

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

INDO-FRENCH KNOWLEDGE SUMMIT

The first ever Indo-French Knowledge Summit was held recently at New Delhi. The summit coincided with the state visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India.

The summit ended with a landmark agreement on mutual recognition of educational qualifications between the two countries and a record 15 other MoUs between universities and research institutions on joint initiatives and partnerships.

Significance of mutual recognition of educational qualifications:

Agreement on mutual recognition of academic qualifications will go a long way in boosting the educational relationship between the two countries and will encourage mobility of students from both the countries by facilitating possibilities for them to continue their studies in the other country and would also promote excellence in higher education through cooperation, university and research exchanges.

A Franco-Indian Education Trust was also unveiled at the closing session of the summit. It will be funded by the Indian industry and French Companies in India to offer educational scholarships and merit based financial support to Indian students.

The Knowledge Summit is the First Franco-Indian Summit for university, scientific and technology cooperation with the broader objective to design a roadmap of Franco-India cooperation for the next five years, in collaboration with companies.

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This event offers a common moment for a common goal; increase student mobility, enlarge Research & Development collaborations and link campuses to companies by focusing on employability.

The summit was organized by the French Embassy in India and co-hosted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

More than 350 people from nearly 80 Indian Institutions and 70 French Institutions along with key enterprises participated in the Summit.

DEPT. OF BIOTECHNOLOGY TO INVESTIGATE ILLEGAL CULTIVATION OF HT COTTON

Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Science and Technology has constituted a Field Inspection and Scientific Evaluation Committee (FISEC) to investigate the matter of illegal cultivation of HT cotton.

The cultivation of BG-III or HT cotton has not been approved by Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of Ministry of Environment. However, there are several media reports and complaints regarding the illegal or unauthorized cultivation of HT cotton in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

HT Cotton:

BG Cotton – III, also known as Herbicide-Tolerant Cotton, contains Round-up Ready and Round-up Flex (RRF) gene. HT cotton is an innovation in Bt cotton as it takes care of the weeds problem at a much lower cost than the labour farmers have to engage for weeding.

Monsanto, a US-based multinational seed giant, has developed herbicide-tolerant trait (BG-III) and commercialized it as ‘Round-up Ready Flex (RRF)’ in USA.

In normal cotton, spraying of herbicide is not possible once the plant has emerged out of the soil, as the chemical cannot distinguish between weeds and the crop itself. But with cotton that is genetically engineered to ‘tolerate’ herbicide application – through introduction of another alien gene, this time coding for a protein inhibiting the action of that chemical – only the weeds, not the crop, get killed.

As the unapproved cotton variety is claimed to be herbicide tolerant, farmers resort to indiscriminate use of glyphosate, a herbicide, causing health hazards to humans and cattle, apart from affecting the yield of cotton.

The herbicide-resistant gene could spread through pollen into the biodiversity system leading to transformation of weeds into super weeds on a large-scale. It would not only threaten the growth and yields of all crops in future, but also could increase cultivation costs and lead to health hazards.

As the herbicide tolerant cotton is not approved by the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) for commercial cultivation in India, its sale, cultivation and seed production is also punishable offence under Seeds Act 1966, Seed Rule 1968, Seeds (Control) Order 1983 with regard to Environmental Protection Act 1986 and Environmental Protection Rules, 1989.

MAJOR PORT TRUSTS BILL-2018

With a view to providing more autonomy and flexibility to Major Ports and to professionalize their governance, the Government has introduced the Major Port Authorities Bill in Parliament to replace the existing Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

Salient features of the Bill:

The Bill will apply to the major ports of Chennai, Cochin, Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Kandla, Kolkata, Mumbai, New Mangalore, Mormugao, Paradip, V.O. Chidambaranar, and Vishakhapatnam. The central government may notify more major ports.

Under the 1963 Act, all major ports are managed by the respective Board of Port Trusts that have members appointed by the central government. The Bill provides for the creation of a Board of Major Port Authority for each major port. The Boards will succeed the existing Port Trusts.

The Board will comprise of a Chairperson and a deputy Chairperson, both of whom will be appointed by the central government on the

recommendation of a select committee. Number of Board Members will be 11-13.

