

## Gates pays low-key visit to tech start-up pilot project

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NEW DELHI

Founder and chairman of **Microsoft Corp.** Bill Gates is visiting India. Gates, whose visit was described by both Microsoft and his eponymous foundation as personal, paid a surprise visit to Uttam Nagar in west Delhi on Tuesday. Tech start-up Eko India Financial Services Pvt. Ltd is piloting a mobile banking project in this lower middle-class colony. Gates was accompanied by his father and two sisters.

"We were actually scheduled to meet the (members of) Gates Foundation today but were very surprised to find Mr Gates here in person. Mr Gates was here on a personal visit to pick up information on our pilot and spent a couple of hours with us," said Abhishek Sinha, Eko's chief executive officer.

On Tuesday, Gates, who stepped down from all executive roles at Microsoft in July, also met Union health minister A. Ramadoss. At the meeting, he was briefed by ministry officials on India's efforts to eradicate polio, its National Rural Health Mission, as also its HIV/AIDS control and anti-tobacco efforts. The Microsoft chairman then addressed a press conference that was accessible only to television reporters.

On Wednesday, Gates is scheduled to address a second press conference, less exclusive this time, on the public health initiatives of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Later in the day, he will participate in an event at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, to launch a new initiative of Microsoft, of which little detail was immediately available.

Microsoft declined comment on the Gates visit saying it was not aware of his agenda.



**Missionary:** Microsoft chairman Bill Gates in New Delhi on Tuesday.

In answer to a query whether Gates was in New Delhi to receive this year's Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development (announced in March), Penny Richards, a spokeswoman at the Bill and Melinda Gates

Foundation, said Gates will not be receiving it on this trip because Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was not available to present it to him. This could not be independently confirmed by Mint.

While Singh refused to comment, a senior IIT-D official pointed out that at the time of suspension, the only charge against him was non-payment of the fine as ordered by CIC, though more charges were added against him by the institute subsequently. **PALLAVI SINGH**

### ENERGY

#### IOC, HPCL, BPCL losses lighten on fuel sales

**New Delhi:** Oil firms **Indian Oil Corp. Ltd (IOC)**, **Hindustan Petroleum Corp. Ltd (HPCL)** and **Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd (BPCL)** are projected to lose Rs1,28,135 crore on fuel sales this fiscal, 13% lower than previously anticipated revenue loss as a fall in international oil prices has brought some relief.

The fall in global crude prices has seen the projections for revenue loss on sale of petrol, diesel, domestic LPG and kerosene being lowered from Rs1,47,592 crore, anticipated last month, to Rs1,28,135 crore now. For the first time in more than 12 months, oil companies have started making a profit on sale of petrol, though they continue to lose Rs155 crore per day on diesel, LPG and kerosene sales. **PTI**

### FDI

#### Nath: India to ease rules on defence production

**New Delhi:** India will further ease foreign investment rules, including those relating to defence production, commerce and industry minister Kamal

Nath said on Tuesday.

He did not name the other sectors where foreign investment rules could be relaxed, but said the cabinet would consider the issue soon. Nath said during April-September period of the current fiscal year, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows rose 137% from the same period a year ago to \$17.21 billion (Rs83,640.6 crore). **REUTERS**

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

#### Isro to launch maps similar to Google Earth

**Gandhinagar:** Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) will soon launch "Bhuvan", which will provide online maps based on Geographical Information System (GIS) in line of Google Earth, Isro chairman, G. Madhavan Nair, said here on Tuesday.

"Isro is planning to launch 'Bhuvan'. It is equivalent to the Google Earth, but is going to be much more precise," said Nair, who was here to attend the inaugural function of the 28th INCA International Congress on Collaborative Mapping and Space Technology. **PTI**

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### APPOINTMENTS

#### Rajiv Sawhney to head Essar's telecom biz

**New Delhi:** Ruias-promoted **Essar Group** on Tuesday said it has appointed Rajiv Sawhney as the chief executive officer (CEO) of its telecom business group. As CEO, Sawhney would be responsible for Essar's overall telecom business, that includes telecom retail and infrastructure, the company said in a statement. Prior to this appointment, Sawhney was CEO of Indonesia-based PT Hutchison CP Telecommunications.

