

Integration of oil & gas majors is best avoided

In his fourth budget speech, Finance minister Arun Jaitley revisited the idea of an integrated oil and gas sector. The idea first made its appearance during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government in 1998. The proposal was then rejected for encouraging a monopolistic scenario in distribution of essential goods like LPG, petrol, kerosene etc. In 2005, the Krishnamurthy committee formed by the UPA government debunked the idea as it would reduce competition and manpower in the oil and gas sector.

Why, then, did the idea of an integrated oil major surface again in 2017 even after being rejected twice?

Five reasons

Mr. Jaitley stated five major reasons for the same: better capacity to bear higher risks, avail economies of scale, create more shareholder value, make better investment decisions and be more competent globally. From the table, it is apparent that Indian firms are much smaller in size compared with top international oil companies. The Government's track record of consolidating state run firms has not borne good results. The aviation sector suffered a major setback following the merger of Air India and India Airlines in 2007 and has not yet fully recovered. In oil and gas, minimum political interference and liberalisation have proven better in creating more shareholder value compared with integration. ONGC's decision to bail out debt-ridden Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation has been said to be the result of political interference. With oil firms facing such allegations and inefficiencies, giving complete autonomy to one entity can risk the nation's energy security.

Another concern is employment generation. The graph shows that the sector has seen a continuous decline in manpower since FY11. The Krishnamurthy Committee had earlier deduced that such integration will result in manpower reduction. At a time when the government is struggling with job creation, it will be difficult to justify job losses due to restructuring.

The ability of a company to take higher risks depends on the amount of capital it has. The financials of all six major oil PSUs show that they have more than the minimum amount of capital required. Size is also not the only factor that facilitates acquisition of offshore projects. Ireland's Tullow Oil, with a market cap of only \$3.62 billion, has expanded in several countries by forming consortia with local oil firms. Therefore, companies should focus on better strategy, techniques and management practices to negate shortcomings of their size. The Indian oil market today has hardly any competition and is dominated by IOCL, HPCL and BPCL. Curbing competition in the past has already adversely affected the aviation and banking sectors.

So, any decision that creates a monopoly in the oil and gas sector must be carefully thought through. An important question here is whether a bigger oil company will help achieve the aims stated by Mr. Jaitley. Or, will it create new problems for the Indian people at large?

(The author is a BJD Member of Parliament and views are personal)

The service is available in Bengaluru, Kolkata and Chennai, operating 500 bicycles

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Nine more bird, biodiversity areas in Kerala

Nilgiri Flycatcher | Photo Credit: [Dileep Anthikad](#)

The bird and biodiversity-rich areas in Kerala are drawing global attention with nine more locations being identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs).

The newly identified IBAs of Kerala are Achencoil Forest Division; Anamudi Shola National Park; Camel's Hump Mountain, Wayanad; Kurinjimala Wildlife Sanctuary; Malayattoor Reserve Forest; Mankulam Forest Division; Mathikettan Shola National Park; Muthikulam-Siruvani; and Pampadum Shola National Park.

With the latest addition, Kerala now has 33 IBAs.

The new list was released by the Bombay Natural History Society, a partner of BirdLife International, in its recent publication, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas in India Priority sites for conservation.

The IBAs are "places of international significance for the conservation of birds and other biodiversity" and are "distinct areas amenable to practical conservation action," according to BirdLife International.

Three species

Kerala IBAs are home to three critically endangered species — Whiterumped Vulture, Indian Vulture, and Red-headed Vulture. Studies have identified the presence of five endangered, 13 vulnerable, and 32 near-threatened bird species in the Kerala IBAs, said P.O. Nameer, Kerala State coordinator of the Indian Bird Conservation Network, a BirdLife partner, and one of the contributors for the enlistment of the areas from Kerala.

The BirdLife International had earlier listed 19 endangered species in India, out of which nine are found in Kerala, the report said.

Listing out the conservation threats faced by the IBAs, the report pointed out that anthropogenic pressure on the forests was very intense. The protection and maintenance of evergreen and semi-evergreen forests of the State were required to ensure the survival of endemic threatened species, it said.

The "birds of the low altitude evergreen forests seem to have suffered the most in Kerala, mainly due to human interventions. Species such as Malabar Pied Hornbill, a near-threatened species, has declined, along with Orange-breasted Green-pigeon," it said.

Habitat fragmentation in high altitude areas, according to conservationists, was a major cause for concern as many "species have nowhere to go. These 'sky islands' are now surrounded by tea estates or plantations, leaving very limited habitat for species such as White-bellied Blue Robin, Nilgiri Blue Robin, and Blackand-Orange Flycatcher," it said.

Chief Minister to launch insurance scheme for migrant workers today

V. J. Kurien, Managing Director of the Cochin International Airport, has been selected for this year's FACT Lalithakala Academy's MKK Nayar Award. The

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Sunderbans mangrove cover at risk - Today's Paper

Remote sensing and GIS-enabled data offer definite proof for the first time that the mangrove forest cover in the Sunderbans has been depleting alarmingly. From 1986 to 2012, 124.418 sq. km., or about 5.5% of the mangrove cover, was lost. Variable degrees of erosion was observed in at least 18 islands.

The continuation of this process is a serious ecological threat, says a study by Jadavpur University.

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Why Bhutan is special to India

The present [standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in Doka La \(Doklam\)](#) is a rare insight into New Delhi's very special relationship with Bhutan, which includes military responsibilities towards it.

In India's only official statement on the standoff, the Ministry of External Affairs on Friday said that on June 16, a "PLA (People's Liberation Army) construction party entered the Doklam area and attempted to construct a road. It is our understanding that a Royal Bhutan Army patrol attempted to dissuade them from this unilateral activity."

The lowdown on the border standoff with China

The MEA statement went on to say that the Foreign Ministry of Bhutan "has also issued a statement underlining that the construction of the road inside Bhutanese territory is a direct violation of the 1988 and 1998 agreements between Bhutan and China and affects the process of demarcating the boundary between these two countries."

Giving a view of India's role in Bhutan's security, the MEA statement said, "In keeping with their tradition of maintaining close consultation on matters of mutual interest, RGOB (Royal Government of Bhutan) and the Government of India have been in continuous contact through the unfolding of these developments."

It further said that "in coordination" with the Bhutanese government, "Indian personnel, who were present at general area Doka La, approached the Chinese construction party and urged them to desist from changing the status quo. These efforts continue."

In a rebuff, Bhutan refutes China's claims on Doko La road construction

Under the 2007 India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty, the two sides have agreed to "cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other."

Under the previous treaty, India was to "guide" Bhutan on foreign and defence policies. The language of the 2007 treaty, is meant to respect the sensitivities of Bhutan regarding its sovereignty. But the reality is that the Indian military is virtually responsible for protecting Bhutan from the kind of external threat that the Chinese military poses.

The Eastern Army Command and the Eastern Air Command both have integrated protection of Bhutan into their role. The Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT), headed by a Major General, plays a critical role in training Bhutanese security personnel.

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

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In Telangana, a unique irrigation project

If anything is at stake for the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government in the youngest State of the country for the next elections due in 2019, it is the execution of the Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP).

Why is it important?

Claimed to be the costliest irrigation project to be taken up by any State till date with an estimated cost of Rs. 80,500 crore, the project holds the key to the TRS government's promise of providing irrigation facility to one crore acres of land under all projects/tanks. The government has already spent Rs. 10,000 crore on the project, including land acquisition, and has allocated Rs. 7,000 crore in the current budget, besides tying up a Rs. 7,400 crore loan from a consortium of banks. Notwithstanding its share of controversies, particularly related to land acquisition for the Mallannasagar reservoir, one of the key components of the project for storage of 50 tmc ft water, the project is making swift progress.

"We are working towards completing the barrages and pump houses at Medigadda, Annaram and Sundilla by December-end next year, with Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao himself monitoring the progress of works live through video streaming from the work spots with the help of high resolution cameras installed there," a senior irrigation engineer, overseeing execution of the project, said.

What's the project?

The Kaleshwaram project is an off-shoot of the original Pranahitha-Chevella Lift Irrigation Scheme taken up by the Congress government in 2007 when Andhra Pradesh was not divided. After the formation of Telangana in 2014, the TRS government redesigned the project on the ground that the original plan had too many environmental obstacles and had very low water storage provision — only about 16.5 tmc ft. After conducting a highly advanced Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) survey for a couple of months, the government separated the original component serving the Adilabad area as the Pranahitha project and renamed the rest as Kaleshwaram by redesigning the head works, storage capacity and the canal system based on the data of availability of water at different locations along the course of the Godavari and its tributaries.

The Kaleshwaram project has provision for the storage of about 148 tmc ft with plans of utilising 180 tmc ft by lifting at least 2 tmc ft water every day for 90 flood days.

"The project is designed to irrigate 7,38,851 hectares (over 18.47 lakh acres) uplands in the erstwhile districts of Karimnagar, Nizamabad, Warangal, Medak, Nalgonda and Ranga Reddy," the senior engineer said.

As a lot is at stake for the government, it is pursuing various clearances and permissions simultaneously with the Union Ministry of Environment and Forest and the Central Water Commission. Recently, the Ministry of Environment has given its nod for utilising 3,168 hectares (7,920 acres) of forestland, including 302 hectares in Maharashtra. The project requires a total of 32,000 hectares. Following severe opposition from a section of farmers against land acquisition for the Mallannasagar reservoir, the State amended the 2013 Land Acquisition Act to speed up the process.

What's unique?

According to engineers, KLIP has many unique features, including the longest tunnel to carry water in Asia, running up to 81 km, between the Yellampally barrage and the Mallannasagar reservoir. "The tunnel work is nearing completion and the lining work is also in progress," another engineer involved in the project said, adding that the project would also utilise the highest capacity pumps, up to 139 MW, in the country to lift water.

B. Chandrashekhara

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ADB, Centre ink pact for road revamp

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley with Takehiko Nakao, President, Asian Development Bank in a meeting at North Block in New Delhi. File Photo. PTI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India on Monday signed a \$220 million loan agreement meant to improve connectivity, transport efficiency, and safety on the State highways of Rajasthan.

“The loan is the first tranche of the \$500 million Rajasthan State Highways Investment Program, approved by ADB Board in May this year, that will upgrade about 2,000 km of State highways and major district roads to two-lane or intermediate-lane standards to meet road safety requirements,” the government said in a release.

“The first tranche loan will improve about 1,000 km of State highways and major district roads,” the release added.

“But for the medium term, we see a very solid track ahead for the Indian economy,” Lagarde said to a question on India.

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China: Beijing's Bhutan gambit: Here's how to contain China

By Abhijit Iyer-Mitra

The recent skirmishes with [China](#) near the [Bhutan](#) border bring home one thing loud and clear: the danger is clear and present. The question is: how do we defuse this, and what options does India have on the table?

The recent spate of deliberate incursions — and let us be clear about it that these are planned in [Beijing](#) — seems to have had multiple triggers and multiple desirables. All Chinese actions invariably are multi-causal.

In conjunction with ongoing provocations by China in the [South China Sea](#), the first message is clearly aimed at the United States to show that China can activate multiple fronts to make Washington's life miserable and bog it down in many theatres of action. More importantly, this also demonstrates that the US's regional allies are security lightweights, and that the benefits they bring are outweighed by the security baggage they lug along.

The second is aimed at India — the message that any closer proximity with the US comes with consequences, and should those consequences escalate militarily, there is very little that the US can realistically do to help India. The third message is also to India — and it has to do with India's furious rejection of the 'One Belt One Road' ([Obor](#)) initiative — something President Xi has associated his personal prestige with and the rejection of which he seems to have taken quite personally as well. The final message is to Bhutan. To Bhutanese policymakers, it is to demonstrate the limits of Indian help.

After all, will India risk Gangtok, Itanagar or, for that matter, Delhi, for Thimpu, if push comes to shove? Clearly then, one of the desired tangibles of the latest Chinese action is to co-opt Bhutan into joining Obor and pave the way for formal bilateral relations between the two, reducing, if not jettisoning, India's vice-regency. So what can India do? The response has to be divided in two: the tactical talking down of China, and the strategic containment of China. The tactical involves appeasing China to some degree and assuaging Xi by pursuing the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Forum for Regional Cooperation vigorously.

