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INTERNATIONAL

Indias outreach to Myanmar

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Chief of the Army Staff Gen. Manoj Naravane visited Myanmar. The visit is because of the upcoming general elections in Myanmar, would be viewed as India's support for Myanmar's efforts in strengthening democratisation.

Highlights:
The support of India seems to be a continuation of India's Myanmar policy since the 1990s which has been to support democratisation driven from within the country.

India took a balanced stand by its engagement with all the political players in the country, including the military that played a key role in Myanmar's political transition and is still an important political actor.

India has followed a non-interference policy in the internal politics of Myanmar.

Significance:

IndiaMyanmar border makes a challenge to India's security. Myanmar shares a land border with northeastern India, stretching some 1,624 kilometres and also a 725-km maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal given the link between the porous border and organized crime and extremism in the region.

India Myanmar border is highly porous, poorly guarded and located along a remote, underdeveloped, insurgency-prone region and proximate to an opium-producing area. The border is also vulnerable to the activities of insurgents and drugs and arms trafficker.

Myanmar is critical for the overall development of North-Eastern Indian states. Myanmar is strategically important to India as it is the only ASEAN country that shares a border with India. Myanmar is key in linking South Asia to Southeast Asia and helping enhance its regional outreach.

Myanmar is also an important member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

Japan aims to reach net-zero emissions by 2050

Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has announced the country's ambition to
achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and become carbon-neutral by 2050.

**Highlights:**

Yoshihide Suga - Responding to climate change is no longer a constraint on economic growth.

Yoshihide Suga - Need to change our thinking to the view that taking assertive measures against climate change will lead to changes in industrial structure and the economy that will bring about great growth.

In addition to boosting research and development in these areas, the country will promote a digital society, placing heavier reliance on smart technologies in everyday life.

Japan, the world's fifth-biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, has set admirable goals, some are dubious of the country's ability to achieve its target by 2050, given since the nation's heavy reliance on coal after the 2011 Fukushima Disaster led to the closure of many nuclear reactors.

The country's new target of no greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is in line with the European Union, which has also set its carbon-neutral target to 30 years.

Japan had previously pledged carbon neutrality as soon as possible in the second half of the century, instead of setting an explicit date, as its long-term climate strategy was to cut emissions by 80% by 2050 from 2010 levels.

According to the 2016 Japan Executive Summary, the country's total greenhouse gas emissions in the fiscal year were 1,322 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, which marked a decrease of total emissions by 0.2% when compared to those of FY2015.

**Chile to replace its Constitution that has many anti-democratic features**

Chile voted in favour of replacing its Constitution with a new document. Since it transitioned to democracy in 1990, Chile has amended the Constitution to take away many of its anti-democratic features.

**Background:**

Mass protests shook Chile. In 2019 So, the conservative President, Sebastin Piera, agreed to hold a referendum on rewriting the country's Constitution. This Constitution was introduced during the military dictatorship. It was approved in a fraudulent plebiscite in 1980. It was the main hurdle in introducing social and economic reforms. Now, 78% of Chileans voted in favour of replacing the charter with a new document.
2019 protests:
Protests erupted last year over a small rise in metro fares. But it soon snowballed into a public agitation demanding reforms, An abolition of the private pension fund system, implemented by Gen. Pinochet, An increase in investments in education and health care, and Strengthening of the rights of the indigenous communities. The protesters also demanded an overhaul of the Constitution as it was impossible to introduce far-reaching reforms with the current charter. With the recent plebiscite results, they have won the first stage.

Highlights:
Replacing the Constitution is going to be a two-year process. In 2021, Chileans will elect a 155-member Assembly with a half delegates of women to draft the new document, which will then be put to a plebiscite in 2022.

The new Constitution is also expected to be a heated political issue, with the general elections next year. But despite the political and procedural challenges, it offers a fresh opportunity for Chile to say goodbye to a dark era.

Now, through a democratic process, Chileans can bury the document and introduce a modern democratic charter. It offers them an opportunity to right the systemic wrongs of the past.

It will also chart out a more inclusive economic and social system that works well for all Chileans.

Typhoon Molave hits Vietnam

Recently, Vietnam has been hit by one of its biggest storms in two decades - Typhoon Molave. Vietnam is prone to natural disasters in the rainy season between June and November.

Highlights:
Vietnam is prone to natural disasters in the rainy season between June and November, with central coastal provinces commonly impacted, but the storms have notably worsened in recent years.

Typhoon is a regionally specific name for a strong "tropical cyclone". Tropical cyclones are known as typhoons' in the northwest pacific ocean, hurricanes in the North Atlantic Ocean, Willy-willies in north-western Australia and Tropical Cyclones in the Indian Ocean Region.

A tropical cyclone is a generic term used by meteorologists to describe a rotating,
organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical waters and has closed, low-level circulation.

Tropical cyclones rotate counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere. These are measured by the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale.

The Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre (RSMC) Tokyo - Typhoon Centre assigns a tropical cyclone a name from the five lists. The name Molave' is contributed by the Philippines.
Shri Arjun Munda to launch Two Centers of Excellence for Tribal Welfare

Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr Shri Arjun Munda will launch two Centers of Excellence for Tribal Welfare in collaboration between Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Art of Living (AoL) on October 27, 2020, through video conference.

**Highlights:**

The first initiative Strengthening PRIs (Panchayati Raj Institutions)' will be launched in 5 districts covering 30 Gram Panchayats and 150 villages of Jharkhand. The initiative is done in creating awareness among elected representatives of PRI about various Tribal Acts and Rules and different welfare schemes available for these tribals and help the tribes getting access to these schemes. The initiative is designed to create the youth volunteers among the tribal youths by giving them personality development training, hence creating the tribal leaders who will work for their community.

The 2nd is about training 10000 tribal farmers in Aurangabad, Maharashtra on sustainable natural farming based on Go-Adharith farming techniques.

Farmers will get help in getting the Organic certification & the marketing opportunities will be made available to them to make each of them Atmanirbhar Tribal Farmers.

Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal inaugurated the DST-IIEST Solar PV Hub virtually

DST-IIEST Solar PV Hub, has been established at Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology(IIEST), Shibpur through a generous Research and Development by Department of Science and Technology (DST), Govt of India, under the aegis of Centre of Excellence for Green Energy and Sensor System at IIEST, Shibpur.

**Highlights:**

To encourage and support the research by IIESTin the field of Solar Energy and Solar Cells, the DST has to create a central Hub with the name of DST-IIEST Solar PV Hub.

DST-IIEST Solar PV Hub has world-class research facilities and will act as the central node for research and developments.
Dissemination of knowledge in the field of solar energy, solar photovoltaics, including fabrication, characterization and testing of solar cells, solar PV Modules and also Solar PV systems, for the entire Eastern and North-Eastern region of India. This Hub will help in aligning the national as well as local industries, research institutes, and start-ups with the Make in India Mission towards a smooth transition from fossil fuel energy to solar energy scenario.

A number of industries and research organizations in Eastern and North-Eastern regions are engaged in solar energy activities so they are greatly benefitted from this Research Unit.

Direct interactions with this DST-IIEST Solar Hub will enable the transfer of indigenous know-how and training for the fabrication, characterization and testing of solar cells and solar PV modules and systems as no such facility is available elsewhere in this region.

The students and research fellows of higher education institutes of West Bengal and the entire Eastern and Northeastern Region will get hands-on experience in this Solar Hub.

Well designed training programs offered by the Hub will also be an impetus to the Skill India Mission of the Government of India.

These training modules will be arranged to generate and strengthen the knowledge in the field of solar energy and solar photovoltaics so that in future they can contribute to indigenous development and usage of solar energy in India.

**Mr Shri Arjun Munda launches two Centers of Excellence for tribal welfare**

Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr Shri Arjun Munda launched two Centers of Excellence for Tribal Welfare in collaboration between Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and Art of Living (AoL) through video conference on October 27, 2020.

