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**FSSAI collecting samples of Nestle's Cerelac cereals**



**New Delhi:** Food regulator FSSAI said it is in the process of collecting pan-India samples of Nestle's Cerelac baby cereals, amid a report that claimed the company was adding higher sugar content in the product. "We are collecting samples (of Nestle's Cerelac baby cereals) from across the country. It will take 15-20 days to complete the process," FSSAI CEO G Kamala Vardhana Rao said.

**Start trade talks with India: businesses tell Pak PM**

**Islamabad:** Pakistan's Punjab assembly Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan said that enmity with India needs to be ended and talks for the resumption of trade between the two countries should be initiated. Khan's call for the restoration of trade ties with India came a day after Pakistan's business leaders urged prime minister Sharif to initiate trade talks with India during an interactive session in Karachi.

# We're bound by the verdict in Kesavananda Bharati case: SC

**GUIDING LIGHT.** Observations made during hearing of case related to takeover of pvt assets

**Press Trust of India**  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Thursday made it clear that it is "subservient" to the historic 13-judge Bench verdict in the Kesavananda Bharati case which upheld a part of Article 31C of the Constitution meant to save laws if they are enacted to subservise "common good" by taking over material resources including private assets.

The path-breaking 1973 Kesavananda Bharati judgement on "basic structure" doctrine had clipped the vast power of Parliament to amend the Constitution and simultaneously gave the judiciary the authority to review any amendment.

It also upheld the constitutionality of a provision of Article 31-C, which implied that amendments for implementing the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), if they do not affect the 'basic structure' of the Constitution, shall not be subjected to judicial review. The observations came from a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud which



**REIGNS SUPREME.** SC also upheld the constitutionality of a provision of Article 31-C, which implied that amendments for implementing the Directive Principles of State Policy, if they do not affect the 'basic structure' of the Constitution

was hearing arguments for the third day to decide the contentious legal question about whether private properties can also be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39 (b) of the Constitution and, consequently, can be taken over by the State to subservise "common good".

**13 JUDGE BENCH**

"We are again subservient to a decision of the 13 judge Bench (in the Kesavananda Bharati case). It wasn't a judgement of five judges," said the Bench, which also comprised justices Hrishikesh Roy, BV Nagarathna, Sudhanshu

Dhulia, JB Pardiwala, Manoj Misra, Rajesh Bindal, Satish Chandra Sharma and Augustine George Masih.

The CJJ was responding to the submissions advanced by the counsel for petitioners, including the Property Owners Association (POA), that Article 31C was set aside by a five-judge Bench verdict in the Minerva Mills case in 1980 and hence, the protection to the laws made under Article 39 (b) and (c) goes.

**MINERVA MILLS CASE**

The top court had, in the Minerva Mills case, declared two provisions of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Amend-

ment which prevented any constitutional amendment from being "called in question in any Court on any ground" and accorded precedence to the Directive Principles over the fundamental rights of individuals as unconstitutional.

The CJJ said the Minerva Mills judgement set aside the expansion of the immunity granted to the laws made in furtherance of all DPSPs and hence, the question to deal with is whether the older and un-amended Article 31C of the Constitution gets revived.

"The Minerva (judgement) couldn't have doubted the Kesavananda Bharati (verdict)," the CJJ said, adding, "So what is emerging is this, that the pre-amended Article 31C is valid, the post amended 31C which expanded the ambit of Article 31C to include all the DPSPs is invalid." The legal arguments and observations of the bench assume significance in view of the fact that the 16 petitioners, including the Property Owners Association (POA) of Mumbai, are opposing Chapter VIII-A of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act.

# Saving through DBT rises to over ₹63,000 crore in FY23

**Shishir Sinha**  
New Delhi

Saving through direct benefit transfer (DBT) during FY22-23 crossed ₹63,000 crore as against ₹50,000 crore in FY22, the latest update on the DBT portal shows.