This enables Xi to portray this initiative as a subset of Obor for the purposes of the 19th Congress of Communist Party of China later this year, and in so doing 'save face'. India, too, saves face by not joining Obor, while ignoring the domestic messaging in China of BCIM being 'Obor-minus'. The strategic containment borrows from a US Cold War template. The closest point between the US and the Soviet Union was in the Bering Straits, where the two were separated by a mere 90 km. Yet, the US kept the Soviet Union bogged down in Europe, seldom — if at all — paying attention to the straits.

In the Indian iteration, India needs to turn the South China Sea into the Fulda Gap and the Himalayas into the Bering Straits. India's fear has always been 'What if China does the same in the Indian Ocean'? This is where our policymakers have a clear decision to make and cannot afford to dither.

Do we continue to invest in an obsolete Army facing what is literally an uphill battle, and indulge the Navy's power projection fantasies? Or do we focus on the problem at hand, cut the Army, focus on the Air Force, and force our Navy into a sea denial posture in a domain where we enjoy an overwhelming advantage? The path ahead seems quite clear. The question is will Delhi choose it.

(The writer is Senior fellow at the Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies)

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Bird flu: India declares itself free from Bird Flu

NEW DELHI: India has declared itself free from [Bird Flu](#) (highly pathogenic [Avian Influenza](#) - H5N1 and H5N8) and notified it to the [World Organisation for Animal Health](#). The move will help it resume export of poultry products to the countries which had banned trade in such items early this year.

India had reported outbreaks of Avian Influenza at various epicentres in Delhi, Gwalior (Madhya Pradesh), Rajpura (Punjab), Hissar (Haryana), Bellary (Karnataka), Allappuzha and Kottayam (Kerala), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Daman (Daman) and Khordha and Angul in Odisha during October 2016 to February 2017.

"India has declared itself free from Avian Influenza (H5N8 and H5N1) from June 6, 2017 and notified the same to the World Organisation for Animal Health", said the Union agriculture ministry in a statement on Thursday.

The countries which banned Indian poultry products, include [United Arab Emirates](#) (UAE) and Hong Kong.

The ministry said that all the outbreaks of Avian Influenza were notified to the world body and the control and containment operations were carried out as per the action plan on preparedness, control and containment.

"Surveillance was carried out throughout the country and around the areas of the outbreaks since completion of the operation (including culling, disinfection and clean-up). Surveillance in the states showed no evidence of presence of Avian Influenza virus", said the ministry while justifying its action.

The World Organisation for Animal Health is recognised as a reference body by the [World Trade Organization](#). It has 181 countries as its members. This global body keeps tab on animal health issues and advises countries on best practices to be followed during such outbreaks.

This organisation also supports countries to help them control animal diseases that cause livestock losses and pose a risk to public health. Under its norms, ban can be lifted after 90 days of surveillance.

Though many West Asian countries have already lifted the ban to import from India, the remaining ones are expected to open their markets after the latest notification to the world body.

India is, at present, the world's fifth largest egg producer and the 18th largest producer of broilers. In terms of export from India, poultry products recorded 18% growth during the 2015-16 financial year over the same period of 2014-15.

The country had exported over 6,59,304 metric tonne of poultry products worth Rs 768.72 crore during 2015-16. The major importing countries of these products were Oman, USA, Saudi Arabia, Japan, UAE and Germany.

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crop insurance scheme: SC gives government six months to show results of PM's crop insurance scheme

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Thursday gave the [central government](#) six months time to demonstrate the gains of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana on the ground level as it observed that a serious issue like this could not be dealt with overnight.

The bench of Chief Justice Jagdish Singh [Khehar](#) and Justice D.Y.Chandrachud said: "We are of the view that a serious issue like this can't be dealt with overnight, it will take time to implement it (PMFBY)."

The top court gave six months as Attorney General [K.K.Venugopal](#) sought a year's time to see the gains of the scheme.

Urging the court to close the matter, he said: "Why should the court interfere when government is doing all to help the [farmers](#)."

He said the scheme that was launched just a year ago has covered 5.3 crore farmers, or 40 per cent of the country's 12 crore farmers and covered 30% of the total crop area in the country.

However, Chief Justice Khehar refused his demand, saying: "We are not going to close the matter."

"Whatever needs to be done has to be done, not on paper. We are not going to close. We are keeping ourself in the loop to know what is going on. You may be doing a good thing."

Pointing out that inability to pay loans was the major cause of farmers suicide in the country, Chief Justice Khehar said: "Inability to pay the loans is the major cause of farmers' suicide. If all of them have been covered, then how can you say that only 40 per cent have been covered?"

At the outset of the hearing, Chief Justice Khehar called for some alternatives to address the farmers woes observing that paying compensation to the famers was no solution.

"Don't worry about the directions, tell us what are you doing (to address the issue of farmers suicide)," the bench said as Attorney General referred to earlier directions issued by the court.

Suggesting an insurance policy with low premium, the bench said that there must be something to soften the impact if a farmer was not able to discharge his loan liabilities.

Asking Venugopal to tell what the government was doing and how it was doing, the bench said: "First you decide what you are taking from the farmers. Rest will be divided between you and the states."

Appreciating the crop insurance policy, senior counsel Colin Gonsalves appearing for the petitioner NGO Citizens Resource and Action and Initiative (CRANTI) said that the Madhya Pradesh and other state governments were not fixing minimum support prices and as a consequence, the farmers were selling their agriculture produces at throw away prices.

Rejecting the government's description of the NGO's suggestions as something in the "in air", he said that they were based on the expert reports including one by noted agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan.

CRANTI is seeking compensation to the families of the debt-ridden farmers who had committed

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National ST Commission to take action on video films of Jaravas on YouTube**National ST Commission to take action on video films of Jaravas on YouTube**

Taking suo-moto cognizance of objectionable video films and pictures of protected Jarava and other tribal communities of Andaman Islands on YouTube social media platform, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribe (NCST) has initiated action on it.

The commission has decided to take up the matter with Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Chief Secretary of A&N Island for removal of these objectionable video films from YouTube and initiate action on those who uploaded these video clips on social media platform.

As per provisions of Andaman and Nicobar Island (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 (PAT) dated 18.6.1956, the Andamanese, Jarawas, Onges, Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shom Pens have been identified as "aboriginal tribes". The PAT contains the provisions of protection of these communities from the outside interference. Penalty provisions for promoting tourism through advertisement relating to aboriginal tribes has also been made in the year 2012. Whoever enters these areas in contravention of the notification under section 7 (which prohibits entry into reserve areas) for taking photographs or making videos shall be punishable with imprisonment up to three years. Section 3 (i) (r) of the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities Act) also attracted.

The total population of tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands is about 28077. Out of these five tribal communities have population of below 500.

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Minister of Food Processing Industry laid foundation stone for First Maize Based Mega Food Park in Kapurthala, Punjab

Minister of Food Processing Industry laid foundation stone for First Maize Based Mega Food Park in Kapurthala, Punjab

Shri Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Union Minister of Food Processing Industry laid the foundation stone for First Maize based Mega Food Park in Kapurthala, Punjab today. Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, Minister of State for Food Processing was also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion Shri Harsimrat Kaur Badal said that Maize is an amazing cereal and is an alternate to *Jhona* (paddy) and *Kanak* (wheat). Maize is rich in protein, provides nutritional requirements that India needs and Maize consumes much lesser water and could contain the problem of further water depletion. The Mega Food Park is being developed by Sukhjit Mega Food park & Infra Limited at village Rehana Jattan, Phagwara, District Kapurthala, Punjab. She also said that Kapurthala has been declared as a Dark Zone district where slow desertification is happening because of overexploitation of water due to cash crops. So establishment of this Mega Food Park was not allowed. Since this would be a maize based Mega Food Park which will promote crop diversification and water conservation, Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal informed that her ministry made special efforts to get this Mega Food Park approved from Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. Establishment of this Mega Food Park will result in the development of this Dark Zone which includes Job opportunities, Environmental Conservation, she added.

Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal also said that there is an urgent need to turn to Maize and our government would relentlessly work to make Maize as the third viable staple crop of Punjab after Wheat and Rice and growing of maize with enhanced quality of seeds. A Maize based Food Park is like putting an engine to the cart so that cultivation of maize grows leaps and bounds. Highlighting the new flagship scheme "KISAN SAMPADA YOJANA", Minister of Food Processing Industries said that with the aim of making every farmer a Food Processor also, this scheme has been designed where farmers can also set up big or small food processing units and marketing units. She also said that enterprises willing to set up maize based food processing units in Sukhjit Mega Food Park would get loan from NABARD at affordable rates. She also thanked the state government for extending support for the establishment of the Mega Food Park.

Background:

Maize Based Mega Food Park is the first major and serious step in the history of India for containing the desertification problem of Punjab and would make farmers turn to maize cultivation which need less water for more production. Maize is being used by different industries for seed, starch, brewery, food additives, sweeteners etc and it is also a basic raw material to thousands of industrial products like oil, proteins, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, beverages, film, textile, gum, value added foods, paper industries, bio-ethanol etc.

The Mega Food Park will leverage an additional investment of about Rs.250 crores in 25-30 food processing units in the park and generate turnover of Rs.450-500 crores annually. The Park will provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 persons and benefit about 25,000 farmers.

Set up in an area of 55 acres, the first Maize based Park is being built with an investment of Rs. 123.7 crores with a grant of Rs.50 crores by Union Food Processing Industries Ministry to have Multipurpose Cold Storage of 3, 000 Metric tonnes, Individually Quick Frozen (IQF) and Deep Freezer 1 Metric Tonne/Hour capacity, Sorting and Grading Yard of 2,000 sqm and Food Testing Lab. In addition to that promoter is also set up an Anchor Unit with an investment of Rs.105 crores

for Maize Processing with an installed grinding capacity of 500 Metric Tonnes a day.



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Supreme Court stays Uttarakhand high court's order declaring Ganga and Yamuna 'living entities'

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the landmark judgement that accorded the Ganga and [Yamuna](#) rivers the status of "living human entities".

On March 20, this year, the Uttarakhand HC accorded the status of "living human entities" to the two rivers. This was to enable the "preservation and conservation of the two rivers and to protect the recognition and faith of society".

Following which the Uttarakhand government moved to the apex Court challenging the state high court order.

"Let me be very clear that we are not against according of living entity status to the two holy rivers Ganga and Yamuna," Uttarakhand minister [Madan Kaushik](#) had said in May.

He was unhappy though with the ambiguity regarding the accountability of damage done to these rivers.

"How can the chief secretary here be held accountable if the river is polluted in West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand or UP?" Kaushik said, adding, "We just want an opportunity to put forth our views in the SC."

In its verdict, the state high court had cited New Zealand's bill which made the Whanganui river, revered by the indigenous Maori people, the first in the world to be recognised as a living entity with full legal rights.

However, legal experts told TOI at the time that treating the rivers as "living entities" would mean that polluting the rivers would be seen as akin to harming a human being.

[Read this story in Bengali](#)

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22nd WPC 2017 - About

Turkey has won the bid to host the 22nd World Petroleum Congress (WPC) in 2017, widely recognized as the `Olympics` of the oil and gas industry.

"This time – Istanbul!" was the motto for the Turkish delegation as they faced the USA with Houston, Kazakhstan with Astana and Denmark with Copenhagen in the election to host the 22nd World Petroleum Congress in 2017. In a tightly run competition, Istanbul won the right to host the prestigious Congress with 55% of the votes in the third round against its strongest rival Houston with 45%. Turkey participated the Council meeting in Calgary, where the elections were held, with students, experts, Turkish National Committee and the government delegation, including the Deputy Energy Minister of Turkey.

All candidates had been conducting an extensive lobbying campaign from January 2013. They visited many of the 70 WPC member countries in person to promote their bids to host the prestigious event. As the "Olympics" of the oil and gas sector, the Congress attracts large attendances with over 6000 delegates, 500 CEOs, 50 Ministers and around 25,000 visitors for the World Petroleum Exhibition, one of the largest strategic oil and gas expos in the world.

In accordance with the World Petroleum Council regulations and the Memorandum of Understanding, establishing the right of Turkey to host the 22nd World Petroleum Congress and assigning responsibilities for preparation and hosting of the Congress between the World Petroleum Council and the Turkish National Committee, was signed on April, 9th, 2014 in Ankara, Turkey.