**Highlights:**

It is a praiseworthy initiative of Art of Living to launch two Centres of Excellence in partnership with MoTA.

The government is responsible to the welfare of tribal people of our country. A large amount of funds to the tune of more than Rs. 2 lakh crores is allocated exclusively for tribal development across the country.

Strengthening of tribal Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) will also help to educate them about their constitutional rights. This will empower the PRIs in matters
relating to decision making and development of their community.
The Ministry is working in collaboration with many NGOs and social organizations who are also doing a commendable job in this field. Art of Living has a vast network of volunteers who will make this program successful.
The 1st initiative 'Strengthening PRIs' will be launched in 5 districts covering 30 Gram Panchayats and 150 villages of Jharkhand to create awareness among elected representatives of PRI about various Tribal Acts & Rules and different welfare schemes available for these tribals & help them getting access to these schemes.
This model is designed to create the youth volunteers, giving them personality development training, and thereby creating the tribal leaders who will work for their community in spreading this awareness.
The 2nd is about training 10000 tribal farmers in Aurangabad District on sustainable natural farming based on Go-Adharith farming techniques.

**MSDE, NCVET unveil guidelines for Awarding Bodies Assessment & Agencies**

The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET) unveil the guidelines and operation manuals for Awarding Bodies Assessment & Agencies for further strengthening the skilling ecosystem.

**Highlights:**
NCVET was notified by the MSDE in December 2018. NCVET subsumed the existing skill regulatory bodies National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) and National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and now acts as an overarching skills regulator.
NCVET was operationalized in November 2019 by the assumption of additional charge by Secretary, MSDE and Senior Economic Advisor, MSDE as Chairperson, NCVET and Executive Member, NCVET respectively.
It establishes minimum standards for the functioning of entities engaged in vocational education and training.
The major functions of NCVET are the recognition and regulation of awarding bodies, assessment agencies, and skill related information providers; approval of qualifications; monitoring and supervision of recognized entities.
The NCVET will enable the integration of the fragmented regulatory system and
infuse quality assurance across the entire vocational training value chain, leading to better outcomes.

**Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan digitally inaugurates Radio diagnosis Facilities**

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan digitally inaugurated the Radio diagnosis Facilities at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bathinda on 29th October.

**Highlights:**

He also inaugurated the MBBS Student Hostel.

The setting up of new AIIMS at Bathinda will not only transform health education and training but will also address the shortfall of health care professionals in the region.

The new AIIMS will serve the dual purpose of providing super speciality health care to the population and also help to create a large pool of doctors and other health workers in this region.

The number of AIIMS has increased from 6 to 22, while another 75 existing institutions are planned for upgradation to provide quality tertiary healthcare services.

**MHA has designated 18 individuals, all Pakistan based, as terrorists under the UAPA Act**

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has designated 18 individuals, all Pakistan based, as terrorists under the UAPA Act, 2019. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019 was passed by the Parliament in August 2019.

It amends the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

**Highlights:**

The latest UAPA Act empowers the central government to designate an individual a "terrorist" if they are found committing, preparing for, promoting, or involved in the act of terror.

The 1967 UAPA law required an investigating officer to take prior permission of the Director-General of Police of a state for conducting raids, and seizing properties that are suspected to be linked to terrorist activities.
The amendment act removes this requirement if the investigation is conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The investigating officer only requires sanction from the Director-General of NIA.

The 1967 law specifies that only officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police of the NIA shall have the power to investigate offences under the UAPA law. The new act allows NIA officers of Inspector rank to carry out investigations.

**National Investigation Agency (NIA):**
The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a statutory body constituted under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008. It is a central agency to investigate and prosecute offences: affecting the sovereignty, security and integrity of India, security of State, friendly relations with foreign States. It implements international treaties, agreements, conventions and resolutions of the United Nations, its agencies and other international organizations. It acts as the Central Counter-Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.

**Vivad se Vishwas deadline extended**

The government has extended for the 3rd time the deadline for making payment without additional amount under the Vivad Se Vishwas' by three months from December 31, 2020, to March 31 2021.

**Highlights:**
Vivad se Vishwas scheme was announced in the budget this fiscal to provide a mechanism for the resolution of pending Income Tax disputes.

As on November 30, 2019, about 4.83 lakh appeals pending at various levels involving tax arrears to the tune of about 9.32-lakh crore.

Under the Scheme, a taxpayer would be required to pay only the amount of the disputed taxes and will get a complete waiver of interest and penalty provided he pays by March 31, 2020. Those who avail this Scheme after March 31, 2020, will have to pay some additional amount.

To provide more time to taxpayers to settle disputes, earlier the date for filing the declaration and making payment without additional amount was extended from March 31, 2020, to June 30, 2020. This date was again extended to December 31, 2020.
Indian Railways launches OPERATION MERI SAHELI

Indian Railways has launched operation Meri Saheli for focused action on the security of women across all zones to provide safety & security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from starting station to destination station.

**Highlights:**

- An initiative of Railways Protection Force (RPF), the strategy of the entails interaction with women passengers those are travelling alone by a team of young woman RPF personnel at the originating station.
- These passengers will then be briefed about all precautions to be taken during the journey and be told to dial 182 in case they face or see any problem in the coach.
- The RPF team collects the seat numbers of the ladies and conveys them to stoppages en-route. The platform duty RPF personnel at the stopping stations en-route keep unobtrusive watch over the concerned coaches and berths and if the need arises, interact with the lady passengers.
- RPF escort onboard also covers all the coaches/identified berths during its duty period. RPF teams at the destination collect the feedback from the identified women passengers. The input is then analyzed and corrective action, if any, is taken.
- The Meri Saheli” initiative was started as a pilot project in South Eastern Railway in September 2020. After getting encouraging response from female passengers, it was extended to all zones from October 17.

Union Cabinet approves Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) Phase II & Phase III with the financial assistance from the World Bank (WB), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

**Highlights:**

- The Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project aims to improve the safety and operational performance of selected dams all over the country, along with institutional strengthening with a system-wide management approach.
- The project cost is Rs 10,211 crore. The project will be implemented over a period of 10 years duration in two phases, each of six years duration with two years
overlapping from April 2021 to March 2031. The share of external funding is Rs.7000 crore.

The Project aims to improve the safety and performance of selected existing dams and associated appurtenances in a sustainable manner.

DRIP focuses on strengthening the dam safety institutional setup in participating states as well as at the central level.

DRIP will explore the alternative incidental means at a few selected dams to generate incidental revenue for sustainable operation and maintenance of dams. The scheme envisages the comprehensive rehabilitation of 736 existing dams located across the country.

Khadi Commission launches Happy Diwali printed face masks


**Highlights:**

The Diwali Muslin face masks are priced nominally at 75 rupees a piece and are available for sale through the Khadi outlets in Delhi and online through KVIC's e-portal www.khadiindia.gov.in.

Like the other variants of Khadi face masks, the Muslin face masks too are skin-friendly, washable, reusable and bio-degradable and economical that suits all pockets. Traditional Khadi artisans make these handmade masks of West Bengal.

The sparkling red piping on the masks adds to the style to the look as it has been designed to gel with the festive attires.

Amid protecting people from the spread of covid -19, KVIC is working to make its face masks look trendier. These Muslin fabric face masks have added variety to the range of face masks that also include Cotton and Silk masks.

The Muslin face masks have been developed following the overwhelming public response to two layers Khadi Cotton and three layers of silk masks. Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises - So far KVIC has sold over 18 lakh such face masks across the country in less than six months.

KVIC will also launch Christmas and New Year special masks in the coming days.
AIM Launches India Australia Circular Economy Hackathon I-ACE

AIM (Atal Innovation Mission), in association with Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), is organizing a two-day hackathon on the circular economy, IndiaAustralia Circular Economy Hackathon (I-ACE), on 7 and 8 December.

