

“We love being mentally strong, but we hate situations that allow us to put our mental strength to good use.”

INDIA TSUNAMI EARLY WARNING CENTRE (ITEWC)

The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC) established at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Sciences, (INCOIS – ESSO) Hyderabad, is an autonomous body under Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Indian Tsunami Early Warning System comprises a real-time seismic monitoring network of broadband seismic stations. ITEWC receives data in real time from 350 seismic stations, 50 tsunami buoys and 300 tide gauges established in the Indian as well as the other oceans by other countries and international agencies.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO has designated ITEWC as the Tsunami Service Provider (TSP) for the entire Indian Ocean Region. Since 2012, ITEWC is providing tsunami advisories and related services to about 25 countries”.

On December 26, 2004, one of the deadliest earthquakes (9.3 magnitude), epicentred off the West coast of Sumatra, Indonesia, triggered a tsunami that killed over 2.3 lakh people across 14 countries, including 11,000 in India.

Since then, India has made rapid strides in establishing an early warning system with the help of various organisations, and partnered with international agencies involved in the study of earthquakes, tsunami and other ocean-related natural disasters.

Even though tsunamis can be generated by various phenomena, the most destructive tsunamis are generated from large, shallow earthquakes at subduction zones. Major tsunamis are produced by large earthquakes of magnitude greater than 7.0 associated with the movement of oceanic and continental plates.

The waves can travel great distances from the source region, spreading destruction along their path. More than 80% of the world's tsunamis occur in the Pacific along its Ring of Fire subduction zones.

CONSTITUTION BENCH PLEA TO EXAMINE THE VALIDITY THE CITIZENSHIP ACT 1955

The Supreme Court has decided to refer to a fresh Constitution Bench plea to examine the validity of various aspects of a provision of the Citizenship Act 1955, including the cut-off date for awarding citizenship to Bangladeshi immigrants in Assam. Section 6A of the Act relates to provisions for citizenship of people covered by the Assam Accord.

In December 2014, a two-judge Bench of the apex court had framed 13 questions, for deliberation by a larger Bench, which included whether Section 6A violates the Articles of the Constitution by diluting the political rights of residents of Assam. It had also framed a question about the scope of fundamental right contained in Article 29(1), relating to the right to conserve a distinct language, script or culture, and also about the meaning of expressions ‘culture’ and ‘conserve.’

Assam Accord:

The Assam Accord (1985) was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement in New Delhi on 15 August 1985. The accord brought an end to the Assam Agitation and paved the way for the leaders of the agitation to form a political party and form a government in the state of Assam soon after.

As per the Accord, those Bangladeshis who came between 1966 and 1971 will be barred from voting for ten years. The Accord also mentions that the international borders will be sealed and all persons who crossed over from Bangladesh after 1971 are to be deported.

Though the accord brought an end to the agitation, some of the key clauses are yet to be implemented, which has kept some of the issues festering.

AGNI-I BALLISTIC MISSILE

- India recently flight-tested the indigenously developed Agni-I ballistic

missile that can carry a nuclear payload as part of a user trial by the Army from a test range off the Odisha coast.

- It has a specialized navigation system, which ensures it reaches the target with a high degree of accuracy and precision
- 18th version of Agni-I. The missile was inducted into service in 2004.
- The surface-to-surface, single stage missile, powered by solid propellants, was launched as part of a regular training exercise by the armed forces.
- The missile has a specialized navigation system, which ensures it reaches the target with a high degree of accuracy and precision.
- The 15-metre-long Agni-I, weighing 12 tones, can carry payloads up to 1,000 kg.

UNION BUDGET REINFORCED THE CORRECTION OF THE INVERTED DUTY STRUCTURE (IDS)

The Union Budget has reinforced the correction of the inverted duty structure (IDS) which has adversely impacted manufacturing for decades.

The Budget has raised customs duties significantly. The goods and services tax (GST), especially the IGST or Integrated GST component, has begun to erode the advantage that the IDS was giving to foreign exporters in Indian markets. Also, the Finance Minister, in Budget 2014, had announced the beginnings of a reversal of the IDS in electronics and has sustained that effort in subsequent Budgets.

INVERTED STRUCTURE

- Higher import duty on raw materials than the finished goods making import of finished goods cheaper
- Dehydrated culture media attracts a customs duty of 10% while the micro-organism attracts a duty of 30%
- It has a variety of industrial, pharmaceutical, biotech, food safety and life science applications
- Sea-weed attracts a duty of 10%, while the raw material Agar attracts a duty of 30%
- Solar modules attract nil import duty while the import duty on components ranges between 5-10%

An IDS means higher duty on intermediate as opposed to final/finished goods, with the latter often enjoying concessional custom

duty under some schemes. Inverted duty structure is a situation where import duty on finished goods is low compared to the import duty on raw materials that are used in the production of such finished goods. For example, suppose the tariff (import tax) on the import of tyres is 10% and the tariff on the imports of natural rubber which is used in the production of tyres is 20%; this is a case of inverted duty structure.

When the import duty on raw materials is high, it will be more difficult to produce the concerned good domestically at a competitive price. Several industries depend on imported raw materials and components. High tax on the raw materials compels them to raise price. On the other hand, foreign finished goods will be coming at a reduced price because of low tax advantage. In conclusion, manufactured goods by the domestic industry become uncompetitive against imported finished goods.