Minister of Energy and Natural Resources of Turkey, Mr. Taner Yldz, President of World Petroleum Council, Mr. Renato Bertani and Chairman of WPC Turkish National Committee, Mr. Besim iman, WPC Director General, Mr. Pierce Riemer, together with participants from Turkish Petroleum (TP) attended the signature ceremony.

They all presented their pleasure of Turkey's success being selected as the next host country.

Turkey kicked off its promotion for the 2017 Congress at the 21stWPC in Moscow, Russia, 15-19 June 2014; with its stand activities, interviews, speeches and closing ceremony presentations. The Turkish delegation at the 21st WPC consisted of more than 100 delegates, from TP, government, national companies and universities.

At the closing ceremony, the WPC Symbol was handed over from Russia to Turkey after fantastic shows from Russia. The Congress Symbol inauguration by Russia Minister of Energy Alexander Novak to Minister of Energy of Turkey, Mr. Taner Yldz was followed by colorful performances of Turkish folk dance ensemble.

The 22nd World Petroleum Congress will be held in Istanbul (Turkey) on 9-13 July, 2017.

During the 3 years period, WPC Turkish National Committee and the Organizing Team will be communicating all National Committees about the progress and the preparations.

Turkey welcomes all industry stakeholders to Istanbul in 2017 to the 22ndWPC!

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All you need to know about Sri Lanka's bottom trawling ban and India's deep-sea fishing plan

A screen grab of a video released by Tamil Nadu fisheries department, promoting deep sea fishing.

The [Sri Lankan Parliament unanimously passed an Amendment](#) to the Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Act on July 6 that declared the method of fishing by bottom trawling an offence. It is aimed at curbing local trawlers as well as deterring trawlers from Tamil Nadu. Here's an explainer on bottom trawling and deep-sea fishing, and the impact of the ban on fishermen from Tamil Nadu.

Bottom trawling, an ecologically destructive practice, involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea-floor, causing great depletion of aquatic resources. The net is spread along the sea-floor to catch shrimp and fish like halibut and sole; however, bottom trawling also captures juvenile fish, thus exhausting the ocean's resources and affecting marine conservation efforts.

According to the amended Act, a violation will now attract a possible two-year prison term and a fine of Rs. 50,000 (Sri Lankan).

This practice was started by Tamil Nadu fishermen and actively pursued at the peak of the civil war in Sri Lanka. But after the decimation of the LTTE and its Sea Tigers in 2009, a small section of the northern Sri Lankan fisher folk too began using trawlers to maximise profits. Hence, it would be right to say that Tamil fishermen from both sides are engaged in this practice.

Tamil Nadu fishermen have termed the amendment "[draconian and aimed at crushing the livelihood of the fishers once for all](#)". They have urged the Union government to prevail upon the Sri Lankan government to withdraw the Bill. But N.V. Subramanian, secretary of the Association for Northern Province Fisher People's Unity, says "A complete ban on bottom trawling is an important and very positive step. It will not only deter Indian fishermen but also prevent local trawlers from engaging in the practice."

[The Joint Working Group on Fisheries, formed by the two countries in November 2016](#), stated that it would meet every three months while the Ministers of Fisheries on both sides would meet every six months (from Jan. 2017) along with the Coast Guard and naval representatives to discuss the protracted issue.

Fishermen of both countries have been in talks for a long time to resolve the conflict. While the Sri Lankan fishermen want an immediate end to incursions by Indian trawlers, those from Tamil Nadu insist on a three-year phase-out period. The proposal to ban bottom trawling is two years old.

The solution lies in transition from trawling to deep-sea fishing. The Central and Tamil Nadu governments plan to provide 500 deep-sea fishing boats with long lines and gill nets this year as part of a plan to replace 2,000 trawlers in three years.

The activity of catching fish that live in the deep parts of the sea/ocean is called deep-sea fishing. The boats are designed in such a way that fishermen get access to the deeper parts of the ocean and fish species. It is practiced worldwide, especially in the coastal areas with no ecological damage.

Yes, last week Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally launched the project to promote deep-sea fishing among Ramanathapuram fishermen by handing over work orders to five fishermen for the construction of tuna long-liners with gill nets. As per the project, 2,000 deep-sea fishing boats, costing Rs. 1, 600 crore, will replace trawlers in three years.

Nearly 14,000 fishers from the Palk Bay will be benefitted by the transtion. So far, more than 1,000 fishermen from Kanniyakumari and Nagapattinam districts have registered with the authorities for deep-sea fishing.

A boat costs Rs. 80 lakhs. The Centre's contribution will be 50% and the State government will pitch in with 20% share. Of the remaining 30%, 20% will comprise institutional finance and 10% will be the beneficiary's contribution. The duration of the deep-sea voyage would be between 15 days to four weeks and the yield from each voyage is expected to be 8-10 tonnes of high value catch. This will work out to a profit of Rs. 7-8 lakh a voyage.

Rameswaram fishermen say the beneficiary contribution of Rs. 8 lakhs (10% of the cost of a tuna long-liner) is very high. They want that to be reduced considerably, if not waived. However, the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department said the beneficiary contribution was finalised after holding discussions with the fishing community. The department also clarified that fishermen have to pay their contribution only at a later stage. It promised to "fine-tune" the project if there are any hurdles in its implementation.

Film-maker traces British engineer's roots in the country

Rain, though intense, is not enough to fill tanks; Chembarambakkam is only 10% full

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Sensor network to map and predict pollution in Godavari

The Ganga may be the focus of the government's river-cleaning efforts, but a group of U.S. researchers is working on a system to map undulating pollution trends in the Godavari, India's second longest river.

Using a mix of methods, including satellite-monitoring, traversing stretches of the river to collect water samples and using special sensors to measure bacterial and chemical pollution, the researchers are trying to develop a cost-effective forecast system.

The team's long-term objective is to be able to inform State officials and citizens of a probable spike in, say, levels of dangerous microbes or effluents, similar to weather and air pollution forecasts. That apart, said Anup Malani, Professor of the University of Chicago Law School, it is to be able to access "raw data" that could be used to inform the efficacy of a proposed faecal sludge treatment plant and whether behavioural interventions — including incentives or punishments — to restrict activities that pollute the river could actually work. "We've had debates with town planners who told us that all the pollution gets washed away... Is that true? We need to find out," Mr. Malani, who is also co-founder of the International Innovation Corps, told *The Hindu*. "That would help us know whether interventions are needed only up-river or along various stretches."

The project started eight months ago and has so far identified two "hotspots" of pollution, which Mr. Malani declined to reveal, saying he would first inform the Andhra Pradesh government about them. The sampling exercise, being done along a portion of the 1,400-km river spanning Rajamundhry (East Godavari district) and Kovvur, Narsapur and Palakol (all in West Godavari), measures parameters such as total dissolved salts, nitrate, pH, temperature, turbidity and electrical conductivity. These are relayed to a website called Thoreau, a wireless sensing network maintained at the University of Chicago to map environmental parameters, for analysis. Some river attributes such as microbial levels require to be measured in laboratories, though the team hopes eventually to be able to use low-cost sensors that measure them, too, in real time.

"Through cloud-based data collection and real-time mapping systems, the research and implementation teams intend to demonstrate the importance and value of detecting and anticipating pollutants that enter the river in the form of human waste, organic materials, and chemical contaminants," the University of Chicago research team said in a statement.

The exercise is part of a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation project to support the programme of the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) to provide city-wide sanitation improvements in urban Andhra Pradesh. Sensors to monitor river pollution are an emerging technological approach in India.

In April, Ashutosh Sharma, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST), said 40 proposals to make the sensors (to monitor river and environmental pollution) had come in, and two would be short-listed soon. Intel, which will make the chips powering the devices, and the DST will split a 35-crore investment.

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

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Cabinet approves SASEC Road Connectivity Investment Program - Tranche 2**Cabinet approves SASEC Road Connectivity Investment Program - Tranche 2**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for upgradation and widening of 65 kms of Imphal-Moreh Section of NH-39 in Manipur at a cost of Rs. 1630.29 crores.

Manipur being a landlocked state with almost 90% of the area under difficult terrain presently has only road transport as a means of mass transport system within the state. Hence development of the road infrastructure is of paramount importance to improve connectivity and progress of the State and to ensure that the administrative set up reaches the isolated and remote habitats. The project will improve connectivity between Imphal with the eastern part of the state. Based on the existing and projected traffic requirements the NH-39 will be widened to 4 lane between Lilong village and Wanginj village, while the stretch between Wanginj village to Khongkhang will be upgraded to 2 lane with paved shoulder.

The project is being developed with ADB's loan assistance under the South Asian Sub-Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Road Connectivity Investment Program which aims at upgradation of road infrastructure in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India (BBIN) in order to improve the regional connectivity among BBIN nations. The project corridor is also a part of the Asian Highway No. 01 (AH01) and acts as India's Gateway to the East. Thus trade, commerce and tourism in the region will get a boost.

Background

For fulfilling India's "Look East" Policy and to promote and enhance trade link with South East Asia, the Government of India has notified an Integrated Custom Post (ICP) at Moreh. The development of this project is essential in order to support the increased traffic volume due to coming up of ICP. The workers of Manipur who specialize in creating bamboo and wood based handicraft items and uniquely designed hand woven textile items will get a new market among the Myanmar's customers. Small scale industries such as those making farm implements and tools, stationery, plastic extrusion items, carpentry units, could also develop markets beyond the border.

Besides socio-economic development the project will also lead to reduction in average travel time along the project road by nearly 40%. In addition, the new features of road

safety namely vehicular underpasses, crash barriers, road signs & markings, service roads for segregation of slow and high moving traffic, truck lay-by, bus-bays etc. will help in greatly reducing accidents. Improved highway and lesser travel time will lead to savings in terms of fuel cost.

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Minister of Railways Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu launched various Railway initiatives**Minister of Railways Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu launched various Railway initiatives**

Minister of Railways Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu launched the following Initiatives:-

1. RAIL CLOUD PROJECT.
2. NIVARAN-Grievance Portal (First IT Application on Rail Cloud).
3. Cashless treatment Scheme in Emergency (CTSE) Scheme and Handing over of 1st CTSE Card.

Minister of State for Railways Shri Rajen Gohain was specially present to grace the occasion. Member Staff, Shri A.K.Mital, other Railway Board Members and senior officials were also present on the occasion. Ministry of Railways has launched the RailCloud project in association with its PSU, RailTel Corporation of India Limited.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister of Railways Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu said, "Efforts are being made to bring entire Railway system on Integrated dIGITAL Platform. RailCloud is another step towards Digitization of Railways. Rail Cloud works on popular Cloud Computing system. Most Important works are done through Cloud Computing. Also, this is going to reduce the cost & data may be safely ensured on the servers. Also, another important step is Cashless Treatment Scheme in Emergency. Life Expectancy has increased, so many health problems have evolved. This scheme would improve health care facilities of Railway employees."

Salient Features of the Initiatives Launched:**1. RailCloud**

Indian Railway has started a strategic IT initiative, christened IR-OneICT, for enterprise wide digital single platform with an aim to improve customer satisfaction, improve revenue and effective, efficient and safe operations. To achieve the goal of single digital platform for IR a few foundational projects need to be implemented first, establishment of RailCloud is one such project. Cloud Computing is the emerging technology for faster and on demand commensurate deployment of Server resources which result in reduced cost. Accordingly, RailCloud Phase-I has been sanctioned at the cost of Rs. 53.55 Cr under PH-17, DF(3) in FY 17-18. Potential benefits to Railways after implementation of RailCloud are:

Faster and on-demand deployment of application- RailCloud will pave the way for swifter deployment of application (within 24 hrs as compared to conventional time running into weeks and months). At the same time the cloud hardware and environment will be available for rigorous testing of the new applications.

Optimum use of Servers and storage- The technology enables maximising the usage of the available server and storage resulting in accommodation of bigger data and more applications within same server space.

Utilization of existing infrastructure as part of Cloud- The existing resources available with railway will be subsumed in RailCloud thereby ensuring that expenditure is minimized in acquiring new resources.

Rapid scalability and elasticity- Server and storage space will scale up and down as per the demand. This makes the system suitable to meet the higher demand at peak hours with less

expenditure.

