

SUPPLEMENTARY CURRENT AFFAIRS – 2018

OTHER TOPICS IN NEWS

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1. POLITY AND CONSTITUTION

1.1. GOVERNMENT TO GRANT CITIZENSHIP TO HAJONG AND CHAKMA REFUGEES

Why in news?

The Centre will grant citizenship to all Chakma and Hajong refugees living in the Northeast as directed by a 2015 Supreme Court order.

Issue Involved

Chakmas and Hajongs were originally residents of Chittagong Hill Tracts in erstwhile East Pakistan. They had fled their homeland after it was submerged by Kaptai dam project in 1960s. The Chakmas, who are Buddhists, and Hajongs, who are Hindus, also allegedly faced religious persecution and entered India through the then Lushai Hills district of Assam (now Mizoram).

Opposition

Several organisations and civil society in Arunachal Pradesh are opposing granting citizenship to refugees saying it would change demography of state and would reduce indigenous tribal communities to minority and deprive them of opportunities.

1.2. CVC TO DEVELOP INTEGRITY INDEX OF 25 ORGANIZATIONS

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has decided to develop Integrity Index of 25

Government Organizations in line with its broader strategy and emphasis on preventive

vigilance. The management of all 25 organizations have been involved in the development of Integrity Index.

The Integrity Index will bring out annual scores and rankings of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and Financial Institutions/Ministries/Departments of Central Government. The main objectives for which the Integrity Index is to be established are:

- Define what constitutes Integrity of Public Organizations.
- Identify the different factors of Integrity and their inter-linkages.
- Create an objective and reliable tool that can measure the performance of organizations along these above factors.
- Validate the findings over a period of time to improve upon the robustness of the tool that measures Integrity.
- Create an internal and external ecosystem that promotes working with Integrity where public organizations lead the way.

1.3. LAUNCH OF E-SANSAD AND E-VIDHAN IN PARLIAMENT AND STATE

The 18th All India Whips' Conference rolled out e-Sansad and e-Vidhan in Parliament and State Legislatures to digitize and make their functioning paperless. They are projects of Government of India under Digital India, to make the functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures efficient and paperless. Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of both the projects.

