

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan to attend 7th Asia Ministerial Energy Roundtable in Bangkok, Thailand

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The Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan will be on an official visit to Bangkok, Thailand from 01-02nd November 2017 to participate in the IEF 7th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable (AMER7). India is the current chair of International Energy Forum (IEF) which is promoting the AMER - a biennial event bringing together Energy Ministers and experts from Asian countries.

At the 7th AMER, Minister will participate in the Ministerial Roundtable and speak on "Natural Gas: Overcoming Market and Policy Hurdles to the Golden Age of Gas" along with Energy Ministers from Ministers Qatar, Brunei and Senior Representatives from Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) of Japan and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). Energy Ministers from Saudi Arabia, Russia, UAE, Thailand, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Brunei are also participating in the AMER.

In the recent years, India has played a leadership role in Oil and Gas sector. On 18th October 2017, Minister Pradhan participated in the 6th Annual LNG Producers Consumer Conference held in Tokyo, Japan and called for establishing a Liquid, Flexible and Global LNG Market between the countries providing a framework to cooperate in facilitating flexibility in LNG contracts, abolition of Destination Restriction Clause and also explore possibilities of cooperation in establishing reliable LNG spot price indices reflecting true LNG demand and supply. Shri Pradhan, during his meetings and interactions with OPEC Secretary General, has called for replacing the 'Asian Premium' with 'Asian Discount'. He has emphasized the implementation of 'Responsible and Reasonable Pricing' by producing countries. In this background, the IEF, whose membership accounts for 90% of global supply and demand for oil and gas, is an important forum to share India's views on global oil and gas scenario and the changes that are required to balance it better and benefit not only producers, but also consumers. The 7th AMER at Bangkok will be an important IEF event before India hosts the 16th IEF Ministerial meeting.

India is the current Chair of IEF and will host the 16th Ministerial Conference of the IEF in India schedule during April 2018. During his participation in the 7th AMER, Minister Pradhan will invite his counterparts from Asian countries to participate in the prestigious

16th IEF Ministerial Conference in India.

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Bombay Blood: how the rare blood type was discovered

B.S. Sridhar, who has rare Bombay Blood Group. Photo: G.R.N. Somashekar

Donating blood to the needy is a noble act of saving lives. Most of us are ready to do so. But the doctor first ensures the type of blood we carry, since our blood comes in various physiological types or groups. The general types are A, B, AB and O. Matching of the blood types of the donor and the recipient is vital, else it could lead to serious life-threatening complications.

It is in this connection that a heart-warming piece of news was reported about two weeks ago regarding a life-saving instance of blood donation. An infant, Sandesh Kumar from Gorakhpur, U.P., was found to have an inborn heart condition that needed surgery to set it right. This required blood donation. But the youngster has a very rare blood type. His blood is not O, A, B, or AB, but a special type called (hh)- a rare one first discovered in Bombay in 1952, and hence christened as Bombay Blood. People who carry this rare blood type, about 1 in 10, 000 Indians, can accept blood only from another Bombay Blood type individual, and not from anyone who is O, A, B or AB type.

Fortunately for baby Kumar, this problem was posted on the internet by an acquaintance of the family, and out volunteered as many as 10 individuals. The NGO called The Think Foundation, whom they got in touch with, asked donors to come forward and donate their blood in a donation centre in Mumbai. Three of them, Mr Prabodh Yatnalkar of Pune, and Alec Fernandez and Mehul Bhelekar from Mumbai came forward and donated their Bombay Blood. The blood was air-flown to Delhi where Kumar's father received it and Kumar was treated.

Why is it called Bombay Blood, and how was it discovered? Dr Durgadas Kasbekar of CDFD Hyderabad has written a detailed and lucid article about it in the forthcoming issue of the journal *Indian Journal of History of Science*, and I give a short summary of it here. It was in 1952 that Drs. Y.M. Bhende, C.K. Deshpande and H.M. Bhatia of the Seth Gordhandas Sunderdas Medical College, Mumbai published a note in *The Lancet* (pp. 903-4, May 3, 1952) about two patients (X, a railway worker and Y, a stab wound victim) who needed blood transfusion. None of the blood types known until then worked for them. The moment their blood samples were mixed with any of the above types, the blood coagulated or clumped up. The doctor trio tried the blood of over 160 donors and found at last that one from Mr. Z, a resident of Bombay, suited the type of both patients X and Y. This donor blood type was then named by Dr. Bhende and others as the 'Bombay Blood Type.' Technically it is now termed the (hh) type of blood.

What is the biology behind this exceptional blood type? To understand this, let us first look at what each blood group type contains. Blood contains red blood cells (and other cells that are not relevant for us here, floating in a fluid called plasma. Red blood cells carry on their surface a set of markers with which the plasma interacts. This compatibility or cross-talk between the cell and the plasma is what makes each blood type special. The markers on the cell are determined by a master type called H, out of which are generated types A, B, AB and AO. When blood transfusion occurs, the compatibility between the donor blood cell type and the plasma of the recipient becomes vital, else the blood may coagulate or clump up, causing serious danger. Thus people with A type blood can accept blood from A type or O type and not from AB or B type donors. And they can donate, in turn, to those with A or AB types. Those with B type can receive from B or O types, and can donate to those with B or AB types. Those with AB type blood can receive from any one and donate to other AB. Finally those with O type blood can receive only from O, but can donate their blood to A, B, O or AB- universal donors. In contrast, the Bombay doctors found that the hh type (Bombay type people) can accept only from other hh type, and also can receive only from the hh types. This makes the Bombay Blood types a very special and rare category of

people.

How did this happen and why are these people so rare? It is largely because of extensive inbreeding within the same lineage or close-community marriages, often consanguineous, such that the 'blood type' or the gene pool is greatly restricted. Such intra-community marriages have happened in small isolated communities such as the gypsies, Russian Jewish or Parsi communities. It is thus likely that the Bombay Blood types have common ancestral origins. This special feature is occasionally dramatized in plays and movies, such as in the Telugu film *Okkadunadu* where the villain (antagonist) finds to his dismay that the hero (protagonist) was the one who donated his Bombay Blood to save him. And in the Hindi film *Kahaani* the villain was exposed since he needed Bombay Blood for transfusion.

Bombay has many reel life heroes, but to me, the heroes in real life are the Yatnalkars, Fernandezes and Bhalekars, who helped save young Kumar and such needy fellow-citizens, and the Think Foundation and their officer Vinay Shetty. They with their Big Bs (Bombay Blood) deserve our applause and best wishes for the New Year.

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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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Cabinet clears stake sale in Dredging Corp.

The government on Tuesday approved the sale of its entire 73.47% stake in Dredging Corporation of India Ltd. (DCI), official sources said.

They said the Cabinet had approved the sale of the government's entire 73.47% stake in the company, which could fetch about Rs. 1,400 crore for the exchequer.

The dredging company is under the administrative control of the shipping ministry.

Core group clears sale

It is involved in maintenance dredging, capital dredging, beach nourishment, land reclamation, shallow-water dredging, project management consultancy and marine construction. A core group of secretaries on disinvestment, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, had already approved the sale of DCI.

The government think tank NITI Aayog too had favoured disinvestment.

The Dredging Corporation of India stock hit the 20% upper circuit at at Rs. 669.95 on the BSE on Wednesday.

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What is Cobra effect in Political economy

This refers to the phenomenon wherein policies that are aimed at addressing a problem only manage to worsen it by leading to some unintended consequences. The term originates from the story of a policy pursued by the British colonial government in India to tackle the menace caused by a huge population of cobras out in the open. It tried to incentivise the capture of cobras by providing a bounty, but the policy led to an actual increase in the cobra population as people began to breed new cobras in order to seek the bounty. The cobra effect is usually cited to emphasise that good intention alone does not necessarily translate into desirable results.

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

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Maximum age of joining National Pension System (NPS) increased from the existing 60 years to 65 years under NPS- Private Sector.

Maximum age of joining National Pension System (NPS) increased from the existing 60 years to 65 years under NPS- Private Sector.

In continuance of the several initiatives under taken by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) during the last few years to increase the pension coverage in the country, PFRDA has now increased the maximum age of joining under NPS-Private Sector (i.e. All Citizen and Corporate Model) from the existing 60 years to 65 years of age.

Now, any Indian Citizen, resident or non-resident, between the age of 60- 65 years, can also join NPS and continue up to the age of 70 years in NPS. With this increase of joining age, the subscribers who are willing to join NPS at the later stage of life will be able to avail the benefits of NPS.

NPS provides a very robust platform to the subscriber to save for his/her old age income security. Due to the better healthcare facilities and increased fitness, along with the opportunities and avenues available in the private sector as well as in the capacity of self-employment, more and more people in their late 50s or 60s are now living an active life allowing them to be employed productively.

The subscriber joining NPS beyond the age of 60 years will have the same choice of the Pension Fund as well as the investment choice as is available under the NPS for subscribers joining NPS before the age of 60 years.

Subscriber joining NPS after the age of 60 years will have an option of normal exit from NPS after completion of 3 years in NPS. In this case, the subscriber will be required to utilize at least 40% of the corpus for purchase of annuity and the remaining amount can be withdrawn in lump-sum.

In case of such subscriber willing to exit from NPS before completion of 3 years in the NPS, he/she will be allowed to do so, but in such case, the subscriber will have to utilize at-least 80% of the corpus for purchase of annuity and the remaining can be withdrawn in lumpsum.

In case of unfortunate death of the subscriber during his stay in NPS, the entire corpus will be paid to the nominee of the subscriber.

The increase in joining age will provide the options to the subscribers who are at the fag-end of the employment and expecting lump-sum amount at the time of retirement, but willing to defer their retirement planning for future, to open the NPS account and contribute the lump-sum corpus to NPS for better fund management by Professional Fund Manager to fetch better returns and plan for the regular income after some time. The Annuity rates available in the older age fetch better annuities than that at the age of 60 or less age.

This initiative will allow a larger segment of the society particularly senior citizens to reap the benefits of NPS and plan for their regular income.

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All 4 wheel Motor Vehicles sold after 1st December 2017 to be fitted with FASTags**All 4 wheel Motor Vehicles sold after 1st December 2017 to be fitted with FASTags**

The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has issued a Gazette Notification today according to which all four wheel motor vehicles sold on or after 1st December 2017 will have FASTags fitted on them by the manufacturer of the vehicle or its authorized dealer, as the case may be. In case of vehicles that are sold as drive away chassis without wind screen, FASTag will have to be fitted by the vehicle owner before it is registered. Necessary amendments have been made to the relevant sections of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 in this regard.

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Visit of Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan to Bangkok to attend the 7th Asian Energy Ministers' Round Table

Visit of Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas, Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Shri Dharmendra Pradhan to Bangkok to attend the 7th Asian Energy Ministers' Round Table

Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas Shri Dharmendra Pradhan concluded 2-day visit to Bangkok today where he participated in the 7th Asian Energy Ministers' Round Table organised by International Energy Forum (IEF). India is the current Chair of the IEF which is the largest inter-governmental organisation in the field of oil and gas comprising 72 member countries, accounting for 90% of global supply and demand of oil and gas. Members include developing, developed, OPEC, Non-OPEC and G20 countries. 18 of the G20 countries are members of IEF.

During the visit, Shri Pradhan met his counterparts from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Thailand, Bahrain, Brunei, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Kuwait, Yemen and other countries. Speaking at a Plenary session on Natural Gas, he highlighted the importance of overcoming market and policy hurdles and move to a flexible, transparent and non-discriminatory global LNG trading regime which would expedite ushering in the golden age of gas. He also highlighted efforts of the government to move to a gas based economy and the avenues for FDI in building infrastructure for gas including LNG terminals, pipelines, CGD etc. He highlighted the unprecedented leap of 30 places made by India in the ease of doing business and also how PM Ujjwala Scheme can be a model to be adopted in developing countries of Asia and Africa.

Minister Pradhan held a detailed bilateral meeting with the Saudi Energy Minister Mr. KHALID AL-FALIH. The Saudi Minister congratulated for India gaining 30 positions in World Bank Ease of Doing Business index. The two Ministers reviewed entire gamut of oil and gas cooperation between the two countries.

Shri Pradhan met Mr. U WIN KHIANG, Minister of Energy and Electricity of Myanmar. He expressed keenness to closely collaborate with India and learn from Indian experience on meeting consumer requirement of petroleum products.

Shri Pradhan invited the Ministerial counterparts to attend the IEF Ministerial meeting which India will host in New Delhi on 10-12 April, 2018. The event is expected to be attended by above 50 energy ministers, heads of international organizations like OPEC, IEA, IGU and CEOs of Global oil majors. This would be the largest congregation in the oil and gas sector at the Ministerial level.

The Minister visited a Skill Development Centre in Bangkok. He also addressed the India-Thai Chamber of Commerce, a 50-year-old prestigious body, where he elaborated the economic successes of last 40 months and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision of New India. He appealed the Indian origin business persons to remain connected to India through whichever way possible.

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PM to inaugurate World Food India 2017**PM to inaugurate World Food India 2017****India gears up to welcome Global Food Titans**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, will inaugurate World Food India 2017 on 3rd November 2017 from Vigyan Bhavan New Delhi. WFI is the most anticipated international mega food event, as India welcomes to host biggest ever congregation of global investors and business leaders of major food companies from 3-5 November in New Delhi. Organized by Ministry of Food Processing Industries under leadership of Union Minister Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal, World Food India aims to transform Food Economy and realize the vision of doubling of farmers' income by establishing India as a preferred investment destination and sourcing hub for the global food processing industry. This is the first time that India is hosting such an event for the Food processing sector. World Food India platform will strengthen India's position as a Global Food Factory and is a positive step towards making the Country Food Secure.

India is expected to attract an investment of US\$ 10 billion in food processing sector and generate 1 million jobs in the next 3 years. World Food India 2017 gears up to host over 2,000 participants, over 200 companies from 30 countries, 18 ministerial and business delegations, nearly 50 global CEOs along with CEOs of all leading domestic food processing companies, and representatives of 28 States in India. Germany, Japan and Denmark are Partner Countries to World Food India. Italy & Netherlands are the Focus Countries. Specially curated experiential platform 'Food Street' specially curated by Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, is a lively vibrant zone, that will showcase Indian and foreign cuisines using Indian ingredients, flavours and fragrances to celebrate India's rich cultural heritage, the diverse uniqueness of its produce to create contemporary renditions and fusion food. After the inauguration from Vigyan Bhavan, the Prime Minister will visit the Food Street at India Gate Lawns opposite National stadium.

At the inaugural, host Union Minister for Food Processing Industries Smt Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Sadhvi Niranjana Jyoti will be joined by Chief Ministers of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. Ministerial Delegations from a number of countries, leading global and Domestic CEOs, etc will also be present in the inaugural session.

Exclusive CEOs roundtables have also been scheduled with Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs Shri Arun Jaitley and Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Suresh Prabhu with CEOs of leading global & Indian food processing companies. Illustrative list of Industry Captains participating in World Food India from across the globe and India includes Mr Paul Bulcke, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Nestle, Mr Pieter Boone, Chief Operating Officer & CEO, Metro Cash and Carry, Mr Brian J McNamara, CEO, GSK Consumer Healthcare, Ms. Amanda Sourry, President, Food Unilever; Mr. Sharafuddin Sharaf, Al – Sharaf Group; Mr. Yusuff Ali, Managing Director, LuLu Group, Mr Kishore Biyani, CEO, Future Group; Mr Krish Iyer, CEO, Walmart India; Mr Amit Agrawal, CEO, Amazon, India to name a few. A total of 60 Global CEOs including Asia Pacific (APAC) leadership of leading companies will be interacting with leading CEOs from 100+ top Indian food processing leaders. Over 1000 B2B meetings are expected to take place over three days.

