

Infosys to buy land for Kolkata centre

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KOLKATA

After years of uncertainty over land allotment, which resulted in **Infosys Technologies Ltd** almost pulling the plug on its proposed development centre in Kolkata, India's second-largest information technology (IT) firm by revenue on Tuesday signed an agreement with the West Bengal government to acquire 50 acres to launch a new office.

Goutam Deb, West Bengal's minister for housing, announced on Tuesday that Infosys was to pay ₹75 crore for the plot, or ₹1.5 crore an acre, but Infosys refused to comment on the price. The land is located close to the airport in Rajarhat, a satellite township being built on the eastern fringes of Kolkata. **Wipro Ltd** was allotted land there in December last year at the same price, according to Deb.

Infosys had initially spurned the West Bengal government's offer for land in Rajarhat, saying the price was exorbitant. While keen to get Infosys to build a development centre in Kolkata, the state government had in 2003-04 asked for at least ₹2 crore an acre.

Eventually, in 2008, Infosys agreed to acquire 90 acres in an IT township that



Investment plans: Infosys director T.V. Mohandas Pai

was to be built jointly by the state government and a private developer, for an undisclosed price.

But the IT township, 30km from Kolkata, was scrapped after violence there in August last year blew the lid off forcible land acquisition by the private developer. After the August 2009 setback, Infosys said it wouldn't consider setting up a development centre in Kolkata in the "foreseeable

future".

"The state government has been persuading us to build a development centre in Kolkata," said Infosys director T.V. Mohandas Pai. "We have only created an option for the future considering our business expansion potential."

Though Deb said the development centre would create up to 20,000 jobs, Pai refused to comment on employment potential and the timeframe for commissioning the centre because the company isn't sure when it will be able to use the plot.

"There is currently no civic infrastructure at the site that has been allotted to us," Pai said. "The state government has committed to build it within a reasonable length of time, but when it comes to such promises, almost all state governments are known to be optimistic."

Deb said Infosys was to pay 25% of the land price, or around ₹19 crore, within a month, and that the state government would build roads to connect the site within six months.

West Bengal's information technology minister Debesh Das said Infosys had committed to start construction of the development centre as soon as the civic infrastructure at the site was ready.

APPOINTMENT

Bains likely to head Punjab & Sind Bank

New Delhi: The government is likely to appoint D.S. Bains, a Punjab cadre Indian Administrative Service officer, as chairman and managing director (CMD) of Punjab and Sind Bank.

"His name (Bains) has been sent for approval of the appointments committee of the cabinet," an official close to the development said. Bains is currently the principal secretary to the Punjab government. The post of CMD at the bank fell vacant after G.S. Vedi retired in June this year. The new CMD is likely to take over before the bank's initial public offering next month. **PTI**

AUTO

GM to convert Halol plant into CV hub

New Delhi: General Motors India Pvt. Ltd (GM) will convert its car manufacturing plant at Halol into a commercial vehicle (CV) plant, which will manufacture vehicles from GM's Chinese partner—**Shanghai Automotive Industry Corp.**, a top official said on Tuesday.

"We are converting (the) Halol plant into a commercial vehicle hub by early 2012... We are preparing for manufacturing," said GM India president and managing director Karl Slym. "We are putting in \$250 million (₹1,140 crore) for the purpose. This takes us to a new space and we are confident about the growth in this segment."

The company currently produces the Chevrolet Tavera from its Halol facility. It will increase the capacity of Halol plant from 85,000 units to 100,000 units. "Basically, we are trying to increase the capacity and capability of the Halol plant," Slym said.

The firm plans to launch six new products adopted from its Chinese partner Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation (SAIC) over the next two years. **AMRIT RAJ**

AVIATION

Kingfisher, American Airlines in pact

Mumbai: Kingfisher Airlines Ltd and American Airlines Inc. have entered a code-sharing and frequent flyer agreement that will take effect from 2011, the Indian carrier said in a statement on Tuesday.

The agreement, subject to regulatory approvals, will allow Kingfisher to place its code on American's daily flight between New Delhi and Chicago.

American Airlines can codeshare on Kingfisher's flights from London Heathrow to both New Delhi and Mumbai as well as tap its domestic network, it said. **REUTERS**

BANKING

Microfinance Bill after RBI views: govt

New Delhi: Amid microfinance institutions (MFIs) drawing criticism for their coercive ways of functioning, the government on Tuesday said it will introduce a Bill on the sector after taking into account the views of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the recommendations of a central bank sub-committee.

"The department of financial services proposes to introduce the Micro Finance

(Development and Regulation) Bill, 2010, after taking into account the views of RBI and the Malegam committee recommendations," minister of state for finance Namo Narain Meena told the Rajya Sabha. Last month, RBI had set up a sub-committee headed by Y.H. Malegam to look into MFIs' activities. **PTI**

CORPORATE

Aegis to set up oil terminal at ₹400 cr

Bangalore: Aegis Logistics Ltd will

invest up to ₹400 crore to build an oil storage complex at Pipavav Port in Gujarat, it said in a statement.