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.1. BALI DECLARATION

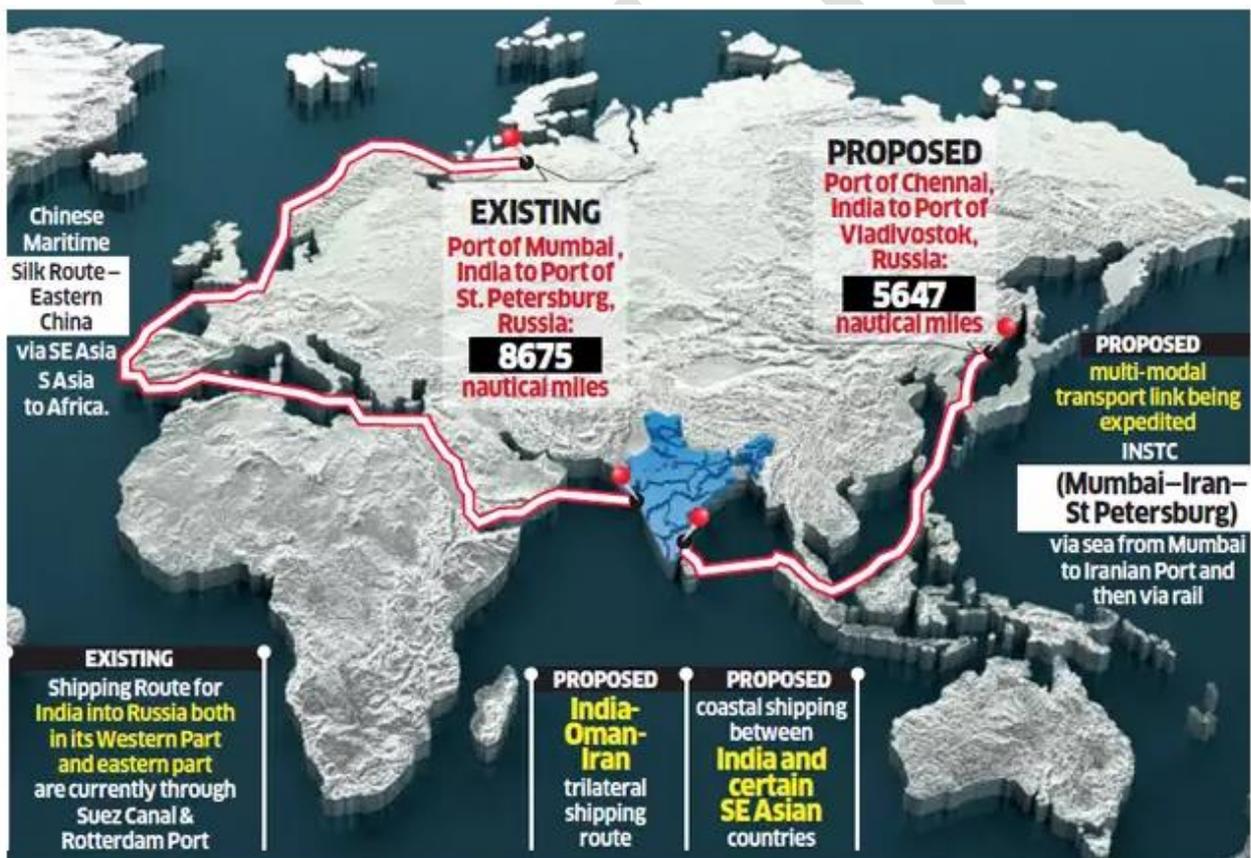
India has refused to be a part of Bali Declaration adopted at conclusion of World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development held in Bali, Indonesia to show of solidarity with Myanmar. It was not adopted because it carried “inappropriate” reference to violence in Rakhine State from where 1,25,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh and was not in line with agreed global principles of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

India reiterated its stance that purpose of convening Parliamentary forum was to arrive at mutual consensus for implementation of SDGs which required inclusive and broad-based development processes.

2.2. CHENNAI-VLADIVOSTOK SEA ROUTE

India is planning to launch major connectivity initiative, connecting Chennai with key Russian port Vladivostok via sea route. It will help in connecting India with Northeast Asia and Western Pacific region and may also act as a counter strategy to China's ambitious Maritime Silk Route. It will also help India expand its presence in Far East Russia to harness natural resources. This shipping link would enable to transfer cargo between Chennai and Vladivostok in 24 days in comparison to over 40 days currently taken to transport goods from India to Far East Russia via Europe.

The region has a wealth of natural resources such as land, timber, mineral and other resources like tin, gold, diamonds and oil and natural gas.



2.3. INDIA-JAPAN INK OPEN SKY AGREEMENT

India and Japan have signed an agreement that will allow their airlines to operate unlimited number of flights between the two countries. The National Civil Aviation Policy, 2016, allows the government to enter into an 'open sky' air services agreement on a reciprocal basis with SAARC nations as well as countries beyond a 5,000 kilometre radius from New Delhi.

Last year India signed open sky agreements with Greece, Jamaica, Guyana, Czech Republic, Finland, Spain and Sri Lanka. India also has open sky agreement with the US, among other countries.

2.4. FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION

The First International Consumer Protection Conference on empowering consumers in new markets for South, South East and East Asian Countries was held in New Delhi on the theme “Empowering Consumers in New Markets”. The two day conference was organised by Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution in association with UNCTAD.

2.5. BUENOS AIRES DECLARATION ON WOMEN AND TRADE

119 of 164 members of World Trade Organisation (WTO) have supported Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade at 11th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC11) held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Buenos Aires Declaration on Women and Trade is non-binding declaration that sought women’s economic empowerment by speedily removing barriers to their participation in trade. India voted against declaration.