International Ministerial & business delegations with 200+ members from 15 countries will take part in B2B/B2G meetings. The mega event would also host 8 sectoral conferences, 2 plenary sessions on "India the preferred destination" with the Finance Minister of India as the Guest of Honour and one on "One Nation, one food law- an enabling regulatory environment for investment

in the food sector” in association with the Food Standards and Safety Authority of India. In addition, there are 20 State sessions and 6 country sessions. 7 sectoral publications would be released at the event.

A massive exhibition spread over 40,000 sq mtrs in the verdant C- Hexagon lawns of India Gate is expected to attract significant footfalls. More than 800 global companies representing 22 Countries & domestic companies will be exhibiting. Special focus on Farmer Producer Organizations & Women Entrepreneurs will connect them to corporates – international & Indian- increasing opportunities for sourcing & business.

Ministry of Food Processing Industries’ Theme Pavilion provides an exciting view of India’s offering to the world in terms of products, a geo mapping of produce availability and mega food parks. The event is supported by Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Development of North East Region, Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Civil Aviation.

[Fair Facts:](#)

[Exhibition Highlights:](#)

[Conferences Schedule - World Food India:](#)

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POWERGRID completes Govt.'s prestigious project extending Grid connectivity to Leh-Ladakh region in J&K

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First-time ever in India that any 220kV voltage level substation is built at a high altitude of over 11,500 ft.

POWERGRID has successfully completed and charged 220 kV S/c Leh - Khalsti Line section of 220 KV S/c Alusteng (Srinagar) - Leh Transmission line, along with 220/66 kV GIS sub-stations at Leh and Khalsti on 31st Oct'17. This is the first time in the country that any 220kV voltage level substation is built at such a high altitude of over 11500 ft.

This is a prestigious project of Govt. of India for extending Grid connectivity to difficult Geographical areas of Leh- Ladhakh Region in Jammu & Kashmir. Foundation of this strategically important project was laid by the Prime Minister in Aug.'14 (12.08.2014). Implementation of Srinagar-Leh Transmission System has been entrusted to Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID).

Commissioning of these elements will facilitate delivery of power from the Nimmo Bazgo (3x15MW) Hydro-electric power stations in Leh/Ladhakh Region, with reliability.

Balance sections of this project, namely Khalsti-Kargil-Drass-Alusteng(Srinagar) section is under progress, which upon completion, will facilitate Transfer of power to Ladakh region, directly from Northern Grid, in all seasons, with reliability.

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Hyderabad to host 3 day Conference to discuss urban transport challenges and solutions from tomorrow

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Efficient, coordinated use of different modes of transport, ensuring mobility access to all, climate friendly transport planning to be discussed

'Intelligent, Inclusive and Sustainable Mobility' is the theme of Conference

Initiatives and experiences of 86 cities including 36 foreign cities to be discussed

Road Safety, Transit Oriented Development and Introduction of Tram services in Hyderabad to be discussed

Two special sessions for Mayors and Municipal Councilors from 5 Southern States

1,000 officials, experts from 25 foreign countries and 20 Indian States to participate

Vice-President Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu to inaugurate tomorrow; Telangana CM and Union Minister Shri Hardeep Singh Puri to attend inaugural session

About 1,000 policy makers including Mayors and Municipal Councilors from the five southern States, administrators, experts, urban planners, researchers and technology and service providers from over 20 Indian States and 25 foreign countries will converge at the iconic HITEX City in Hyderabad for a three day Conference from tomorrow to discuss issues, challenges and solutions related to transport and mobility in the cities and towns.

Vice-President of India Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu will inaugurate the 'Urban Mobility India Conference and Expo' tomorrow. Chief Minister of Telangana Shri K.Chandrasekhara Rao and Union Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri will also address the inaugural session setting the tone for deliberations over the next three days.

Hyderabad was decided as the venue for the tenth UMI Conference and Expo by Shri M.Venkaiah Naidu last year when he was the Union Minister of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. Hyderabad is hosting this Conference for the first time since UMI Conference was introduced in 2008. This Conference is being organized jointly by the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of Telangana and CODATU, a French Transport Institute.

UMI Conference aims at promoting dissemination of information and exchange of ideas on urban transport and mobility issues and the best practices being followed in the cities across the world. At the Hyderabad Conference, initiatives and experiences in respect of various aspects of urban transport of 86 cities including 36 foreign cities will be presented as case studies for detailed discussion.

Case studies of foreign cities to be discussed include Boudeau and Lyan (France), Lausanne (Switzerland), Lisbon (Portugal), Gaudalajara (Mexico), Curitiba (Barzil), Bangkok (Thailand), Santiago (Chile), Constantine (Algeria), Cape Town (South Africa), Rabat (Morocco), Dhaka (Bangladesh) etc.

Indian city case studies to be presented and discussed include three relating to Hyderabad viz., Road Safety Aspects, Transit Oriented Development and Introduction of Tram Services

besides Parking Policy, Planning and Implementation in Vijayawada, initiatives and experiences of Mysuru, Bengaluru, Chennai, Trivendrum, Varanasi, Lucknow, transport planning for Maha Kumbh Mela to be held in Allahabad in 2019, Indore, Bhopal, Amritsar, Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Chandigarh, Kolkata etc.

A total of 60 Plenary, Special and Technical Sessions will be held over the next three years for a detailed discussion on Intelligent Transport Solutions, Inclusive Urban Transport and Sustainable Urban Transport Planning.

The highlight of the Hyderabad Conference is two Special Sessions for Mayors and Municipal Councilors from the States of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Inclusive and Sustainable Mobility and Intelligent Mobility.

Intelligent Transport Solutions (ITS) are advanced ICT based applications for enhancing the efficiency of use of different modes of transport in cities through better coordination and by informing the users to make safe, quick and smarter use of transport networks. ITS are used for effective management of traffic and mobility.

Inclusive Urban Transport Planning seeks to ensure the right of access to public spaces and particularly, to public transport systems for all. In the present scenario, road spaces in Indian cities are being used more by the vehicle owning sections at the cost of the poor and the marginalized.

Sustainable Urban Transport and Mobility aims at integrating environmental concerns with transport planning so that urban residents are not deprived of quality air.

UMI Conferences are being organized to further the objectives of the National Urban Transport Policy which lays stress on 'moving the people rather than the cars'.

Hyderabad Conference will deliberate on various components of the chain of urban transport from conceptualization of urban transport projects, design, financing and execution. The broad themes to be discussed include; Mobility for All, Multi-modal Integration, Inclusive Planning, New Paradigms of Mobility, Smart Cities and Mobility, Electric Mobility, Shared Mobility, Linking Urban Transport and Environment, Informal Transport Systems, Using Urban Transport Planning as an Opportunity, Efficient and Sustainable City Bus Service Systems, Financial Planning for Urban Transport Projects, Land Value Capture and Transit Oriented Development, Metro Rail Policy etc.

Nine leading transport technology and service providers will display the latest technologies for the benefit of city and State Governments.

The conclusions and recommendations of the Hyderabad Conference will be presented by Shri Durga Shanker Mishra, Secretary(Housing & Urban Affairs) during the Valedictory Session on Monday i.e November 6, 2017.

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Jnanpith Award for Krishna Sobti

Hindi litterateur Krishna Sobti has been chosen for this year's Jnanpith Award, the Jnanpith Selection Board announced on Friday.

"The Jnanpith Selection Board has announced the recipient of the 53rd Jnanpith Award for the year 2017 in a meeting. It went to eminent Hindi Litterateur Krishna Sobti," the Board said in a statement.

Born in 1925 in Gujarat, now in Pakistan, Ms. Sobti, 92, is known for experimenting with new writing styles and creating "bold" and "daring" characters in her stories who were ready to accept all challenges.

Her language is highly influenced by the intermingling of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi cultures.

"Sobti is a path breaking novelist. She has immensely enriched Hindi literature," the statement by the board chaired by noted scholar, writer and critic Namwar Singh, said.

The writer's choice of subjects spans Partition, relationships between men and women, the changing dynamics of Indian society, and the gradual deterioration of human values.

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First Heli Expo India & International Civil Helicopter Conclave Inaugurated Today**First Heli Expo India & International Civil Helicopter Conclave Inaugurated Today**

The 1st Heli Expo India and International Civil Helicopter Conclave-2017 is inaugurated in New Delhi today by the Uttarakhand Tourism Minister Shri Satpal Maharaja ji in the presence of the Secretary, Civil Aviation Shri R.N. Choubey, CMD Pawan Hans, Dr. B. P. Sharma and other dignitaries. The first issue of Pawan Hans Magazine *Aviation Today* is also unveiled by the chief guests on this occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the Uttarakhand Tourism Minister said that the helicopter taxi services have a huge potential for enforcing law and order, air ambulance services, to check forest fire and can provide better connectivity to religious and tourist destinations located in rough terrain of hilly areas.

On this occasion the Secretary, Civil Aviation Shri R.N. Choubey said that India has achieved a growth rate of about 20% in domestic air travel section in the last three years, which is the highest growth rate in the world Civil Aviation Sector. He said however, that this growth rate is confined to fixed wing traffic only and the helicopter traffic is much less in India. He said that the National Civil Aviation Policy tries to address this gap. As per the new NCAP, helicopters are free to fly from point to point without prior ATC clearance in airspace below 5000 feet. Shri Choubey said the aviation agencies should start exploring the option to start helicopter taxi services between Delhi -NCR and other North Indian States.

This two days 1st Heli Expo India & International Civil Helicopter Conclave-2017 is organised by Pawan Hans Limited, a Mini Ratna company of Ministry of Civil Aviation in association with PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry with the theme of 'Enhancing Connectivity' at the Pawan Hans Heliport, Rohini, New Delhi. Experts from Industry and Defence Forces and representatives from ICAO and SAARC countries attended the conclave.

An exhibition is also organised at the venue. The second day is open for public, where one can visit the exhibition and pre-book the Delhi Darshan joy rides by Helicopter.

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Cauvery Tribunal Gets Six Months Extension

Cauvery Tribunal Gets Six Months Extension

Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has extended the term of Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal by six months upto May 02, 2018.

Cauvery is an interState basin having its origin in Karnataka and flowing through Tamil Nadu and Puduchery before outfalling in Bay of Bengal. The sharing of waters of the Cauvery has been the source of a serious conflict between the states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The genesis of this conflict rests in two agreements in 1892 and 1924 between the erstwhile Madras Presidency and Kingdom of Mysore.

In this regard, Government of India on June 02, 1990 constituted the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) to adjudicate the water dispute regarding interstate river Cauvery and the river valley thereof among the States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.

The Tribunal was asked to submit its report by August 05, 2005. The term of the tribunal was extended for one year upto August 06, 2006 and again for six months upto February 05, 2007.

CWDT gave its report and decision u/s 5(2) of the ISRWD Act, 1956 on February 05, 2007. The party States and Central Govt filed application for clarification/further guidance u/s 5 (3) of the above said Act on April 27, 2007, April 30, 2007 and May 03, 2007 and the Tribunal had to submit a further report within one year from May 03, 2007. The Central Govt. on the requests made by the tribunal from time to time extended the period of the submission of the said further report upto November 02, 2017. Now the tribunal has again sought an extension and hence the Govt. has extended the period upto May 02, 2018.

Meanwhile, the Party States also filed Special Leave Petition (SLPs) against the above mentioned report and decision of the Tribunal before the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court on May 05, 2007 granted Special Leave in the matter.

A Protem Supervisory Committee was constituted for implementation of the final order dated February 5, 2007 as notified vide Notification dated February 19, 2013. The Supervisory Committee consists of the Secretary, Union Ministry of Water Resources as Chairman and the Chief Secretaries of the respective States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union Territory of Puducherry as Members. So far eight meetings of this Committee have been held on June 01, 2013, June 12, 2013, July 15, 2013, November 08, 2013, September 28, 2015, September 12, 2016, September 19, 2016 and February 17, 2017 at New Delhi.

Decision of CWDT has been challenged by party States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala before Supreme Court by filling Civil Appeals. Supreme Court in its order dated

December 09,2016 directed that these Civil Appeals are maintainable and the matter is sub judice in the court.

Samir/SKP

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Col Rajyavardhan Rathore to attend World Youth Forum at Sharam El Shiekh, Egypt

Col Rajyavardhan Rathore to attend World Youth Forum at Sharam El Shiekh, Egypt

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) Youth Affairs and Sports Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore has left to attend World Youth Forum, scheduled to be held at Sharam El Shiekh, Egypt. Col Rathore has been deputed on behalf of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to represent the country at the Forum.

The five-day forum will be inaugurated by the President of Egypt Mr Abdelfateh El Sisi tomorrow. The Summit segment is expected to be attended by the Heads of State/Government, Ministers of youth from 14 countries and Representatives of UN, Arab League and African Union. The Forum aims to provide a platform to the youth from all over the globe to engage with the key global policy makers.

The forum will cover role of youth in business and innovation, challenges and making of future leaders, gender equity and women empowerment among other things.

AD

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President of India is in Chhattisgarh; Addresses the Chhattisgarh Rajyotsava**President of India is in Chhattisgarh; Addresses the Chhattisgarh Rajyotsava**

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, addressed the Chhattisgarh Rajyotsava today (November 5, 2017) in Naya Raipur.

Speaking on the occasion, the President congratulated people of Chhattisgarh on the 17th anniversary of the formation of the State.

The President said that Chhattisgarh has immense potential for development. The forests, rivers and minerals are priceless natural resources for the State. But the biggest assets are the honest and friendly people of Chhattisgarh.

The President said that Chhattisgarh has done many things in the field of public welfare and development that have been praised throughout the country, and from which other states have learnt a lot. Chhattisgarh is the first state in the country to enact 'Food and Nutrition Security Act'.

The President said that under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Raman Singh commendable work has been done for STs, SCs, the underprivileged, farmers, women, youth and other sections of society. He congratulated the Chhattisgarh administration and the people for this. He stated that the development of Chhattisgarh can be an example of development for the rest of the country.

Earlier in the day, the President paid tributes at the Shahidi Smarak Sthal in Raipur. Tomorrow, he will visit the Guru Ghasidas Jaitkham and attend the bhoomi puja for a Saamudayik Bhavan at Girodhपुरi in Chhattisgarh.

[Text of President's address in Hindi is attached.](#)

AKT/NT

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Inauguration of Three-Day International Conference – ‘FIPSPHYSIOCON 2017’**Inauguration of Three-Day International Conference – ‘FIPSPHYSIOCON 2017’**

"FIPSPHYSIOCON 2017", Conference on Human Physiology - VII Congress of Federation of Indian Physiological Societies (FIPS) along with XXIX Annual Conference of the Physiological Society of India (PSI) organised by Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Science (DIPAS) of DRDO was inaugurated at Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute (VPCI), University of Delhi today. The objective of the conference is to update the scientific community about most recent advances in human Physiology in extreme environments, Neuroscience, Yoga, Sport Physiology and translational research.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman DRDO and Secretary, Department of Defence Research & Development Dr S Christopher emphasised on the importance of quality research and its application for tangible products and solutions to major problems. He highlighted the importance of Yoga and other approaches to improve human capabilities in difficult environmental conditions and terrains. In this context he urged the entire scientific community to utilise the facilities like highest altitude research station created by DRDO at Changla (17,660 ft), Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir.