IT Security enhancement and Standardization: The cloud shall be equipped with security features as per the latest GOI guidelines, the security features can be updated in one go for all the applications hosted on the cloud, resulting in enhanced security and stability with less expenditure and effort.

Cost reduction: The server and storage infrastructure will be deployed as per the requirement, resulting in substantial savings to railway as expenditure will be incurred as and when required instead of upfront shelling out money on procurement of expensive servers.

Better User Experience: In Cloud, the server resources are constantly scaled up or down as per the no. of users logged on to the system. This ensures a better user experience to the customer.

The Managed Network and Virtual Desktop Interface (VDI) services are also being planned, in near future, for providing faster and more efficient work environment to each rail worker.

2. NIVARAN-Grievance Portal'First IT application on RailCloud

'NIVARAN-Grievance Portal' is the first IT application to be launched on the RailCloud. It is the platform for resolution of service related grievances of serving and former railway employees. The existing application was hosted on a conventional server; it has been made cloud-ready and being migrated as the first cloud application of Indian Railways. It will save significant revenue and at the same time user experience will also improve.

3. Cashless treatment Scheme in Emergency (CTSE)

Railway provides Comprehensive Health Care Facilities to its beneficiaries through in-house health Institutions, supplementing with referrals to recognized hospitals whenever necessary. The beneficiaries include retired employees and their dependent family members. Large no. of retired beneficiaries lives in the newly developed suburbs of various cities. These parts of the city are often far away from the established Railway Health Institutions. In this scenario the RELHS beneficiaries coming to Railway Health Institutions in routine is acceptable, however in emergency situations, precious time (Golden Hour) is lost in travel.

To provide immediate care to its retired employees in 'Golden Hour' Railway Board has decided to roll out a "Cashless treatment Scheme in Emergency' (CTSE), in empanelled hospitals, for retired employees and their dependent family members. A web based system of communication between private hospitals and railway authorities has been developed wherein identity of the beneficiary shall be established using biometrics stored in Aadhar (UIDAI) server, eligibility shall be determined using Railway Data Base and emergency shall be verified by Railway Medical Officer based on private hospital's clinical report. The whole system is online and even the bill processing shall be online. This scheme shall provide help and succor to the retired railway employees at the time of need and at the same time will have a morale boosting effect on the serving employees.

The Scheme fulfils both the avowed objectives of the GOI; utilizing IT tools to cut the red-tape and promoting cashless transactions.

Rather than creating a separate time and resource consuming vertical the scheme has used the existing resources by bringing on board the UIDAI and ARPAN database. Railway has not incurred any capital expenditure on the scheme, M/s UTIITSL has developed the software in consultation with Railway and shall be paid on per bill processed basis. The online processing will ensure swifter disposal of bills in a transparent manner.

At present the scheme has been rolled out in four metro cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and

Chennai, based on the experience of this pilot the scheme may be extended to the whole of country.

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Cabinet approves establishment of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) at campus of National Seed Research and Training Center (NSRTC) in Varanasi

Cabinet approves establishment of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) at campus of National Seed Research and Training Center (NSRTC) in Varanasi

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the establishment of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) at campus of National Seed Research and Training Center (NSRTC) in Varanasi.

Under the proposal, a Centre of Excellence in Rice Value Addition (CERVA) will be set up in Varanasi. This will include a modern and sophisticated laboratory with capacity to determine quality and status of heavy metals in grain and straw. The Centre will also undertake capacity building exercises for stakeholders across the rice value chain.

This Center will be the first international Center in the eastern India and it will play a major role in harnessing and sustaining rice production in the region. It is expected to be a boon for food production and skill development in the eastern India and similar ecologies in other South Asian and African countries.

Benefits from ISARC

The Centre will help in utilizing the rich biodiversity of India to develop special rice varieties. This will help India to achieve higher per hectare yields and improved nutritional contents. India's food and nutritional security issues will also be addressed. The Centre will support in adopting value chain based production system in the country. This will reduce wastage, add value and generate higher income for the farmers. The farmers in Eastern India will benefit in particular, besides those in South Asian and African countries.

Management of ISARC

ISARC will operate under the governance of the IRRI Board of Trustees who will appoint an appropriate IRRI staff member as Director. A Coordination Committee will be headed by Director General, IRRI as Chair and Secretary, Government of India, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare (DACFW) as Co-Chair. The other members of Coordination Committee are Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences), ICAR; Director, NSRTC; IRRI representative in India, representative of Government of UP and representatives of Governments of Nepal & Bangladesh and Private Sector.

For setting up of the Centre, A Memorandum of Agreement, will be signed between DAC&FW and IRRI, Philippines. The Department of DAC&FW will provide physical space for laboratories, offices, training classes, etc. with associated infrastructure and land at

NSRTC, Varanasi. The Centre will be commissioned within six months.

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Bitcoin trade may come under SEBI

This August 3, 2016 illustration shows a Bitcoin sign in Hong Kong.

The government is considering the introduction of a regulatory regime for virtual or crypto currencies, such as Bitcoin, that would enable the levy of the Goods and Services Tax on their sale.

The new regime may possibly bring their trading under the oversight of the stock market regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

The idea is to treat such currency in a manner similar to gold sold digitally, so that it can be traded on registered exchanges in a bid to “promote” a formal tax base, while keeping a tab on their use for illegal activities such as money laundering, terror funding and drug trafficking.

Crypto-currency that is planned to be brought under the regulatory regime is a digital currency which allows transacting parties to remain anonymous while confirming that the transaction is a valid one. It is not owned or controlled by any institution – governments or private.

There are multiple such currencies — bitcoin, ethereum, ripple are some of the popular ones. Currently, they are neither illegal nor legal in India. “One bitcoin today is worth as much as 60 grams of gold. The market cap for all crypto-currencies has just crossed \$100 billion, with most of the increase coming in the past few months. On April 1, 2017, the total market cap was just over \$25 billion, representing a 300% rise in just over 60 days,” said a senior government official.

“The discussion on whether crypto-currencies should be banned or regulated has been on for some time. The pros and cons for both aspects were put forth in the meeting chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley last month,” the official told *The Hindu*.

A proposal to ban such currency altogether was also considered at the meeting, but found few takers among top officials from the Ministries of Finance, Home Affairs and IT as well as SEBI, the Reserve Bank of India, the State Bank of India and NITI Aayog.

Bitcoins were in the news recently when during the two global cyber ransomware attacks — WannaCry and Petya — attackers sought about \$300 in bitcoin as ransom. Crypto-currency can also be used for a lot of legal activities — such as booking tickets, buying coffee or fast food, depending of which retailers accept such currency.

Why bitcoins are a bit risky

“Banning will give a clear message that all related activities are illegal and will disincetivise those interested in taking speculative risks, but it was pointed out it will impede tax collection on gains made in such activities and that regulating the currency instead would signal a boost to blockchain technology, encourage the development of a supervision ecosystem (that tracks legal activities and may also assist in tracking illegal activities) and promote a formal tax base,” said another official privy to the development.

Blockchain is basically a digital public ledger that records every transaction. However, the involved parties can remain anonymous and they transact under an id. Bitcoin is just one of the applications for the technology, whose use in being tested across industries, particularly those that rely on intermediaries such as land record registry.

It was also suggested that government maintain limited regulation. “This means reiterating that crypto currencies are not recognised and those who deal in them do so at their own risk, while focusing on curbing illegal activities... Blockchain technology can be separately encouraged.”

If a decision is taken to regulate such currency, these would be treated as “digital asset, similar to gold,” which means that crypto currency owners will be able to trade them on registered exchanges.

Demonetisation won't have lasting benefits: Larry Summers

However, the government is wary that regulation will provide legitimacy to “what is currently ambiguous,” and may lead to further rise in its valuation and end up contributing “to the investment bubble”.

“But for the medium term, we see a very solid track ahead for the Indian economy,” Lagarde said to a question on India.

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India ranks 116 out of 157 nations on SDG index

UNITED NATIONS: [India](#) is ranked 116 out of 157 nations on a global index that assesses the performance of countries towards achieving the ambitious sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The [SDG](#) Index and Dashboards Report produced by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung shows that [world](#) leaders need to strengthen their joint efforts to realise the 17 global goals.

"Not only does a rising trend of nationalism and protectionism impede the implementation of the goals, but as the report shows, industrialised countries are not serving as role models," the report added.

It said many of the richest countries in the world are nowhere near achieving the global policy objectives but also deteriorate the implementation process for poorer countries because of negative spillover effects.

India is ranked 116th on the index with a score of 58.1, behind countries such as Nepal, Iran, [Sri Lanka](#), Bhutan and [China](#). [Pakistan](#) is ranked 122.

The report said that the countries which are closest to fulfilling the goals are not the biggest economies but comparably small, developed countries.

Sweden leads the list, followed by Denmark and Finland. Among the G7 countries, only Germany and France can be found among the top ten performers. The [United States](#) ranks 42nd on the Index, while Russia and China rank 62nd and 71st respectively.

"One of the greatest obstacles to achieving the global goals for high-income countries are poor performances regarding sustainable consumption and production. All countries that score lowest on electronic-waste generation, for example, are high-income countries," it said.

Bertelsmann Stiftung chairman and CEO Aart De Geus said the report's findings show that politicians, businesses and society altogether must urgently intensify their efforts and commit themselves to this agenda.

"SDG Index and Dashboards highlight the need for urgent action on the part of G20 countries in making sustainable development a reality both within and beyond their borders. If the world is to achieve the SDGs, all countries must take up the goals as part of their national development strategies, and ensure that they take responsibility for their impact on the rest of the world," said Jeffrey D Sachs, Director of the SDSN.

The SDG Index and Dashboard collect available data for 157 countries to assess where each country stands in 2017 with regard to achieving the SDGs.

The SDG Index ranks countries based on their performance across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

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Tribunal prohibits dumping of waste near Ganga banks - Today's Paper

Solution in sight: A file photo of the garbage dumped on the banks of the Ganga. AFP

An area of 100 metres from the edge of the Ganga between Haridwar and Unnao has been declared a 'No Development Zone,' with the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday prohibiting dumping of waste within 500 metres of the river.

An environment compensation of Rs. 50,000 will be imposed on anyone dumping waste in the river.

The NGT also directed the Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments to formulate guidelines for religious activities on the ghats of the Ganga and its tributaries.

The order said: "Till the demarcation of floodplains and identification of permissible and non-permissible activities by the State government, we direct that 100 metres from the edge of the river would be treated as no development/construction zone between Haridwar to Unnao in Uttar Pradesh."

Order on PIL petition

Giving its verdict on a 1985 PIL petition of environment activist and lawyer M.C. Mehta — which was transferred to the NGT from the Supreme Court in 2014 — a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar said the authorities concerned should complete projects, including a sewage treatment plant and cleaning of drains, within two years. "The Uttar Pradesh government is duty-bound to shift tanneries, within six weeks, from Jajmau in Kanpur to leather parks in Unnao or any other place it considers appropriate."

Supervisory panel

The court also appointed a supervisory committee, headed by the Secretary of the Water Resources Ministry and comprising IIT professors and officials of the Uttar Pradesh government, to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its verdict. The committee is to submit reports at regular intervals.

The Bench further noted that all industrial units in the catchment areas of the Ganga should be stopped from indiscriminate groundwater extraction.

The green court reiterated its earlier order of a ban on mechanical mining in the Ganga and said, "No in-stream mechanical mining is permitted and even the mining on the floodplain should be semi-mechanical and preferably more manual."

"Such mining should be permitted only after a detailed and comprehensive assessment of the annual replenishment of sand and gravel in the riverbed and ensuring that the connectivity of the river is not disturbed and that only a quantity less or equal to the annual replenishment is permitted to be removed from the riverbed or the banks," it said.

END

Centre to grant NIIF 20,000 cr.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley reviewed the performance of the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) on Friday during the third meeting of its governing council where he was informed that the Department of Economic Affairs had signed an agreement with the NIIF for a 20,000 crore contribution to the Fund.

“It was informed that a strong investment pipeline with investment opportunities is under consideration in the roads, ports, aviation and power sectors,” according to an official statement.

“NIIF is considering investments in third-party managed funds focused on clean energy, affordable housing and medium-sized infrastructure companies.”