With this, the total saving since inception has exceeded ₹3.48 lakh crore.

Total saving in FY23 can meet a bigger part of allocation for the rural employment scheme during FY25. The government has provided ₹86,000 crore under the scheme for FY25.

**PLUGGING LEAKAGES**

The Centre says that DBT and other governance reforms have led to the removal of duplicate/fake beneficiaries and plugging of leakages, and due to this the government has been able to better target the deserving beneficiaries.

As on date, DBT, being implemented by 53 Central Ministries and Departments, is used in 314 schemes. During FY23, Public Distribution System provided a saving of over ₹50,000 crore which was highest among all



The total saving since inception has exceeded ₹3.48 lakh crore

schemes. Till date total saving has been over ₹1.85 lakh crore. This has been possible because of "Deletion of over five crore duplicate and fake/non-existent Ration Cards," the portal said.

Another big saving was made under PM Kisan with a saving of over ₹10,000 crore. "Deletion of over 2.11 crore ineligible beneficiaries helped to save," the portal added.

Proper administration of LPG subsidy has helped to save over ₹500 crore in FY23, and this took the total saving to over ₹73,000 crore. Government says, 4.15 crore duplicate, fake/non-existent, inactive LPG connections eliminated. In addition, number of non-subsidised LPG consumers is 2.45 crore

including 1.13 crore 'Give it Up' consumers.

**WELFARE SCHEMES**

With the aim of reforming Government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of information/funds and to ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, de-duplication and reduction of fraud, DBT was started on January 1, 2013.

First phase of DBT was initiated in 43 districts and later on 78 more districts were added in 27 schemes pertaining to scholarships, women, child and labour welfare. DBT was further expanded across the country on December 12, 2014.

JAM is DBT enabler and as on date around 52 crore Jan Dhan Account, more than 139 crore Aadhaar and 115 crore Mobile connections provide an opportunity to implement DBT in all welfare schemes across the country including States and Union Territories.

"DBT will bring efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability in the Government system and infuse confidence of citizen in the governance.

# UK fintech Tide bets big on formalisation of Indian MSMEs

**KR Srivats**  
New Delhi

Tide, a UK-based financial platform focused on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), seeks to make India its second core market after the UK within five to ten years, its Global CEO Oliver Prill said.

The fintech, which launched its products in India in December 2022, is open to investing more in the country to reach the targeted ₹1,000-crore mark and headcount of 1,000 by 2026, Prill told *businessline*.

The company also has a product engineering centre in Hyderabad that caters to its global operations.

Its membership base of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) in India is 2.25

lakh and it targets 5 lakh by end-December, Prill said.

**INDIA DYNAMICS**

The company is mainly focused on the annual inflow of nearly 2 million micro and small units in India that are looking to formalise their business.

"In India, the dynamics is more on formalisation and so we are taking market share from informal economy. We are helping people to formalise. Our competitors are moneylenders, cash," Prill said.

"Our aspiration is over the next 5-10 years, we would want India to be the second core market. That will be with different attributes. To achieve this objective we will have to do something that is good for



Oliver Prill, Global CEO, Tide

the development of India. I don't think you can be a serious player unless you do this."

Prill also made it clear that Tide is not inching towards 10 per cent market share in an enormously big market like India.

"It will be a small single-digit. It will still be a core business for us because of the scale

of opportunity. Being part of the ecosystem that helps India in its journey will be a fantastic outcome," he said.

Tide has over 800 employees in India currently. "We are ahead of our target on the headcount front. Same is true for investments.

A lot of investments we make here is people-related and marketing-related. We may even be above the indicated investment level. We are bullish about India," Prill said.

**SHRINKING UK MARKET**

In the UK, Tide has 11 per cent market share, but it's a shrinking market with the number of SMEs down to 5.5 million from 6 million earlier. "In the UK it is a very intensive competitive dynamics for a static pool of SMEs. In India, it is very differ-

ent with rapid formalisation. India is really the spearhead of our internationalisation story. We are entering other markets too. We just entered Germany," Prill said.