**Themes:**
- Innovation in packaging reducing packaging waste
- Innovation in food supply chains avoiding waste
- Creating opportunities for plastic waste reduction
- Recycling critical energy metals and e-waste

**Highlights:**
The idea of the hackathon (I-ACE) was conceived during a virtual summit on 4 June, between the Indian and Australian prime ministers, exploring innovative ways to boost the circular economy in India & Australia.

Hackathon will focus on identification and development of innovative technology solutions by bright-minded students, startups and MSMEs of both nations.

Shortlisted startups/MSMEs and students will be called for the hackathon (I-ACE), where two winners per theme from each country will be announced at an award ceremony on 11 December.

India and Australia have had a strong and productive bilateral partnership since a decade and our collaborations across a broad range of areas have yielded significant results. Australia and India can align research and developmental efforts to achieve more at a challenging time in the history of mankind.

The winning startup/MSME and Indian student teams will be awarded with a prize of Rs 5 lakh and Rs 2 lakh, respectively, coupled with post-hackathon product development opportunities. The winning student of Australia will be awarded a prize of AUD$3500 and the winning Australian SMEs/startup team a prize of AUD$9500.

**Indian genomes contributes a compendium of genetic variants - contemporary Indian population**

Analysis from the extensive computation analysis of the 1029 sequenced genomes
from India carried out by CSIR constituent labs, CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (IGIB), Delhi and CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad were published in the scientific journal, Nucleic Acid Research.

**Highlights:**

The observation led to the identification of 55,898,122 single-nucleotide variants in the India genome dataset.

Comparisons with the world genome datasets revealed that 18,016,257 (32.23%) variants were unique and found only in the samples from India.

India is the 2nd largest country in terms of population density with more than 1.3 billion individuals. In spite of having this rich genetic diversity, India has been under-represented in global genome studies.

CSIR started the IndiGen Program in April 2019. Under this, the whole genome sequencing of 1029 self-declared healthy Indians drawn from across the country has been completed.

The current IndiGenomes data provides a compendium of genetic variants representing the contemporary Indian population with an objective to classify variants involved in Mendelian disorders & improve precision medicine outcomes. The resource is accessible to the researchers and clinicians in India and abroad. There have been over 200,000 pageviews on the IndiGenomes web page from users spanning 27 countries.

**ISRO to launch earth observation satellite EOS-01 on 7 November**

This is the first launch by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) since the COVID-19 induced lockdown came into force in March.

**Highlights:**

India would launch its latest earth observation satellite EOS-01 and nine international customer spacecraft onboard its Polar rocket PSLV-C49 from the spaceport of Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on November 7.

ISRO Chairman K Sivan had said in June that ten space missions being prepared for launch this year have been 'disturbed' due to the lockdown.

EOS-01 is intended for applications in agriculture, forestry & disaster management support.

The launch is tentatively scheduled at 3.02 pm on November 7 subject to weather conditions.
conditions from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota. The customer satellites are being launched under a commercial agreement with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), Department of Space. This will be the 51st mission of ISRO's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. Given the strict COVID-19 pandemic norms in place at the launch centre, a gathering of media personnel there was not planned, and the viewing gallery will be closed. However, the live telecast of the launch will be available on the ISRO website, Youtube, Facebook and Twitter channel.

In June, Sivan highlighted that ISRO would assess the impact of the lockdown on its missions. Because of this (pandemic), everything got disturbed. We have to assess after the COVID-19 issue is resolved.
Newly identified tectonically active zone in the Himalayas

The Indus Suture Zone (ISZ) or the suture zone of the Himalayas in the Ladakh region where Indian & Asian Plates are joined has been found to be tectonically active, as against current understanding that it is a locked zone. This may have major implications in terms of earthquake study, prediction, understanding the seismic structure of the mountain chains well as its evolution.

**Highlights:**

Scientists from WIHG - Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun, an autonomous institute under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, have found through observations and detailed mapping of geological features that the Indus Suture Zone that was thought to be locked is tectonically active.

Scientists have done the mapping of the remote regions of Ladakh region that forms the most hinterland part of the Himalaya.

The geologists analysed that sedimentary beds are tilted & thrust broken, the rivers are associated with uplifted terraces, and the bedrock shows brittle deformation that occurred at much shallower depths.

The combination of lab and field data suggested the region of the ISZ - Indus Suture Zone has been neo-tectonically active since the last 78000 -- 58000 years and a recent earthquake in 2010 of low magnitude 4.0 near the village of Upshi that occurred due to a thrust rupture.

Himalayas were made up of north dipping thrusts like the MCT - Main Central Thrust, MBT - the Main Boundary Thrust, MFT - the Main Frontal Thrust.

As per the established models, all of these thrusts except MFT are locked, and overall deformation in Himalaya is being accommodated only along with the MFT.

The new findings, which suggest a more remote fault at the suture zone being neo-tectonically active, could call for a serious relook into the existing evolutionary models using new techniques and a larger geological database.
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**Green crackers to make full-fledged Delhi debut**

Delhi is set for its first full-fledged debut with green' crackers for Deepavali. The development comes amid growing sentiment against not deepening the air pollution crisis the capital countenances every winter.

**Highlights:**

A ban on fireworks was imposed in 2018, and in 2019 only 'green' crackers were allowed. However, it could not be implemented on a large scale as the permission
had come too late for manufacturers to ensure their availability on time.

Green Crackers has been developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Components in firecrackers are replaced with others that are "less dangerous" and "less harmful" to the atmosphere.

The commonly used pollution-causing chemicals aluminium, barium, potassium nitrate and carbon have either been removed or sharply reduced in the green crackers.

Firework is a device that contains gunpowder and also other combustible chemicals which causes striking effects, and when ignited, they explode. They are mostly used in festivals, celebrations, etc.

Green crackers are those crackers that do not contain harmful chemicals that would cause air pollution. They are environmentally friendly or eco friendly. Green crackers are less harmful as compared to conventional firecrackers, and less pollution emission will result in reduced air pollution.

In green crackers, the commonly used polluting chemicals like aluminium, barium, potassium nitrate and carbon have either been removed or sharply reduced to slow down the emissions by 15 to 30%.

Cracker manufactures say they aren't sure if they will be able to supply and manufacture in sufficient quantities in 2019. It is too short a time before Deepavali (on the 27th and 28th) to manufacture and release them in the market.

**Centre sets up commission to tackle NCR pollution**

The Centre has formed the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas. It was brought in via an ordinance. However, the commission awaits formal scrutiny by the Supreme Court (SC) before it can be brought into effect.

**Highlights:**

The Commission is a permanent body that replaces the 22-year-old Environmental Pollution Prevention and Control Authority (EPCA).

Encompassing Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, the body assumes several powers: To coordinate action among States and Levy fines ranging up to 1 crore or five years in prison to address air pollution.

The panel will have at least six permanent members. It will be headed by a former or incumbent Secretary to the Central government, or a Chief Secretary to a State
government.

The Commission will have members from Ministries as well as representatives from States.

The Central Pollution Control Board and its State branches have the powers to implement provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act for air, water and land pollution. In case of dispute or a clash of jurisdictions, the commission’s writ will prevail specifically to matters concerning air pollution.
BILLS & ACTS

IFSCA Authority Board approves two Regulations

A meeting of the IFSCA - International Financial Services Centres Authority was held on October 27, 2020. The Board, after detailed discussion, approved the following regulations - International Financial Services Centres Authority (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020 and International Financial Services Centres Authority (Global In-House Centres) Regulations, 2020.