Such expenditure needs expeditious resolution of stressed loan problem: Crisil

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Mahadayi: Goa open to out-of-tribunal settlement - Today's Paper

Vinod Palyekar

In a clear departure from its stand on the Mahadayi waters dispute, Goa Minister for Water Resources Vinod Palyekar said on Thursday that his State was open to talks with Karnataka and Maharashtra to explore an out-of-tribunal settlement.

He was replying to a question by *The Hindu* on the State government's response to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's letter requesting the Goa Chief Minister for talks and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadanvis had also supported it.

'Rigid stance'

Mr. Palyekar said he would discuss the issue with Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar upon his return from the U.S. on Friday.

Asked what made Goa change its "very rigid stance" of sticking to the tribunal verdict only, Mr. Palyekar, who represents Goa Forward Party in the BJP-led coalition government, remarked that all three States had been spending huge sums over the dispute and the legal battle had been on for long. It would be in the fitness of things to explore an amicable solution, he said.

Some proposals

Mr. Palyekar said he recently met Karnataka Minister for Water Resources M.B. Patil at a function in Karnataka. The latter broached the water dispute issue and indicated that they had some proposals such as building power plants jointly with Goa.

"At least it is my personal view that it would be advisable for all the three States as well as for the country if we can sort out our issues through talks. It would save money as well as time and energy," he said.

Verdict next month

On the strong pressure exerted by environmentalists and civil society that with the tribunal expected to give its verdict next month before the expiry of its term, any deviation by the Goa government would compromise its interest, the Minister said his view was that "talks is an option to negotiate and discuss issues, to have a give and take, to reduce the differences and to come to a solution where, as long as Goa's interest is not compromised, there should not be any problem".

"I am of the opinion that it would be a better option to work for an out-of-court settlement by agreeing to discuss the issue. That is what I will tell the Chief Minister," Mr. Palyekar reiterated.

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Govt. clears three export infra plans

With deficient infrastructure severely hurting the competitiveness of India's exports, the Centre – for the first time under a new scheme launched in March to address the problem — has given its approval for three proposals including one to establish an Integrated Cargo Terminal (ICT) at the Imphal International Airport.

The other applications that received the green signal from an (Inter-Ministerial) Empowered Committee (EC) chaired by Commerce Secretary Rita Teautia were: modernisation of infrastructure facility in Karnataka for marine exports – where the total cost is 13.34 crore; and construction of a new 'Standard Design Factory' building at Cochin Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for which a total of 61.63 crore will have to be spent, official sources told *The Hindu*.

The EC on 'Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES)' — in its first ever meeting that was held on June 9 — deferred on technical grounds an application to set up "the first dedicated facility" in India to test medical devices.

This is proposed to be established at the Andhra Pradesh Med Tech Zone in Visakhapatnam – with four separate facilities at a total cost of about 169 crore.

The Indian medical device market was worth about \$4 billion in 2015 and exports of these items from India were close to \$1 billion (in 2016).

The EC has, however, granted an in-principle nod for a proposal to establish a 'Coastal Cashew Research and Development Foundation' in Karnataka, for which the total cost estimated is 10 crore.

The cost of building the ICT at Imphal is 16.2 crore, of which the share of TIES is 12.96 crore and that of the Airport Authority of India (AAI) is 3.24 crore. The AAI is learnt to have informed the EC that there was no cargo facility at the Imphal airport, and that the proposed ICT "would act as a hub for air cargo movement and air connectivity to South-East Asian countries."

'600 crore allocation'

The TIES, which is being implemented from FY18 till FY20, has a budgetary allocation of 600 crore. The scheme's annual outlay is 200 crore.

According to a March 2016 report on 'Export Infrastructure in India' by the Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce, "deficient infrastructure and the manner in which infrastructure is being operated (in India) are the major obstacles to ensure competitiveness in manufacturing of goods and exports thereof."

The report said Indian exports lose competitiveness on account of huge logistics costs. It noted that "the logistic cost in India is about 14% of the GDP whereas in advanced economies like the U.S. and the European Union, it is 8% and 10% of the GDP respectively."

The Standing Committee further said, "Owing to sub-optimal logistic capability, certain sectors dependent on logistics lose as much as 2% on sales return. An ASSOCHAM study conducted a few years ago shows that India runs against a disadvantage of about 11% of its trade due to deficient infrastructure."

According to an ASSOCHAM-Resurgent India joint study, "India can save up to \$50 billion if

logistics costs are brought down from 14% to 9% of country's GDP thereby making domestic goods more competitive in global markets." As per the Commerce Ministry, the objective of the TIES is to "enhance export competitiveness by bridging gaps in export infrastructure, creating focused export infrastructure and first-mile and last-mile connectivity."

Such expenditure needs expeditious resolution of stressed loan problem: Crisil

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When too much is too little - OPINION

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi brought up the issue of food wastage on his 'Mann Ki Baat' programme about two months ago, he endorsed a valid point when he asked people not to waste food. Though he raised an extremely critical issue of national importance, he could also have used the occasion to propose some government-led mechanism to handle it.

He was right to an extent when he linked food wastage to people's behaviour. However, there are wastages which happen in any case due to food's perishability and the absence of an effective distribution mechanism and legal framework. Looking at the scale of problems, it is wise to frame a comprehensive strategy by combining the efforts of the government and private sectors and civil society. The government can create a time-bound task force under Niti Aayog, with experts from different sectors, to frame a national policy to tackle this gigantic issue, which can recommend the legal framework to support initiatives to reduce food loss and waste. As a nation, we need to give priority to tackling this issue so that we can handle the social, economic and environmental ill-effects of wastage of food.

One third of food wasted

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), "One third of food produced for human consumption is lost or wasted globally, which amounts to about 1.3 billion tons per year." It also states: "Food is lost or wasted throughout the supply chain, from initial agricultural production to final household consumption." The losses, it says, represent "a waste of resources used in production such as land, water, energy and inputs, increasing the green gas emissions in vain".

Food wastage has multiple socio-economic and environmental impacts. In a country like India, not only is food scarce for many poor families, it is a luxury for many others. Though hunger cannot be tackled directly by preventing food wastage, a substantial amount of food that is wasted in our country can feed many hungry people. India ranked 97th among 118 countries in the Global Hunger Index for 2016. About 20 crore people go to bed hungry and 7,000 people die of hunger every day; wastage of food is not less than a social delinquency. According to one estimate, 21 million tonnes of wheat are wasted in India every year. A recent study by the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, revealed that only 10% of food is covered by cold storage facilities in India. This, coupled with poor supply-chain management, results in significant wastage, both at pre- and post-harvest stages, of cereals, pulses, fruits and vegetables.

The wastage of food entails loss of considerable amount of resources in the form of inputs used during production. For example, 25% of fresh water and nearly 300 million barrels of oil used to produce food are ultimately wasted.

The increasing wastage also results in land degradation by about 45%, mainly due to deforestation, unsustainable agricultural practices, and excessive groundwater extraction. Wastage results in national economic loss. To put a monetary value to the loss in terms of wastage, India loses Rs. 58,000 crore every year, to quote *The CSR Journal*.

The energy spent over wasted food results in 3.3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide production every year. Decay also leads to harmful emission of other gases in the atmosphere; for instance, decaying of rice produces methane. Food waste emissions have a major impact on climate change and result in greater carbon footprint.

Laws to encourage donation

Many countries have legislation providing for global best practices, such as the 1996 Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Act in the U.S., which was intended to encourage donation of food and grocery products that meet quality and labelling standards by protecting the donor and the recipient agency against liability, except in the case of gross negligence and/or intentional misconduct. France has taken a lead by becoming the first country in the world to ban supermarkets from destroying unsold food, forcing them instead to donate it to charities or food banks or send it to the farmers to be used as fertilisers in crop production.

In India, there are many civil society, private sector and community initiatives aimed at distributing food among the poor. The government is also committed to securing availability of food grains for two-thirds of the 1.3 billion population, under the National Food Security Act, 2013. While securing food for all or feeding them through such initiatives is important, addressing wastage of food in all forms is equally critical to complete the cycle of food sufficiency and food sustainability. There are initiatives such as India Food Banking Network (IFBN), which is promoting the concept of collaborative consumption with support from the private sector and civil society organisations. Such initiatives, creating networks and channels of distribution between those who have surplus food and those who are in need of them, are necessary.

The government needs to do more and should play a larger facilitating role. The Prime Minister's call to the nation needs to be followed up with further interventions. There is an urgent need to understand the complexity of the problem and then to devise a national-level strategy to combat it so that surplus of food can be turned into an advantage instead of resulting in wastage. Hunger and food wastage are two sides of the coin. The cycle of hunger cannot be broken without channelising the wasted food to help the needy. Without stopping wastage of food, we cannot do justice to millions of hungry people, our economy and the planet.

Sanjay Kumar is the India Country Director of Harvard South Asia Institute. Views are personal

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Govt. panel to study cow derivatives

Harsh Vardhan.

The government has set up a 19-member panel, including three members linked to the RSS and VHP, to carry out what it says will be scientifically validated research on cow derivatives including its urine, and their benefits, according to an inter-departmental circular and members of the panel.

Headed by Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan, the committee will select projects that can help scientifically validate the benefits of panchgavya — the concoction of cow dung, cow urine, milk, curd and ghee — in various spheres such as nutrition, health and agriculture, says the circular accessed by PTI.

Named the National Steering Committee, the panel includes secretaries of the departments of Science and Technology, Biotechnology, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and scientists from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi.

It also has three members of Vigyan Bharti and Go Vigyan Anusandhan Kendra, outfits affiliated to the RSS and VHP. The government circular says former CSIR Director R.A. Mashelkar, known for vigorously campaigning against U.S. patents on turmeric and basmati rice, is also a member of the panel. The others include IIT-Delhi director Prof. V. Ramgopal Rao and Prof. V.K. Vijay of the IIT's Centre for Rural Development and Technology.

The government has given the project the acronym SVAROP, which stands for Scientific Validation and Research on Panchagavya, and says it is a “national programme” that's being conducted by the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) of the Ministry of Science and Technology in collaboration with IIT-Delhi.

The document also says “this multi-disciplinary programme” will involve participation of other related ministries, government departments, academic institutions, research laboratories, voluntary organisations and others “to carry out research and development and also build capacities, and cover five thematic areas including scientific validation of uniqueness of indigenous cows.”

It will cover “scientific validation of ‘panchagavya’ for medicines and health, scientific validation of ‘panchagavya’ and its products for agriculture applications, scientific validation of ‘panchagavya’ for food and nutrition,” the circular says.

Vijay Bhatkar, president of the Delhi-based Vigyan Bharti, an RSS-affiliated science body, is the co-chairman of the committee.

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

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Eco-bridges for the movement of tigers

Marking boundaries: A tiger urinating to mark its territory in the Dewada buffer area of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.

In a first of its kind, Telangana State will have eco-friendly bridges over a canal cutting across the tiger corridor linking the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra with the forests in Telangana's Kumram Bheem Asifabad district. The intervention requires the laying of fertile soil to grow grass and plants over the structure, so that fragmentation of the reserve forest is camouflaged.

The 'eco-bridges' will be constructed at key spots along the 72 km-long, and at some places over a kilometre wide, right flank canal of the Pranahita barrage in the Bejjur and Dahegaon mandals, according to Chief Engineer (Projects) K. Bhagwanth Rao.

One of the locations tentatively earmarked for the eco-bridge is a spot close to Sulgupalli in the Bejjur forest range. Here, the canal is over a kilometre wide and the need to facilitate the movement of wild animals is quite necessary.

The concept emerged after visits by experts from the Wildlife Board of India and the Wildlife Institute of India. They were concerned about the large-scale destruction of pristine forest along the corridor, which would result in cutting off tiger movement between TATR and Bejjur.

The Telangana Irrigation Department has given its consent for the construction of the eco-bridges. Recommendations on the size and locations of the bridges are awaited from the National Board of Wildlife, Mr. Rao said.

In recent years, big cats from the TATR have ambled into the mixed and bamboo forests of the Bejjur range via the Sirpur forests. The TATR and its buffer area, which are contiguous with the Sirpur forests, boast of a speedily multiplying tiger population, the cause of the frequent migration of tigers into Sirpur and Bejjur.

Conduct Civil Rights Day on 30th of every month, says Collector

Australian minister, law-makers and others participate

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GM mustard policy: SC gives govt. time

The government on Monday informed the Supreme Court that a policy decision on the commercial release of the Genetically Modified (GM) mustard crop is yet to be finalised.