2.6. INDIA SELECTED AS CHAIR OF AD HOC COMMITTEE OF KIMBERLEY CERTIFICATION SCHEME

Conflict diamonds or blood diamonds are the rough diamonds used by rebel movements in the third world countries especially in Africa to finance (civil) wars with an aim to topple legitimate governments. The KPCS completely bans import and export of rough diamonds without certification.

India was selected as Chair of Ad Hoc Committee on Review & Reforms to look into various issues pertaining to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPSC) at recently held KP Plenary Session in Brisbane, Australia.

Kimberley Process is joint initiative of governments, industry and civil societies to stem flow of ‘conflict diamonds’, rough diamonds used by rebel groups to finance wars against legitimate governments.

3. ECONOMY

3.1. INDIA'S SECOND BULLET TRAIN PROPOSED

After India's first bullet train which will ply on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad route by 2023, Indian Railways will launch the country's second high-speed train from Delhi to Amritsar via Chandigarh. The project will be funded by the government and not by any public private partnership.

The proposed train will cover the 458-km-long route in 2 hours and 30 minutes running at a speed of 300-350 kmph, reducing the travel time between New Delhi and Amritsar by about two and a half hours. The train will run on standard broad gauge and the project shall be completed by 2024.

3.2. GOVERNMENT SIGNS DEAL WITH JICA TO UPGRADE ALANG-SOSIYA SHIPYARDS

The Government of India signed a loan deal worth \$76 million with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), for a project to upgrade the environment management plan at Alang-Sosiya ship recycling yards. This project will help the Alang-Sosiya ship-recycling yards to comply with international safety & environmental regulations. This will attract more business at the recycling facilities at Alang, thereby further consolidating India's share in the global ship-recycling industry.

This project will also help in safeguarding the marine and coastal environment. The use of advanced decontamination technology will rule out the possibility of fire accidents in oil and chemical tankers, thereby ensuring workers safety.

Significance

Marine salvage industry: The shipyards at Alang recycle approximately half of all ships salvaged around the world. It is considered the world's largest graveyard of ships. The yards are located on the Gulf of Khambat, 50 km southeast of Bhavnagar.

3.3. SBI LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST BOND INDEX SERIES AT LONDON STOCK EXCHANGE

An index is an indicator or measure of something, and in finance, it typically refers to a statistical measure of change in a securities market. In the case of financial markets, stock and bond market indices consist of a hypothetical portfolio of securities representing a particular market or a segment of it.

The FTSE SBI Indian Government Bond Index, denominated in INR, is a market-capitalisation weighted total-return index tracking the domestic Indian government bond market. The index is rebalanced monthly.

Significance

The Indian bond market is worth around \$1.7 trillion. In respect of the Indian government bond market, there were no international indices on which the international investors could take a call.

3.4. INDIA GETS FIRST-EVER U.S. CRUDE SHIPMENT

The first ever shipment of U.S. crude oil of 1.6 million barrels, purchased by state-run Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) was received at Paradip Port in October 2017. American crude oil (West Texas Intermediate) is cheaper by \$23 a barrel to 'Brent', the alternative benchmark of the oil industry. This will help in mitigating the risks arising out of geo-political disruptions.

The Indian Crude Basket, is weighted average of Dubai and Oman (sour) and the Brent Crude (sweet) crude oil prices.

The OPEC basket price represents an index of 12 grades: Algeria's Saharan Blend, Angola's Girassol, Iran's Iranian Heavy, Iraq's Basra Light, Kuwait's Export, Nigeria's Bonny Light, Libya's Es Sider, Qatar's Marine, Saudi Arabia's Arab Light, Murban of UAE, Ecuador's Oriente, and Venezuela's Merey. Indian refiners source from all these producers.