**International Financial Services Centres Authority (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020:**
The GoI - Government of India, on the recommendation of IFSCA, notified the bullion spot delivery contract and bullion depository receipt (with bullion as underlying) as Financial Products and related services as Financial Services under the IFSCA Act, 2019 on August 31, 2020. The Authority approved the draft bullion regulations, which paves the way for setting up the entire ecosystem for bullion trading, namely, bullion exchange, depository, clearinghouse and vaults.
The salient aspects of the Bullion Exchange Regulations include:
- Functions and general obligations of a bullion exchange and clearing corporation
- Ownership and governance structure of a bullion exchange and clearing corporation
- Rights and Obligations of Bullion Depositories, Participants and Beneficial Owners
- The grant of registration to a vault manager by the Authority
- The role of bullion depositories
- Other operational aspects of the bullion exchange
The Bullion Exchange Regulations envisage providing an integrated platform for all the market intermediaries including trading members/ clearing members, bullion depositories, vault managers, etc. so as to facilitate transparency and traceability in the bullion market and standardisation of bullion contracts.

**International Financial Services Centres Authority (Global In-House Centres) Regulations, 2020:**
Government of India, on the recommendation of IFSCA, had notified Global In-House Centres (GIC) as financial service to provide services relating to financial products and financial services on October 16, 2020.
Some salient features of the regulations are as follows:

Global In-house Centres (GIC) may conduct its business in any mode permitted by the Authority. The applicant entity shall exclusively serve to its financial services group wherein the entities served must be located in a FATF - Financial Action Task Force compliant jurisdiction.

A financial services group is an entity which is regulated by a financial services regulator or any other competent body regulating financial services activities in its home jurisdiction.

The support services provided should be for the purpose of carrying out a financial service in respect of a financial product. A Global In-House Centres (GIC) set up within the IFSC shall be entitled to avail itself of all concessions.

India is emerging as global's leading centre of digitization, with one of the largest pool of digital talents. Global In-house Centres (GIC) in India have been contributing to the development of a highly-skilled talent pool in the country.

Patents Amendment Rules came into effect

The Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2020, came into effect on October 19, 2020. And now Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2020 have further streamlined for the better usage.

**Highlights:**

The amendments relate to the requirements associated with the filing of Form 27 and the submission of verified English translation of priority documents; those are not in the English language.

The patentee would get the flexibility to file a single Form-27 in respect of a single or multiple related patents. This would help in compliance burden and boost innovation.

Authorized agents would be able to submit Form-27 on behalf of the patentee. This will lead to greater Ease of Doing Business' for innovators. For filing that Form patentees would get 6 months, instead of the existing 3 months.

If the priority document is available in WIPO's digital library, the applicant would not be required to submit the same in the Indian Patent Office (IPO).

Where a patent is granted to two or more persons, such persons may file a joint Form-27. The patentee would be required to provide approximate revenue/value accrued'.
The patentee will not be required to file Form-27 in respect of a part or fraction of the financial year.
US to support India's Defence of territory

The Union Defence Minister of India and the U.S. Secretary of Defence reviewed bilateral defence cooperation spanning military-to-military cooperation, secure communication systems and information sharing, defence trade and industrial issues. The third India-U.S. 2+2' dialogue was held in New Delhi.

2+2 ministerial dialogue:

2+2 ministerial dialogue is a format of dialogue where the defence and foreign ministers meet with their counterparts from another country. This is the highest-level institutional mechanism between India and the USA. This aims at bringing together the perspectives of both the countries on issues relating to foreign policy, defence and also other strategic issues. India holds such dialogues even with Japan. With Australia, it is held at the foreign secretary and defence secretary level.

Highlights:

The United States will support India to defend its territorial sovereignty and liberty. The comment hints at the ongoing tensions between China and India in eastern Ladakh. A greater threat posed by China in the Asia-Pacific region.

Both the sides have decided to expand joint capacity building activities with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific region. India has announced the signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on geospatial cooperation (BECA) with the U.S.

The Defence Ministry has said that India and the U.S. will sign the last foundational agreement, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA) during the 2+2 ministerial dialogue.

BECA:

BECA is one of the four foundational agreements for strengthening defence ties between India and the US. The agreement allows exchanging of Geospatial-Intelligence information for use by the governments for defence and other purposes.

The US would exchange technical and procedural information about standardisation of methods, specifications and formats for the collection, processing and production of geo-intelligence information with India. It shall also include the tools and models to process GPS data and transform Latitude, Longitude and Height coordinates across various reference frames and others.
Indian Army develops Secure Application for Internet

In the quest for Atmanirbhar Bharat’, Indian Army has developed a simple and secure messaging application named the Secure Application for the Internet (SAI).

**Highlights:**

The Indian Army has developed a simple and secure messaging application named the Secure Application for the Internet (SAI).

The application supports an end to end secure voice, text and video calling services for the Android platform over the internet.

The model is similar to commercially available messaging applications like Whatsapp, Telegram, SAMVAD and GIMS and utilises end to end encryption messaging protocol.

SAI scores over on security features with local in-house servers and coding which can be tweaked as per requirements.

The application has been vetted by CERT-in empanelled auditor and Army Cyber Group.

The process for filing Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), hosting the infrastructure on NIC and working on the iOS platform is currently in progress. SAI will be utilised pan Army to facilitate secure messaging within the service.

The Raksha Mantri after reviewing the functionalities of the App complimented Col Sai Shankar for his skill and ingenuity for developing the application.
AWARDS AND HONOURS

Digital India Award 2020

Digital India Award formerly known as Web Ratna Awards is an initiative to acknowledge the exemplary initiatives in e-Governance. The Government of India (GoI) has been bracing for innovation and transformation in the delivery of information/services with the adoption of best ICT practices.

**Digital Awards:**
The Government of India (GoI) has been deploying innovative digital solutions to enhance the quality and reach of government services. Every year, Digital-Governance initiatives are demonstrating the power of ICT in improving the ease of living for all citizens. With the growing spread of internet & mobile, citizens are empowered to gain from government services using any digital device, anywhere, any time.

As government entities at all levels - Centre, State & across India - continue undertaking various initiatives to provide accessible information & services, the Digital India Awards (DIA) offers an apt opportunity to showcase such initiatives. The Digital India Awards (DIA), instituted under the aegis of National Portal of India, serve the purpose of bringing to the fore innovative digital solutions & thereby inspiring emulation by all government entities.

CSIR-CDRI Scientist, Dr Satish Mishra bags Dr Tulsi Das Chugh Award

Tulsi Das Chugh Award 2020 won by CSIR-CDRI Scientist Dr Satish Mishra, Principal Scientist, Division of Molecular Parasitology and Immunology, CSIR-CDRI, Lucknow.

**Highlights:**
Ministry of Science & Technology - Dr Satish Mishra gets this award for research work on Malaria Parasite’s Life Cycle, which is a complex process involving two hosts and three invasive stages.

Invasion in both mammals and mosquitoes requires a coordinated sequence of events to be played out successfully.

His outstanding work focused on Secreted Protein with Altered Thrombospondin Repeat (SPATR) which is Essential for Asexual Blood Stages but not Required for
Hepatocyte Invasion by the Malaria Parasite Plasmodium Berghei. This study focuses on the dispensability of SPATR in P. bergheisporozoites and its importance for the establishment of blood-stage infection, further investigation is needed to unravel its precise role during this process.

**About The Academy & The Award**

National Academy of Medical Sciences (India) is a unique institution which fosters and utilizes academic excellence as its resource to meet medical and social goals. It was registered as the Indian Academy of Medical Sciences' on 21st April, 1961 under Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860. The Academy was renamed National Academy of Medical Sciences (India) on 16th November, 1976 on the recommendations of a Working Group set up by the Govt. of India.
SUMMITS & CONFERENCE

Ministry of Tourism organizes webinar on Bundi: Architectural Heritage of a Forgotten Rajput Capital

Ministry of Tourism organizes a webinar on Bundi: Architectural Heritage of a Forgotten Rajput Capital under Dekho Apna Desh Webinar Series on October 24, 2020. In shadows of former power centres of medieval India, are small historic towns largely unknown today beyond their immediate geographical context.

