

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 Akademy'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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NASA developing first asteroid deflection mission

This file computer-generated handout image taken on May 15, 2015 and released by the European Space Agency (ESA) on May 15, 2015 shows the impact of the DART (Double Asteroid Redirection Test) projectile on the binary asteroid system (65803) Didymos observed by the AIM (Asteroid Impact Mission) satellite. | Photo Credit: [AFP/NASA IMAGES](#)

NASA is developing the first-ever mission that will deflect a near-Earth asteroid, and help test the systems that will allow mankind to protect the planet from potential cosmic body impacts in the future.

The Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) — which is being designed and would be built and managed by the John Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory — is moving from concept development to preliminary design phase, the US space agency said.

“DART would be NASA’s first mission to demonstrate what’s known as the kinetic impactor technique — striking the asteroid to shift its orbit — to defend against a potential future asteroid impact,” said Lindley Johnson, planetary defense officer at NASA Headquarters in Washington.

“This approval step advances the project towards a historic test with a nonthreatening small asteroid,” said Johnson.

“DART is a critical step in demonstrating we can protect our planet from a future asteroid impact,” said Andy Cheng, who serves as the DART investigation co-lead.

“Since we don’t know that much about their internal structure or composition, we need to perform this experiment on a real asteroid,” Andy said.

“With DART, we can show how to protect Earth from an asteroid strike with a kinetic impactor by knocking the hazardous object into a different flight path that would not threaten the planet,” he said.

The target for DART is an asteroid that will have a distant approach to Earth in October 2022, and then again in 2024.

The asteroid is called Didymos — Greek for “twin” — because it is an asteroid binary system that consists of two bodies: Didymos A, about 780 metres in size, and a smaller asteroid orbiting it called Didymos B, about 160 metres in size.

DART would impact only the smaller of the two bodies, Didymos B.

The Didymos system has been closely studied since 2003.

The primary body is a rocky S-type object, with composition similar to that of many asteroids. The composition of its small companion, Didymos B, is unknown, but the size is typical of asteroids that could potentially create regional effects should they impact Earth.

After launch, DART would fly to Didymos and use an APL- developed onboard autonomous targeting system to aim itself at Didymos B.

Then the refrigerator-sized spacecraft would strike the smaller body at a speed about nine times faster than a bullet, about six kilometres per second.

Earth-based observatories would be able to see the impact and the resulting change in the orbit of Didymos B around Didymos A, allowing scientists to better determine the capabilities of kinetic impact as an asteroid mitigation strategy.

The kinetic impact technique works by changing the speed of a threatening asteroid by a small fraction of its total velocity, but by doing it well before the predicted impact so that this small nudge will add up over time to a big shift of the asteroid's path away from Earth.

A study of nearly 300 people living in different parts of India found that nine single-base variants (single-nucleotide polymorphisms or SNPs) account

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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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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.

Samir/JKD/jk

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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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Japan's men-only island gets UNESCO heritage tag

A men-only island in Japan where women are banned and male visitors must bathe naked in the sea before visiting its shrine, has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The tiny landmass of Okinoshima is permanently manned by a Shinto priest who prays to the island's goddess, in a tradition that has been kept up for centuries.

Limited numbers are permitted to land on the island in the Sea of Japan (East Sea) — this year it was 200 — for a yearly festival that lasts just two hours, but they must adhere to strict rules.

Most importantly, they must be men, but they must also strip off and take a purifying dip in the ocean before they are allowed to set foot on the sacred ground of the shrine.

Despite its inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage list — often the prelude to a leap in tourist numbers — shrine officials say they are now considering banning future travel for anyone apart from priests, partly out of fears the island could be "destroyed" by too many visitors.

"The island has sometimes been said to ban women, but in principle anyone but the priests who pray there for 365 days a year is barred from entering," said a spokesman.

The ban on women visitors specifically "has nothing to do with discrimination against women," the official said over phone.

It is considered dangerous for women to travel by sea to get to the island and the shrine will not change the centuries-old rule, he said. "It is meant to protect women, the birth-giving gender," he added.

The island, which sits off the north-west coast of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, was an important window for foreign trade in Japan since ancient times, forming part of a trade route that linked the archipelago to the Korean peninsula and China.

Thousands of gold rings and other valuable items have been found there. "These treasures are believed to have been offered to the gods in order to pray for national prosperity and the safety of marine traffic," says the website of Munakata Taisha, the shrine which owns Okinoshima.

UNESCO's heritage committee considered 33 sites for the prestigious status at its annual gathering in Poland.

On Sunday it also accepted Taputapuatea, a portion of the "Polynesian Triangle" in the South Pacific thought to be the last part of the globe settled by humans, to the list.

It also added Britain's Lake District — muse for artists from William Wordsworth to Beatrix Potter — and the Valongo wharf in Rio de Janeiro where slaves from Africa first arrived in Brazil.

UNESCO's World Heritage list includes over 1,000 sites, monuments and natural phenomena that are of "outstanding universal value" to humankind.

It includes treasures such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef, the Taj Mahal in India, and the rock-carved city of Petra in modern-day Jordan.

A Bangladeshi auto-rickshaw driver is suing for damages after his phone number was used in a

movie, leading to a barrage of calls from female fans

Nuclear disarmament campaign group ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its efforts to consign the atomic bomb to history, firing off a

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Earth facing sixth mass extinction

Habitat loss: Gorillas are surviving on 20% or less of the land they once roamed. AFP/AFP

The sixth mass extinction of life on Earth is unfolding more quickly than feared, scientists have warned.

More than 30% of animals with a backbone — fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals — are declining in both range and population, according to the first comprehensive analysis of these trends.