The Bill allows the Board to use its property, assets and funds as deemed fit for the development of the major port. The Board can also make rules on: (i) declaring availability of port assets for port related activities and services, (ii) developing and providing infrastructure facilities such as setting up new ports, jetties, and (iii) providing exemption or remission from payment of any charges on any goods or vessels.

Under the 1963 Act, the Board has to seek prior sanction of the central government to raise any loan. Under the Bill, to meet its capital and working expenditure requirements, the Board may raise loans from any (i) Indian scheduled bank or financial institution, or (ii) any financial institution outside India that is compliant with all the laws. However, for loans above 50% of its capital reserves, the Board will require prior sanction of the central government.

The Bill provides for the central government to create an Adjudicatory Board. The Board will consist of a Presiding Officer and two members, as appointed by the central government on the recommendation of selection committee. Central Government shall have the power to remove the Presiding Officer or any member of the Adjudicatory Board from the office following the prescribed manner.

Functions of the Adjudicatory Board will include: (i) certain functions being carried out by the Tariff Authority for Major Ports, (ii) adjudicating on disputes or claims related to rights and obligations of major ports and PPP concessionaires, (iii) reviewing stressed PPP projects, and (iv) looking into complaints received from port users regarding port services.

Reforms have been under way since 1996, when ports were opened to private investment. With India's major and non-major ports (over 200 of them) accounting for over 70 per cent of India's international trade by value, it was necessary to address

inefficiencies such as high turnaround time of ships by stepping up modernization and grappling with shoddy management. The new Bill marks an effort to promote ease of doing business.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON COUNTERFEITING AND ROLE OF ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES BY CIPAM

The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) is organizing a National Conference on Counterfeiting and Role of Enforcement Agencies in New Delhi, in collaboration with European Union (EU).

The conference intends to bring together national and international experts on the same platform to have a dialogue and exchange best practices for the benefit of enforcement agencies, attorneys and industry representatives and provide fresh ideas for further strengthening the IPR protection ecosystem.

Counterfeiting has grown considerably to a point where it has become a widespread phenomenon with a global impact. Counterfeiting, other than causing erosion on the brand value, reputation and goodwill of the manufacturers and owners of IP, leads to social and economic consequences resulting in huge economic losses in terms of lost taxes and revenues. It leads to diversion of funds earned there from to other illegal activities; counterfeit products put a threat to consumers' health and safety as well.

Enforcement agencies like police, customs, as also the prosecution wing, have a major role to play in effective enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in the country. Creating awareness about IPRs and the menace of counterfeiting amongst officials of these agencies will strengthen the enforcement regime, as also assist them in handling cases relating to counterfeit products in their day to day activities.

CIPAM:

Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been created as a professional body under the aegis of DIPP to take forward the implementation of the National IPR Policy

that was approved by the Government in May 2016, with the slogan – b

CIPAM is working towards creating public awareness about IPRs in the country, promoting the filing of IPRs through facilitation, providing inventors with a platform to commercialize their IP assets and coordinating the implementation of the National IPR Policy in collaboration with Government Ministries/Departments and other stakeholders.

NEW METRIC FOR JOBS GROWTH TO INCLUDE INFORMAL ECONOMY

The government has now decided to start counting jobs created in the non-farm informal sector.

The government has asked labour bureau under the Union labour ministry to begin counting jobs created in establishments deploying less than 10 people.

It means establishments and shops run by a single owner or with one employee too will be counted as employment generation.

A pragmatic definition of workers:

In July 2017, a government task force headed by then NITI Aayog vice-chairman had suggested adopting a "pragmatic definition" of formal workers.

It recommended that workers covered under private insurance or pension, those subjected to tax deduction at source (TDS) and those working in companies excluded from the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) should be considered for counting of jobs.

The labour ministry will take the 2013-14 sixth economic censuses as the base for the new survey of informal jobs.

The annual household survey by the department of statistics, the quarterly establishment survey by labour bureau covering eight sectors and 18 subsectors and now the new survey of establishments with less than 10 employees will give a comprehensive picture of jobs in India.