The disadvantage of the inverted duty structure increases with the increased use of imported raw materials. An inverted duty structure discourages domestic value addition.

GOOGLE, NCERT PARTNER FOR INTERNET SAFETY TRAINING IN SCHOOLS

Google and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) have signed a pact to integrate a course on 'digital citizenship and safety' in information and communication technology curriculum

NCERT has curriculum on IT and communication technologies embedded in teachers training programme

The curriculum developed by NCERT in collaboration with Google will be used to train students from class I to class XII across 1.4 million schools in India

Components of curriculum:

The curriculum is spread into four themes—being smart, being safe, being a digital citizen and being future ready

This will help student identify good content and bad content

In advance classes, it will focus on privacy, device management, intellectual property and reputation management

National Council of Educational Research and Training:

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an autonomous organization of the Government of India established on 1 September 1961

The NCERT was established with the agenda to design and support a common system of education which is national in character and also enables and encourages the diverse culture across the country.

"DEVELOPMENT OF SOLAR CITIES" SCHEME

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy under its scheme "Development of Solar Cities" has approved/sanctioned 60 Cities including 13 Pilot and 5 Model Cities up to 12th Five-year Plan period.

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is implementing a programme on 'Development of Solar Cities' which aims to reduce a minimum of 10% of the projected demand of conventional energy of the city through renewable energy installations and energy efficiency measures. Sixty Cities are proposed to be developed as Solar Cities during the Eleventh Plan period including four Model Solar Cities and 10 Pilot Solar Cities. The Master plan for each Solar City is being prepared to assess and utilize various renewable sources including Solar, Wind and Municipal Waste etc.

The criteria set by the ministry for the identification of cities include a city having population between 50,000 to 50 lakh (with relaxation given to special category states including northeast states), initiatives and regulatory measures already taken along with a high level of commitment in promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Solar Cities:

Urbanization and economic development are leading to a rapid rise in energy demand in urban areas in our country leading to

enhanced Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Many cities around the world are setting targets and introducing policies for promoting renewable energy and reducing GHG emissions and the countries like Australia and USA are developing the solar cities.

Several Indian cities and towns are experiencing rapid growth in the peak electricity demand. The local governments and the electricity utilities are finding it difficult to cope with this rapid rise in demand and as a result most of the cities/towns are facing electricity shortages. In this context, the "Development of Solar Cities" programme is designed to support/encourage Urban Local Bodies to prepare a Road Map to guide their cities in becoming 'renewable energy cities' or 'solar cities'.

The Solar City programme aims:

- To enable and empower Urban Local Governments to address energy challenges at City – level.
- To provide a framework and support to prepare a Master Plan including assessment of current energy situation, future demand and action plans.
- To build capacity in the Urban Local Bodies and create awareness among all sections of civil society.
- To involve various stakeholders in the planning process.
- To oversee the implementation of sustainable energy options through public – private partnerships.

SEBI GETS MORE POWER

As part of the proposed amendments in the Finance Bill 2018, the government has given more power to the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to impose monetary penalties on important market intermediaries such as stock exchanges and clearing corporations.

SEBI can also take action against newer categories of participants like investment advisers, research analysts, real estate

investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs).

The proposed amendments to the SEBI Act and the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act now allow the capital markets regulator to impose a monetary penalty of at least Rs. 5 crore on stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories for non-compliance with regulatory norms.

The amendments also allow SEBI to act against entities that furnish false or incomplete information to the regulator. Earlier, it could act only if the entity did not furnish any information.

The whole-time members of SEBI have also been given additional powers to act against wrongdoers.

BHUTAN, NEPAL & BANGLADESH TO BE PART OF INDIA'S TIGER CENSUS

India's tiger census, which began late last year, will see coordination with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh in estimating the territorial spread of the animal in the subcontinent.

In a first, all countries will jointly estimate big cat numbers

While India has engaged with Nepal and Bangladesh in previous tiger counts, this is the first time all countries are uniting in arriving at tiger numbers, particularly in regions with shared borders.

Since 2006, the WII — a Union Environment Ministry-funded body — has been tasked with coordinating the tiger estimation exercise.

The once-in-four-years exercise calculated, in 2006, that India had only 1,411 tigers. This rose to 1,706 in 2010 and 2,226 in 2014 in later editions on the back of improved conservation measures and new estimation methods.

'SECURITY CHECK KIYA' CAMPAIGN

To create awareness around Internet safety, Google India has launched public initiative “#SecurityCheckKiya”.

It aims to protect young and first-time web users from account hijacking, safeguard

Android devices from malicious apps and secure all their personal data if they lose their device. Under the campaign, Google encouraged users to take the first step of Security Check on Safer Internet Day which is celebrated on February 6.

People can follow a three-step action to stay safe on the web. To protect account hijacking, all Android devices and Gmail users can review their security settings and Google account activity with one click “Google Security”. This automatically scans for any vulnerability and guides users to keep their account safe.

To safeguard Android devices from malicious apps, users can scan and check Android device for any harmful apps through Google Play Protect. Google Play Protect scans all apps for malware before and after you install them and is automatically enabled on your device. To secure all personal data if an Android device is lost, users can download “Find My Device” app and it will help you to easily locate a lost Android device and keeps device and information secure.