Director DIPAS and Convener of the conference Dr. Bhuvnesh Kumar in his welcome address deliberated the importance of the theme "Integrating Physiological and Biomedical Science Approaches to Improve Performance, Health and Safety" and various topics of the conference in orations, key note addresses, plenary sessions, 16 sessions, 118 lectures and 140 posters by the 300 delegates from India, USA, UK, Kyrgyz Republic and Malaysia.

President of PSI Prof. Amar K. Chandra in his presidential address highlighted the necessity of the formation of the Federation of Indian Physiological Societies by combining PSI, SAPI, APPI, ISCAP and its role to facilitate the scientific interaction between physiologists of this country with their international counterparts.

Distinguished Scientist & DG Life Sciences, DRDO, President, FIPS Dr. Shashi Bala Singh in her address focused on optimisation of physical performance with interdisciplinary approaches. She also cited the unique mechanism of human body system by emphasising on different important aspects like sophisticated neural processing and energy requirements of human brain. She highlighted the collaborative approaches not only within the physiological sciences but also in a broader spectrum involving physical sciences and engineering.

MJPS/NA/ NM/DK

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What is the 'Warsaw convention' in Law?

This refers to an international agreement that defines the rules and regulations that govern civil aviation. It was initially signed by a small group of countries but has since been amended multiple times and now been adopted by most countries in the world. Among other things, the Warsaw Convention defines the potential liability that an international carrier faces with regards to the air transport of people and luggage of various kinds. It helps provide a common framework for dispute resolution between parties belonging to different countries.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Shri Radha Mohan Singh to inaugurate the three-day Organic World Congress – 2017 in Greater Noida

Shri Radha Mohan Singh to inaugurate the three-day Organic World Congress – 2017 in Greater Noida

1,400 representatives from 110 countries and 2000 Indian delegates to participate in Organic World Congress-2017

(Curtain Raiser)

Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh will inaugurate the three-day Organic World Congress – 2017 being organized at India Expo Centre in Greater Noida. It will see the participation of 1,400 representatives from 110 countries, and 2000 delegates from India. The Organic World Congress (OWC) is organized once every three years in a different country and this time it is being organised in India. The last edition of the Organic World Congress took place in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2014. The International Federation of Organic Farming Movements (IFOAM) and OAFI are organizing the event where 55 seeds group from 15 Indian states will showcase 4,000 varieties of seeds.

The goal is to move from organic India to the organic world. Shri Singh said it is important to understand that India is one of the oldest organic agricultural nations of the world. Even today, large areas and regions of the country practice traditional organic farming. One of the highlights of the event is the exhibition of carefully preserved diverse indigenous seed varieties over generations.

The inauguration ceremony will also be attended by Minister of Agriculture, Bhutan Shri Yeshey Dorji; Minister for Commerce and Industry, Shri Suresh Prabhu; Sikkim's Chief Minister, Pawan Kumar Chamling; Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Smt. Krishna Raj; Haryana Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister, Shri Om Prakash Dhankar; Odisha Agriculture Minister, Shri Damodara Rout; Kerala Agriculture Minister, V.S. Sunilkumar and hundreds of experienced organic farmers, scientists and traders.

SS/AK

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PM congratulates Chennai on city's inclusion in UNESCO creative Cities Network

PM congratulates Chennai on city's inclusion in UNESCO creative Cities Network

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has congratulated people of Chennai on inclusion of Chennai in UNESCO creative Cities Network.

The Prime Minister said, "Congratulations to the people of Chennai on the city's inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network for its rich musical tradition. Chennai's contribution to our rich culture is precious. This is a proud moment for India."

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Andaman's new taste is sweet-and-sour

Wild cousinThe newly discovered banana has fruit with prominent seeds (right). It is critically endangered.

Botanists in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have been quietly going bananas. And it is not their fault, for the islands are a biodiversity hotspot that hosts seven different species of wild banana that we know of, not to mention numerous, as yet undocumented, others.

The latest discovery, published in the *Nordic Journal of Botany*, is of a species of wild banana named *Musa paramjitiana*, in honour of Paramjit Singh, who happens to be the director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI). The species was found in North Andaman's Krishnapuri forest, six kilometres from any human habitation.

Height

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

"No population has been located in the other regions of Andaman Islands, and the drastic disappearance of its mixed forest habitat indicates that the species should be considered Critically Endangered (CR), based on IUCN Red List categories and criteria," observed the article by Lal Ji Singh, a BSI scientist.

According to Mr. Singh, the fruit is part of the diet of local tribes. "The fruits and seeds have ethno-medicinal importance. Pseudo-stem and leaves of these species are also used during religious and cultural ceremonies," he added.

Conserve germplasm

"These discoveries present a great opportunity for plant breeders and horticulture experts to improve the existing banana crop. The germplasm of all the wild banana species needs to be conserved on an urgent basis, since most of these are found in very small habitats and at risk of extinction," Mr. Singh said.

In 2014, he discovered *Musa indandamanensis*, another wild banana, in a remote tropical rain forest on the Little Andaman island. It has dark green cylindrical flower buds.

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Olive Ridleys keep date with Odisha

A file photo of Olive Ridley turtles nesting on the Odisha coast.

Olive Ridley turtles have kept their date with Gahirmatha beach in Odisha's Kendrapara district, known as world's largest rookery of this endangered species, arriving just offshore for mating in large numbers.

"Olive Ridley pairs have been seen swimming near Gahirmatha coast since October last week. We hope that turtles would scale the sand slope in large numbers to lay eggs in January and February," said Bimal Prasad Acharya, Divisional Forest Officer of Mangrove Forest Division (Wildlife), Rajnagar, on Thursday.

Offshore congregation of Olive Ridley pairs has been observed along 8 km of the Habelighati shoreline. The spectacular sight fascinates nature lovers and scientists.

To ensure safe mating, day and night patrolling had been intensified so that fishing attempts could be checked, said Subrat Patra, Gahirmatha forest range officer. Mechanised fishing spells the biggest trouble for turtles as they get entangled in the trawl net.

In 2016-17, around 9.75 lakh Olive Ridley turtles came out from the sea to lay eggs along the Odisha coast.

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President of India to launches Bihar Krishi road map 2017-2022**President of India to launches Bihar Krishi road map 2017-2022**

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, launched the Bihar Krishi Road Map 2017-2022 in Patna today (November 9, 2017).

Speaking on the occasion, the President said it was a moving and emotional experience for him to come to Bihar for the first time as President of India. He would always remember the regard and affection received from people of all sections and regions of the State during his tenure as the Governor of Bihar.

The President stated that the centenary year of the Champaran Satyagraha is being commemorated from April 2017. As such this was the best time to introduce the new 'Agricultural Road Map' in the interests of farmers. Mahatma Gandhi had emphasised through the Satyagraha that farmers are at the centre of Indian life and policy making. And this remains true even today.

The President said that the Government of Bihar had launched the first 'Agricultural Road Map' in 2008 after consulting farmers, agricultural scientists and other stakeholders. The 2017 road map is the third. It provides comprehensive and coordinated plans for the development of agriculture. All concerned Departments have been directed to design their policies keeping the welfare of farmers in mind. This is a fundamental change. The President expressed confidence that the 3rd Agricultural Road Map' released today will further energise the agricultural sector's performance in Bihar and empower the farming community.

AKT/HS/SK

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Cabinet gives nod for expo centre

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved a proposal to develop an Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (ECC) in the national capital at an estimated cost of Rs. 25,703 crore by 2025.

Once fully operational, the Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre at Dwarka is expected to bring New Delhi in the league of Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore in the area of exhibition market, an official statement said, adding that currently India lacked an integrated world class facility which can meet the requirements of global ECC operators.

The project is estimated to generate more than five lakh jobs.

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Centre approves creation of National Testing Agency

The move will reduce CBSE's burden of conducting entrance examinations

The Union Cabinet on Friday approved the creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.

Its creation will relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) – which conducts exams like the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test – and the All India Council for Technical Education of the burden of conducting entrance tests.

The Hindu had first reported on December 13, 2016, about the Centre's move to set up the NTA.

“The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the creation of a National Testing Agency (NTA) as a Society registered under the Indian Society Registration Act, 1860, and as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions,” said a press release.

The NTA will begin by conducting exams managed by the CBSE and gradually conduct other examinations too.

“The entrance examinations will be conducted in online mode at least twice a year, thereby giving adequate opportunity to candidates to bring out their best,” the release added. “In order to serve the requirements of the rural students, it would locate the centres at sub-district/district level and as far as possible would undertake hands-on training to the students.”

The NTA will be chaired by an eminent educationist appointed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. There will be a Board of Governors comprising members from user institutions.

Grant from Centre

The Centre will give an initial grant of Rs. 25-crore to the NTA to start its operations in the first year. Thereafter, it will be self-sustaining. “Establishment of NTA will benefit about 40 lakh students appearing in various entrance examinations. It will... also bring in high reliability, standardized difficulty level for assessing the aptitude, intelligence and problem solving abilities of the students,” the release said.

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Recommendations made On GST Rate changes by the GST Council as per discussions in its 23rd Meeting on 10th November, 2017 held at Guwahati**Recommendations made On GST Rate changes by the GST Council as per discussions in its 23rd Meeting on 10th November, 2017 held at Guwahati**

- a) In the meeting held today, that is 10th November, 2017, the Council has recommended major relief in GST rates on certain goods and services. These recommendations spread across many sectors and across commodities.
- b) As per these recommendations, the list of 28% GST rated goods is recommended to be pruned substantially, from 224 tariff headings [about 18.5% of total tariff headings at 4-digit] to only 50 tariff headings including 4 headings which have been partially reduced to 18% [about 4% of total tariff headings at 4-digit].
- c) Further, the Council has recommended changes in GST rates on a number of goods, so as to rationalise the rate structure with a view to minimise classification disputes.
- d) The Council has also recommended issuance of certain clarifications to address the grievance of trade on issues relating to GST rates and taxability of certain goods and services.
- e) On the services side also, the Council recommended changes in GST rates to provide relief to aviation & handicraft sectors and restaurants.

2. Major recommendations of the Council are summarised below.

(I) **Pruning of list of 28% rated goods:** The Council has recommended reduction in GST rate from 28% to 18% on goods falling in 178 headings at 4-digit level (including 4 tariff heading that are partially pruned). After these changes, only 50 items will attract GST rate of 28%.

- a) **Goods on which the Council has recommended reduction in GST rate from 28% to 18% include:**
 - v Wire, cables, insulated conductors, electrical insulators, electrical plugs, switches, sockets, fuses, relays, electrical connectors
 - v Electrical boards, panels, consoles, cabinets etc for electric control or distribution
 - v Particle/fibre boards and ply wood. Article of wood, wooden frame, paving block
 - v Furniture, mattress, bedding and similar furnishing
 - v Trunk, suitcase, vanity cases, brief cases, travelling bags and other hand bags, cases
 - v Detergents, washing and cleaning preparations
 - v Liquid or cream for washing the skin

- √ Shampoos; Hair cream, Hair dyes (natural, herbal or synthetic) and similar other goods; henna powder or paste, not mixed with any other ingredient;
- √ Pre-shave, shaving or after-shave preparations, personal deodorants, bath preparations, perfumery, cosmetic or toilet preparations, room deodorisers
- √ Perfumes and toilet waters
- √ Beauty or make-up preparations
- √ Fans, pumps, compressors
- √ Lamp and light fitting
- √ Primary cell and primary batteries
- √ Sanitary ware and parts thereof of all kind
- √ Articles of plastic, floor covering, baths, shower, sinks, washbasins, seats, sanitary ware of plastic
- √ Slabs of marbles and granite
- √ Goods of marble and granite such as tiles
- √ Ceramic tiles of all kinds
- √ Miscellaneous articles such as vacuum flasks, lighters,
- √ Wrist watches, clocks, watch movement, watch cases, straps, parts
- √ Article of apparel & clothing accessories of leather, guts, furskin, artificial fur and other articles such as saddlery and harness for any animal
- √ Articles of cutlery, stoves, cookers and similar non electric domestic appliances
- √ Razor and razor blades
- √ Multi-functional printers, cartridges
- √ Office or desk equipment
- √ Door, windows and frames of aluminium.
- √ Articles of plaster such as board, sheet,
- √ Articles of cement or concrete or stone and artificial stone,
- √ Articles of asphalt or slate,
- √ Articles of mica
- √ Ceramic flooring blocks, pipes, conduit, pipe fitting

- √ Wall paper and wall covering
- √ Glass of all kinds and articles thereof such as mirror, safety glass, sheets, glassware
- √ Electrical, electronic weighing machinery
- √ Fire extinguishers and fire extinguishing charge
- √ Fork lifts, lifting and handling equipment,
- √ Bull dozers, excavators, loaders, road rollers,
- √ Earth moving and levelling machinery,
- √ Escalators,
- √ Cooling towers, pressure vessels, reactors
- √ Crankshaft for sewing machine, tailor's dummies, bearing housings, gears and gearing; ball or roller screws; gaskets
- √ Electrical apparatus for radio and television broadcasting
- √ Sound recording or reproducing apparatus
- √ Signalling, safety or traffic control equipment for transports
- √ Physical exercise equipment, festival and carnival equipment, swings, shooting galleries, roundabouts, gymnastic and athletic equipment
- √ All musical instruments and their parts
- √ Artificial flowers, foliage and artificial fruits
- √ Explosive, anti-knocking preparation, fireworks
- √ Cocoa butter, fat, oil powder,
- √ Extract, essence and concentrates of coffee, miscellaneous food preparations
- √ Chocolates, Chewing gum / bubble gum
- √ Malt extract and food preparations of flour, groats, meal, starch or malt extract
- √ Waffles and wafers coated with chocolate or containing chocolate
- √ Rubber tubes and miscellaneous articles of rubber
- √ Goggles, binoculars, telescope,
- √ Cinematographic cameras and projectors, image projector,
- √ Microscope, specified laboratory equipment, specified scientific equipment such as for meteorology, hydrology, oceanography, geology

b) Goods of the following categories are entitled to a special rate of 12%:

(ii) Other goods of the following categories are entitled to a special rate of 12%: dressings, mixed condiments and mix

- vii. Printing ink
- viii. Hand bags and shopping bags of jute and cotton
- ix. Hats (knitted or crocheted)
 - x. Parts of specified agricultural, horticultural, forestry, harvesting or threshing machinery
- xi. Specified parts of sewing machine
- xii. Spectacles frames
- xiii. Furniture wholly made of bamboo or cane

b) 18% to 5%

- i. Puffed rice chikki, peanut chikki, sesame chikki, revdi, tilrevdi, khaza, kazuali, groundnut sweets gatta, kuliya
- ii. Flour of potatoes put up in unit container bearing a brand name
- iii. Chutney powder
- iv. Fly ash
- v. Sulphur recovered in refining of crude
- vi. Fly ash aggregate with 90% or more fly ash content

c) 12% to 5%

- i. Desiccated coconut
- ii. Narrow woven fabric including cotton newar [with no refund of unutilised input tax credit]
- iii. Idli, dosa batter
- iv. Finished leather, chamois and composition leather
- v. Coir cordage and ropes, jute twine, coir products
- vi. Fishing net and fishing hooks
- vii. Worn clothing
- viii. Fly ash brick

d) 5% to nil

- i. Guar meal
- ii. Hop cone (other than grounded, powdered or in pellet form)
- iii. Certain dried vegetables such as sweet potatoes, maniac
- iv. Unworked coconut shell
- v. Fish frozen or dried (not put up in unit container bearing a brand name)
- vi. Khandsari sugar

e) Miscellaneous

- i. GST rates on aircraft engines from 28%/18% to 5%, aircraft tyres from 28% to 5% and aircraft seats from 28% to 5%.
- ii. GST rate on bangles of lac/shellac from 3% GST rate to Nil.