India has about 67 million MSMEs, according to government estimates. "Normally, in a country 8-9% population equivalent is SMEs. Our estimate is there are 130-134 million SMEs in India. However we are focused on the micro and small end," said Gurjodhpal Singh, CEO, Tide India.

The company has launched its Bharat Women Aspiration Index (BWAI) to champion women-led small businesses in India. The index highlights the motivations, aspirations and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Tier-II and beyond cities.

# US report citing human rights violations deeply biased: MEA

**Press Trust of India**  
New Delhi

India on Friday described a US State Department report citing alleged incidents of human rights violations including in Manipur as "deeply biased" and said it reflects a poor understanding of India and it attach no value to it.

The annual report of the State Department highlighted instances of human rights abuses in Manipur following the outbreak of ethnic conflict.

"This report is deeply biased and reflects a poor understanding of India," External Affairs Ministry

spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

The report also mentioned the raids by Indian tax authorities on the office of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

"We attach no value to it and urge you to do the same," he said at his weekly media briefing.

The India section of the report said local human rights organisations, minority political parties and affected communities criticised the country's government for the delayed

action to stop violence and provide humanitarian assistance in Manipur.

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# Housing market outlook bullish, consumer sentiments positive: Report

**Press Trust of India**  
New Delhi

Consumers sentiments in India's housing market remain positive despite a rise in prices, according to realty portal Magicbricks.

On Thursday, Magicbricks released a report 'Housing Sentiment Index' based on the survey of over 4,500 customers across 11 cities.

"Despite inflationary pressures, the Housing Sentiment Index (HSI) across India remains robust with strong buyer confidence," it said in a statement.

The survey revealed a positive market outlook for the Indian residential real estate sector with an overall HSI of 149.

Magicbricks said the HSI is derived from an online survey

capturing the responses of 4,500 high intent homebuyers across the top 11 cities of India, spanning various income brackets and budget preferences.

**BULLISH SENTIMENT**

The HSI score ranges from 0 to 200, with 100 representing neutrality. Indicating an expectation of market stability in the short to medium term. A score of 200 reflects a bullish sentiment while a score of 0 indicated a bearish sentiment.

"Currently, the pan-India HSI stands at 149, signalling the optimistic outlook of prospective homebuyers," the report said.

Ahmedabad emerged as the frontrunner with the highest HSI of 163, closely followed by Kolkata (160), Gurugram (157), and Hydera-

bad (156), propelled by enhanced infrastructure and upcoming new real estate projects.

"The current scenario of India's real estate sector reflects the most promising conditions witnessed in the past decade, instilling confidence among homebuyers and investors nationwide. Its also noteworthy that the demand is consistently surpassing available supply, showing encouraging signs of swift absorption when new inventory enters the market," Sudhir Pai, CEO of Magicbricks, said.

The report also identified that mid-age professionals (24-35 age group) demonstrated the highest HSI (154). Furthermore, consumers with an annual income of ₹10-20 lakh displayed strongest aspirations for home buying, with HSI of 156.

# Kejriwal is kingpin of liquor scam, was involved in conspiracy: ED

**Our Bureau**  
New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has told the Supreme Court that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is allegedly the "kingpin and key conspirator" of the Delhi liquor scam as he was involved in the conspiracy of formulation of the now scrapped Delhi excise policy of 2021-22 to favour certain persons.

**ED AFFIDAVIT**

Opposing Kejriwal's petition in the Apex Court against his arrest last month in the Delhi liquor scam, the ED also charged that he colluded with his minister and AAP leaders to demand kickbacks from businessmen in lieu of favours granted in the excise policy.

"Arvind Kejriwal, chief minister of NCT of Delhi is the kingpin and key conspirator of the Delhi excise scam in collusion with ministers of the Delhi govt, AAP leaders and other persons," the ED said in its 734-page affidavit submitted to the SC.