Essar has 33% stake in the Vodafone-Essar telecom joint venture and also runs telecom retail chains under the brand name "Mobile Store". **PTI**

### AUTO

#### Bengal may offer Singur land to Chinese firm

**Kolkata:** The West Bengal government plans to showcase Singur land before Chinese automobile manufacturer **First Automobile Works Ltd (FAW)**, after its vice-president Rendian Sheng met chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at Writers' Building in Kolkata on Tuesday and expressed interest in opening an automobile manufacturing unit in the state in collaboration with Ural India Ltd, which already has a presence in the state in heavy truck and vehicles manufacturing.

FAW, the biggest car manufacturer in China produces 20 lakh cars every year. They have worked in collaboration with Mazda, Toyota, Audi, Volkswagen and have expertise in small cars, buses, omnibus and heavy vehicles.

The company has asked for 600 acres of land and the state government may display 645 acres of the land at Singur, where Tata Motors Ltd was supposed to set up its mother plant. The state government has leased out 997 acres of land to the Tata Motors, out of which 645 acres was reserved for the mother plant and rest for vendors park for automobile parts.

Since the state's main Opposition party Trinamool Congress is not demanding land from the mother plant, but from the 290 acres allotted for ancillary units, the government feels it would be safe to show the Singur land to the Chinese manufacturer. Just to make sure, the government has also proposed land in Kharagpur, where it is planning an automobile park, and land in Kalyani in North 24 Parganas. A team of FAW members would be taken around these places in the next few days. **ROMITA DATTA**

#### Compact car: Toyota to go it alone in India

**Bangalore:** Japanese car maker **Toyota Motor Corp.** made it clear on Tuesday that the compact car it plans to roll out in India in 2010 would be its own and will have no association with **Daihatsu Motor Co. Ltd.**

"No. This is very much Toyota.", Hiroshi Nakagawa, managing director of **Toyota Kirloskar Motor Pvt. Ltd** (TKM), the Indian arm of the company,

said, denying reports that the small car was proposed to be launched in association with Daihatsu, Japan's largest mini-car maker in which Toyota holds 51% stake. TKM had announced an investment of nearly Rs1,400 crore for its second unit at Bidadi near here. **PTI**

### BANKING

#### StanChart banks on emerging markets

**Hong Kong:** UK lender **Standard Chartered Plc.** is not looking to raise new capital and believes relatively high emerging market growth rates will help buffer it from the global financial crisis, its chairman said on Tuesday.

"We're very comfortable with our capital ratios," Mervyn Davies, the lender's chairman, told a media briefing in Hong Kong.

"I never say never...but we're very well capitalized," he added, when pressed on whether the firm was ruling out raising fresh funds. The London-based bank generates two-thirds of its revenue in Asia, which is seeing slowing growth as economic conditions in the US and Europe worsen. Standard Chartered's London-listed shares have lost nearly 46% since the start of the year. **REUTERS**

### ECONOMY

#### PM appoints apex group to interact with industry

**New Delhi:** Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has constituted an apex group under his chairmanship to coordinate the government's response to points raised by industry from time to time.

The members of the apex group include finance minister P. Chidambaram, industry and commerce minister Kamal Nath, deputy chairman of Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia and Reserve Bank of India governor D. Subbarao. The group will meet industry representatives with regard to the current global financial crisis and its impact on India.

The Prime Minister has also approved a committee of officers chaired by the finance secretary that will meet on a daily basis, or as often as required, to consider issues raised by industry. The members of the committee of officers are commerce secretary, secretary (DIPP) and secretary (Planning Commission). The joint secretary (banking) finance ministry will be the government contact person to receive suggestions from the industry. **STAFF WRITER**

### EDUCATION

#### IIT Delhi told to reinstate suspended registrar

**New Delhi:** More than a year after the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi suspended its registrar for "disciplinary action", the ministry of human resource development has asked the institute to reinstate him.

IIT-D had suspended Col Rajendra Singh in July last year on the ground that he had not paid Rs25,000 fine as ordered by the chief information commissioner. Singh's suspension came

a day after he approached the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) seeking an investigation into "misappropriation of funds at IIT Delhi". In his complaint filed before the commission on 25 July last year, Singh had sought investigations into an order issued to him by the IIT Delhi administration seeking the release

of endowment funds towards foreign junkets of faculty members. Singh had also sought protection under the Whistleblowers Protection Act.

The ministry in its directive issued on 16 October has asked the institute to reinstate Singh, allowing the institute to continue its probe against him.

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