3.5. NATIONAL WATERWAY ON RIVER KRISHNA

Recently, Vice president Venkaiah Naidu laid the foundation stone for the first phase of the 2,890-km National Waterway-4 (NW-4) at Amravati in Andhra Pradesh. The first phase involves development of a water channel from Muktyala to Vijayawada on Krishna river along with four floating terminals and three fixed terminals to handle cargo operations.

The NW-4 would be developed in three phases. In the first phase, the 82 km stretch from Muktyala to Vijayawada will be developed. This would be followed by the second phase where 233 km will be developed from Vijayawada to Kakinada and Rajahmundry to Polavaram on Godavari river. The third phase will connect Commamur canal, Buckingham canal and the balance stretches of river Krishna and Godavari across 573 km.

3.6. GST COMPOSITION SCHEME

It is an easy and compliance friendly tax scheme for small and medium enterprises. Under the scheme, firms under a threshold limit of turnover can pay a fixed percentage of their turnover as tax. They need to fill only reduced number of returns compared to normal tax payers under GST.

Features

- A tax payer under the Composition Scheme under GST will be required to file summarized returns only on a quarterly basis.
- Turnover limit for the Scheme: The Composition Scheme can be availed by any taxpayer whose turnover is less than Rs. 1.5 crores.
- The Composition scheme is for businesses dealing in goods. Services providers are can't avail the scheme. But restaurants can opt for the scheme.
- The Composition Scheme is available only for intra-state supplies. This means that dealers engaged in inter-state supplies cannot opt for the scheme.
- A Composition scheme firm is not allowed to avail input tax credit of GST.
- Ecommerce firms can't opt for the Composition Scheme.
- A Composition Dealer is not allowed to collect composition tax from the buyer.

3.7. DOMESTIC GAS TRADING HUB

A domestic gas trading hub is used as a central pricing point for a network that could aid better price discovery for Natural Gas. The share of natural gas in India's primary energy basket— that currently stands at 6.5%, falls way behind the global average of 24%.

Need

Currently, the domestic natural gas price is set by the government on a biannual basis, and is the weighted average price of four global gas benchmarks with a time lag of 15 months. As India imports almost 45% of its natural gas consumption, domestic pricing considers imported gas prices with a long lag.

Significance

- Setting up of a trading hub to set Indian gas benchmark would provide a fillip to the upstream activities.
- Several gas-dependent countries in Asia are now setting up trading hubs, including Japan and China.
- Here natural gas can be traded, and supplied through a market-based mechanism instead of multiple formula driven prices which will give a boost to its consumption in the country.
- Currently, the cost of imported LNG into India is around USD 7.5 which can be rationalized through more domestic production and better price mechanisms.

3.8. ALTERNATIVE MECHANISM PANEL

The Union Government has constituted Alternative Mechanism Panel headed by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to oversee merger proposals of public sector banks (PSBs). The other members of the panel include Railway and Coal Minister Piyush Goyal and Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

3.9. INITIAL COIN OFFERING

SEBI is planning to bring Initial Coin Offerings (ICO) under its existing legal framework. In recent times, popularity of crypto currencies has increased rapidly and number of entities are looking at raising funds through ICO.

ICO is an unregulated means of crowd funding for project via use of crypto currencies. It is like an equity initial public offer (IPO) where right of ownership or royalties of project is offered to investors in form of digital coins in exchange for legal tender or other crypto currencies. ICO is mostly used to raise funds by start-up firms dealing in block chain technology and virtual currencies.

China's Central Bank recently had banned ICO as dubbed it as an illegal public finance mechanism used for issue of securities and money laundering.

3.10. LEGAL ENTITY IDENTIFIER

The Legal Entity Identifier (LEI) is a global reference number that uniquely identifies every legal entity or structure that is party to a financial transaction, in any jurisdiction.

Why in News?

Recently, The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) directed corporate borrowers having exposure of Rs 5 crore and above to mandatorily obtain 20-digit Legal Entity Identifier (LEI). The move is aimed at improving risk management in the wake of the

huge stressed assets in the banking system. Borrowers with bank credit between Rs 50 crore and Rs 100 crore have been given time to comply with LEI provision by December 2019. Borrowers who do not obtain LEI as per the schedule may not to be granted renewal/enhancement of credit facilities.