(III) Exemption from IGST/GST in certain specified cases:

- i. Exemption from IGST on imports of lifesaving medicine supplied free of cost by overseas supplier for patients, subject to certification by DGHS of Centre or State and certain other conditions
- ii. Exemption from IGST on imports of goods (other than motor vehicles) under a lease agreement if IGST is paid on the lease amount.
- iii. To extend IGST exemption presently applicable to skimmed milk powder or concentrated milk, when supplied to distinct person under section 25(4) for use in production of milk for distribution through dairy cooperatives to where such milk is distributed through companies registered under the Companies Act.
- iv. Exemption from IGST on imports of specified goods by a sports person of outstanding eminence, subject to specified conditions
- v. Exemption from GST on specified goods, such as scientific or technical instruments, software, prototype supplied to public funded research institution or a university or IISc, or IITs or NIT.
- vi. Coverage of more items, such as temporary import of professional equipment by accredited press persons visiting India to cover certain events, broadcasting equipments, sports items, testing equipment, under ATA carnet system. These goods are to be re-exported after the specified use is over.

(IV) Other changes for simplification and harmonisation or clarification of issues

- i. To clarify that inter-state movement of goods like rigs, tools, spares and goods on wheel like cranes, not being in the course of furtherance of supply of such goods, does not constitute a supply. This clarification gives major compliance relief to industry as there are frequent inter-state movement of such kind in the course of providing services to customers or for the purposes of getting such goods repaired or refurbished or for any self-use. Service provided using such goods would in any case attract applicable tax.
- ii. To prescribe that GST on supply of raw cotton by agriculturist will be liable to be paid by the recipient of such supply under reverse charge.
- iii. Supply of e-waste attracts 5% GST rate. Concerned notification to be amended to make it amply clear that this rate applies only to e-waste discarded as waste by the consumer or bulk consumer.

(V) Changes relating to GST rates on certain services

(A) Exemptions / Changes in GST Rates / ITC Eligibility Criteria

- i. All stand-alone restaurants irrespective of air conditioned or otherwise, will attract 5% without ITC. Food parcels (or takeaways) will also attract 5% GST without ITC.
- ii. Restaurants in hotel premises having room tariff of less than Rs 7500 per unit per day will attract GST of 5% without ITC.
- iii. Restaurants in hotel premises having room tariff of Rs 7500 and above per unit per day (even for a single room) will attract GST of 18% with full ITC.
- iv. Outdoor catering will continue to be at 18% with full ITC.
- v. GST on services by way of admission to "protected monuments" to be exempted.
- vi. GST rate on job work services in relation to manufacture of those handicraft goods in respect of which the casual taxable person has been exempted from obtaining registration, to be reduced to 5% with full input tax credit.

(B) Rationalization of certain exemption entries

- i. The existing exemption entries with respect to services provided by Fair Price Shops to the Central Government, State Governments or Union Territories by way of sale of food grains, kerosene, sugar, edible oil, etc. under Public Distribution System (PDS) against consideration in the form of commission or margin, is being rationalized so as to remove ambiguity regarding list of items and the category of recipients to whom the

exemption is available.

- ii. In order to maintain consistency, entry at item (vi) of Sr. No.3 of notification No. 11/2017-CT(R) will be aligned with the entries at items (ii), (iii), (iv) and (v) of Sl.No.3. [The word "services" in entry (vi) will be replaced with "Composite supply of Works contract as defined in clause 119 of Section 2 of CGST Act, 2017"].
- iii. In order to obviate dispute and litigation, it is proposed that irrespective of whether permanent transfer of Intellectual Property is a supply of goods or service.-
 - (i) permanent transfer of Intellectual Property other than Information Technology software attracts GST at the rate of 12%; and
 - (ii) permanent transfer of Intellectual Property in respect of Information Technology software attracts GST at the rate of 18%.

(C) Clarifications

- i. It is being clarified that credit of GST paid on aircraft engines, parts & accessories will be available for discharging GST on inter-state supply of such aircraft engines, parts & accessories by way of inter-state stock transfers between distinct persons as specified in section 25 of the CGST Act.
- ii. A Circular will be issued clarifying that processed products such as tea (i.e. black tea, white tea etc.), processed coffee beans or powder, pulses (de-husked or split), jaggery, processed spices, processed dry fruits & cashew nuts etc. fall outside the definition of agricultural produce given in notification No. 11/2017-CT(R) and 12/2017-CT(R) and therefore the exemption from GST is not available to their loading, packing, warehousing etc.
- iii. A suitable clarification will be issued that (i) services provided to the Central Government, State Government, Union territory under any insurance scheme for which total premium is paid by the Central Government, State Government, Union territory are exempt from GST under Sl. No. 40 of notification No. 12/2017-Central Tax (Rate); (ii) services provided by State Government by way of general insurance (managed by government) to employees of the State government/ Police personnel, employees of Electricity Department or students are exempt vide entry 6 of notification No. 12/2017-CT(R) which exempts Services by Central Government, State Government, Union territory or local authority to individuals.

3. It is proposed to issue notifications [giving effect to these recommendations of the Council] on 14th/15th November, 2017, to be effective from 00hrs on 15th of November, 2017.

DsM/SBS

Cabinet approves appointment of Second National Judicial Pay Commission for Subordinate Judiciary in the country

Cabinet approves appointment of Second National Judicial Pay Commission for Subordinate Judiciary in the country

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved appointment of Second National Judicial Pay Commission (SNJPC) for Subordinate Judiciary in the country.

The Commission is to be headed by Shri Justice (Retd.) P. Venkatrama Reddi, former Judge of Supreme Court of India. Shri R. Basant, a former Judge of the Kerala High Court is the Member of the Commission.

The Commission will make its recommendations to the State Governments preferably within a period of 18 months.

It will examine the present structure of emoluments and conditions of service of Judicial Officers in the States and UTs. The Commission aims to evolve the principles which would govern pay structure and other emoluments of Judicial Officers belonging to the Subordinate Judiciary of the country. It will examine the work methods and work environment as also the variety of allowance and benefits in kind that are available to Judicial Officers in addition to pay and to suggest rationalization and simplification thereof.

The Commission will devise its own procedures and formulate modalities necessary for accomplishing the task. The Commission also aims at making the pay scales and conditions of service of Judicial Officers uniform throughout the country.

The recommendations of the Commission will help in promoting efficiency in Judicial Administration, optimizing the size of judiciary etc. and to remove anomalies created in implementation of earlier recommendations.

AKT/VBA/SH

END

In finance, what is 'pull to par'?

This refers to the tendency of the price of a bond in financial markets to converge towards its face value as the bond nears its maturity. Pull to par happens because any financial security is priced based on the potential future cash flow that it can provide its owner combined with the amount of time that the investor must wait before receiving the cash. If the buyer had purchased the bond at a discount, the price of the bond begins to increase towards its face value as the time left for its maturity decreases. In the case of a bond bought at a premium, its price begins to decrease towards its face value as its time to maturity decreases every day.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

END

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What does Louisiana Purchase mean?

This refers to a historic land deal signed between the U.S. and France in 1803, wherein France agreed to sell its large North American territory of Louisiana to the U.S. government. After the successful execution of the deal, the land territory under the sovereign control of the U.S. government doubled in size. The deal was struck between U.S. President Thomas Jefferson and Emperor Napoleon in France. The Louisiana Purchase is considered to be a distress sale by Napoleon who urgently needed money to fund his war efforts in Europe.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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PM visits IRRI, Mahaveer Philippine Foundation**PM visits IRRI, Mahaveer Philippine Foundation**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today visited the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), at Los Banos, in Philippines. IRRI is a premier research organisation dedicated to reducing poverty and hunger through rice science; improving the health and welfare of rice farmers and consumers; and protecting the rice growing environment for future generations.

The Prime Minister reviewed a photo exhibit showcasing flood tolerant rice varieties; drought tolerant rice varieties; salinity tolerant rice varieties; and IRRI's work with women farming cooperatives.

The Prime Minister undertook a symbolic ground breaking for a new plot for submergence tolerant rice varieties. He unveiled a plaque to mark the inauguration of the Shri Narendra Modi Resilient Rice Field Laboratory. He presented two Indian rice seed varieties to the IRRI gene bank.

During the course of the visit, the Prime Minister interacted with several Indian scientists working at IRRI.

The Prime Minister also visited the Mahaveer Philippine Foundation in Manila. This is a long-running humanitarian cooperation programme, between India and the Philippines, and was set up by an Indian origin Mayor of Manila Dr. Ramon Bagatsing. The Foundation, in association with Mahaveer Viklang Sahayta Samiti, has been instrumental in the fitment of Jaipur Foot to needy amputees. The Prime Minister interacted with people who have benefited from the Jaipur Foot.

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National Certification System for Tissue Culture Raised Plants

National Certification System for Tissue Culture Raised Plants

Stakeholders discuss ways to realize full potential of Certification System

Tissue Culture Industries, Farmers and Mission Directors of State Horticulture Mission/ Senior Officials of Horticulture Department in the State's dealing with tissue culture plants/quality planting material interacted at a Stakeholder Meet on "National Certification System for Tissue Culture Raised Plants (NCS-TCP)" to identify the way forward to realize the full potential of this certification system which is unique, dynamic and comprehensive in nature.

Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology conducted the meeting in New Delhi today to create awareness among all the Stakeholders particularly key Officials from Centre and State Government's Agriculture and Horticulture Departments.

In his keynote address, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Shri. S. K. Pattanayak stressed on a system in which all tissue culture material would be procured from accredited laboratories and the need for participation of states in such a system. He said that India is doing very well in tissue culture research and that scientific institutions of international repute is now open for Indian scientists for new research. He underlined the need for fund for popularization of tissue culture from the Ministry of Agriculture.

In his inaugural address, Secretary Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Professor K VijayRaghavan, highlighted the strong foundation of partnership between farmers and scientific community and added the need to have a well articulated project for new improved varieties for horticulture. Since India is the only country to develop this certification system, Professor VijayRaghavan pointed out that this progress can be used for building capacities in the neighbouring countries and that it would be an important step in science diplomacy.

Highlighting the structure and current status of NCS-TCP and the impact it has made on production of quality materials in different states, Dr RenuSwarup, Senior Advisor, DBT stressed on the need for popularising tissue culture plants across India by 2020 and enlisting the participation of the states in the process.

Government of India established the "**National Certification System for Tissue Culture Raised Plants (NCS-TCP)**" authorizing Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science & Technology as the Certification Agency vide the Gazette Notification dated 10th March 2006 under the "Seeds Act, 1966" for ensuring production and distribution of quality tissue culture planting materials.

With increasing demand for agricultural, forestry, plantation and horticulture crops, the demand for high quality, high yielding, disease free planting stock has been increased

significantly over the last two decades. Conventional propagation method which includes sowing of seeds, propagation by cutting, layering etc suffers from the inherent limitations in the number that can be produced, non-uniformity of quality and incidence of diseases. Plant Tissue Culture has emerged as an important biotechnology and commercially viable tool to multiply elite varieties of high quality, disease free and high yielding plants rapidly in the laboratory irrespective of the season of the year. In India the tissue culture Industry is growing at a rate of 15% per annum.

The purpose of NCS-TCP is to ensure production and distribution of quality tissue culture planting materials. NCS-TCP is a unique quality management system, first of its kind in the world which ensures recognition of Tissue Culture Production Facility for the production of quality planting material and certification of end products.

NCS-TCP has made significant impact in the last one decade of its implementation. Currently, around 80 Companies are recognized. Two Referral Centres and five Test Laboratories are accredited under this system. The recognized companies are eligible for getting their planting material certified from the Accredited Test Laboratories. So far, more than 275 million Tissue Culture plants have been certified through this system.

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Package one of Delhi-Meerut Expressway project to be complete by year-end Package done in record 14 months

Package one of Delhi-Meerut Expressway project to be complete by year-end Package done in record 14 months

Shri Gadkari says development and environment protection should go together

The Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari has reiterated the Government's commitment for speedy completion of highways projects in Delhi NCR in order to decongest the region and cut down vehicular pollution levels by nearly 50 percent. Shri Gadkari did an on the spot inspection of one such project - the Delhi – Meerut Expressway project today, and briefed media persons near Akshardham temple on NH 24.

Speaking on the occasion he said that the first package of the Delhi – Meerut Expressway project stretching from Akshardham Temple to Delhi-UP border will be ready by December this year. The 9 km, 14 lane highway is being completed in a record time of 14 months as against the earlier expected construction period of 30 months. This is also the first national highway in the country with 14 lanes, and has several features that would help reduce pollution. These include a 2.5 metre wide cycle track on either side of the highway, a vertical garden on the Yamuna Bridge, solar lighting system and watering of plants through drip irrigation only. Shri Gadkari said this highway will be developed further upto Lucknow, and will be a lifeline for the people of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. The highway will also reduce traffic congestion on the Delhi – Meerut route, which in turn will lower the pollution levels in the region, he said.

Shri Gadkari further said that work on the Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways around Delhi is also going on at full speed, and the former is likely to be ready before 26th of January next year. Once the NH-24 and the two peripheral expressways are ready, vehicles destined for neighbouring states will be able to bypass Delhi and this will reduce pollution by 50 percent.

The Minister also said that projects worth Rs 40,000 crore are being undertaken to decongest Delhi. These include plans for Dhaula Kuan stretch, Dwarka Expressway and a Ring Road for Delhi the cost for which will be borne jointly by the Centre and Delhi Government.

Apart from speedy construction of highways the Ministry is also taking other steps to check pollution arising from the highways sector. These include actively promoting the use of bio fuel driven vehicles and electric vehicles, greening of highways, covering construction sites to contain dust and promoting the use of waterways. He added that tenders have been issued for dredging of river Yamuna and linking Delhi and Agra through waterways.

Emphasizing that ecology, economy and development should go side by side, Shri Gadkari said that these projects will pave the way for development, employment generation, cleaner atmosphere and hassle free travel for people.

[Please Click here to see the details of Project.](#)

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Portable Diver Detection Sonar**Portable Diver Detection Sonar**

In consonance with Government of India's 'Make in India' Policy; **Indian Navy on 15th November 2017, has concluded a contract with Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division for supply of Portable Diver Detection Sonar (PDDS) under the 'Buy and Make (Indian)' category.** This is the second contract to be signed by the Indian Navy under the 'Buy and Make (Indian)' category to boost Government of India's Defence indigenisation effort. The maiden contract under this category was also signed earlier this year by the Indian Navy for supply of Surface Surveillance Radar for *IN* warships.

Portable Diver Detection Sonar would be manufactured by Tata Power SED in India at their facility at Bengaluru with Transfer of Technology from DSIT Israel. **Induction of weapons and sensors under 'Buy and Make (Indian)' category, is one the numerous measures being taken by the Indian Navy to boost indigenisation for ensuring a self reliant Navy, in line with the Government of India's 'Make in India' initiative.** Induction of Portable Diver Detection Sonar would further enhance Indian Navy's Underwater Surveillance Capability in the field of Low Intensity Maritime Operations. Procurement of these sonars for utilisation onboard ships is being undertaken by the Indian Navy to augment countermeasures against asymmetric threats.

DKS/GY

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The Steering Committee of the South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) met in national capital today and applauded the work done by the Center at a faster pace since its inauguration; Endorses the Center's Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan.

The Steering Committee of the South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) met in national capital today and applauded the work done by the Center at a faster pace since its inauguration; Endorses the Center's Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan.