Highlights:

The considerable focus was on major historic imperial and provincial cities of India like Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Lucknow etc.,

The other smaller cities and towns spread across vast unvisited hinterland of India have received less than deserved attention of tourists, enthusiasts and scholars.

The webinar was visualized by Charudatta Deshmukh, an Architect-Urban Planner with over 25 years of experience in managing planning and design of urban infrastructure and development projects.

Bundi:

Bundi former capital of Hada Rajput province known as Hadauti located in south-eastern Rajasthan. Bundi is known as City of step walls, blue city and also as Chotti Kashi. The area around Bundi was inhabited by various local tribes, of which the Parihar Tribes, Meena was prominent. Years later the region was governed by Rao Deva, who took over Bundi from Jaita Meena in 1242, renaming the surrounding area as Haravati or Haroti. Rao Raja Chattar Sal became the ruler in 1632. He constructed the temple of Keshavarao at Keshoraipatan and Chathra Mahal at Bundi.

The architectural heritage of Bundi can be classified in six typologies:
- Garh (Fort) - Taragarh
- Garh Mahal (Royal Palace) - Bhj Mahal, Chattar Mahal, Ummed Mahal
- Baori (Stepwell) - Khoj Darwaja ki Baori, Bhawaldi Baori
- Kund (Stepped tank) - Dhabhai ji ka Kund, Nagar Kund & Sagar Kund, Rani Kund
- Sagar mahal (Lake Palace) - Moti Mahal, Sukh Mahal, Shikar Burj
- Chhatri (Cenotaph) Chaurasi

PM inaugurates National Conference on Vigilance and Anti Corruption
Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the national conference on vigilance and anti-corruption on October 27, 2020. The theme of this year conference is "vigilant India, prosperous India". The inaugural session of the conference will be live-streamed and available on 'pmindiawebcast.nic.in' link.

**Highlights:**

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) organises the national conference, coinciding with the "Vigilance Awareness Week", which is observed from October 27 to November 2 annually. The theme of this year's conference is- Satark Bharat, Samruddha Bharat.

The conference would be focussed on vigilance issues aimed at raising awareness and reaffirming India's commitment to the promotion of integrity and probity in public life through citizens' participation.


This Conference will also bring policymakers and practitioners on a common platform enabling them to combat corruption through systemic improvements and preventive vigilance measures.

**India hosts meeting of SCO Ministers handling economy and foreign trade**

India hosted the 19th Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Ministers are responsible for Foreign Economy and Foreign Trade Activities.

**Highlights:**

Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shri PiyushGoyalhighlighted that the current crisis due to Covid-19 is a clarion call to the SCO countries to leverage the economic strength and explore partnerships that enhance trade and investment in the region.

The cooperation should be continued to enhance intra-SCO trade and investment, which would be critical in ensuring the speedy recovery from the aftermath of the pandemic.

Its civilization and philosophical tradition shape every nation's world view.
India's ancient wisdom sees the world as one family - Vasudeva Kutumbakam. The virtual meeting was attended by the Secretary-General of SCO and Ministers from Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In the meeting, four documents were adopted. **They are:**

- **Statement on the response to Covid-19:** It reinforces the need for greater cooperation for access to medicines and facilitation of trade.
- **Statement on the Multilateral Trading System of Ministers of SCO Countries who are WTO Members:** This statement highlights the importance of the rules-based multilateral negotiations.
- **Statement on SCO Cooperation on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** It relates to the cooperation of intellectual property and include sharing information/experience on legislation and enforcement, cooperation in international organisations and other areas.
- **Action Plan for Implementation of MOU to stimulate cooperation within the framework of SCO in the field of MSMEs:** It looks at several areas of cooperation among MSMEs, including the exchange of information, organisation of events and collaboration on research and capacity building.

All these outcomes of the meeting are significant milestones for the SCO solidarity.

**UK-India Economic and Financial Dialogue**

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman leads the Indian delegation in the 10th Round of Ministerial UK India Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD). It reached several agreements to deepen the economic relationship focusing on financial services, infrastructure and sustainable finance.

**Highlights:**

- The Dialogue, among other things, covered sharing of experiences on coronavirus response, to enable both countries to be enriched by experiences of the other.
- Other issues discussed include collaboration in the G20 on finance track matters, international tax list (including the development of inclusive consensus-based solution on the taxation of the digital economy), furthering of Financial Services Collaboration with special emphasis on Fin-Tech and GIFT City, the establishment of an annual India-UK Financial Market Dialogue, infrastructure development, sustainable finance with a focus on green finance.

It was also decided to establish India UK Sustainable Finance Forum. India UK
economic ties are significant as together they are two of the world's top seven economies with a combined GDP of over $5 trillion.

India UK trade has more than doubled since the first Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD) in 2007, with bilateral investment supporting over half a million jobs across both countries.
SCHEMES

Over 5 lakh loans disbursed under PM SVANidhi Scheme

PM Modi lauded beneficiaries of the PM Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme, and also most of the beneficiaries were repaying their loans on time. So far, 24.76 lakh applications have been received, of which 12.37 lakh have been sanctioned, and over 5 lakh loans have been disbursed.

**Highlights:**
The Scheme was launched on June 1, 2020, by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for providing affordable Working Capital loans to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been affected due to Covid-19 lockdown.

By the Scheme, vendors can avail a working capital loan of up to Rs. 10,000, which is repayable in monthly instalments in the tenure of 1 year. The loans would be without collateral.

On timely/early repayment of the loan, an interest subsidy @ 7% per annum will be credited to the bank accounts of beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer on a quarterly basis. There will be no penalty on early repayment of the loan. The Scheme promotes digital transactions through cashback incentives up to an amount of Rs. 100 per month.

The scheme targets to benefit over 50 lakh street vendors. The duration of the Scheme is till March 2022.

The lending institutions under the Scheme include Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Small Finance Banks, Cooperative Banks, NBFCs, Microfinance institutions and Self Help Group banks.

SERB-POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research) Scheme

Union Minister for Science & Technology launched SERB-POWER (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research) Scheme, designed exclusively for women scientists.

**Highlights:**
The scheme will have two components: SERB-POWER Fellowship and SERB-POWER Research Grants

**SERB-POWER Fellowship:**
Goal: Women researchers in 35-55 years of age. Up to 25 Fellowships per year and not more than 75 at any point in time.

Components of support: Fellowship of Rs. 15,000/- per month in addition to regular income; Research grant of Rs. 10 lakh per annum; and Overhead of Rs. 90,000/- per annum.

Duration: Three years, without the possibility of extension, once in a career.

**SERB-POWER Research Grants:**

- Level I (Applicants from IITs, IISERs, IISc, NITs, Central Universities, and National Labs of Central Government Institutions): The scale of funding is up to 60 lakhs for three years.

- Level II (Applicants from State Universities/Colleges and Private Academic Institutions): The scale of funding is up to 30 lakhs for three years.

POWER Grant will be regulated through terms of reference conforming to SERB-CRG (Science and Engineering Research Board -Core Research Grant) guidelines. While a Search-cum-Selection Committee constituted for the purpose will help in identifying the POWER Fellowship, the existing Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) mechanism will be used to select the POWER Research Grants.

It is proposed to institute 25 POWER Fellowships annually. A total of 50 POWER Grants each will be sanctioned in Level I & Level II per annum.

**SERB:**

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) is a statutory body established through a SERB Act 2008. Supporting basic research in emerging areas of Science & Engineering is the primary and distinctive mandate of the Board. It is under the Department of Science and Technology. It serves as a premier agency for planning, promoting and funding of internationally competitive research in emerging areas. It Identifies major inter-disciplinary research areas, and individuals, groups or institutions and funds them for undertaking research.
APPOINTMENTS / RESIGN

Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha appointed as New Chief Information Commissioner

The Government of India is set to appoint former Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer and Information Commissioner Yashvardhan Kumar Sinha as the new Chief Information Commissioner.