Legal Entity Identifier India Limited (LEIL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Clearing Corporation of India, acts as a local operating unit for issuing globally compatible legal entity identifiers (LEIs) in India. LEIL will assign LEIs to any legal identity including but not limited to all intermediary institutions, banks, mutual funds, partnership companies, trusts, holdings, special purpose vehicles, asset management companies and all other institutions being parties to financial transactions.

3.11. RBI RAISES EXCHANGE TRADED CURRENCY DERIVATIVES LIMIT

Currency futures trading has received a boost after the Reserve Bank of India raised the position limit for trading in currency derivatives on stock exchanges, for both resident and non-resident Indians, to \$100 million across all currency pairs involving the rupee.

An exchange traded derivative is a financial instrument that trades on a regulated exchange and whose value is based on the value of another asset. Futures and options are two of the most popular exchange traded derivatives. These derivatives can be used to hedge exposure or speculate on a wide range of financial assets like commodities, equities, currencies and even interest rates.

4. SECURITY

4.1. ATAGS: INDIGENOUS ARTILLERY GUN SETS NEW RECORD IN RANGE

The advanced towed artillery gun system (ATAGS) has set a world record in terms of range by hitting targets at distance of 48 km during trial firings at Pokhran, Rajasthan.

ATAGS is a 155mm, 52 calibre towed artillery gun being developed in mission mode by DRDO as a part of the Army's artillery modernisation programme. It was designed by DRDO's Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) in Pune.

4.2. 15TH ASIA PACIFIC COMPUTER EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM CONFERENCE HELD IN INDIA

The 15th Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference was held in New Delhi. It is first ever conference to be held in India and South Asia. It was organised by Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) under the aegis of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology. The theme of conference was "Building Trust in the Digital Economy"

APCERT is coalition of CERTs (Computer Emergency Response Team) and CSIRTs (Computer Security Incident Response Teams) located in Asia Pacific region. Currently, APCERT consists of 30 Operational Members from 21 economies and 3 Supporting Members.

4.3. INDIAN CYBER CRIME COORDINATION CENTRE

The Union Home Ministry will set up Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), an apex Coordination centre in New Delhi to deal with cybercrimes.

It will coordinate with State governments/UTs and closely monitor cyberspace and social media with due emphasis on vernacular content. The centre would also block those websites which flout India's laws and circulate child porn, and communally and racially sensitive content. The centre would maintain a list of suspects and the leads generated during investigations in cybercrime cases would be shared with law enforcement agencies. State governments have also been asked to set up a State cybercrime coordination cell at the headquarter-level and also establish district cybercrime cells.

National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) states that 5,693, 9,622 and 11,592 cybercrime cases were registered during 2013, 2014 and 2015, respectively, showing a rise of 69% during 2013 to 2014 and 20% increase during 2014 to 2015.

5. ENVIRONMENT

5.1. MOUSE DEER REINTRODUCED FOR FIRST TIME IN TELANGANA FOREST

For first time, Telangana Forest Department has re-introduced 'mouse deer' in the forests of Nallamalla in Amrabad Tiger Reserve (ATR) bred at Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad. It is one of the endangered species. It looks like mix of a deer, mouse and pig and is nocturnal. Because of their small size they are smallest **ungulates** (large mammals) in the world.

5.2. 'WOOD IS GOOD' CAMPAIGN

Government has launched the "Wood is Good" campaign on the side lines of a two day conference on "Sustainable landscapes and forest ecosystems: Theory to Practice" in New Delhi. It was launched under the Partnership for Land Use Science (Forest-Plus), a joint programme by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) to strengthen capacity for REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) implementation in India. Wood is relatively a climate-friendly material, as it is a renewable resource.