An Interim Meeting of the Steering Committee of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) was held here today in national capital to assess the Center's activities since its inauguration in February 2017 and to review the Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan. The Committee had met earlier on February 13, 2017 after the inauguration of the Center. Officials from all Six (6) Member countries attended, together with the Development Partner representatives (the European Union, the United Kingdom, Australia, and USAID), and IMF staff.

In his Opening Remarks, the Chairman, Shri Dinesh Sharma, Special Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Government of India noted that "for building SARTTAC to meet its potential, a convergence of bright, right and positive minds are needed". The Steering Committee Members welcomed the speed with which SARTTAC has become operational and the array of capacity development (training and technical assistance), the Center has delivered across all work streams in a short space of time. They strongly supported the demand-driven principles embedded in the preparation of the Work Program. The Committee appreciated the range of training delivered to Member countries, including in-country training and the inclusion of subnational officials from India. There was an appreciation for the efforts being made to blend the training with technical assistance, leveraging the unique design of the Center that allows it to deliver both the types of support. The Committee also recognized the efforts, the Center has been making to customize training that is tailored to the unique needs of the South Asia's economies.

The Committee took note of the large demand from member countries to work with SARTTAC on their capacity development needs; this includes growing interest from India's subnational Governments. Recognizing resource constraints on the center's operations, it supported calls to prioritizing rigorously and continuing to demonstrate results. The Committee members also recognized the high resource costs of customization and agreed that scope to customize all activities was constrained. At the same time, the Committee expected SARTTAC's Budget's to be managed flexibly to ensure the Center was able to respond in an agile way to meet members' needs. Members also took note of the actions required to support and strengthen the selection of training participants to ensure maximum impact.

The Committee endorsed the FY 2018 work plan. It also approved a new work area in Government Finance and Public Debt Statistics, where members have expressed strong demand, and work is underway to plan future technical assistance and training. The Committee welcomed progress in securing over 90 percent of the financing for SARTTAC's first five-year (2017-2022) Phase. SARTTAC was encouraged to continue its dissemination of results, its coordination with external partners in the region, and its

outreach activities. The next Steering Committee meeting will take place in Sri Lanka in May, 2018.

The South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC), which was inaugurated in February 2017, is the first IMF Regional Capacity Development Center to fully integrate training and technical assistance activities. Located in New Delhi, India, SARTTAC works with Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Member countries finance two-thirds of the Center's Budget, with additional funding from the European Union, Korea, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

The IMF's capacity development efforts are part of its core mandate and help Governments modernize their economic policies and institutions. A global network of Regional Capacity Development Centers anchor IMF support for economic institution building and are complemented by global thematic funds for capacity development. They are financed jointly by the IMF, external development partners, and member countries.

SARTTAC website

IMFCapDev on Facebook

IMFCapDev on Twitter

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India hosts congress on military medicine

India is for the first time hosting the World Congress of the International Committee of Military Medicine, which was formally inaugurated by Admiral Sunil Lanba, Navy Chief and Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee on Monday.

“It is a platform to share medical best practices and also foster long term bonds,” said Lt. Gen. Bipin Puri, Director General Armed Forces Medical Services.

Around 350-400 foreign delegates from 80 countries are expected to take part in the 42nd edition of the Congress, themed ‘Military Medicine in Transition: Looking Ahead’.

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President draws less salary than top officials

The President and the Vice- President continue to get salaries less than top bureaucrats and the chiefs of the armed forces, because the laws are yet to be amended to rectify an anomaly in the implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations.

More than a year ago, the Home Ministry prepared a plan for increasing the salaries of the President, the Vice-President and the Governors and forwarded it to the Cabinet Secretariat for the approval of the Union Cabinet, an official of the Ministry said. But no decision had been taken yet.

At present, the President draws Rs. 1.5 lakh a month, the Vice-President Rs. 1.25 lakh and a Governor Rs. 1.10 lakh.

After the Seventh Pay Commission's recommendations were implemented on January 1, 2016, the Cabinet Secretary, the country's top-most bureaucrat, gets Rs. 2.5 lakh a month and a Secretary in the Union government Rs. 2.25 lakh.

The President is the supreme commander of the Army, the Indian Air Force, and the Navy. But his salary is less than those of the chiefs of the three forces, who earn a sum equivalent to the Cabinet Secretary's.

The government spokesperson did not respond to messages regarding the delay in clearing the plan to increase the President's salary to Rs. 5 lakh, the Vice-President's to Rs. 3.5 lakh and a Governor's to Rs. 3 lakh. When the Cabinet approves the proposal, a Bill will be tabled in Parliament, the official said.

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BIZ-INSOLVENCY-PANEL

With the rising number of cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, the government has set up a 14-member panel to identify and suggest ways to address issues in implementation of the law. The Insolvency Law Committee, chaired by Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas, will take stock of the implementation of the Code, according to an official communication.pti

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Cigar-shaped asteroid came from another solar system

A rocky cigar-shaped object detected in space last month came from another solar system, astronomers said on Monday as they confirmed an unprecedented observation.

The discovery may provide clues as to how other solar systems formed, said the researchers, who published their study in the British journal *Nature*.

The asteroid, named Oumuamua by its discoverers, is 400 meters long and highly elongated, perhaps 10 times as long as it is wide.

That odd shape is unprecedented among the some 7,50,000 asteroids and comets observed in our solar system where they formed, said the researchers.

Once a year

They concluded that the cigar-shaped thing is from another solar system due to data on its orbit. Asteroids like Oumuamua enter our solar system about once a year. But they are hard to trace and had not been detected until now, thanks to stronger telescopes.

The detection suggests this object had been wandering through our galaxy, the Milky Way, unattached to any star system for hundreds of millions of years before it ran into ours.

“For decades we’ve theorized that such interstellar objects are out there, and now — for the first time — we have direct evidence they exist,” said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for NASA’s Science Mission Directorate in Washington.

“This history-making discovery is opening a new window to study formation of solar systems beyond our own,” he added.

The asteroid was detected by a telescope in Hawaii. Oumuamua means messenger in Hawaiian.

Tux brushing tussar, cards being exchanged like cocaine packets, billionaires mingled at Illuminating India

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10 new heritage sites commence special sanitation action as the Swachh Iconic Places project under Swachh Bharat Mission completes a year.

10 new heritage sites commence special sanitation action as the Swachh Iconic Places project under Swachh Bharat Mission completes a year.

A two day National Consultation of Swachh Iconic Places (SIP), an initiative of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission began today at New Delhi. Representatives from 20 Iconic Sites including central and State officials, representatives of iconic places and Corporate and development partners including World Bank joined the consultations.

Initiated as a project to implement Prime Minister's vision to take iconic places and their surroundings to higher standards of Swachhata, so that all visitors benefit and also take away home the message of cleanliness, Swachh Iconic Places is now in its second phase.

10 New Iconic sites identified under Phase II are: 1. Gangotri, 2. Yamunotri, 3. Mahakaleshwar Temple, 4. Charminar, 5. Church and Convent of St. Francis of Assisi, 6. Kalady, 7. Gomateshwar, 8. Baijnath Dham, 9. Gaya Tirth and 10. Somnath temple. These phase II SIPs will join 10 iconic places where special Swachhata work is under implementation for about a year. These Phase I iconic places are: 1. Ajmer Sharif Dargah 2. CST Mumbai 3. Golden Temple, 4. Kamakhya Temple, 5. Maikarnika Ghat, 6. Meenakshi Temple, 7. Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, 8. Shree Jagannath Temple, 9. The Taj Mahal and 10. Tirupati Temple.

SIP is a truly collaborative project with three other central Ministries: Urban Development, Culture, Tourism; all levels in the concerned States and more importantly, Public Sector and Private companies as partners. The CSR partners for both the phases are:

1. Hindustan Zinc India Ltd. 2. SBI Foundation 3. HPCL 4. Oil India Ltd 5. Northern Coal Field Ltd 6. BPCL 7. NALCO 8. IOCL 9. GAIL 10. ONGC 11. NHPC 12. NTPC 13. Airport Authority of India 14. Power Grid Corporation (PGCIL) 15. IDEA Cellular 16. Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL).

In his opening address, Secretary, MDWS, Shri Parameswaran Iyer, said that SIP is a unique initiative and is aligned with the PM's vision of achieving high standard of cleanliness and easy access to sanitation at iconic places of historic, religious and tourist

importance. He highlighted the importance of collaboration between multiple agencies, which has accelerated the implementation of action plans.

On this occasion, Secretary, MDWS released a special Compendium and brochure on SIP giving information and progress in the project.

Director General (Special Projects), Swachh Bharat Mission, Shri Akshay Rout presented the SIP status report of previous year and highlighted the key initiatives launched by the Phase I sites towards improving the cleanliness and sanitation facilities.

Phase I iconic sites reported notable initiatives taken by them like improved sewage infrastructure, drainage facilities, installation of Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), improved sanitation facilities, water vending machines (Water ATMs), Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) set-up, structure restoration, roads maintenance, Lighting arrangements, beautification of parks, better transport facilities in approach and access areas besides at the main sites.

The Phase II Iconic sites formulated their Action Plans based on their site needs in consultation with experts and based on learning from phase I implementation.

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World Class Center of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building to come up in Mumbai and Vishakhapatnam

World Class Center of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building to come up in Mumbai and Vishakhapatnam

CEMS to provide skilled manpower for ship building and maritime sector

A world class Center of Excellence in Maritime and Ship Building (CEMS) is being set up by Ministry of Shipping in collaboration with Siemens and Indian Register of Shipping (IRS) under the Ministry's flagship Sagarmala Programme. CEMS will have campuses at Vishakhapatnam and Mumbai, and will provide industry-relevant skill development, equip students with employable engineering and technical skills in the port and maritime sector and contribute to the Government of India's ambitious Sagarmala programme. Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation had announced this at an event in Cochin last week.

CEMS is being set up to meet the domestic skill requirement in ship design, manufacturing, operating and maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO), and aims to become an international nodal centre in South Asia, attracting students from neighboring countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia for skill development in the Port and Maritime sector.

This initiative also adds to the Make in India and Skill India efforts in the maritime sector. CEMS will provide skilled manpower to make vessels for inland waterways, ships, fishing boats and other ancillary manufacturing sectors.

Siemens-a private sector entity is contributing technology, expertise and 87% funding for the center which is being made at a cost of Rs 766 crore. This is the first time such an in-kind grant is being made by Siemens in India. Siemens has also worked with state governments in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh on skilling initiatives.

The Ministry of Shipping's financial contribution is towards capex for procuring of machinery, creation of classrooms, workshop and labs etc., and is a one time-non recurring grant of 50.07 crore. An equivalent amount has been raised by Indian Register of Shipping. The land and building for Vishakhapatnam campus has been provided by Indian Maritime University (IMU) and that for Mumbai campus by IRS.

CEMS will be run by Siemens for two years and thereafter by a Special Purpose Vehicle (a Section 8 nonprofit Company) promoted by IRS. Siemens will handhold this SPV in the third year. CEMS will have a unique hub and spoke delivery model providing industry relevant courses and creating a self sustaining platform. The training will be of two types: full time and co-curricular training (i.e along with regular courses in ITI and polytechnics and engineering colleges). The centre would operate on an open technology platform and provide scalable, modular and independent self learning interactive modules based on Digitally Advanced Interactive System. The total capacity of the COE is 10,512 students per year and the centre will offer paid courses for both domestic and international students but with fees far less than the current fees in the market.

It is expected that CEMS will become a global hub for quality skill development in the port and maritime sector and provide skilled manpower for India's ship building and repair industry.

[To see detailed project details click the link below.](#)

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Shri J P Nadda inaugurates '1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products and International Laws for Trade and Health'

Shri J P Nadda inaugurates '1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products and International Laws for Trade and Health'

India is deeply committed nationally and globally to achieving all public health goals: J P Nadda

"India is deeply committed nationally and globally to achieving all public health goals and also focusing on developing India as a hub for affordable medical devices." This was stated by Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare at the inauguration of '1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products and International Laws for Trade and Health in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', here today. The Health Minister further stated that there is a need for promoting industry and academia collaboration for developing affordable medical products such that innovations and advances in medical sector reach a vast population.

Smt. Anupriya Patel, Minister of State (HFW), Dr. V.K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, Govt. of India, Smt Preeti Sudan, Secretary (Health), Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Secretary, Dept. of Health & Research (DHR) and DG, ICMR and Dr. Jagdish Prasad, Director General Health Services also graced the occasion.

Highlighting the importance of transparency between regulatory authorities and pharma sector, Shri Nadda stated that the coordination between the National Regulatory Authorities and pharmaceutical sector will enable launch and registration of new health technologies. He further said that the dialogue on role of competition in competitive pricing and discussion on related WTO agreements influencing health should lead to a larger umbrella of suggested policy options for the government.

Shri Nadda stated that the 2015 National Medical Device Policy will enable local manufacture in the multiproduct, multidisciplinary industry. "In India, nearly 150 thousand orthopaedic knee procedures are done every day. More investments and more players in the medical devices sector will lead to lowering down of prices and access to medical products as most of the governments are sensitive to access and pricing of medical products," he added.

Addressing the conference via video link, Shri Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Minister of State (HFW) said that research and development in public health should focus on two main aspects. To enable safe, effective and quality medical products for the diseases and rolling out the innovations and inventions along with the learning's from the field to the people. He further stated that the research and development should focus on making the cost of medical devices/products affordable to the people and highlighted the issue of Anti-microbial Resistance (AMR).

Speaking at the function, Smt Anupriya Patel, Minister of State (HFW), stated that India is committed to attainment of the highest possible standards of health for its citizens. She

further said that at the national level, access to medical products (medicines, vaccines, medical devices & diagnostics) is an important facet in the health system as a whole and at the international level, access to medical products is a critical factor for the success of the 2030 sustainable development goals agenda that aims to ensure healthy lives and to promote well-being of people of all ages.

Dr. V.K. Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, Govt. of India stated that there is a need for investment in medical products for preventive therapy and treatment and highlighted the importance of affordability, quality, domestic production capacity and to create an eco-system of policy and innovation for greater accessibility of affordable medical drugs and devices. Dr V K Paul further said that technology is an integral block for strengthening medical systems in any country and must also ensure timely maintenance of medical equipment by suppliers in remote and rural areas such that equipment functions effectively.

Smt Preeti Sudan, Secretary (Health) spoke about the issues of access of medicines and medical products. She said that safe medical products should be available at affordable prices. She further reiterated that the Health Ministry is committed to robust regulatory systems for ensuring safety, quality and efficacy of drugs.

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Secretary (DHR) and DG, ICMR highlighted issues such as how to use TRIPs flexibilities; alternative models for affordable medicines and devices such as voluntary licensing; clear predictable regulatory pathways; more investment in R&D and publicly funded R&D; innovative healthcare service delivery models; anti-biotic stewardship; and collaboration between the public and private sectors including academia to reduce cost of production and delivery.

The Conference is being organized by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare with the support of WHO Country Office for India and in partnership with Indian Society of International Law. The objective of the Conference is to exchange knowledge and expand understanding on contemporary issues in international trade laws and research and innovation for access to medical products to achieve SDG 2030 agenda.

Also present at the event were, Dr. R.K. Vats, Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; Dr. Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative to India; and Dr. EMS Natchiappan, President, Indian Society of International Law, India along with other senior officers of the Ministry, delegates from various countries and representatives of development organisations.

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Water Aid's comments on Swachh Bharat "Out of Order"

Water Aid's comments on Swachh Bharat "Out of Order"

Water Aid has recently released a report entitled "Out of Order – The State of the World's Toilets 2017". This report quotes data from the WHO-UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP), which extrapolates sanitation data based on available data from past studies between 2000 and 2015. This means it misses out on most of the progress under the Swachh Bharat Mission which aims to eradicate open defecation from the country by October 2019.