Appointment:
The commissioners are appointed by the President of India on the recommendation of a committee. As per the RTI Act, the appointment of commissioners in the Central Information Commission is recommended by a committee comprising the prime minister (chairperson), a cabinet minister and the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha.

Central Information Commission at present:
The Central Information Commission consists of a chief and up to 10 commissioners. It has been headless twice this year and has not functioned at full strength for almost four years. Now, it has only five commissioners, leading to a backlog of 37,000 pending cases. In a February 2019 order, the Supreme Court had directed that appointments be made in a transparent and timely manner. The SC directed the government to put up all necessary information on its website, including particulars of the applicants and the composition of the search committee which shortlists candidates.

Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019:
The Act amended Sections 13 and 16 of the RTI Act, 2005. Section 13 of the original Act sets the term of the central Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners at five years (or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier). The amendment changed that the appointment will be for such term as may be prescribed by the Central Government.

According to the amendment act, the salaries, allowances and other terms of service of the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners shall be such as may be prescribed by the Central Government. Previously it was equivalent to that of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners respectively.

The government said that the amendment was required because the election
commission is a Constitutional body while the information commission, formed under the Right to Information Act, is a statutory one.

**Tummala Srinivasa appointed as the new INCOIS Director**

Tummala Srinivasa Kumar took charge as the new Indian National Centre for Ocean Information System (INCOIS) Director. INCOIS is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

**Highlights:**

- India has a tsunami early warning system established at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information System (INCOIS).
- India can detect large undersea earthquakes in real-time and provide a tsunami warning in 10-20 minutes after the earthquake occurrence.
- For Indian Ocean earthquakes where the network of seismometers is reasonably good, quakes can now be detected in less than five minutes and a tsunami warning issued within 10 minutes if the quake occurs elsewhere in the globe.
- Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) accredited Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre as Tsunami Service Provider (TSP) for 28 Indian Ocean rim countries, along with Indonesia and Australia in 2011, for issuing regional warnings.

**IOC-UNESCO:**

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC) is the United Nations body responsible for supporting global ocean science and services. The IOC enables its 150 Member States to work together to protect the health of the shared ocean. Since it was established in 1960, the IOC has provided a focus for all other United Nations bodies that are working to understand and improve the management of our oceans, coasts and marine ecosystems.
Infantry Day is observed on 27 October

Infantry Day is observed on October 27 annually to mark the landing of the first Indian troops in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 who fought to push back Pakistan supported intruders.

**Highlights:**

On October 26, 1947, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, signed the instrument of accession, making his state a part of the Indian dominion, and thus paving the day for Indian troops to be deployed in the state to fight against Pakistani invaders.

Army establishments across the country mark Infantry Day by paying homage to the thousands of infantry soldiers who had lost their lives in the line of duty.

As part of the Infantry Day celebrations, a Wreath Laying ceremony was held at the National War Memorial to honour the martyrs of the Infantry, who made the supreme sacrifice on various battlefields in service of the nation.

On October 27, 2020, 74th Infantry Day was observed. The nation is proud of the role played by the infantry in protecting India.

**Need for infantry troops:**

Initially, the Pakistani invaders were advancing towards the summer capital of J & K. Later, inducting the troops via the link road was time-consuming and the valley would have fallen into the hands of invaders of Pakistan. Thus, an emergency meeting was held on the night of October 26 and after a go-ahead received from the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and finally troops were rushed to Srinagar. Since then, every year, Infantry Day is celebrated to pay homage to the thousands of infantry soldiers who lost their lives in the line of duty.
AGREEMENTS MOU

India Post, US Postal Service signs an agreement

Department of Posts, Government of India - India Post and United States Postal Service - USPS have signed an agreement for Electronic Exchange of Customs data related to postal shipments exchanged between the two countries.

**Highlights:**

The agreement signed will allow to transmit and receive electronic data of international postal items prior to their physical arrival at the destination and would enable customs clearance of postal items in advance in line with the evolving global postal framework.

The agreement will also improve the performance of postal services in terms of reliability, visibility and security.

The USA is the top export destination for India which is also reflected in the exchange of goods through the postal channel.

In 2019, around 20% of outbound EMS and 30% of Letters & Small Packets transmitted by India Post were destined to the USA whereas 60% of the Parcels received by India Post were originated from the USA.

Exchange of Electronic Advance Data (EAD) as per the Agreement will be a key driver towards promoting mutual trade with emphasis on the exports from different parts of India to the USA.

The primary objective that will be served by this agreement is to facilitate ease of exports' for small and large exporters through postal channels from different parts of the country and will contribute towards making India an Export Hub for the world.

U.K. to partner for developing GIFT City

The United Kingdom(UK) has entered into a strategic partnership to develop India's GIFT City. GIFT - Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is India's first international financial services centre. It is located in Gandhinagar of Gujarat.

**Highlights:**

India and the U.K. also signed off on a new infrastructure finance and policy partnership to support India execute its National Infrastructure Pipeline that
envisages investments worth $1.4 trillion.

The UK has agreed to set up a new Fund of Funds to be managed by the State Bank of India (SBI) group to route the U.K.’s future capital investments into India. It provides an opportunity to drive international capital flow from London to India.

India is now the second-largest project investment source for the U.K. Bilateral trade between India, and the U.K. stood at 24 billion in 2019.

The U.K. and India announced a joint investment of 8 million for research to understand and address the factors leading to the severity of the novel coronavirus in South Asian populations in the U.K. and India.

To achieve the GDP of $5 trillion by 2024-25, India needs to spend about $1.4 trillion over these years on infrastructure. To implement an infrastructure program of this scale, the government has envisaged the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP).


**MoC between India and Japan on cooperation in the field of ICTs**

Cabinet approves Memorandum of Cooperation between India and Japan on cooperation in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

**Highlights:**

The Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) is expected to contribute to strengthening bilateral cooperation and mutual understanding in the field of communications.

MoC will serve as a strategic initiative for India as Japan is an important partner with Special Strategic and Global Partnership status.

The MoC will further enhance opportunities for India to get into the global standardization process.

The MoC will help in cooperation between both countries in various fields like 5G network, telecom security, submarine cable, standard certification of communication equipment, utilization of latest wireless technologies and ICTs, ICTs capacity building, public protection and disaster relief, artificial intelligence (AI)/block chain, spectrum chain, spectrum management, cooperation on multilateral platforms, etc.
Memorandum of Understanding between India and Cambodia

The Union Cabinet approved the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Cambodia on cooperation in the field of health and medicine on October 29, 2020.

**Highlights:**

- The MoU will make cooperation strong between the two countries through joint initiatives and technology development in the health sector.

- The pact will become effective on the date of its signature and will remain in force for a period of five years.

- The main areas of cooperation between India and Cambodia include -- mother and child health, family planning, HIV/AIDS and TB, drugs and pharmaceuticals, technology transfer, public health and epidemiology, disease control (communicable and non-communicable) and medical research.

- It also includes development-subject to the approval of the National Ethics Committee of Cambodia and the clearance by concerned department/Ministry in India, medical education, health human resources development in the field of public health, training in clinical, para-clinical and management skills.
Electricity Access In India And Benchmarking Distribution Utilities Report


**Highlights:**

According to the report, 92% of customers reported the overall availability of electricity infrastructure within 50 metres of their premises.

And 87 per cent of the surveyed customers have access to grid-based electricity. The remaining 13 per cent can use non-grid sources or do not use any electricity at all.

The hours of supply have improved significantly across the customer categories to nearly 17 hrs/day.

The report is based on a primary survey conducted across ten states, representing about 65 per cent of the total rural population of India and with a sample size of more than 25 thousand, including households, commercial enterprises and institutions.