5.3. CARBFIX PROJECT

The world's first negative emissions plant under the CarbFix Project to turn atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂) into stone has begun operations in Hellisheidi, Iceland.

The pioneering experiment in Iceland mixed CO emissions with water and pumped it hundreds of metres underground into volcanic basalt rock — where it rapidly turned into a solid. A porous, blackish rock, basalt is rich in calcium, iron and magnesium. These minerals are needed to solidify carbon for storage. Basalt makes up most of the world's seafloors and approximately 10 per cent of continental rocks.

5.4. SAWFISH MORE THREATENED THAN TIGERS

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute recently issued a statement saying that sawfish may be the most endangered fish species in India. The sawfish, included in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 enacted to save them from exploitation, have been sighted off the Indian coast less than 10 times in over a decade and they appear to be more threatened than tigers and elephants. Sawfish are primarily found in coastal marine and estuarine brackish waters, but they are **euryhaline** (can adapt to various salinities) and also found in freshwater.

There are only five species of the sawfish ever identified — dwarf sawfish, knife-tooth sawfish, small-tooth sawfish, large tooth sawfish and green sawfish. Sawfish are elasmobranchs, meaning their skeleton is made of cartilage. They are closely related to sharks and have shark-shaped bodies and, hence, are also called flat sharks.

The sawfish family has been assessed either 'Endangered' or 'Critically Endangered' in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Global Red List.

5.5. MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT APPROVES GHODAZARI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

The Maharashtra government has approved Ghodazari in Chandrapur district as a new wildlife sanctuary in the state. The sanctuary, in the North East of Tadoba, will include 159 sq km of Brahmapuri forest. The wildlife sanctuary will be carved out in a total of 159 sq km area covering Nagbhir, Talodhi and Chimur forest areas. The aim is to not only save the forest, but also improve tourism in nearly 40 villages in the area and provide employment to the youth.

The area is rich with flora and fauna such as tigers, leopards, bisons, spotted deer, sambar, blue bulls, fox, wild boars, monkeys, rabbits etc. The area is also an important corridor for wild animals moving from **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve to Umrer-Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary** and vice versa.

5.6. 'GREEN GOOD DEEDS' CAMPAIGN

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has launched Green Good Deeds campaign to sensitise people and students, in particular about climate change and global warming. Green Good

Deeds are small positive actions to be performed by individuals or organisations to strengthen the cause of environmental protection. The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change has drawn up a list of over 500 Green Good Deeds and asked people to alter their behaviour to Green Good Behaviour to fulfil their Green Social Responsibility.

The BRICS Ministerial on Environment at Durban, South Africa, has agreed to include “Green Good Deeds” in its official agenda in the next Ministerial in Brazil and another meeting in Russia.

5.7. A NEW SPECIES OF WILD EDIBLE BANANA HAS BEEN DISCOVERED

A species of wild banana named *Musa paramjitiana* was found in North Andaman’s Krishnapuri forest, 6 kilometres from any human habitation. It is named in honour of Paramjit Singh, who happens to be the director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI).

The plant grows to a height of nine metres and bears an edible, sweet-and-sour tasting fruit that is boat-shaped and has numerous bulb-shaped seeds. Its conservation status has been declared as ‘Critically Endangered’ as it has so far been spotted in only two locations on the islands, each with 6 to 18 plants in a clump.

5.8. RHODODENDRON PARK IN TAWANG

Recently, a foundation stone of Rhododendron Park was laid in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh by the Chief Minister. Tawang district was once home to about 100 species of rhododendron but now they have been reduced to only 50 plus species due to construction activities in border areas. The park will be built in a total area of 1.15 ha and will be partly funded under Border Area Development Programme.

Stressing on the role of Army and BRO in preservation of Rhodos, the Chief Minister requested them to sensitize their men in carrying out conservation effort of this endangered species as the high altitude border areas are beyond the reach of forest officials.