Recognizing that such an unprecedented commitment to bringing so many people out of open defecation in such a short span of time has no parallels anywhere in the world, the JMP, in the same report, inserted a special section with high praise for the rapid results being seen under the Swachh Bharat Mission, and stating that their report does not capture a lot of the work done since 2015, and hence the data is not up to date.

Egregious mistakes

However, this point has not been mentioned in the report by Water Aid, thereby misleading the readers into believing that this is the present status of sanitation in India. The disparity between the numbers mentioned in this report and reality is extremely stark. This report says that "355 million women and girls are still waiting for a toilet". This is a total departure from reality. The same JMP report confirms that as on June 2017, the total number of people defecating in the open in India has reduced to 350 million, and this has further come down to below 300 million people as on November 2017. The report also mentions that 56% of people in India lack access to safe sanitation, whereas the present number is down to about 28%. In fact, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation maintains a detailed household level database of sanitation coverage on its website, which is also open to the public.

Such statements from an organization of the credibility of Water Aid are factually incorrect and irresponsible, especially since the Water Aid India team has been working closely with the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin, and is fully aware of both the ground work, macro statistics and overall progress. It is unfortunate that these facts were not been communicated by Water Aid India to their global counterparts.

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New direct tax law coming

With the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in place, the government has now turned its attention towards improving India's direct tax regime by constituting a task force to review the country's 56-year old Income Tax law and suggest a new law to replace it.

On Wednesday, the Finance Ministry formed a task force led by Central Board of Direct Taxes Member Arbind Modi to review the Income Tax Act, 1961 and draft a new direct tax law in consonance with economic needs of the country.

Terms of reference

"The terms of reference of the task force is to draft an appropriate direct tax legislation keeping in view the direct tax system prevalent in various countries, international best practices, the economic needs of the country and any other matter connected thereto," the Ministry said in a statement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had sought a redrafting of the archaic Income Tax law to make it simpler and raise India's low direct tax base, at a meeting with tax administrators this September.

The task force had been given six months to submit its report to the Centre. Hence, a decision on the tax law overhaul is unlikely in the 2018-19 Union Budget.

Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian will be a permanent special invitee in the task force that also includes academics, private sector tax experts and a retired Indian Revenue Service officer.

Incidentally, Mr. Arbind Modi was also instrumental in drafting the direct taxes code which was introduced in 2009 by the then Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. The UPA Government subsequently diluted the provisions proposed in the code.

The NDA government had put the code in cold storage after assuming office in May 2014.

'Future-ready'

Rajiv Memani, chairman and regional managing partner, EY, who is one of the members of the tax force, said the government's steadfast focus on undertaking 'bold yet much needed reforms will enhance India's competitiveness and make the country future-ready.'

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Cabinet approves new finance panel

Arun Jaitley

The Cabinet on Wednesday set the ball rolling for the constitution of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, which will decide the devolution formula for revenue-sharing between the Centre and States from the year 2020 till 2025.

The Commission, whose members and terms of reference will be notified soon, will have to grapple with the significant changes in the taxation framework, such as the Goods and Services Tax, which has replaced the earlier indirect taxation system.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that the Cabinet had given an in-principle nod to constitute the Commission and finalise its terms of reference.

"The next step would be to decide on who its members would be and notify the same so that it can begin its work," he said.

The Fourteenth Finance Commission, whose recommendations were accepted by the government and are effective till March 31, 2020, had mooted a ten percentage points jump in States' share of the central pool of taxes from 32% earlier to 42%.

Taxes shared

"India is a Union of States, the Union also has to survive," Mr. Jaitley said in jest, hinting that the Centre hoped the devolution of shareable taxes did not compromise on its own capacity to spend.

"The Fifteenth Finance Commission's recommendations have to be in place before April 1, 2020. The normal experience is that a Finance Commission takes about two years to undertake consultations and finalise its report," said Mr. Jaitley, explaining the timing of the Cabinet decision.

When asked about the terms of reference for the Commission, the Minister said: "Many changes have taken place (since the previous Commission's tenure). Both the Centre and States' expenditure patterns need to be retained and the impact of the new distribution of taxes system on States and the Centre has to be considered by the Commission."

"It is natural that compared to the previous Finance Commissions, the exercise will be different this time. Because, after the GST, it's no longer the same pattern," Mr. Jaitley pointed out.

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Shri Radha Mohan Singh sends a proposal to United Nations for declaring the year 2018 as International Year of Millets

Shri Radha Mohan Singh sends a proposal to United Nations for declaring the year 2018 as International Year of Millets

Shri Radha Mohan Singh, the Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has sent a proposal to United Nations for declaring the year 2018 as 'International Year of Millets'. The proposal, if agreed, will raise awareness about millets among consumers, policy makers, industry and R&D sector. Promotion of production and consumption of millets through conscious efforts at global level is likely to contribute substantially in the fight against targeted hunger and mitigate the effect of climate change in long run. Popularizing millets would benefit future generations of farmers as well as consumers.

Millet is a common term to categorize small-seeded grasses that are often termed nutri-cereals or dryland-cereals, and includes sorghum, pearl millet, ragi, small millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, kodo millet and other millets. An important staple cereal crop for millions of small holder dryland farmers across sub-saharan Africa and Asia, millets offer nutrition, resilience, income and livelihood for farmers even in difficult times. They have multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, fodder, biofuels and brewing. Therefore, millets are Smart Food as they are Good for You, Good for the Farmer and Good for the Planet.

Nutritionally superior to wheat & rice owing to their higher levels of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fiber & minerals such as Iron, Zinc, and Phosphorous, millets can provide nutritional security and act as a shield against nutritional deficiency, especially among children and women. The anaemia (iron deficiency), B-complex vitamin deficiency, pellagra (niacin deficiency) can be effectively tackled with intake of less expensive but nutritionally rich food grains like millets. Millets can also help tackle health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten free, have a low glycemic index and are high in dietary fibre and antioxidants

Adapted to low or no purchased inputs and to harsh environment of the semi-arid tropics, they are the backbone for dry land agriculture. Photo-insensitive & resilient to climate change, millets are hardy, resilient crops that have a low carbon and water footprint, can withstand high temperatures and grow on poor soils with little or no external inputs. In times of climate change they are often the last crop standing and, thus, are a good risk management strategy for resource-poor marginal farmers.

SS/ AK

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Smt. Anupriya Patel inaugurates the National Biomaterial Centre**Smt. Anupriya Patel inaugurates the National Biomaterial Centre**

Smt. Anupriya Patel, Minister of State (HFW) today inaugurated the National Biomaterial Centre (National Tissue Bank) at the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO). The main thrust & objective of this centre is to fill up the gap between 'demand' and 'supply' as well as 'quality assurance' in the availability of various tissues.

Speaking at the function, Smt Anupriya Patel stated that it is important to understand that in India it is mainly the living donors who are donating organs and only about 23% of the organ transplant is being done with organs obtained from the cadavers. "There is a need to promote cadaver or deceased organ donation rather than relying on living donors in order to avoid the risk of commercial trading of organs and also to avoid the inherent risk to the health of the living donor," Smt Anupriya Patel added.

Addressing the participants, Smt Anupriya Patel further stated that it's high time we understand, and also spread awareness in the community at large, that a living person can save the life of only one person but a deceased or cadaver organ donor can save up to 9 lives by donating vital organs. "Apart from promoting organ donation it is also important to improve the infrastructure and capacity of government hospitals to undertake transplantation so that the poor and needy could benefit," she said.

Congratulating Safdarjung Hospital on this initiative, Smt Anupriya Patel stated that deriving inspiration from this more and more government hospitals should come forward and take up organ transplantation task to benefit the poor and needy patients of India.

National level Tissue Bank will fulfill the demands of tissue transplantation including activities for procurement, storage and fulfill distribution of biomaterials. The centre will take care of the tissue allografts that includes bone and bone products e.g. deep frozen bone allograft, freeze dried bone allograft, dowel allograft, AAA Bone, duramater, facialata, fresh frozen human amniotic membrane, high temperature treated board cadaveric joints like knees, hips and shoulders, cadaveric cranium bone graft, loose bone fragment, different types of bovine allograft, used in orthodontics, skin graft, cornea, heart valves and vessels. The Centre will also add other tissues gradually.

The activities of the Centre will include coordination for tissue procurement and distribution, donor tissue screening, removal of tissues and storage, preservations of

tissue, laboratory screening of tissues, tissue tracking, sterilization, records maintenance, data protection and confidentiality, quality management in tissues, patient information on tissues, development of guidelines, protocols and standard operating procedures, trainings and assisting as per requirement in registration of other tissue banks.

Also present at the event were Dr. Jagdish Prasad, Director General Health Services, Dr Sudhir Kumar, Joint Secretary, MoHFW along with the other senior officers of the Health Ministry and NOTTO.

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Constitution of Task Force for drafting a New Direct Tax Legislation**Constitution of Task Force for drafting a New Direct Tax Legislation**

During the Rajaswa Gyan Sangam held on 1st and 2nd September, 2017, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had observed that the Income-tax Act, 1961 (the Act) was drafted more than 50 years ago and it needs to be re-drafted. Accordingly, in order to review the Act and to draft a new Direct Tax Law in consonance with economic needs of the country, the Government has constituted a Task Force with the following Members:

- (i) Shri Arbind Modi, Member (Legislation), CBDT - Convener
- (ii) Shri Girish Ahuja, practicing Chartered Accountant and non-official Director, State Bank of India;
- (iii) Shri Rajiv Memani, Chairman & Regional Managing Partner of E&Y;
- (iv) Shri Mukesh Patel, Practicing Tax Advocate, Ahmedabad;
- (v) Ms. Mansi Kedia, Consultant, ICRIER, New Delhi;
- (vi) Shri G.C. Srivastava, Retd. IRS (1971 Batch) and Advocate.

Dr. Arvind Subramanian, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) will be a permanent Special Invitee in the Task Force.

The Terms of Reference of the Task Force is to draft an appropriate Direct Tax Legislation keeping in view:

- (i) The direct tax system prevalent in various countries,
- (ii) The international best practices.
- (iii) The economic needs of the country and
- (iv) Any other matter connected thereto.

The Task Force shall set its own procedures for regulating its work and shall submit its report to the Government within six months.

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Cabinet approves continuation of the scheme on Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs beyond the 12th Plan Period

Cabinet approves continuation of the scheme on Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs beyond the 12th Plan Period

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for continuation of the scheme on Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) for another three financial years (FYs 2017-18 to 2019-20) and providing Grants-in-aid of Rs.18 crore to the Institute. It will make the Institute self-sustainable by the end of FY 2019-20.

Impact:

- The training programs, research activities and projects conducted by the Institute in partnership with public and private sector in the niche areas of Corporate Governance will enhance the skill sets resulting in increased employability of students as well as professionals.
- The thrust of the Institute is to become a prestigious Institute in the field of Corporate Laws while enhancing its resources and revenues.
- It is envisaged that IICA will be an Institute of National importance thereby becoming an engine of growth leading to increased economic activity.
- The improvement in the professional competence is also expected to help the professionals in tapping employment opportunities in emerging corporate areas including those in overseas.

Background:

The National Foundation for Corporate Social Responsibility (NFCSR) at IICA is responsible for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The Foundation has been designed around the new provisions of Companies Act, 2013. The NFCSR conducts various activities in partnership with Corporates in the field of CSR, oriented towards social inclusion.

IICA is a think-tank and repository of data and knowledge to support rational decision-making for the policy makers, regulators as well as other stakeholders working in areas related to the corporate sector. It offers services to stakeholders in the field of corporate laws, corporate governance, CSR, accounting standards, investor education, etc. Various activities of IICA also help first-generation entrepreneurs and small business for imparting multi-disciplinary skills as they are unable to afford to employ separate experts in management, law, accountancy, etc.

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Cabinet approves revised salaries, gratuity, allowances and pension for the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts

Cabinet approves revised salaries, gratuity, allowances and pension for the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the revision in the salaries, gratuity, allowances, pension etc. of the Judges of the Supreme Court and the High Courts and retired Judges of Supreme Court and High Courts. It follows the implementation of recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission in respect of Civil Servants.

The approval will pave the way for necessary amendments in the two laws viz. Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1958 and High Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1954, which govern the salaries of Chief Justice of India (CJI), Judges of Supreme Court of India, Chief Justices and all Judges of High Courts.

The increase in the salary and allowances etc. will benefit 31 Judges of Supreme Court of India (including the CJI) and 1079 Judges (including the Chief Justices) of High Courts. Besides, approximately 2500 retired Judges will also be benefited on account of revision of pension/gratuity etc.

Arrears on account of revised salaries, gratuity, pension and family pension w.e.f 01.01.2016 will be paid as one time lump sum payment.

Background:

Salaries, gratuity, pension, allowances etc. in respect of Judges of Supreme Court are governed by the Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1958. Salaries etc. of Judges of High Courts are governed by High Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Act, 1954. An amendment in the Acts is required whenever there is any proposal for revision of salaries/pension gratuity, allowances etc. in respect of Judges of Supreme Court and High Courts. Therefore, Government proposes to move a Bill in the Parliament in the ensuing Session for amendment in the relevant Acts for giving effect to the revision of salaries and allowances.

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Cabinet approves setting up of the 15th Finance Commission**Cabinet approves setting up of the 15th Finance Commission**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the setting up of the 15th Finance Commission. Under Article 280 (1) of the Constitution, it is a Constitutional obligation. The Terms of Reference for the 15th Finance Commission will be notified in due course of time.

Background:

Article 280(1) of the Constitution lays down that a Finance Commission (FC) should be constituted "...within two years from the commencement of this Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year or at such earlier time as the President considers necessary...". In keeping with this requirement, the practice has generally been to set up next Finance Commission within five years of the date of setting up of the previous Finance Commission.

Fourteen (14) Finance Commissions have been constituted in the past. The 14th Finance Commission was set up on 02.01.2013 to make recommendations covering the period of five years commencing on 1st April, 2015. The Commission submitted its Report on 15th December, 2014. The recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission are valid upto the financial year 2019-20. In terms of Constitutional provisions, setting up the 15th Finance Commission, the recommendations of which will cover the five years commencing on April 1, 2020, has now become due.

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Cabinet approves Wage Policy for the 8th Round of Wage Negotiations for workmen in Central Public Sector Enterprises

Cabinet approves Wage Policy for the 8th Round of Wage Negotiations for workmen in Central Public Sector Enterprises

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Wage Policy for the 8th Round of Wage Negotiations for workmen in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).

Highlights:

- i. Management of the CPSEs would be free to negotiate wage revision for workmen where the periodicity of wage settlement of five years or ten years has expired generally on 31.12.2016 keeping in view the affordability and financial sustainability of such wage revision for the CPSEs concerned.
- ii. No budgetary support for any wage increase shall be provided by the Government. The entire financial implication would be borne by the respective CPSEs from their internal resources.
- iii. In those CPSEs for which the Government has approved restructuring/ revival plan, the wage revision will be done as per the provisions of the approved restructuring / revival plan only.
- iv. The management of the concerned CPSEs have to ensure that negotiated scales of pay do not exceed the existing scales of pay of executives/officers and non-unionized supervisors of respective CPSEs.
- v. The Management of CPSEs where the five year periodicity is followed have to ensure that negotiated scales of pay for two successive wages negotiations do not exceed the existing scales of pay of executives/officers and non-unionized supervisors of respective CPSEs for whom ten years periodicity is being followed.
- vi. To avoid conflict of pay scales of executives/non-unionised supervisors with that of their workmen, CPSEs may consider adoption of graded DA neutralization and/or graded fitment during the wage negotiations.