The Centre said it was poring through the various suggestions on and objections to the commercial rollout of the GM crops.

A Bench, led by Chief Justice of India J.S. Khehar and Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, granted the government one week to report back on when the policy would be finalised. It said the policy should be good-intentioned and well-informed.

The court had on October 17, 2016, extended the stay on the commercial release of the GM mustard until further orders. It had asked the Centre to collect public opinion before the release.

The government had assured the court that there would be no commercial release of GM seeds till the views of the public were collected and placed before the appraisal committee.

Sowing without safety

The hearing was conducted on the basis of a petition filed by activist Aruna Rodrigues, who had alleged that the government was sowing GM seeds without the relevant tests.

Mustard is one of India's most important winter crops, sown between mid-October and late November.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Ms. Rodrigues, alleged the government was sowing the seeds in various fields and that the bio-safety dossier, which has to be made public by putting it on the website, had not yet been done.

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BharatNet deadline pushed to March 2019

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the second phase of the BharatNet project that forms the backbone for the government's Digital India initiative, according to an official aware of the development.

However, the deadline for the delay-marred project had been pushed to March 2019, the official said. The project seeks to bring high speed broadband to all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats (GPs) through optical fibre.

Phase I

The Centre was still working on completing the first phase of the project for which the deadline was March 2017. It had been able to lay optical fibre in nearly one-lakh GPs, however, only about 22,000 GPs have been provided Internet connectivity due to equipment procurement issues.

The second phase aims at covering the remaining 1.50 lakh GPs. "The Cabinet has approved a modified implementation strategy of BharatNet project for providing broadband connectivity to all GPs by March 2019," the official said. The official said the approval entails a total estimated expenditure of 42,068 crore for the implementation of project bankrolled from the Universal Service Obligation Fund.

"Out of this amount, 11,148 crore is the cost of providing connectivity to 1 lakh GPs in Phase-1 and 18,792 crore is for providing connectivity to remaining 1.5 lakh GPs in Phase-II," the official said, adding that balance amount is for activities such as last mile connectivity architecture, operation and maintenance, and replacement of BSNL's poor quality fibre.

The BharatNet project, earlier National Optical Fibre Network or NOFN, seeks to bring high-speed broadband to all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats through optical fibre. It was approved by Cabinet in 2011 and deadline was fixed by end of 2013 then deferred to September 2015 by UPA Government. The Narendra Modi-led government re-examined project status and set target to complete roll out by end of 2016. This was later delayed to December 2018.

Such expenditure needs expeditious resolution of stressed loan problem: Crisil

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Cabinet nod for IWAI bond issue

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday gave its nod to Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) for raising Rs. 660 crore in bonds for extra budgetary resources in 2017-18.

“The proceeds from the bonds will be utilised by IWAI for development and maintenance of National Waterways (NWs) under National Waterways Act, 2016 (effective from 12.4.2016),” an official statement said. “Funds received through issue of bonds will be used exclusively for capital expenditure to improve infrastructure funding,” it said. The IWAI may get Rs. 857 crore in loan from World Bank for its Jal Marg Vikas Project.

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Think beyond loan waivers

Valuing the produce: A farmer carrying his harvested paddy on a buffalo cart in Mayong village in Morigaon district, Assam.

Indian agriculture is characterised by low scale and low productivity. About 85% of the operational landholdings in the country are below 5 acres and 67% farm households survive on an average landholding of one acre. More than half of the area under cultivation does not have access to irrigation. Agriculture income generated at average size of landholding is not adequate to meet farmers' needs.

The problem is exacerbated by weather and market risks. According to the latest National Sample Survey on Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households (NSS-SAS), 13.9% farm households experienced negative return from crop production during 2012-13. Non-farm income comprised 40% of the income of farm households, but access to non-farm sources of income is highly skewed as about 40% of farm households reported zero income from such sources.

Modern agriculture requires investment in farm machinery and use of purchased inputs like seed, fertiliser, agri-chemicals, diesel and hired labour. Most often, savings generated from unremunerative crop enterprise are inadequate for such investments. Rising expenses on health, education, social ceremonies and non-food items put additional financial demand on farm families. Consequently, majority of the farmers have to take loans from institutional or non-institutional sources or both. The share of institutional loans disbursed during a year to agriculture and allied sectors has risen from 8.9% of the value of output in 2000-01 to 31.4% in 2015-16.

The lowdown on farm loan waivers

The amount of short-term institutional loans for agriculture exceeds the total cost of inputs including hired labour at an all-India level and in many States. This indicates that a part of crop loans is likely spent on non-agricultural purposes. A more worrisome fact out of NSS surveys on Investment and Debt (NSS-I&D) is that the loans taken by cultivators from non-institutional sources, which involve high interest rate, is rising faster than from institutional sources. These indicators point to a worrying development — much of the growth in household demand in rural India has been debt-ridden and not supported by growth in income.

Recently a few States like [Uttar Pradesh](#), [Maharashtra](#), [Punjab](#) and [Karnataka](#) have responded to farm distress by rolling out farm loan waiver schemes as a measure of immediate relief to those farmers who qualify certain criteria. The demand for such measures is spreading to other States too.

The ultimate goal of farm loan waiver is to lessen the debt burden of distressed and vulnerable farmers and help them qualify for fresh loans. The success of the loan waiver lies on the extent to which the benefits reach the needy farmers. Loan waivers suffer from several drawbacks in this respect. First, it covers only a tiny fraction of farmers. According to 2012-13 NSS-SAS, 48% of the agricultural households did not have any outstanding loan.

Further, out of the indebted agricultural households, about 39% borrowed only from non-institutional sources. The farmers investing from their own savings and those borrowing from non-institutional sources are equally vulnerable to weather and market risks. But all such households are outside the purview of loan waiver.

Farm loan waiver may dent State finances, risk slippage: Fitch Ratings

Second, it provides only a partial relief to the indebted farmers as about half of the institutional borrowing of a cultivator is for non-farm purposes. Third, in many cases, one household has multiple loans either from different sources or in the name of different family members, which entitles it to multiple loan waiving. Fourth, loan waiving excludes agricultural labourers who are even weaker than cultivators in bearing the consequences of economic distress. Fifth, it severely erodes the credit culture, with dire long-run consequences to the banking business. Sixth, the scheme is prone to serious exclusion and inclusion errors, as evidenced by the Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) findings in the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008.

According to the CAG report, 13.46% of the accounts which were actually eligible for the benefits under the scheme were not considered by the lending institutes while preparing the list of eligible farmers. On the other hand, in 8.5% of the cases, the beneficiaries were not eligible for either debt waiver or debt relief but were granted the benefits. Further, 34.28% of the beneficiaries were not issued debt relief certificates which would have entitled them to fresh loans. Beside these errors in implementation, the loan waiver as a concept excludes most of the farm households in dire need of relief and includes some who do not deserve such relief on economic grounds.

Apart from above drawbacks, such schemes have serious implications for other developmental expenditure, having a much larger multiplier effect on the economy. For instance, loan waiver may cost Uttar Pradesh at least 36,000 crore, which is 4.4 times the State's capital expenditure of 8,191 crore (Budget estimate) in agriculture, including irrigation and flood management, in 2016-17. A similar amount spent on improvement of agriculture infrastructure and other developmental activities would create a base for future growth and development of the sector.

It appears that loan waiving can provide a short-term relief to a limited section of farmers; it has a meagre chance of bringing farmers out of the vicious cycle of indebtedness. There is no concrete evidence on reduction in agrarian distress following the first spell of all-India farm loan waiver in 2008. In the longer run, strengthening the repayment capacity of the farmers by improving and stabilising their income is the only way to keep them out of distress.

For providing immediate relief to the needy farmers, a more inclusive alternative approach is to identify the vulnerable farmers' based on certain criteria and give an equal amount as financial relief to the vulnerable and distressed families. For instance, in Uttar Pradesh 23.2% (41.87 lakh) agricultural households (180.49 lakh) are estimated to have income below poverty line. With 36,000 crore, each of these households can be given 85,980. This looks to be a more inclusive approach and provides farmers flexibility to spend this money.

In our view, the sustainable solution to indebtedness and agrarian distress is to raise income from agricultural activities and enhance access to non-farm sources of income. The low scale of farms necessitates that some cultivators move from agriculture to non-farm jobs. Improved technology, expansion of irrigation coverage, and crop diversification towards high-value crops are appropriate measures for raising productivity and farmers' income. All these require more public funding and support and there is a danger of these getting adversely affected by resources diverted towards loan waiver. Another major source of increase in farmers' income is remunerative prices for farm produce. This requires removal of old regulations and restrictions on agriculture to enable creation of a liberalised environment for investment, trading and marketing. Agrarian distress and farmers' income will be addressed much better if States undertake and sincerely implement long-pending reforms in the agriculture sector with urgency.

Ramesh Chand is Member and S.K. Srivastava an Agricultural Economist with the NITI Aayog. Views expressed are personal

The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

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Ministry, NITI Aayog moot privatisation of select services in district hospitals

Model contract: Under the Public Private Partnership , care for three non-communicable diseases — cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, and cancer care — will be provided.

As a part of a radical 'privatisation project', the Health Ministry and the NITI Aayog have developed a framework to let private hospitals run select services within district hospitals, on a 30-year lease.

In a 140-page document, prepared in consultation with the World Bank, the government will be allowing "a single private partner or a single consortium of private partners" to bid for space in district level hospitals, "especially in tier 2 & 3 cities."

Under this Public Private Partnership (PPP), care for only three non-communicable diseases — cardiac disease, pulmonary disease, and cancer care — will be provided.

A model contract drawn up by NITI Aayog was sent out to State governments on June 5 by Amitabh Kant, Chief Executive Officer of NITI Aayog, giving the states a two-week window to furnish responses.

In a letter sent out last month, Mr. Kant adds that the draft document was prepared by a working group comprising representatives from the industry, Health Ministry and "representatives of a few states".

The policy document has come under sharp criticism for the Ministry's failure to consult with key stakeholders from civil society and academia. Dr. Amit Sengupta, convener of the India chapter of the People's Health Movement, said that the government was handing over critical public assets without gaining anything much in return.

"NITI Aayog has no locus standi to make health policy, which is a state subject in India. The logic behind shutting down the Planning Commission was to ensure that policies are not centralised. NITI Aayog was to be an advisory body but here they are rushing through a policy that will essentially hand over public assets to the private sector, leading to a further dismantling of the public services available for free. If the government has to give seed money, share blood banks and other infrastructure, and still not be able to reserve beds for poor patients, it seems like we are not getting much in return," said Dr. Sengupta.

Mr. Kant, Health Minister JP Nadda and Health Secretary C.K. Mishra did not respond to emails and phone calls.

According to the draft model contract, private hospitals will bid for 30-year leases over portions of district hospital buildings to set up 50- or 100-bed hospitals in smaller towns across the country. The State governments could lease up to five or six district hospitals within the State.

Further, the State governments will give Viability Gap Funding (VGF), or one-time seed money, to private players to set up infrastructure within district hospitals. The private parties and State health departments will share ambulance services, blood banks, and mortuary services.

A major concern about the policy is that under 'principles' of the financial structure, the document states that "there will be no reserved beds or no quota (sic) of beds for free services" in these facilities.

"While it is clear that insured patients will receive free care, it is not at all clear what will happen to

the vast majority of the population. In particular, how will these referral arrangements work? Whereas it says that states can, if they wish, refer 100% of patients for cashless care, it is a matter of concern that it also proposes that States can set a cap on this entitlement. How would this work? What happens when the cap is reached? Would people only be able to access services for half the year, or less,” said Robert Yates, a leading expert on universal health coverage (UHC) and Project Director of the UHC Policy Forum at Chatham House, London.

“What is particularly disturbing is the suggestion that only Below Poverty Line (BPL) patients and those in insurance schemes will be able to access free care. This would effectively exclude hundreds of millions of the Indian population from vital hospital services.

“If implemented, these proposals could threaten to take India away from UHC, a key sustainable development goal, rather than towards it,” Mr. Yates said.