5.9. SHAKTI STHALA: WORLD’S LARGEST SOLAR PARK LAUNCHED IN KARNATAKA

The first phase Shakti Sthala solar park having total capacity of 2,000 megawatts (MW) was inaugurated in drought-prone Pavagada region of Tumkur district, Karnataka. It is slated to be world’s largest solar park. It has been executed within record time of two years, with zero land acquisition. KSPDCL had used “plug and play” model for development of park, under which it acquires and develops land as blocks for solar power generation, embedded with required government approvals and gives it out to solar power developers (SPDs) through auctions. The land was taken on 25-year lease by government from around 2,300 farmers. In return, these farmers are paid annual rental of Rs.21,000 per acre, with scope for 5% increase every two years.

5.10. WORLD’S LONGEST SANDSTONE CAVE DISCOVERED IN MEGHALAYA

The world’s longest sandstone cave named Krem Puri was discovered near Laitsohum village in Mawsynram area in East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. It is more than 6,000 metres longer than world record-holder Cueva Del Saman in Edo Zulia, Venezuela, a quartzite sandstone cave measuring 18.2km. This cave system also has fossils of dinosaurs.

5.11. SCHEME FOR IN-SITU MANAGEMENT OF CROP RESIDUE TO FIGHT AIR POLLUTION

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved a Central Sector Scheme for in-situ management of crop residue in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi. Under this scheme, the proceeds from central fund will be used to establish **Farm Machinery Banks (FMBs)** for Custom Hiring of in-situ crop residue management machinery.

Beneficiaries will be identified and selected for establishment of Farm Machinery Bank for Custom Hiring and procurement of machines on individual ownership basis by state nodal department/DLEC. The scheme is expected to go long way in tackling air pollution issue in NCT of Delhi, as stubble burning which has been identified as one of key problem areas.

6. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

6.1. INDIA'S FIRST HYPERLOOP PROJECT

India's first Hyperloop project will come up in Andhra Pradesh, connecting its city centres, Vijayawada and Amaravati. Hyperloop Technology is brainchild idea of technology entrepreneur Elon Musk. It is system of magnetically levitating capsules (pods) that are sent at high speeds through low-pressure tubes. It is a transport system that runs free of friction.

6.2. SCIENTISTS FOR FIRST TIME OBSERVE OPTICAL POLARISATION PHENOMENON OF FAST SPINNING STAR

Scientists for first time have observed Optical polarisation phenomenon (polarised light emitted by rapidly rotating stars) after it was predicted by Indian astrophysicist and Nobel laureate Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar 70 years ago.

In 1946, Chandrasekhar had predicted the emission of polarised light from the edges of stars, prompting the development of sensitive instruments called stellar polarimeters to try to detect this effect.

Researchers have used a highly sensitive piece of equipment to detect the polarised light from Regulus, one of the brightest stars in the night sky. The information is crucial for understanding the life cycles of most of the hottest and largest stars in the galaxies, which are the ones that produce the heaviest elements, such as iron and nickel, in interstellar space.

Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar was Indian American astrophysicist who was awarded the 1983 Nobel Prize for Physics with William A. Fowler for his theoretical studies of physical processes of importance to structure and evolution of stars.

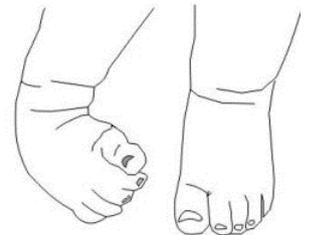
6.3. GLOBAL CLUBFOOT CONFERENCE

Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated Global Clubfoot Conference organised by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in partnership with CURE India in New Delhi.

What is Clubfoot?

It is one of the most common orthopaedic birth defects. In this one or both feet are rotated inwards and downwards and the baby's foot is twisted out of shape or position. In clubfoot, tissues connecting muscles to the bone (tendons) are shorter than usual.

50,000 children are born annually in India with clubfoot, however, only 8,000 fresh cases are brought into the ambit of treatment every year.