- vii. CPSEs must ensure that any increase in wages after negotiations does not result in increase in administered prices of their goods and services.
- viii. The wage revision shall be subject to the condition that there shall be no increase in labour cost per physical unit of output. In exceptional cases where CPSEs are already working at optimum capacity, the administrative Ministry / Department may consult DPE considering industry norms.
- ix. The validity period of wage settlement would be for a minimum period of five years for those who opted for a five year periodicity and for a maximum period of ten years for those who have opted for a ten year periodicity of wage negotiation w.e.f. 01.01.2017.
- x. The CPSEs would implement negotiated wages after confirming with their Administrative Ministry/Department that the wage settlement is in conformity with approved parameters.

Background:

There are about 12.34 lakh employees in 320 CPSEs in the country. Out of these, about 2.99 lakh employees are Board level and below Board level executives and non-unionized Supervisors. The remaining about 9.35 lakh employees belong to the unionized workmen category. Wage revision in respect of unionized workmen is decided by trade unions and managements of CPSEs in terms of guidelines issued by the Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) for wage negotiations.

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PSU oil M&As exempt from CCI nod

Stamp of approval:As per the Competition Act, combinations over and above a certain threshold, need CCI's nod.

Combinations including mergers, acquisitions and amalgamations involving Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) operating in the oil and gas sector, have been exempted from seeking the nod of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for five years from now.

The move, being carried out in "public interest", comes even as the government had said in a statement on November 14 that it was undertaking a number of key economic reforms to fuel the growth and that these included "consolidation of government-run oil companies."

According to a notification by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) dated November 22, "... the Central Government in the public interest hereby exempts all cases of combinations ... involving the CPSEs operating in the Oil and Gas Sectors under the Petroleum Act... and the rules made thereunder or under the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948 ... and the rules made thereunder, along with their wholly or partly owned subsidiaries operating in the Oil and Gas Sectors, from the application of the provisions of sections 5 and 6 of the (Competition) Act (pertaining to combination and their regulation), for a period of five years from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette."

As per the Competition Act, combinations over and above a certain threshold need to get CCI's nod. The MCA, had similarly in August said "the Central Government in the public interest exempts, all cases of reconstitution, transfer of the whole or any part thereof and amalgamation of nationalized banks... from the application of provisions of Sections 5 and 6 of the Competition Act, 2002 for a period of ten years from the date of publication of this notification in the Official Gazette."

In July, the then Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Ministry, Dharmendra Pradhan, had in a statement before the Lok Sabha said that the "Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs in its meeting held on July 19 has given 'in principle' approval for strategic sale of the Government of India's existing 51.11% of total paid up equity shareholding in HPCL to ONGC along with transfer of management control."

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Bamboo ceases to be a tree, freed of Forest Act

Bamboo grown in the forest areas would however come under the Indian Forest Act.

After 90 years, the bamboo has legally ceased to be a tree with the government, on Thursday, amending the Indian Forest Act and axing the bamboo — taxonomically a grass — from a list of plants that also included palms, skumps, brush-wood and canes.

In doing so, said Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan, the government hoped to promote cultivation of bamboo in non-forest areas to achieve the “twin objectives” of increasing the income of farmers and also increasing the green cover of the country. Bamboo grown in the forest areas would continue to be governed by the provisions of the Indian Forest Act.

‘Required permits’

For several years now, the classification of the bamboos as a tree meant that it couldn’t be easily ferried across State borders. It also required permits from village councils and couldn’t be cultivated in non-forest areas.

“This will now create a viable option for cultivation in 12.6 million hectares of cultivable waste land. It will encourage farmers and other individuals to take up plantation/block plantation of suitable bamboo species on degraded land, in addition to plantation on agricultural land and other private lands under the agro-forestry mission,” the Minister added in a press statement.

Experts hail move

The amendment was cleared as an ordinance and is therefore yet to get parliamentary backing. However experts welcomed it saying that it removed ambiguity on the status of bamboo and also brought it in harmony with the related Forest Rights Act. “Tribals have a right to forest produce but its earlier classification posed problems,” said environmental lawyer, Ritwick Datta.

The current demand of bamboo in India is estimated at 28 million tonnes. Though the country has 19% share of the world’s area under bamboo cultivation, its market share in the sector is only 6%. At present, it imports timber and allied products, such as pulp, paper, and furniture. The amendment will help in addressing some of these issues, besides meeting the demand from domestic production, the press note added.

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For fair and evidence-based bail

Bail in its essence is a fine balance between the right to liberty of the person accused of an offence and the interests of society at large. The Law Commission of India has urged the government to adapt the bail law according to the changing times, changing patterns of crimes, and the arbitrariness shown by the judiciary in exercise of its discretion.

While rejecting the idea of a stand-alone law for bail, the 21st Law Commission led by a former Supreme Court judge, Justice B.S. Chauhan, suggests amendments in the Code of Criminal Procedure in its 268th report. The Commission found that the “existing system of bail in India is inadequate and inefficient to accomplish its purpose.”

It notes that grotesque crimes involving extreme violence are on the rise throughout the country. Murder has increased by 250%, rape by 873%, and kidnapping and abduction by 749% since 1953.

Further, with insufficient infrastructure, lack of modernisation of investigative machinery and other challenges, the bail system cannot be fashioned into a panacea to ensure a responsive criminal justice system in India.

Providing core principles and suggesting amendments in exercising the powers to grant or deny bail, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill of 2017 is a breath of fresh air. It underlines that bail practices should be fair and evidence-based. The Law Commission has suggested that decisions about custody or release should not be influenced to the detriment of the person accused of an offence by factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, financial conditions or social status.

It further recommends that bail practices should address two key goals: create safeguards to prevent the risk of the accused failing to appear in court on a scheduled date, and protect the safety of victims of crime, and society.

The Commission also highlights the need to minimise pretrial confinement of an accused.

The report suggests futuristic measures like electronic tagging to reduce both fugitive rates (by allowing the defendant to be easily located) and government expenditures (by reducing the number of defendants detained at state expense).

The Commission proposes a central digital database in the format of a Criminal Tracking Network and Systems scheme to be utilised to ensure that the person accused of an offence marks his appearance.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Centre approves over one lakh crore rupees worth Highway and Shipping Projects for Tamil Nadu

Centre approves over one lakh crore rupees worth Highway and Shipping Projects for Tamil Nadu

Nitin Gadkari says under Prime Minister's initiative permanent solution for water starved Tamil Nadu on the anvil

Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Nitin Gadkari has said that the Centre has approved projects of value of more than one Lakh crore rupees for Tamil Nadu.

These projects will cover the Highways, Shipping and Port and for finding a permanent solution to the irrigation and drinking water requirements of the state.

The Minister was addressing a joint press conference with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Shri Edappadi K. Palaniswami after a review meeting of Central and State government.

Shri Gadkari, announced 40,000 crore rupees worth of Road and Highway projects approved at the meeting today. He outlined the proposed projects with details of the financial outlay.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Eddapadi K. Palaniswamy said that the meeting was fruitful and thanked the Union Minister for largely accepting projects and programmes put forward by the state government.

Union Minister of State for Finance and Shipping, Shri P. Radhakrishnan and Tamil Nadu Transport Minister Shri. M.R.Vijayabhaskar, senior officials of Centre and State governments also attended the meeting.

Focussing on the decongestion of Chennai Traffic, Shri Gadkari said Three New Elevated Corridors have been approved first being the Tambaram- Chengelpatu at a cost of 2250 crores, Poonamalee- Maduravoyal Corridor with an outlay of 1500 crores and the Tiruvallur Corridor budgeted at 1000 crore. He also said that Tambaram- Vandalur ,Vandalur -Guduvanchery section of the Highway will be upgraded to 8 lane Highway with a budget of 72 crores which will also solve the traffic congestion at the Tambaram - Perungalathur bridge.

The Chennai- Bengaluru Expressway is being taken at a projected cost of 20,000 crore

rupees and will boost industrialisation and development activities along the Express way. The Minister requested the state Government to earnestly take up land acquisition, shifting of utilities to help timely starting of the project.

The Minister said to ease the congestion in the extended suburban areas of Chennai, approval has been given for six laning of the Koyambedu- Poonamalee -Wallajahpet road at a cost of 1500 crores.

Listing the new projects to be awarded this year, Mr Gadkari said Tiruchi-Chidambaram Highway project is being taken up with a budgeted outlay of 4000 crore, while the Villupuram- Nagapattinam section is being upgraded at a cost of 6000 crore rupees. Other projects to be approved include Chennai- TADA (500 crore).

Elaborating on the Bhartmala project that links port terminals to the hinterland, he said six projects are being taken up the major one being Nagapattinam to Tuticorin (355 kms), Madurai- Kollam (62kms) Vellakoil-Erode (71kms), Madurai-Natham (38kms), Madurai - Theni(44kms) and Musiri -Namakkal (44kms). Along with these, the ring road development will be taken up in Madurai, Tiruchi and Salem.

Rs. 2000 crore has also been sanctioned to the State PWD to develop the Dindigul-Kottampati road into a National Highway. 1300 kms of State Highways are being upgraded to National Highways in the state. The state highways being upgraded include Perambalur- Attur (55kms), Salem-Vanniyampadi (141kms), Thoppur- Mettur-Erode (85kms), Tirupur-Ottanchatiram (91kms).

In a bid to, reduce traffic accidents, the Centre is funding 2300 crore rupees to take preventive measures in 61 identified black spots where there are frequent accidents take place.

The Minister said the DPR for Madurai, Coimbatore and Salem bus ports – terminals with the latest facilities like an airport will be prepared and the report will be submitted soon.

On the Shipping front, the Minister said Tamil Nadu is only state with three major ports and said these would be enhanced to facilitate exports and industrialisation, and value addition under the Sagarmala programme.

Coal movement from Orissa through Paradip to Ennore and Tuticorin will significantly reduce the logistics cost of coal. He hoped to improve the coal handling productivity in all

three ports. Coastal movement of petroleum products, LPG and automobiles is the lifeline of the industry of Tamil Nadu. Referring to Tuticorin port, shri Gadkari said the depth is to be increased from the present 14m to 16.5 meters at a cost of Rs.3000 crore rupees and this would help the port to handle 1,30,000 tonnage vessels from the present capacity of 60,000 tonnage ships. This would reduce the logistic cost by 30 percent.

He said coastal movement of containers from Chennai to Puducherry will commence soon and this would reduce the congestion on this road sector.

The Minister said a Passenger ferry services between Kanyakumari and Rameshwaram and between Kanyakumari and Thiruvananthapuram are being planned and urged private operators to come forward and participate in the project, stating that the centre would provide full support.

Coastal berths are being built at Cuddalore at a cost of Rs 115 crore and similar facilities are coming at Chennai and Tuticorin ports.

The Minister said that as the Prime Minister has assured a doubling of income of farmers by 2022, the present NDA government has taken up the interlinking of river projects and has given priority to the water scarce southern states. The Minister said Water resources ministry has therefore decided on transfer of surplus Godavari river waters to the Cauvery via the Krishna and Pennar Rivers. He said a meeting of the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu will be convened soon to discuss the project. Initially about 300tmc of water is proposed to be lifted from Godavari river upstream of Pollavaram project and would be released into the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam on River Krishna. Further the water would be taken from Krishna upto Somasilam project on river Pennar and from there to Grand Annaicut on the Cauvery.

KMK/SG

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Human form of “mad cow” disease — Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease — may spread through skin

Cows graze in a field in Vlezenbeek near Brussels, in this August 7, 2015 file photo. The deadly Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease — human form of the ‘mad cow’ disease — may spread through touch, say scientists who found that an abnormal protein linked to the fatal infection can be detected from the skin of patients | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

The deadly Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease — human form of the ‘mad cow’ disease — may spread through touch, say scientists who found that an abnormal protein linked to the fatal infection can be detected from the skin of patients. Scientists from National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Case Western Reserve University in the United States have detected abnormal prion protein in the skin of nearly two dozen people who died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD).

The scientists also exposed a dozen healthy mice to skin extracts from two of the CJD patients, and all developed prion disease.

The study, published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*, raises questions about the possible transmissibility of prion diseases via medical procedures involving skin, and whether skin samples might be used to detect prion disease.

Researchers from NIH’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) stress that the prion-seeding potential found in skin tissue is significantly less than what they have found in studies using brain tissue.

CJD is an incurable and ultimately fatal transmissible, neuro-degenerative disorder in the family of prion diseases.

Prion diseases originate when normally harmless prion protein molecules become abnormal and gather in clusters and filaments in the human body and brain.

The reasons for this process are not fully understood.

The accumulation of these clusters has been associated with tissue damage that leaves sponge-like holes in the brain.

Human prion diseases include fatal insomnia; kuru; Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker syndrome; and variant, familial and sporadic CJD.

Sporadic CJD is the most common human prion disease, affecting about one in one million people annually worldwide.

Other prion diseases include scrapie in sheep; chronic wasting disease in deer, elk and moose; and bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, in cattle.

Most people associate prion diseases with the brain, although scientists have found abnormal infectious prion protein in other organs, including the spleen, kidney, lungs and liver.

Using a test for prion diseases, scientists analysed skin tissue from 38 patients - 23 who had died from CJD, and 15 who died of other causes. They also collected brain tissue from the 23 CJD patients and from seven individuals who died of other causes.

The test correctly detected abnormal prion protein in each CJD patient sample tested and in none

of the non-CJD group.

The scientists then exposed humanised laboratory mice to either brain or skin extracts from two of the CJD patients.

All 12 mice inoculated with brain tissue developed prion disease, as did all 12 inoculated with skin extracts, though disease in the skin group took about twice as long — roughly 400 days — to develop. The group also reported that brain degeneration in both groups of infected mice was similar.

The study authors say the results should generate discussion about potential surgical instrument contamination and risk associated with procedures involving CJD patients.

“This study used humanised mice with tissue extracts directly inoculated into the brain, so the system was highly primed for infection,” said Byron Caughey, NIAID’s Rocky Mountain Laboratories (RML).

“There is no evidence that transmission can occur in real-world situations via casual skin contact. However, the results raise transmission questions that warrant further study,” said Mr. Caughey.

The study also raises the possibility of using skin tissue samples to test for human and animal prion diseases.

The test is widely used with samples of brain and spinal-fluid for the diagnosis of CJD, but such samples are not always available.

World Diabetes Day highlights the implications of neglecting women’s health

The Cardiff University professor, who reported on the enzyme called New Delhi metallo beta lactamase, says China and Pakistan are more serious about anti-microbial resistance genes than India.

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Enhancement of Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) for two subsectors of Textiles Industry

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The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has issued Public Notice no. 42 today by which rates for incentives under the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) for two subsectors of Textiles Industry, that is readymade garments and made ups have been enhanced from two percent to four percent of value of exports with effect from 01.11.2017 till 30.06.2018.

The estimated annual incentives will be Rs. 1,143.15 crore for 2017-18 and Rs. 685.89 crore for 2018-19. This measure will incentivise the exports of labour intensive sectors of readymade garments and made ups and contribute to employment generation.

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On the Visit of the IUGS Delegation

A high level delegation of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) comprising its President, Prof. Qiuming Cheng; Prof. S C Finney, Secretary General; and Prof. H Kitazato, Treasurer visited India during 20-24 November 2017 to discuss the preparatory aspects of the 36th International Geological Congress (IGC) to be held in Delhi, India in the year 2020.