"The facilities at Pipavav port will offer services to oil companies which wish to use the port for import and export of oil and petrochemical products," Anish Chandaria, managing director and chief executive officer of Aegis, said after signing an agreement with Pipavav port. The 600,000 kilolitre storage complex will be set up on 100 acres. **P. MANOJ**

LIC Mauritius looks for acquisition

Port Louis: LIC Mauritius, a fully owned branch of Life Insurance Corp. of India (LIC), is looking at acquiring a local life insurance company.

The possible acquisition will help consolidate the company in that country, LIC Mauritius chief manager **P.S. Jagannatham** said. "Any acquisition needs to add value to our products and give LIC sufficient leverage to explore new business opportunities," he said.

LIC's international operations are spread across nine countries, including the UK, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Bahrain. **PTI**

IL&FS Financial to raise ₹70,000 crore

Mumbai: Non-banking financial company **IL&FS Financial Services Ltd** plans to fund ₹70,000 crore aggregate of projects this fiscal and raise around ₹34,300 crore in the immediate term, a top official said.

"We aim to fund ₹70,000 crore aggregate of funds this fiscal. We will require to raise 75% of this amount soon," the company's managing director and chief executive officer Ramesh Bawa said, adding that the amount required to be raised will increase to ₹75,000 crore, he said.

The company has tied up with five public sector banks—Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Union Bank, Bank of Baroda and Canara Bank besides **Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS)** to form a joint syndication and underwriting platform for infrastructure projects. **PTI**

Medfort raises ₹60 cr for expansion

New Delhi: Medfort Hospitals Pvt. Ltd, a six-month-old Indian healthcare company that specializes in eyecare and diabetes, has raised ₹60 crore to fund its organic and inorganic growth plans by selling a "significant minority stake" to **TVS Capital Funds Ltd** and ePlanet Ventures.

Medfort, which currently has seven centres through tie-ups in the National Capital Region centred in Delhi, will open

50 more in states including Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, said Gaurav Malhotra, chief executive, Medfort.

"We will look to tie up with other hospitals in these states and primarily follow the brownfield approach," he said. **HARINI SUBRAMANI & SHRADDHA NAIR**

ECONOMY

Gems and jewellery exports up 31% in Oct

Mumbai: The gems and jewellery exports grew by 31% in October to ₹12,979.19 crore.

In October 2009, the total exports stood at ₹9907.61 crore, according to data from the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC). The export of cut and polished diamonds was at ₹9,170.72 crore in October, up 31% from ₹7,013.86 crore last year.

The overall shipments of gems and jewellery in the April-October period showed a growth of 34.48% at ₹98,088.53 crore against ₹72,937.90 crore in the same period of the previous year, GJEPC said. **PTI**

FDI down 26% during Jan-Sep to \$16 bn

New Delhi: Foreign direct investment (FDI) in India stood at \$15.97 billion (₹78,200 crore) during the January-September period, down 26% vis-a-vis the corresponding period last year, industry ministry data showed.

In January-September 2009, the country attracted FDI worth \$21.44 billion. The countries that pumped the maximum foreign capital into the Indian economy during the nine-month period were Mauritius, Singapore, the US, the Netherlands, Cyprus, Japan, Germany and France.

According to data from the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP), the nodal agency for FDI-related matters, the sectors that attracted the maximum foreign inflows include services (financial and non-financial), computer software and hardware, telecommunications, housing and real estate and power. **PTI**

EDUCATION

HK universities for India partnership

New Delhi: A cluster of government-funded universities from Hong Kong (HK) Tuesday said it is looking for greater education collaboration with India.

The University of Hong Kong (HKU), has also opened a liaison office in New Delhi.

Raymond H.C. Wong, permanent secretary of education, Hong Kong, said they are looking for research collaboration, faculty and student exchange programmes with Indian Institutes of Technologies (IITs) and other leading educational institutions in India. The delegation has met human resource development minister Kapil Sibal. "India and China are two important countries and will be leaders in the world by 2050. HKU India liaison office will bring the best of Hong Kong, mainland China and India in the field of education," John Spinks, director undergraduate admission at HKU, said. **PRASHANT K. NANDA**

ENERGY

HPCL to divest 40% stake in gas block

New Delhi: State-owned **Hindustan Petroleum Corp. Ltd (HPCL)** and its partners will divest 40% of their stake in a gas-bearing block in offshore Australia to US-based **Apache Corp.**

"We have agreed to farm out a part of our stake in WA-388-P to Apache," HPCL chairman and managing director Subir Roy Chowdhary said.