6.4. INDIA FREE FROM TRACHOMA

India has become free from Trachoma—a chronic infective disease of the eye and a leading cause of infective blindness—with an overall prevalence found to be only 0.7% in the National Trachoma Survey Report (2014-17).

Trachoma is a disease caused by poor environmental and personal hygiene and inadequate access to water and sanitation. It affects the conjunctiva which lines the inside of the eyelids. Repeated infections can cause scarring, leading to in-turning of the eyelashes and eyelids. This further causes damage to the cornea and blindness. The disease is found to be affecting the population in certain pockets of north Indian states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and the Nicobar Islands.

Trachoma infection of the eyes was the most important cause of blindness in India in 1950s and over 50% of the population was affected in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh. It was the most important cause of corneal blindness in India, affecting young children.

India has now met the goal of trachoma elimination as specified by the WHO under its GET2020 programme. In 1996, WHO had launched the WHO Alliance for the Global Elimination of Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET2020).

7. SOCIAL

7.1. GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES PRADHAN MANTRI GRAMIN DIGITAL SAKSHARTA ABHIYAN IN GUJARAT

The PM Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) is aimed at imparting digital literacy to citizens in rural areas. This scheme will focus on making at least six crore people in rural areas (across States/UTs) digitally literate.

Under free of cost PMGDISHA scheme, people in the rural area will be trained to operate a computer, tablet, smartphones, etc. They will be taught how to access the Internet, government services, undertake digital payment, compose e-mails, etc.

The citizens of rural India will be taught to use applications related to digital payments so they can participate in the process of nation-building. This scheme will help to connect the digital divide.

Illiterate people between the age group 14-60 years, nominated from every eligible rural household, are qualified for the scheme.

7.2. INDIA'S FIRST TRIBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP SUMMIT

India's first Tribal Entrepreneurship Summit was organised at Dantewada in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. The summit is part of 8th Global Entrepreneurship Summit being held in India. The event was organized by National Institute of Transforming India (NITI) Aayog in partnership with Government of United States of America (USA).

8. CULTURE

8.1. DEENDAYAL HASTKALA SANKUL

Prime Minister recently laid the foundation stone for Deendayal Hastkala Sankul – a trade facilitation centre for handicrafts in Varanasi. The Sankul will facilitate the weavers/artisans/exporters in promotion of handlooms/handicrafts in both domestic and international markets. The Crafts Museum in the Sankul will preserve the traditional handloom/handicrafts products of Varanasi and showcase the handloom & handicraft products, which will be an inspiration for the new generation, scholars, designers and tourists.

Background

The Finance Minister in the Budget 2014-15 had announced setting up of a Trade Facilitation Centre and a Crafts Museum to develop and promote handlooms, handicrafts and silk products of Varanasi and to provide necessary help to weavers, artisans and entrepreneurs of Varanasi in strengthening their marketing activities in domestic as well as international markets and in carrying forward the rich tradition of handlooms at Varanasi.

8.2. SUPREME COURT HAS REFUSED TO GRANT AN INTERIM STAY ON KAMBALA

What is Kambala?

Kambala is traditional slush track buffalo race that is held annually in coastal districts of Karnataka. These bullock cart races are held in parts of north Karnataka and in the coastal districts of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. The race, held between November and March, involves a pair of buffaloes tied to a plough and anchored by one person. They are made to run in parallel muddy tracks in a competition in which the fastest team wins. It is believed to be held to propitiate the gods for a good harvest, besides being a recreational sport for farmers.

Background

The Karnataka HC had stayed these traditional sports in view of Supreme Court's ban on jallikattu, a traditional bull taming sport of Tamil Nadu. However, Karnataka Assembly had passed an ordinance Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2017 to allow Kambala to circumvent ban imposed by Karnataka High Court. The ordinance had received Central Government (Ministry of Law and Justice) and Presidential assent. Now PETA has opposed the upcoming Kambala festival on grounds of cruelty to animals.

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