The report highlights the benefits of government-led schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana.

The key recommendations provided in the report in the areas of policy and regulation, process improvement and infrastructure will be utilized for improving the power distribution sector.

The report underlines some best practices adopted by the better-performing electricity distribution utilities in India and provides key recommendations to enhance sustainable electricity access.
FESTIVALS

PM to participate in the Ekta Diwas Celebrations

Prime Minister to participate in the Ekta Diwas Celebrations at Kevadia, Gujarat on 31st October. Prime Minister will pay homage to Sardar Patel on his 145th birth anniversary on 31st October 2020.

Highlights:
The Prime Minister will participate at the Ekta Diwas Parade and administer the Rashtriya Ekta Pledge in Gujarat.
The Prime Minister will also witness a Rifle drill by female officers of CRPF.
As part of EktaDiwas celebrations, a cultural show of tribal heritage is also being organized at Kevadia and Indian Air Force will perform a Fly-past.
Thereafter, the Prime Minister will interact with and address 428 Officer Trainees belonging to various Civil Services currently undergoing the 95th Foundation Course at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie through videoconference as a culmination of Aarambh 2020.
The theme of Aarambh 2020 is Governance in India @ 100 with three subthemes - Ek Bharat - Shresth Bharat: Cultural diversity and synergy in India as an Influencer; Economic diversity and oneness as strength
Atma Nirbhar Bharat: in Energy, Health and building large systems for handling black swan events
Naveen Bharat: Research & Innovation in Education, Industry and Administration.
PM Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate various projects on the 30th & 31st October 2020.
These include the flag-off of the Ekta Cruise Service to the Statue of Unity, the inauguration of the Ekta Mall and Children Nutrition Park there.
Shri Narendra Modi will also unveil the website of Statue of Unity in all the UN official languages and will launch the Kevadia App, at the Unity Glow Garden.
Ekta Cruise Service:
One can experience the viewing of Statue of Unity through the Ferry Boat Service
from Shrestha Bharat Bhavan to Statue of Unity by covering a distance of 6 km. New Gora Bridge is built especially for the operation of the ferry service. Boating Channel is constructed to provide boating services to tourists visiting the Statue of Unity.

**Ekta Mall:**
The Mall displays a diverse range of handicrafts and traditional items from all over India symbolizing unity in diversity and is spread over 35000 sq ft. The mall consists of 20 Emporia each representing a specific state in India and is built in just 110 days.

**Children Nutrition Park:**
It is the world's first ever technology-driven nutrition park for children and is spread over an area of 35000 sq ft. A Nutri Train runs across the park to various exciting theme-based stations namely Phalshaka Griham', Payonagari', Annapoorna', PoshanPuran', and Swastha Bharatam'. It will raise nutritional awareness through various edutainment activities like Mirror Maze, 5D Virtual reality theatre and Augmented reality games.

**Aarambh 2020:**
Aarambh is an initiative to bring all the probationers of All India Service, Group-A Central Service and Foreign Service together for a Common Foundation Course (CFC) with the vision to break the silos of departments and services from the very beginning of the career of a civil servant. Aarambh aims at making the civil servants capable of leading the transformation and work seamlessly across departments and fields. Aarambh was started as part of the 94th Foundation Course in 2019 where Officer Trainees (OTs) from 20 Services participated in a week-long programme at the Statue of Unity, Kevadia, Gujarat. It culminated into a presentation to the Honourable Prime Minister, an interaction with him followed by his address to the Officer Trainees. This year, the second edition of Aarambh 2020 is taking place in LBSNAA from 14th to 31st October, 2020, in which 428 Officers Trainees from eighteen Services and three Royal Bhutan Services are participating. Due to the prevailing pandemic situation, this year the Aarambh 2020 is a virtual one, with the focus on cultural diversity and synergy in India as an influencer,
economic diversity and oneness as strength, Atmanirbhar in Energy, Health, Building large systems for Black Swan events, Research and Innovation in Education, Industry and Administration.
QUIZ CORNER

1) International Financial Services Centres Authority recently approved ____________ bills

A.2  
B.1  
C.3  
D.4

Answer A

Explanation A meeting of the IFSCA - International Financial Services Centres Authority was held on October 27, 2020. The Board, after detailed discussion, approved the following regulations - International Financial Services Centres Authority (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020 and International Financial Services Centres Authority (Global In-House Centres) Regulations, 2020.

2) India is the ______________ largest country in terms of population density

A.3rd  
B.1st  
C.2nd  
D.5th

Answer C

Explanation India is the 2nd largest country in terms of population density with more than 1.3 billion individuals. Inspite of having this rich genetic diversity, India has been under-represented in global genome studies.

3) CSIR started the IndiGen Program in ______________

A.March 2019  
B.April 2020  
C.March 2020  
D.April 2019
CSIR started the IndiGen Program in April 2019. Under this, the whole genome sequencing of 1029 self-declared healthy Indians drawn from across the country has been completed.

4) "Vigilance Awareness Week", which is observed from ________________

A. October 27 to November 2
B. October 28 to November 3
C. October 29 to November 4
D. October 30 to November 5

Answer A

Explanation The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) organises the national conference, coinciding with the "Vigilance Awareness Week", which is observed from October 27 to November 2 annually. The theme of this years conference is- Satark Bharat, Samruddha Bharat.

5) ________________ organises the national conference, coinciding with the "Vigilance Awareness Week"

A. CBI
B. CVC
C. Both A and B
D. None

Answer A

Explanation The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) organises the national conference, coinciding with the "Vigilance Awareness Week", which is observed from October 27 to November 2 annually. The theme of this years conference is- Satark Bharat, Samruddha Bharat.

6) Digital India Award is an initiative to acknowledge the ________________ activities.

A. Administrative
B. Media persons
C. Social service
D. e-Governance
Answer D

Explanation Digital India Award formerly known as Web Ratna Awards is an initiative to acknowledge the exemplary initiatives in e-Governance. The Government of India (GoI) has been bracing for innovation and transformation in delivery of information/services with adoption of best ICT practices.

7) Digital India Award formerly known as ______________ Awards
   A. Web Ratna
   B. Digital Ratna
   C. Web India
   D. None

Answer A

Explanation Digital India Award formerly known as Web Ratna Awards is an initiative to acknowledge the exemplary initiatives in e-Governance.

8) Centers of Excellence for tribal welfare was launched by Ministry of
   ______________________
   A. Education
   B. Tribal Affairs
   C. Railways
   D. None

Answer B

Explanation Union Minister of Tribal Affairs, Mr Shri Arjun Munda launched two Centers of Excellence for Tribal Welfare in collaboration between Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) and Art of Living (AoL) through video conference on October 27, 2020.

9) The initiative 'Strengthening PRIs' will be launched in 5 districts of
   ______________
   A. Chattisgarh
   B. West Bengal
   C. Jharkhand
D. None of these

**Answer C**

**Explanation** The 1st initiative 'Strengthening PRIs' will be launched in 5 districts covering 30 Gram Panchayats and 150 villages of Jharkhand to create awareness among elected representatives of PRI about various Tribal Acts & Rules and different welfare schemes available for these tribals & help them getting access to these schemes.

10) **USPS stands for _________________________________**

A. United States Postal Service  
B. United States Pilot Service  
C. United states rail service  
D. None of these

**Answer A**

**Explanation** Department of Posts, Government of India - India Post and United States Postal Service - USPS have signed an agreement for Electronic Exchange of Customs data related to postal shipments exchanged between the two countries.

11) **India signed Electronic Exchange of Customs data agreement with ____________**

A. US  
B. UK  
C. China  
D. Russia

**Answer A**

**Explanation** Department of Posts, Government of India - India Post and United States Postal Service - USPS have signed an agreement for Electronic Exchange of Customs data related to postal shipments exchanged between the two countries.

