifecycle and by combining construction technologies with indigenous and locally sourced materials, added the minister.

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