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Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY)**Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY)**

The Government of India has decided to launch a new sub-scheme named “Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY)” as part of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM). The Self Help Groups under DAY-NRLM will operate road transport service in backward areas. This will help to provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services to connect remote villages with key services and amenities (such as access to markets, education and health) for the overall economic development of backward rural areas. This will also provide an additional avenue of livelihood for SHGs. The basic outline of AGEY was discussed in a meeting of State Transport Ministers of 13 States held in June 2016 at Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh and all the Transport Ministers had expressed their appreciation of this initiative.

The Community Investment Fund (CIF) provided to Community Based Organization (CBOs) under DAY-NRLM will be utilized to support the SHG members in this new livelihoods initiative. The beneficiary SHG member will be provided an interest free loan by the CBO from its Community Investment Fund upto Rs.6.50 lakh for purchase of the vehicle. Alternative, CBO will own the vehicle and lease it to an SHG member to operate the vehicle and pay lease rental to the CBO

AGEY will be initially implemented in 250 Blocks in the country on pilot basis with each Block provided upto 6 vehicles to operate the transport services. During the current year implementation of the scheme has been so far approved for 52 Blocks in 8 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand and West Bengal with a total provision of Rs.16.06 Crore of which the Government of India share would be Rs.10.16 Crore. The balance funding would be provided by the respective States.

The Blocks will be selected by States from among the Blocks where NRLM is being implemented intensively and where mature CBOs are already functioning. Backwardness, lack of transportation links and sustainability of service would be the guiding factors in the selection of Blocks and routes.

The State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) will do a feasibility study and traffic survey

in the selected blocks to identify the routes and the number and capacity of vehicles which can be operated on sustainable basis. The study will be conducted by technically sound organizations with expertise in transport network planning. The choice of vehicle could be either e-riksha, 3 wheeler or 4 wheeler within a cost ceiling of Rs.6.50 lakh.

The SRLMs will be co-ordinating with State Transport Department for issue of permit for the vehicle. The SHG member operating the vehicle shall ensure that all necessary legal and statutory requirement such as valid permit, road tax permit, valid insurance policy etc. are met.

The SHG member shall run the vehicle on approved routes at pre-determined frequency as jointly agreed between the CBO and the SHG operator based on financial viability and the need for transport link.

All vehicles under the scheme shall have a defined colour code and carry AGEY branding to ensure their identity and avoid diversion to other routes.

The State Rural Livelihood Mission will arrange capacity building for their staff at State, District and Block levels for operating the Scheme. The members of the CBO and the beneficiary SHG member shall also be provided adequate training in the Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs) and other partner organizations.

SNC

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NGT directs Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh to submit guidelines on forest fire

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) today directed the Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh governments to submit the national forest fire prevention and control guidelines. A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar also asked both the state governments to inform it about the total number of forest fires till date starting from 2016.

"We want both the states to inform us how many forest fires have been reported in 2017 as compared to 2016. You also place on record the national guidelines on forest fires," the bench said. The tribunal, which has already reserved its verdict in the matter, has fixed the case for hearing on July 24.

In Himachal Pradesh during 2016-17, there were 1,545 forest fires which affected 13,069-hectare causing loss of Rs 1.53 crore, whereas, in 2015-16, there were 672 fire incidents which caused harm in 5,749.95 hectare area causing loss of Rs 1.34 crore.

The tribunal had earlier directed the states to submit crisis management plan for prevention and control of forest fires to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). It had taken exception to the fact that that the issue of the management plan was pending since 2010 and directed the MoEF to file the details of states which have not submitted the management plan on forest fires.

Voicing concern over forest fires raging in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, the tribunal had said it was shocked that everybody was taking the issue "so casually" and issued show cause notices to both the states.

Massive forest fires had engulfed a large part of areas in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in May last year.

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Mobile App for Road Maintenance “Aarambh launched

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The visiting ILO Deputy Director General(Policy) International Labour Organization Ms. Deborah Greenfield, who is on an official visit to India called on Hon’ble Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister for Panchayati Raj, Rural Development, Drinking Water & Sanitation on 24th July 2017. She highly appreciated the ongoing Flagship Programmes of MORD such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY-Grameen) and thanked Government of India for launching these initiatives which not only address the basic subsistence needs of the rural poor but also effectively contribute to employment creation, poverty alleviation and inclusive growth.

Ms.Greenfield highlighted ongoing ILO-MORD Partnership with the above Flagship Programmes such as : ILO-PMGSY Rural Roads Project, Barefoot Technicians Training under MGNREGA and support to training of Rural Masons under PMAY(Grameen). It is very heartening for the ILO to collaborate with the MORD as it can bring in experience of and learnings from the “Best International Practices” in implementation of these programmes and also promote and integrate and mainstream the *Decent Work Elements* in operational guidelines of these programmes. She recognized the high employment potential for rural population particularly the women in these initiatives.

The Hon’ble Union Minister Shri Tomar and Ms. Greenfield launched the following publications and Mobile App for Road Maintenance “Aarambh”:

- **Concept Note and Guidance Note “Mobilizing Funds for Maintenance of Rural Road”.**
 - o *Resource mobilization for rural roads maintenance has always been a challenge for the States. This Concept Note outlines innovative ways which can be adopted by the state Governments for mobilizing additional funds for road maintenance and presents some international best practices worldwide.*
- **“Mobile Phone based App for Performance Based Maintenance Contracting and Community Contracting for maintenance of rural roads” Brochure**
 - o *This Mobile Phone App aims at use of GIS based mapping for making road inventories, condition surveys, and producing cost estimates and other relevant data for preparation and monitoring of annual road maintenance plans. Its usage would greatly enhance the service delivery of the state level institutions in planning and implementing performance based rural roads maintenance contracts.*

She expressed that these publications and the Mobile App would greatly help in improving the service delivery for road maintenance in all the States.

The Hon’ble Minister appreciated the ongoing collaboration between ILO and Ministry of Rural Development, particularly PMGSY, MGNREGS and PMAY(G). He emphasized that the newly launched mobile application would simplify the maintenance management of rural roads. The Minister reiterated the resolve of Government of India to connect all eligible habitations in rural areas by constructing good quality roads by 2019. The States are being encouraged to put in place robust mechanism to ensure routine and periodic maintenance of these roads even after the first five-year period, after their construction is over.

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Inland Waterways Authority of India: Bill to divert 2.5 per cent proceeds of CRF to national waterways introduced in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI: The government today introduced in the [Lok Sabha](#) a bill providing for allocation of about Rs 2,000 crore from [Central Road Fund](#) (CRF) for developing national waterways (NWs).

The Central Road Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2017 to further amend the Central Road Fund Act, 2000 was moved by Minister of State for Shipping [Pon Radhakrishnan](#) in absence of Shipping Minister [Nitin Gadkari](#).

The bill seeks to amend the Central Road Fund Act, 2000, to allocate 2.5 per cent of the proceeds of CRF for development and maintenance of NWs and a reduction in the share provided for development of National Highways.

Parliament had last year enacted National Waterways (NWs) Act, 2016, for developing and maintaining the existing five NWs and 106 new NWs across the country.

"National Waterways provide cost-effective, logistically efficient and environment-friendly way of transport, whose development as a supplementary mode would enable diversion of traffic over congested roads and railways," according to the objects of the Bill.

CRF is made up of cess on petrol and high speed diesel. The cess at present is Rs 6 per litre.

The fund collected under CRF was Rs 80,800 crore in 2016 -17, Rs 69,540 crore in 2015-16 and Rs 25,122 crore in 2014- 15.

The [Inland Waterways Authority of India](#) (IWAI) has estimated that approximately Rs 25,000 crore would be required for development of identified projects on NWs till 2022-23.

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Union Home Minister chairs first meeting of Islands Development Agency (IDA)**Union Home Minister chairs first meeting of Islands Development Agency (IDA)****IDA focuses on Holistic Development of Islands**

The Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh chaired the first meeting of the newly constituted Islands Development Agency (IDA), here today. The IDA was set up on June 01, 2017 following the Prime Minister's review meeting for the development of islands.

The Union Home Minister presented the vision for developing India's maritime economy while preserving the natural eco-system and addressing the security concerns. He emphasized upon the need for sustainable development of Islands with people's participation.

The CEO, NITI Aayog made a detailed presentation on the current status and the way forward for holistic development of identified islands. He informed that Concept Development Plans and Detailed Master Plans are being prepared for identified islands with principles of sustainability, people's participation, eco-system preservation and determination of carrying capacity as the guiding principles. Such an exercise is being taken up for the first time in the country.

Admiral D.K. Joshi, former Navy Chief and Vice Chairman of IDA suggested taking up suitable interventions for sustainable implementation of planned projects.

During the meeting, the progress being made for the formulation of integrated master plans and other matters concerning the islands development were reviewed. It was also decided that Lt. Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Administrator of Lakshadweep Islands will be included as members of IDA.

After detailed consultations with key stakeholders, 10 islands namely Smith, Ross, Aves, Long and Little Andaman in Andaman & Nicobar and Minicoy, Bangaram, Suheli, Cherium and Tinnakara in Lakshadweep have been identified for holistic development in the first phase. With this meeting, the efforts for holistic development of Islands of India received a major boost.

Other Members of the IDA including Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretary (Environment, Forests and Climate Change), Secretary (Tourism) and Secretary (Tribal Welfare) also participated in the meeting.

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All you need to know about Doklam and the India-China border standoff

A file photo of the Nathu La border. | Photo Credit: [DIPTENDU DUTTA](#)

It was the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan that sounded the alarm — Chinese soldiers had arrived with bulldozers and excavators, and were building a high-mountain road near India's border in an area the two nuclear-armed giants have disputed over for decades.

India responded to the call by sending troops last month to evict the Chinese army construction party from the Doklam Plateau. Within a few days, Indian media were running leaked video footage of soldiers from both sides shoving one another atop a grassy flatland.

The [tense standoff has only escalated, raising concerns in both capitals](#) of an all-out military conflict. Both sides have made threats while simultaneously calling for negotiations. The U.S. State Department has urged the two sides to work together toward a peaceful resolution.

Don't underestimate our determination to safeguard national security, China warns India

India told China last week that it was ready to hold talks if both sides pulled their forces back from the disputed border area. But China countered on Monday by insisting the road was being built on its sovereign territory, and warned India not to "push your luck."

India has said the two governments reached an agreement in 2012 that the status of the Doklam area which falls between China and India on a Bhutanese plateau would be finalised only through joint consultations involving all parties.

India and China have faced off frequently since fighting the bloody 1962 war that ended with China seizing control of some territory. Troops from both sides still regularly patrol other unmarked territories, though neither side has fired any shots in decades. Negotiations since 1985 to settle the boundary dispute have seen little success.

The land in question spans 269 square kilometres on a sparsely populated plateau in western Bhutan, which has no diplomatic ties with China and coordinates its relations with Beijing through New Delhi.

From Doklam to Taiwan, China shows zero tolerance to 'sovereignty' threats

But India and China have staked rival claims to other Himalayan areas as well, including 90,000 sq.km in Arunachal Pradesh, which China refers to as "Southern Tibet," as well as 38,000 sq.km of another plateau called Aksai Chin.

Bhutan said the road China has been building would run from the town of Dokola to the Bhutanese army camp at Zompelri.

Bhutan's Foreign Ministry called it a "direct violation" of agreements reached in 1988 and 1998 to maintain peace and refrain from unilateral action in the area pending a final border settlement. "Bhutan hopes that the status quo in the Doklam area will be maintained," it said in a June 29 statement.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said last week that India's border guards, in responding to Bhutan's call for help, had "illegally trespassed the boundary into Chinese territory" when they confronted the Chinese army construction team.

For India, securing the Doklam Plateau is seen as essential to maintaining its control over a land corridor that connects to its remote northeastern States.

India has said the Chinese road project threatens its access to the corridor, while China has questioned why India should even have a say in a matter that concerns only Beijing and Bhutan.

India's Army chief warned earlier this month that India's army was capable of fighting "2 and a 1/2 wars" if needed to secure its borders.

Army, PLA in a tug of war over Doklam Plateau

Indian analysts said China appeared to be trying to pre-empt settlement negotiations by establishing a Chinese presence in Doklam.

"China has been trying for a long time to gain a tactical advantage in this sector," having already established dominance along the Indian borders at Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, said security expert Uday Bhaskar, a retired Indian navy officer. "The Chinese did not expect this resolute Indian response, and that's why the standoff has continued."