12) **Which Country aims carbon-neutral by 2050?**

A. Japan  
B. China
C. Russia  
D. India

**Answer A**

**Explanation** Japans Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga has announced the countrys ambition to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and become carbon-neutral by 2050.

13) Japan, the worlds ____________ biggest emitter of carbon dioxide

A. 4th  
B. 5th  
C. 6th  
D. 7th

**Answer B**

**Explanation** Japan, the worlds fifth-biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, has set admirable goals, some are dubious of the countrys ability to achieve its target by 2050, given since the nations heavy reliance on coal after the 2011 Fukushima Disaster led to the closure of many nuclear reactor.

14) ISRO to launch _______________ on 7 november

A. Chandrayaan 3  
B. Chandrayaan 2.0  
C. EOS - 01  
D. None

**Answer C**

**Explanation** India would launch its latest earth observation satellite EOS-01 and nine international customer spacecraft onboard its Polar rocket PSLV-C49 from the spaceport of Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on November 7.

15) EOS-01 is intended for applications in _______________________

A. disaster management support  
B. forestry  
C. agriculture
D. All the above

**Answer D**

**Explanation** EOS-01 is intended for applications in agriculture, forestry & disaster management support.

16) **Dr Harsh Vardhan digitally inaugurates Radio diagnosis Facilities at**

A. AIIMS  
B. JIPMER  
C. IIT  
D. None of these

**Answer A**

**Explanation** Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan today digitally inaugurated the Radio diagnosis Facilities at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bathinda.

17) **India hosts meeting of SCO attended by**

A. Kyrgyz Republic  
B. Kazakhstan  
C. Russia  
D. All the above

**Answer D**

**Explanation** The virtual meeting was attended by the Secretary General of SCO and Ministers from, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

18) **Dr. Satish Mishra gets award for**

A. research work on Mice Life Cycle  
B. research work on fungi Life Cycle  
C. research work on Malaria Parasites Life Cycle  
D. None of these

**Answer C**
Ministry of Science & Technology says Dr. Satish Mishra gets this award for research work on Malaria Parasites Life Cycle, which is a complex process involving two hosts and three invasive stages.

19) What are the sub themes of Aarambh 2020?
A. Ek Bharat - Shresth Bharat
B. AtmaNirbharBharat
C. Naveen Bharat
D. All the above

Answer D

The theme of Aarambh 2020 is Governance in India @ 100 with three subthemes - Ek Bharat - Shresth Bharat: Cultural diversity and synergy in India as an Influencer; Economic diversity and oneness as strength AtmaNirbharBharat: in Energy, Health and building large systems for handling black swan events Naveen Bharat: Research & Innovation in Education, Industry and Administration.

20) Myanmar is a member of
A. BIMSTEC
B. ASEAN
C. Both A and B
D. None of these

Answer C

Myanmar is critical for the overall development of North-Eastern Indian states. Myanmar is strategically important to India as it is the only ASEAN country that shares a border with India. Myanmar is also an important member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

21) 2+2 ministerial dialogue is related to
A. Space
B. Science
C. Environment
D. Defence
Answer D

Explanation 2+2 ministerial dialogue is a format of dialogue where the defence and foreign ministers meet with their counterparts from another country. This is the highest-level institutional mechanism between India and the USA.

22) NCVET was notified by the ______________ in December 2018. N

A.Ministry of Health
B.Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship
C.Ministry of Science and Technology
D.None of these

Answer B

Explanation NCVET was notified by the MSDE in December 2018. NCVET subsumed the existing skill regulatory bodies National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) and National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and now acts as an overarching skills regulator.

23) Infantry Day is observed on ________________

A.October 28
B.October 26
C.October 29
D.October 27

Answer D

Explanation Infantry Day is observed on October 27 annually to mark the landing of the first Indian troops in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 who fought to push back Pakistan supported intruders.

24) The Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2020, came into effect on

A.October 19, 2020
B.October 20, 2020
C.October 21, 2020
D.October 22, 2020
The Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2020, came into effect on October 19 2020. And now Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2020 have further streamlined for the better usage.

25) GIFT City is located in _______________________
   A. Chennai  
   B. Bangalore  
   C. Gandhinagar  
   D. Kolkata

Answer C

The United Kingdom (UK) has entered into a strategic partnership to develop India's GIFT City. GIFT - Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is India's first international financial services centre. It is located in Gandhinagar of Gujarat.

26) Green Crackers has been developed by _________________________
   A. IIT - Kharagpur  
   B. IIT - Chennai  
   C. ICAR  
   D. CSIR

Answer D

Green Crackers has been developed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Components in firecrackers are replaced with others that are "less dangerous" and "less harmful" to the atmosphere.

27) The commonly used pollution-causing chemicals
   A. potassium nitrate  
   B. barium  
   C. aluminium  
   D. All the above

Answer D
The commonly used pollution-causing chemicals aluminium, barium, potassium nitrate and carbon have either been removed or sharply reduced in the green crackers.

28) Which of the following statements is/are correct? 1. Green crackers are produced using less harmful raw materials and have additives which reduce emissions by suppressing dust. 2. Green crackers don't contain banned chemicals such as lithium, arsenic, barium and lead. 3. Using pyrotechnics, green crackers are designed to ensure that emission of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide does not occur.

A. 1 only
B. 1 and 2 only
C. 3 only
D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer D

Explanation Green crackers are those crackers that do not contain harmful chemicals that would cause air pollution. They are environmentally friendly or eco friendly. Green crackers are less harmful as compared to conventional firecrackers, and less pollution emission will result in reduced air pollution.

29) GIFT City in Gujarat has been set up as a

A. Special Economic Zone for textile manufacturing
B. International financial services centre
C. Automobile manufacturing hub
D. Oil refining hub

Answer B

Explanation The United Kingdom (UK) has entered into a strategic partnership to develop India’s GIFT City. GIFT - Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is India’s first international financial services centre. It is located in Gandhinagar of Gujarat.

30) In 2021, Chileans will elect a ____________ member Assembly with a half delegates of women to draft the new document
A.156
B.150
C.153
D.155

**Answer D**

**Explanation** Replacing the Constitution is going to be a two-year process. In 2021, Chileans will elect a 155-member Assembly with a half delegates of women to draft the new document, which will then be put to a plebiscite in 2022.

31) **PM SVANidhi is for __________________**

A. Daily wages
B. Women
C. Street Vendors
D. Children

**Answer C**

**Explanation** PM Modi lauded beneficiaries of the PM Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme, and also most of the beneficiaries were repaying their loans on time. So far, 24.76 lakh applications have been received, of which 12.37 lakh have been sanctioned, and over 5 lakh loans have been disbursed.

32) **PM SVANidhi scheme was launched on ________________**

A. June 1, 2020
B. June 1, 2019
C. July 1, 2019
D. July 1, 2020

**Answer A**

**Explanation** The Scheme was launched on June 1, 2020, by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for providing affordable Working Capital loans to street vendors to resume their livelihoods that have been affected due to Covid-19 lockdown.

33) **The lending institutions under the PM SVANidhi Scheme ________________**
A. Regional Rural Banks
B. Small Finance Banks
C. Self Help Group banks
D. All the above

**Answer D**

**Explanation** The lending institutions under the PM SVANidhi Scheme include Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Small Finance Banks, Cooperative Banks, NBFCs, Microfinance institutions and Self Help Group banks.

34) National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a ____________ body

A. constitutional
B. statutory
C. Non-statutory
D. None

**Answer B**

**Explanation** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a statutory body constituted under the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008.

35) Operation Meri Saheli was launched by Ministry of

A. Railways
B. Finance
C. Health
D. None of the above

**Answer A**

**Explanation** Indian Railways has launched on operation Meri Saheli for focused action on the security of women across all zones to provide safety & security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from starting station to destination station.
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