**MAJOR CONTENTIONS**

"Arvind Kejriwal was involved in the conspiracy of formulation of the excise policy 2021-22 to favour certain persons and also involved in the demanding kickbacks from liquor businessmen in exchange for favours granted in the said policy," it said.

Taking exception to his plea, the agency stated that the PMLA, 2002 has no special provision demanding different standards of evidence for arresting a Chief Minister. Countering Kejriwal's

other contention that his arrest violated basic structures and doctrine of free and fair elections, the ED said, "The arrest of a person, however high he may be, for a commission of offence based on material, can never violate the concept of free and fair elections."

"If the aforesaid argument is accepted, politicians who are criminals would be granted immunity from arrest on the ground that he is required to canvass in the election," it said.

"Treating a politician differently from an ordinary criminal in a matter of arrest would amount to arbitrary and irrational exercise of power of arrest which would violate the principle of equality enshrined under Article 14 of the Constitution," the ED elaborated.

# 282 m faced acute hunger in 2023, Gaza and Sudan worst hit, says UN report

Over 80 per cent of those facing imminent famine — 577,000 people — were in Gaza

**Press Trust of India**  
United Nations

Nearly 282 million people in 59 countries suffered from acute hunger in 2023, with war-torn Gaza as the territory with the largest number of people facing famine, according to the Global Report on Food Crises released on Wednesday.

The UN report said 24 million more people faced an acute lack of food than in 2022, due to the sharp deterioration in food security, especially in the Gaza Strip and Sudan. The number of nations with food crises that are monitored has also been expanded.

Máximo Torero, chief economist for the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, said 705,000 people in five countries are at Phase 5, the highest level, on a scale of hunger de-

termined by international experts — the highest number since the global report began in 2016 and quadruple the number that year.

**IMMINENT FAMINE**

Over 80 per cent of those facing imminent famine — 577,000 people — were in Gaza, he said. South Sudan, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mali each host many thousands also facing catastrophic hunger.

According to the report's future outlook, around 1.1 million people in Gaza, where the Israel-Hamas war is now in its seventh month, and 79,000 in South Sudan are projected to be in Phase 5 and facing famine by July.

It said conflict will also continue to drive food insecurity



**SHADOW OF EL NINO.** The report said the full impact of the El Nino phenomenon, including flooding and poor rain in parts of east Africa and drought in southern Africa, is likely to manifest throughout the year. REUTERS

in Haiti, where gangs control large portions of the capital.

Additionally, while the El Nino phenomenon peaked in early 2024, "its full impact on food security—including flooding and poor rain in parts of east Africa and drought in

southern Africa, especially Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe — are like to manifest throughout the year." UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the report "a roll call of human failings," and that "in a world of plenty, chil-

dren are starving to death." "The conflicts erupting over the past 12 months compound a dire global situation," he wrote in the report's foreword.

**DIRE SITUATION**

Guterres highlighted the conflict in the Gaza Strip, as the enclave holds the highest number of people facing catastrophic hunger. There is also the year-old conflict in Sudan, which has created the world's largest internal displacement crisis "with atrocious impacts on hunger and nutrition," he added.

According to the report, over 36 million people in 39 countries and territories are facing an acute hunger emergency, a step below the famine level in Phase 4, with more than a third in Sudan and Afgh-

anistan. It's an increase of a million people from 2022, the report said. Arif Husain, the UN World Food Program's chief economist, said every year since 2016 the numbers of people acutely food insecure have gone up, and they are now more than double the numbers before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The report looks at 59 countries, he said the target is to get data from 73 countries where there are people who are acutely food insecure.

Secretary-General Guterres called for an urgent response to the report's findings that addresses the underlying causes of acute hunger and malnutrition while transforming the systems that supply food. Funding is also not keeping pace with the needs, he stressed.