Described as the Olympics of Geosciences, the IGCs are held quadrennially under the aegis of the IUGS through a process of global bidding. India won the bid in 2012 at Brisbane, Australia to host the Congress in 2020. The win is a remarkable achievement as the event makes a come back to the Indian soil after nearly 6 decades much to the excitement of the entire geoscientific community.

The event is being jointly funded by the Ministry of Mines and Ministry of Earth Sciences with the active support of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), and the Science Academies of the other neighbouring co-host countries, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The delegation, during its visit, inspected the India Expo Mart Limited, the venue for the event and expressed its satisfaction over the facilities available and its convenient location. The team described the state-of-the-art Centre as impressive, and equipped in all respects to host the mega Congress which has conventionally an attendance to the tune of 6000 delegates.

The IUGS dignitaries interacted with Shri Arun Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Mines; Dr. M Rajeevan, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, senior officers of the two Ministries, and key functionaries of the Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee is headed by Dr. V P Dimri as its President, Dr. P R Golani as its Secretary General, Prof. Talat Ahmad, VC, Jamia Millia Islamia as the Chair, Scientific Program Committee, Prof. Somnath Dasgupta, former VC, Assam University as Chair, Field Trip Committee and other eminent geoscientists as Chairs of various other subcommittees. The IUGS was given detailed accounts of the progress made on technical, administrative and other

fronts by the Organizing Committee. The Scientific Program, Field Excursions and the Legacy & Publication Programs and an overview of the preparations were presented to the visitors.

The IUGS team expressed its satisfaction over the entire spectrum of preparatory activities and described the quantum of work done as focussed and effective. It was of the view that the necessary pro-rata ground work has been done as part of the homework. They stated that going by the momentum of the preparatory activities, India is firmly getting ready for a very successful IGC.

The key functionaries, during their visit, also delivered lectures to a select audience comprising eminent geoscientists, academia, students and researchers.

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Rajasthan seeks nod to bring tigers from other States

Cat love: A file photo of a tigress and its cub at Ranthambhore. Special Arrangement

After seeking the Centre's nod for shifting of tigers from Ranthambhore to Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve, the Rajasthan government has asked for permission to bring tigers from other States for their rehabilitation and cross-mating in order to develop strong breeds of the big cat.

State Forest and Environment Minister Gajendra Singh said two tigers could soon be relocated from the Ranthambhore National Park to the Mukundara Hills tiger reserve, located in the Hadoti region, which has been waiting for the big cats since its establishment in 2013.

Mr. Singh, who met Union Environment and Forest Minister Harsh Vardhan in New Delhi on Friday, said the Sariska Tiger Reserve in Alwar district, where the tiger population had vanished a few years ago, had brought back a significant number of big cats. More tiger couples could be rehabilitated there, he added.

The Minister pointed out that shifting tigers to Rajasthan would help resolve the problem of hereditary diseases among them and improve their breeds through cross-mating.

He also sought the Centre's assistance in the relocation of villages situated in the National Park areas and conservation of forest land.

The Mukundara Hills is the third notified tiger habitat in the State, after Ranthambhore and Sariska. Though it was established to cater to the spill over tiger population from Ranthambhore, the majestic cat is still missing from its wildlife population.

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Cooler fabric

On very hot days, there is now an option of switching from cotton shirts to nanofibre shirts in order to cool off!

This new textile prepared using 3D-printed fibre was found to have 55% greater cooling effect than cotton. It also exhibited three times higher tensile strength than pure polyvinyl alcohol fabric.

The nanofibre was made using boron nitride and polyvinyl alcohol. Boron nitride is an effective material in thermal management due to its high thermal conductivity. Unlike most conventional textile fibres that trap the person's body heat inside, the new textile allows body heat to pass through the fabric and escape. Developed by scientists from University of Maryland, US, the results were published in *ACS Nano*.

Energy equivalent to about one solar mass was emitted as a result.

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How the Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park was saved from trees

Grey Francolin | Photo Credit: [Wiki Commons](#)

It is a warm August afternoon, with clouds of wailing kites swirling overhead, as a small group of us enters the rocky valley lying in the shadow of Jodhpur's spectacular Mehrangarh fort. White-eared bulbuls gorge on white berries of ghatbor (*Fleuggia leucopyrus*) bushes nearby as francolins cackle in the distance.

Ahead of us sprawls the Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park, a landscape of ancient rhyolite — volcanic rocks that formed around 700 million years ago — overlaid by pink sandstone. Here, amidst formidable rocks and arid, thorny desert vegetation lies a remarkable story of ecological revival.

Both architectural and ecological restoration are underway in the 72-hectare Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park. We enter the park at the restored Singhoria Pol, an arched gateway through the old city wall. Integrated into Singhoria Pol, along the stone steps and narrow corridors, are well-designed interpretive displays about the geology of the park, about desert ecosystems, the uniquely-adapted native plants, and about the park's history and restoration.

Rao Jodha, the ruler after whom the park and Jodhpur city are named, established the Mehrangarh fort in the middle of the 15th century. Desert Rock Park was established just about 10 years ago, in 2006, by the Mehrangarh Museum Trust.

The Trust then worked with a team guided by the environmentalist and trees aficionado, Pradip Krishen, to ecologically restore the park by painstakingly removing thousands of mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*) shrubs, an invasive species introduced from Central America that had proliferated among the rocks. The restorationists employed the local Khandwalias, expert at detecting hidden cracks and crevices in rocks, to chip away at the stone to remove the invasive mesquite. Over the next seven years, they worked to carefully bring back a multitude of native plant species.

At Singhoria Pol, we meet two of the park's trained naturalists, Sachin Sharma and Harshvardhan Rathore. The two men, dressed in sand-coloured uniforms, lead us on one of the trails into the park.

Near the entrance, in a small raised bed, plants burst forth in a living display of arid-land microhabitats — sandy soil, rocks, calcified or saline soils. We walk along a cool, dark gully, an old aqueduct cut from rock to carry rainwater from a catchment in the north to Padamsar lake at the base of Mehrangarh fort.

Diaphanous mist

After the monsoon rains, it is hard to visualise this as a harsh, arid landscape. A stream of clear water flows down the gully. Beyond, over open terrain, low carpets of coarse grass sway softly in the breeze. The grasses hold spiky flower heads or wispy inflorescences that, in one species, hang like a diaphanous mist over the green blades. The dark pink missi or cowpea witchweed (*Striga gesnerioides*) spikes upward holding delicate pink blossoms. The plant lies ensconced among rocks at the base of a five-foot-tall candelabra-like plant, the succulent, thorny, leafless spurge or thhor (*Euphorbia caducifolia*). Over the pale, sandy or gravelly soils, herbs like *Tephrosia*, *Indigofera*, and creeping *Launaea* sprinkle small, attractive purple, red, and yellow blossoms. From sandy areas and rocky outcrops grow wiry green shrubs like kair (*Capparis decidua*), dangling red flowers, and milkweeds like kheer kheemp (*Sarcostemma acidum*) that

hold white flower clusters, and kheemp (*Leptadenia pyrotechnica*) with their velvety yellow flowers.

Small trees thrust their branches out over the trail: the peeloo or toothbrush trees (*Salvadora persica*), the gum arabic or kumatiyo (*Acacia senegal*) with curved thorns, the desert date or hingoto (*Balanites roxburghii*) with spike-like thorns, and the bordi or jujube tree (*Ziziphus nummularia*) with twigs bearing rows of paired thorns that look like little spears and scimitars that pierce and snag our hats and clothes.

Yet, the harshness and aridity of the landscape is evident. The plants are low, shrubs and trees are scattered and sparse. The stones, hot to the touch even on a late monsoon afternoon, will be blistering in the summer.

Most plants have small leaves, some waxed or sandpapery like the goondi (*Cordia sinensis*), others protected by thorns. To conserve water and survive the heat, many plants have dispensed with regular leaves altogether, and photosynthesise through green stems: wiry as in the kheemp or thread-like in the gymnosperm *Ephedra*. Below, the plants put out deep, wide roots to access the little water found in the landscape that receives only around 600 millimetres of rainfall over 30 rainy days in a year.

The naturalists point to planted saplings, raised in the park's nursery from seeds sourced from mother plants in the wider desert landscape around Jodhpur. Many saplings now grow from the same earthen pits or rock crevices from which the introduced and invasive mesquite was carefully uprooted.

Cackles and chuckles

The ecological restoration in Desert Rock Park has been thoughtfully executed, avoiding the ill-advised tree planting that is often carried out under the guise of 're-greening' the desert. The restoration does not regard the arid, rocky terrain, grasslands and thorn scrub as 'wasteland', as state agencies are wont to do. It recognises the desert and arid-land vegetation as natural ecosystems in their own right.

The contrast is stark: across the city wall lie stone quarries, disturbed soils, and a monotony of *Prosopis*. Inside the park, in the carefully restored, sparse yet vibrant vegetation, a multitude of native arid-land species flourish among ancient rocks. By dusk, we sit quietly on rocks as swarms of little swifts titter and careen in the skies above.

Loud cackles of grey francolins subdue the chuckles of laughing doves — birds of earthen tones merging with the rocks. An Indian crested porcupine emerges from behind a thorny bush, her cloak of quills rustling and clicking as she shuffles along on her crepuscular sortie.

Out of the calm evening at Rao Jodha Desert Rock Park — in the company of rock-loving plants and birds and porcupine — arises a sense that with a little care, people too can blend with the landscape and a fountain of life can indeed spring from a desert.

The author is a scientist and writer with Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru.

A book on geological history that explains climate change

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'No' to Islamic banking

The Union government has no intention to consider introducing Islamic banking, Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said here on Sunday.

Islamic, or Sharia, banking is a system of finance in which interest is not charged.

"In India, the government will not allow Islamic banking because India is a secular and democratic country," the Union Minister said.

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What is 'environmental Kuznets curve' in Economics?

The environmental Kuznets curve states that a country's environment tends to degrade as the country grows richer. But after the country reaches a certain level of economic development, the quality of its environments begins to improve. Supporters of this hypothesis believe that countries need to reach a particular average income level before they can afford to allocate the resources needed to protect the environment. In other words, poor countries do not care much about the environment as they have more pressing problems to solve.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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Coral transplant raises Barrier Reef survival hopes

The Great Barrier Reef is reeling from coral bleaching. | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

Coral bred in one part of the Great Barrier Reef was successfully transplanted into another area, Australian scientists said on Sunday, in a project they hope could restore damaged ecosystems around the world.

In a trial at the reef's Heron Island off Australia's east coast, the researchers collected large amount of coral spawn and eggs late last year, grew them into larvae and then transplanted them into areas of damaged reef.

When they returned eight months later, they found juvenile coral that had survived and grown, aided by underwater mesh tanks.

"The success of this new research not only applies to the Great Barrier Reef but has potential global significance," lead researcher Peter Harrison of Southern Cross University said.

Contrasting approach

"It shows we can start to restore and repair damaged coral populations where the natural supply of coral larvae has been compromised."

Mr. Harrison said his larval-restoration approach contrasts with the current "coral gardening" method of breaking up healthy coral and sticking healthy branches on reefs in the hope they will regrow, or growing coral in nurseries before transplantation. He was optimistic that his approach, earlier successfully trialled in the Philippines in an area of reef highly degraded by blast fishing, could help reefs recover on a larger scale.

"The results are very promising and our work shows that adding higher densities of coral larvae leads to higher numbers of successful coral recruits," he added.

The Great Barrier Reef is reeling from an unprecedented second-straight year of coral bleaching because of warming sea temperatures linked to climate change.

A book on geological history that explains climate change

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N.K. Singh is 15th finance panel chief

The Centre on Monday announced that the Fifteenth Finance Commission would be headed by former Secretary to the government of India N.K. Singh.

The panel, which is to make its recommendations for the five years beginning April 1, 2020, will include Shaktikanta Das, former Economic Affairs Secretary and Anoop Singh, adjunct professor at Georgetown University. The panel is tasked with looking into tax collections and how they are to be divided between the Centre and the States, the principles that should govern the grants in aid to the States and to review the levels of fiscal deficit, among other issues.

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What is 'Dollarisation' in Economics?

This refers to the economic phenomenon wherein people turn to the U.S. dollar as an alternative to their own local currency. Dollarisation happens mainly because of the widespread belief that the value of the U.S. dollar is more stable than other currencies. The dollar thus offers an abode for people looking to safeguard their savings. Sometimes, a country's government may choose to link the supply of its own currency to the dollar in order to boost confidence among people in its long-term value. It is usually countries that have suffered hyperinflation often resort to dollarisation as a means to regain economic confidence.

The definition of harassment needs to be constantly updated, and the process for justice made more robust

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First edition of International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017) kicked off in Jaipur**First edition of International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017) kicked off in Jaipur**

The first edition of the International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017) was kicked off in Jaipur today. The five-day symposium is being organized by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) in partnership with The World Bank, and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).

INSPIRE 2017 is an International Conference that brings together various stakeholders such as policy makers, innovators, financiers, influencers to showcase best practices in the sector. It provides a platform for energy efficiency community to discuss energy efficiency policies, market transformation strategies, emerging technologies, delivery and business-model driven transformations. The event is further designed to provide global and national thought-leaders and implementers to expand perspectives on energy efficiency and spur ideas and solutions that will help leverage the full potential of energy efficiency and bring its multiple co-benefits to the fore.

The highlight of the symposium is the high-level deliberations driven by policy makers and experts from Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), The World Bank Group, The Energy Institute (TERI), International Energy Agency (IEA), Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), USA and representatives of the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) - a high-level global forum to promote policies and programmes that advance clean energy technology.

Several global organizations like the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, International Finance Corporation, The World Bank, International Energy Agency, International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation, Clean Energy Ministerial, Copenhagen Center on Energy Efficiency, GIZ, will also share their perspectives at INSPIRE.

Dr. John Roome, Senior Director, The World Bank Group while expressing concern on mitigating climate change said that India is the third largest energy consumer in the world. In India, the World Bank is proud to be partnering with EESL on a major \$300 million programme, which is a long term low cost loan. This builds on our ongoing engagements with EESL and other agencies. The next five years will be critical for if we want a world that we would like our children to live in. And bold action on Energy Efficiency will be a key part of that action.

Shri Saurabh Kumar, Managing Director, EESL said that INSPIRE 2017 intends to create a platform for deliberations and sharing of best practices around energy efficiency policy solutions, high-impact research, innovative financing and implementation that are driving large scale market transformations in India and across the globe. The event has brought together over 350 participants from 13 countries across North America, Asia, Europe and Middle East.

During the inaugural session, a **mobile app for EESL's various programmes** was launched. This app will allow consumers to connect with the organisation for its various programmes, lodge complaints and track real time complaint status. Further, citizens can now access the real-time status of Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) dashboard at state, district and Urban Local Body (ULB) levels across the country.

On the occasion, Shri Ashok Jain, Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan said that focused initiatives and commitments in green energy are evident in our times. Energy efficiency will be the key in mitigation of climate challenge. India's unified action plan for climate change outlines many steps which simultaneously advance India's development and climate change-related objectives. Rajasthan has large industries in cement and textile sectors. Under the PAT scheme, the designated industrial consumers were given targets, of which 58, in the first cycle, overachieved these targets. This demonstrates the due significance the State of Rajasthan gives to energy efficiency.

Shri Abhay Bakre, Director General, Bureau of Energy Efficiency, said that INSPIRE is very crucial at this juncture. This 5-day conference will cover all the questions in the field of energy efficiency, ideate and discuss on the topic for solutions.

Through an innovative market-led approach towards energy efficiency, India has charted its progress towards being a low-carbon economy, through implementation of large scale zero subsidy initiatives like Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA), Street lighting National Programme, Electric vehicles, Smart Meter programme, Solar Rooftop projects etc.

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