“This is the case of a biological annihilation occurring globally,” said Stanford professor Rodolfo Dirzo, co-author of a study published on Monday in the peer-reviewed U.S. journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

Around a decade ago, experts feared that a new planetary wipeout of species was looming.

Today, most agree that it is under way — but the new study suggests that the die-out is already ratcheting up a gear. It provides much-needed data about the threat to wildlife, mapping the dwindling ranges and population of 27,600 species.

For 177 mammals, researchers combed through data covering the period 1900 to 2015.

The mammal species that were monitored have lost at least a third of their original habitat, the researchers found. Forty per cent of them — including rhinos, orangutans, gorillas and many big cats — are surviving on 20% or less of the land they once roamed. The loss of biodiversity has recently accelerated.

“Several species of mammals that were relatively safe one or two decades ago are now endangered,” including cheetahs, lions and giraffes, the study showed. There are as few as 20,000 lions left in the wild, less than 7,000 cheetahs, 500 to 1,000 giant pandas, and about 250 Sumatran rhinoceros.

Wide impact

Globally, the mass die-off — deemed to be the sixth in the last half-billion years — is the worst since three-quarters of life on the Earth, including the non-avian dinosaurs, were wiped out 66 million years ago by a giant meteor impact.

On an average, two vertebrate species disappear every year.

Tropical regions have seen the highest number of declining species. In South and Southeast Asia, large-bodied species of mammals have lost more than four-fifths of their historical ranges.

While fewer species are disappearing in temperate zones, the percentage is just as high or higher.

As many as half of the number of animals that once shared our planet are no longer here, a loss the authors described as “a massive erosion of the greatest biological diversity in the history of Earth”.

The main drivers of wildlife decline are habitat loss, overconsumption, pollution, invasive species, disease, as well as poaching in the case of tigers, elephants, rhinos and other large animals prized

for their body parts.

Climate change is poised to become a major threat in the coming decades.

“The massive loss of populations and species reflects our lack of empathy to all the wild species that have been our companions since our origins,” said lead author Gerardo Ceballos of the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

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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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China sends PLA unit to man overseas base

Stronger vigil:A ship carrying Chinese military personnel departs a port in Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, on Tuesday.AP

China has dispatched People's Liberation Army (PLA) personnel to man its first overseas military base at Djibouti in the strategic Indian Ocean region, a move likely to spark concerns in the U.S.

Ships carrying Chinese military personnel departed Zhanjiang in southern China's Guangdong Province on Tuesday to set up a support base in Djibouti, located in the Horn of Africa, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

Shen Jinlong, commander of the PLA navy, read an order on constructing the base in Djibouti, and conferred the military flag on the fleets.

The establishment of the PLA Djibouti base was a decision made by the two countries after friendly negotiations, and accords with the common interest of the people from both sides, the PLA navy said. The base will ensure China's performance of missions, such as escorting, peace-keeping and humanitarian aid in Africa and West Asia, the report said.

Joint drills

The base will also conduct overseas tasks, including military cooperation, joint exercises, evacuating and protecting overseas Chinese and emergency rescue, as well as jointly maintaining security of international strategic seaways.

Djibouti base, which China says is more of a logistical and resting centre than a military base, was under construction since 2011.

It is the first such base being set up by China. The second base is coming up in Gwadar, Pakistan, which links up with China through the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

In March this year, Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* had reported that China plans to increase the size of its marine corps from 20,000 to 1 lakh personnel for overseas deployment, including at Gwadar and Djibouti.

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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.

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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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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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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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Sri Lanka clears revised deal for Hambantota port

File photo: Sri Lankan Buddhist monks march in a protest against an industrial zone project at Mirijjawila village in Ambalantota, Sri Lanka. The banner reads "peaceful protest against selling of Hambantota port and land grabbing." | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

Sri Lanka's Cabinet on Tuesday cleared a revised deal for the Chinese-built port in Hambantota, the government said. The modified agreement, the government added, was more profitable to Sri Lanka and also addressed security concerns raised by other countries.

Speaking to reporters here, Ports Minister Mahinda Samarasinghe said the Cabinet gave final approval to sell 70% stake in the southern port to the state-run China Merchants Port Holdings for \$1.12 billion. "Some [diplomatic] missions here were worried that the port would be used as a military naval base. As per the revised agreement Sri Lanka will manage the port security," he said.

While the Chinese would manage port operations, "no naval ship, including Chinese ones, can call at Hambantota without our permission", Mr. Samarasinghe said.

Wary of the Chinese

India's apprehensions about the apparently growing Chinese presence in the island are well known, given the two countries' competing strategic interests in the island. The Hambantota port is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

Beijing's stake in the port and its plan to acquire 15,000 acres of adjoining land to help Colombo set up an industrial zone have strengthened fears of those wary of China's growth in the region. "Our foreign policy today is reaching out to everyone and not giving special treatment to anyone," Mr. Samarasinghe said, responding to accusations that the current government is as close to Beijing as Mahinda Rajapaksa's administration was.

The Hambantota port was built with Chinese loans in 2010 during Mr. Rajapaksa's term. Deeming the project a "white elephant", the Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe government decided in late 2016 to sell 80% stake in the port to the Chinese company in order to tackle the \$8 billion debt Sri Lanka owes China. Under the agreement, Colombo was to receive \$1.12 billion for a 99-year lease.

The deal would be tabled in Parliament on Friday, and is likely to be signed on Saturday, the Ports Minister said.

A Bangladeshi auto-rickshaw driver is suing for damages after his phone number was used in a movie, leading to a barrage of calls from female fans

Nuclear disarmament campaign group ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its efforts to consign the atomic bomb to history, firing off a

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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.

RDS/nb

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