

CYRUS MISTRY:
TIME TO SAY TATA

INTERVIEW: JOHN KERRY
ON NET ZERO

DEFENCE: INDIA'S
NUCLEAR SHARKS

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THE VACCINE EMERGENCY

WHAT'S WRONG WITH INDIA'S VACCINATION
STRATEGY AND HOW TO SET IT RIGHT

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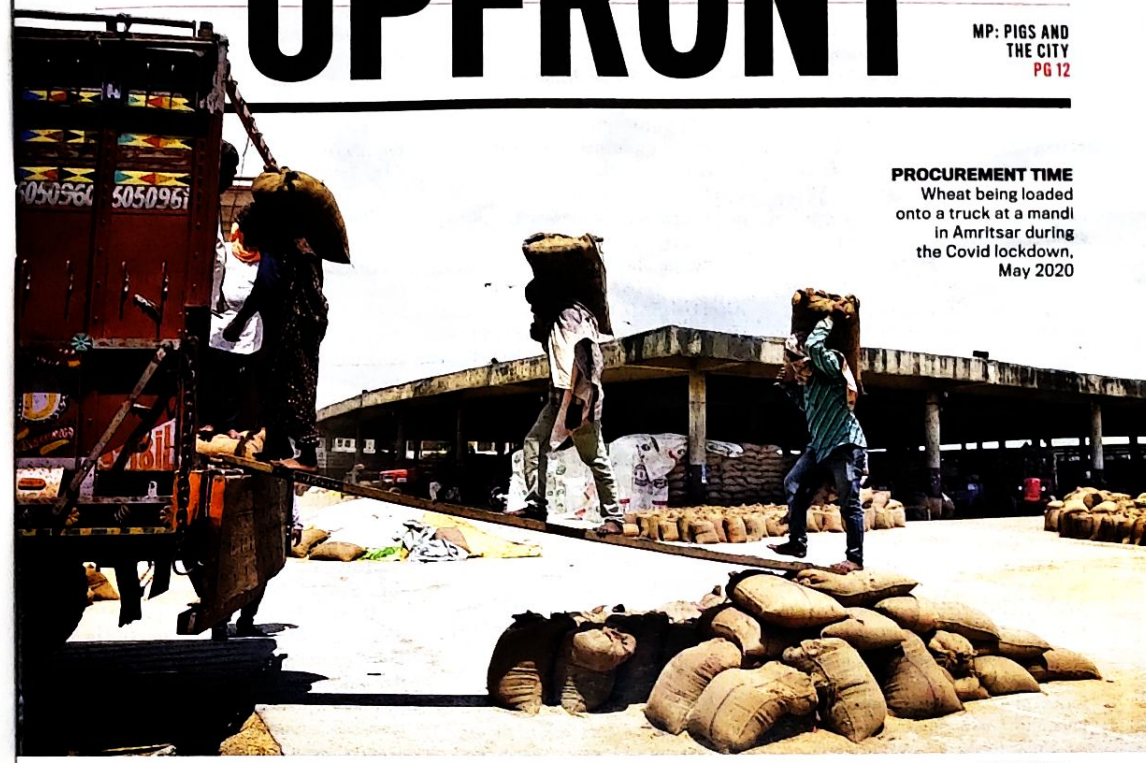
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PROCUREMENT TIME
Wheat being loaded onto a truck at a mandi in Amritsar during the Covid lockdown, May 2020

PRABHJOT GILL

DIRECT BENEFIT TRANSFER

A BETTER DEAL FOR FARMERS?

By Anilesh S. Mahajan

Faced with pressure from the Centre, Punjab is moving towards direct benefit transfer (DBT) to farmers for grain procured for the national granary this season. Fifteen other states that procure grain and other agricultural produce for central agencies, too, have started paying farmers directly or have agreed in principle to do so. This replaces the age-old system of paying farmers through 'arthiyas' or procurement agents. Arthiyas facilitate trade in APMC (Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee) mandis for a fee. In Punjab, the total market charges for trade in agricultural produce is about 9.5 per cent of the crop value, including the 2.5 per cent commission paid to arthiyas. The state's farmer unions, which are agitating against the new central farm laws, want the arthiya system to continue. Amid pressure from the Centre, Haryana's Manohar Lal Khattar government launched the DBT system on April 1, but the Amarinder Singh regime in Punjab was dithering for fear of annoying the farmer unions and arthiyas. On April 8, Union consumer affairs, food and public distribution minister Piyush Goyal, in his meeting with Punjab food minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu and finance minister Manpreet Badal, refused to make further allowances, forcing the state to switch to the