The dispute was discussed briefly without resolution by Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G-20 summit earlier this month in Hamburg, Germany. It is expected to be taken up again when National Security Adviser Ajit Doval visits Beijing for another security forum on Thursday and Friday.

The Doklam standoff is just the latest of many irritants dogging relations between the world's two most populous nations.

For years, China has vigorously wooed Bhutan and other, smaller countries in India's traditional sphere of influence, including Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

"This is not the first time that we have a standoff with China," said foreign affairs analyst and retired Indian diplomat G. Parthasarathy, predicting a period of stalemate followed by a political compromise if the tensions follow past patterns.

"China is in an ultra-nationalist mood of establishing a hegemony power in Asia," he said. "The best thing for China is to sit down and talk."

China, meanwhile, has been frustrated with India's refusal to sign onto a massive effort to build railways, ports and roads reaching from Asia to Europe and the Middle East. The project includes a China-Pakistan economic development programme aimed at absorbing as much as \$46 billion in investment, most of it from Chinese banks.

China also has complained bitterly for decades over India's accepting the Dalai Lama as a refugee in 1959. The Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader has kept his headquarters in northern India since fleeing Chinese-ruled Tibet.

Despite their disagreements, India and China entered a trade agreement in 1985 and have stepped up cooperation in agriculture, science and cultural exchange. But a \$46.6-billion trade deficit favouring China has irked Indian members of parliament, who call regularly for more balance.

Says BJP will campaign against corruption, law and order problems and lack of development work in Himachal Pradesh

The process of holding the requisite Board Meetings and Shareholder Meetings has been completed in phases in September 2017.

Ruben George is staying at Ram Nath Kovind's house at Kalyanpur, near Kanpur

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Mekedatu: Karnataka replies to CWC - KARNATAKA

The State government replied to clarifications sought by the Central Water Commission (CWC) on its proposal to build a balancing reservoir across the Cauvery at Mekedatu at a cost of Rs. 5,912 crore.

Disclosing this to reporters here on Tuesday, Karnataka Water Resources Minister M.B. Patil said it was natural for the CWC to seek clarifications as the issue involved an inter-State river. "However, we have clarified all the issues raised by the CWC," he said.

Karnataka had sought the CWC's permission to start work on Mekedatu project, which has been opposed by Tamil Nadu alleging that it violates the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal order. The State had submitted the Detailed Project Report on Mekedatu to the chief engineer of CWC on June 7. After this, the CWC sought a few clarifications on the DPR, including whether the project violates the final award of Tribunal and whether the construction of a balancing reservoir would affect flow of water to Tamil Nadu.

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Niti Aayog: Niti Aayog clears six proposals for high-tech public transport

NEW DELHI: Mass rapid transportation technologies such as hyperloop, metrino and [pod taxis](#) could soon be a reality in India after [Niti Aayog](#) cleared half-a-dozen proposals of the transport ministry exploring options to improve [public transport](#).

Following the go-ahead, the transport ministry has formed a six member committee, headed by a former top official of Railways, to study safety parameters associated with these technologies and global practices.

A senior government official at Niti Aayog told ET, the think tank approved the proposals of the transport ministry with a condition that the ministry conducts trial run of all these technologies and puts in place safety measures before starting commercially operation.

For The People

INDIA'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT TO SEE A MASSIVE TECHNOLOGICAL UPGRADATION



NITI Aayog draws up plan

Approves 6 new mass rapid transport systems

Transport ministry will now look at safety parameters

This will be followed by trial runs before commercial launch

STATE of the ART

METRINO: fully automatic, driverless small pods travel independently suspended over an overhead network

POD TAXIS: small automated vehicles – cable cars or pod cars – equipped to carry a small group of passengers

HYPERLOOP: a pod-like vehicle is propelled through a near-vacuum tube connecting cities at speeds matching that of an aircraft

“These new technologies are path breaking and can alter the way of [intercity travel](#) in the country. Since we don't have any such thing in India, we need to know the global safety standards and ensure that these technology companies are following it,” a senior transport ministry official said. “Even for the pilot project, passenger safety is paramount,” the transport ministry official added.

The ministry of road transport and highways sought the approval of Niti Aayog to experiment and introduce six latest mass rapid transportation technologies. These technologies include metrino, stadler buses, hyperloop, pod taxis, [hybrid buses](#) and freight rail road.

The new technologies are being explored as current public transportation is unable to resolve the increasing traffic crisis in the country. Besides, some of them are more cost effective than the existing ones.

Once these safety parameters are tried and tested and the pilot run is successful, some of them including metrino, could be up for running by next year's end. “Something like metrino (pod taxis) is almost one tenth of the cost of the metro, so there's a cost advantage as well. However, technologies such as hyperloop can take some time but we would like them to come to India,” the official said, adding land has been proposed for the [hyperloop project](#).

Under the hyperloop transportation mechanism, a pod-like vehicle is propelled through a near-vacuum tube connecting cities at speeds matching that of an aircraft while under the freight rail road proposal, elevated corridors would be built with rail lines where freight trucks can be placed and then they would move on rails at high speed, reducing freight time and increasing freight quantity.

ET VIEW: Adopt New Technologies

It does make sense to adopt new technology for [urban transportation](#), especially when the new networks are billed to be so much more energy efficient and innovative. However, it is imperative that we adopt the precautionary principle and conduct extensive field trials. We do need to thoroughly probe the safety and other features of the new technology on offer that is expected to vastly improve speeds and efficiency.

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National Centre for Seismology launches 'India Quake' – An App for Earthquake Parameter Dissemination

National Centre for Seismology launches 'India Quake' – An App for Earthquake Parameter Dissemination

Union Minister of Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Dr. Harshvardhan launched an app "India Quake" on the occasion of Foundation Day of Ministry of Earth Sciences in New Delhi today.

National Centre for Seismology (NCS) operates national seismological network with 84 stations. These stations are connected to NCS headquarter through VSAT for real time data communication. In the event of an earthquake NCS locates them using data from its network and disseminate earthquake parameters to all the concerned government department and other stake holders through SMS, email and fax. However this causes some delay in dissemination and also restricts the number of recipients.

To overcome this, a Mobile App has been developed by the NCS for automatic dissemination of earthquake parameter (location, time and magnitude) after the occurrence of earthquakes. The App will make information dissemination faster with no restrictions on the number of recipients. Any citizen can download this App and get the real time earthquake location information on his/her mobile. Other than scientific and administrative benefits of the App, it will help in reducing panic amongst people during an earthquake. For example, if an earthquake occurs in Hindukush region, Afghanistan and is strongly felt in Delhi, then people in Delhi will know in less than 2 minutes that the earthquake has actually occurred in Afghanistan and not in Delhi.

There are two categories of events here, scrutinized and unscrutinized. Unscrutinized events are the earthquake whose parameters have been estimated automatically by the software using the incoming waveform data from remote stations. These solutions are scrutinized and confirmed by the NCS, which form the category of scrutinized events.

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25 Charging Stations for Electric Vehicles Installed in Bengaluru on Pilot Basis Under Fame-India Scheme: Shri Piyush Goyal

25 Charging Stations for Electric Vehicles Installed in Bengaluru on Pilot Basis Under Fame-India Scheme: Shri Piyush Goyal

The Minister of State (IC) for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, Shri Piyush Goyal, while giving a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha today, informed the House that under Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India [FAME-India] Scheme of the Government, 25 Charging Stations have been installed at 6 different locations in Bengaluru by M/s. Mahindra REVA Electric Vehicles Pvt. Ltd, as a pilot project. Based on the proposals received under FAME Scheme, charging infrastructure in selected cities/ locations would be sanctioned by the Department of Heavy Industries.

Shri Goyal also informed that the Project Implementation & Sanctioning Committee (PISC) under the chairmanship of Secretary, Department of Heavy Industries has sanctioned following proposal of charging infrastructures under FAME-India Scheme:

Sl. No.	Proposal	Implementing Organisation	Date of Sanction (Date of PISC Meeting)
1.	Proposal for setting up of 50 charging stations in Delhi NCR.	Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)	20 th August 2015
2.	Proposal for setting up of 50 Charging Stations in Delhi NCR.	Rajasthan Electronics & Instruments Limited (REIL)	20 th August 2015
3.	Proposal for setting up of 200 charging stations (both AC and DC fast) in the cities of Delhi, Jaipur and Chandigarh.	Rajasthan Electronics & Instruments Limited (REIL)	15 th June 2017
4.	Proposal for providing 75 AC Smart Charger in Delhi NCR of Delhi.	Consortium of Mahindra – Reva – Ola – Asia Electric	15 th June 2017
5.	Proposal for 60 No. Charging Infrastructure in NCR of Delhi.	Lithium Urban Technologies Pvt Ltd.	15 th June 2017

Supply of electricity in E-mobility business including setting up of vehicle charging infrastructure is also included in the long term corporate plan of NTPC, Shri Goyal added.

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India all set to access resources under the Green Climate Fund for Finance Climate Action**India all set to access resources under the Green Climate Fund for Finance Climate Action****'India Committed to the cause of Climate Change': Dr Harsh Vardhan**

Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan has said that India is committed to the cause of Climate Change. Delivering the keynote address on the occasion of the signing of Accreditation Master Agreement (AMA) between Green Climate Fund (GCF) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) here today, the Minister said that India has been leading from the front in tackling global climate change issues and it will continue to do so in the future as well. "India, like other developing countries, can do more, if finance and technology development & transfer and capacity building support are ensured as per the convention and its Paris Agreement", Dr. Harsh Vardhan said.

The Minister emphasised that climate justice demands that we remain mindful of the needs and aspirations of the poor. He pointed out that despite being one of the fastest growing economies of the world, India has a significant percentage of population living below the poverty line. "We need to take cognizance of the population size and income inequality and cannot ignore the basic requirement of electricity, housing and food for the poor. We expect GCF to partner with us on these issues and prioritize their work to overcome these challenges," Dr Harsh Vardhan said. He highlighted that India is creating a network of strong institutions that can act as enablers for scaling-up climate action through technologically sound and innovative projects.

Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated that environmental consciousness is the bedrock of our growth aspirations. "We are fully conscious of the need to pursue an ecologically sustainable development pathway. Our Prime Minister Modiji wants to build a new India by 2022 - riding on the demographic dividend and opportunities to use off beat solutions like solar and wind power, smart cities, incentivizing forestry, creating investment openings and overall, involving all in the development process", the Minister said.

Speaking on the occasion, Executive Director of GCF, Amb. Howard Bamsey said that India has been acknowledged as a strong proponent of climate change action and GCF looks forward to greater engagement with India.

Several of the mitigation and adaptation targets, articulated in India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), to meet the international climate obligations are aligned with the Fund's strategic impact areas - viz clean energy, energy efficiency, cities, transport, forestry, agriculture, water health and ecosystems. India's NDC is among the few that make specific reference to the GCF specifically with regard to its role as a source for low-cost finance for its 40% non-fossil fuel based power target. India, with numerous climate change and developmental challenges, needs to engage more purposefully and actively with GCF. The accredited entities need to proactively engage with GCF to take advantage of the available opportunities.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is one of the operating entities under financial mechanism set up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to provide support to developing countries in combating climate change, with resources to be generated from funding by developed country Parties and various other public and private sources. It supports both climate change adaptation and mitigation projects in developing countries.

So far, one project from India on “Installation of Ground Water Recharge System” in Odisha has recently been approved by the GCF for \$34 million. Another proposal on coastal areas has already been submitted to the GCF Secretariat and several more projects are in the pipeline.

India has nominated a total of five direct access entities for accreditation by the GCF. Two of these from the public sector and three from the private sector for accreditation by the GCF. The public sector entities are NABARD and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). The private sector entities nominated are YES Bank, IDFC Bank and IL&FS Environmental Services. So far, NABARD and SIDBI have been accredited by the GCF.

NABARD is the first entity from India to be accredited as Direct Access Entity (DAE). The signing of AMA between GCF and NABARD is an essential first step for accessing the GCF resources to help safeguard the lives, property and livelihoods of millions of people against climate change impact.

Board Member of GCF from India, Shri Dinesh Sharma, stressed upon submission of large size of proposals or multi state proposals from India to access the GCF resources and said that in coming years, GCF may play an important role in supporting climate change projects.

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END

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