HPCL, **Bharat PetroResources Ltd**—a unit of state-owned **Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd—Gujarat State Petroleum Corp. Ltd** and **Videcon Industries Ltd** each have a 14% interest in the block. After the divestment, their stakes will decline to 8.4% each. **PTI**

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

China changes visa policy for J&K

New Delhi: China appears to be finally responding to India's concerns over the

issuance of stapled visas to people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), a matter taken up recently by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with his Chinese counterpart Wen Jiabao.

In a move indicative of shift in Chinese policy on Jammu and Kashmir, Tanya Gupta, a singer from the state has been issued a stapled visa, instead of a stapled one, to travel to perform at the closing ceremony of the ongoing Asian Games in Guangzhou on 27 November.

The Chinese have been issuing visa on a separate sheet, stapled to the passports of residents of J&K for more than an year, thereby questioning the state's status as an integral part of India.

When contacted, Chinese embassy officials said: "it might be an indication of a shift in visa policy of China for the Jammu and Kashmir residents". **PTI**

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

'India's ICT spending to rise 10.3% in 2011'

Mumbai: Indian firms are expected to spend around \$95.47 billion (₹4.35 trillion) on information and communication technology (ICT) in the country by 2014, driven primarily by hardware and telecom, research firm **Gartner Inc.** said on Tuesday.

From a spending of \$56.82 billion in 2009, it is estimated that the ICT spending in India will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.9% to reach \$95.47 billion in 2014, Gartner said in a statement.

"IT spending in India saw somewhat of a slowdown as a result of the global economic recession through much of 2009.

While many companies adopted a cautious approach in 2009, a strong return to growth has been seen in 2010," Gartner senior vice-president and global head (research) Peter Sondergaard said. **PTI**

INFRASTRUCTURE

Embassy Property to invest ₹6,000 crore

Mumbai: Embassy Property Developments Ltd, which is soon hitting the capital market, will invest over ₹6,000 crore in new projects in the next three years, a senior official said.

"If you look at our project pipeline and our plans of developing over 89 million sq. ft of space, our capex will be over ₹6,000 crore in the next three years. We already have sufficient land and will not be adding more," the Bangalore-headquartered company's general manager (corporate finance), Sandeep Subramanya, said.

The company, which is eyeing a ₹2,400 crore initial public offering (IPO) by December or early January, will be concentrating on building integrated townships having a mix of commercial and residential, where people can walk to work, he said. **PTI**

LEGAL

HC defers Vodafone tax hearing to 8 Feb

Mumbai: The Bombay high court (HC) on Tuesday deferred to 8 February, a hearing of **Vodafone Group Plc's** petition against a move by Indian tax office to treat it as an agent of the seller in its 2007 acquisition of **Hutchison Whampoa Ltd's** mobile business in India, a Vodafone spokesman said.

Vodafone had filed a writ with the court on 15 October, saying the tax office's move to treat the company as an agent of the seller was an "unusual move". **REUTERS**

MARKETS

ICICI Venture sells stake in Sangam

Mumbai: ICICI Venture Funds Management Co. Ltd has partially exited its investment in **Sangam (India) Ltd**, a suiting textiles player, through a block deal on the Bombay Stock Exchange on Tuesday.

ICICI Ventures had invested ₹42.5 crore in the company in August 2005 from its fund India Advantage Fund I for a 23% stake at ₹40 and 42 per share. It exited at ₹50 per share for a total of ₹31 crore.

Sangam is an integrated producer of fibre dyed poly-viscose (PV) yarn and fabric and also sells yarn and fabric in the domestic and international markets. **SHRADDHA NAIR**



Victory day: (L-R) India's Gautam Gambhir, Ishant Sharma and Harbhajan Singh celebrate after their win in the final Test cricket match against New Zealand on Tuesday.

India defeats New Zealand, wins cricket Test series

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NAGPUR

India rode on some inspired spin bowling to thrash New Zealand by an innings and 198 runs in the third and final Test match on Tuesday and claim the series 1-0.

Spinners Harbhajan Singh, Pragyan Ojha and Suresh Raina shared seven wickets before paceman Ishant Sharma finished off the tail, bowling out New Zealand for 175 early into the second session on the fourth day of the match. New Zealand started the day needing 349 runs to avoid an innings defeat after conceding a huge 373-run lead to India which made 566-8 in its first innings, built around a 191-run knock by Rahul Dravid.

The visitors, weighed down by the enormity of the task at hand, crumbled without much resistance to gift top-ranked India one of their biggest Test wins in recent times. "It was one of those days when everything went to our plans," said Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

India owed its success as much to the pacemen who struck early blows on the first day of the match at the Vidarbha Cricket Association Stadium to bowl out New Zealand for 193 and set the stage for victory.

New Zealand, placed at No.8 in Test rankings, suffered their second batting collapse in the match after resuming the day on 24-1.

Dravid was named man of the match while Harbhajan picked the man of the series award for scoring 315 runs in the three matches and taking 10 wickets. The first two games of the series had ended in draws. **AFP**