

“Discipline Your Mind to Think Positively: Discipline your mind to see the good in every situation and look on the best side of every event.” Roy T. Bennett

INTER NATIONAL & BILATERAL

REGIONAL WORKSHOP OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

A four-day Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), jointly hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and UNCCD Secretariat, to build the capacity of the Asia-Pacific Region to monitor and report on land degradation, was recently held in New Delhi.

UNCCD:

- Established in 1994, the United Nations to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- It is the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference's Agenda 21.
- To help publicise the Convention, 2006 was declared “International Year of Deserts and Desertification”.
- The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- Its 197 Parties aim, through partnerships, to implement the Convention and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy.
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for this Convention.

The new UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations to build.

By sustainably managing land and striving to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality, now and in the future, not only will the impact of climate change be reduced, but a conflict over natural resources will be avoided.

INDIA, CHINA ON ANNUAL REPORT ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS BY USTR

India has made a repeat appearance in an annual report on intellectual property rights violations by trading partners released by the US Trade Representative's office. China has been on the priority watch list for 14 years.

The USTR said neither country had done enough to protect patented and trademarked products.

The report does not trigger any immediate sanctions.

ABOUT THE REPORT:

The Special 301 Report is prepared annually by the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) under Section 301 as amended of the Trade Act of 1974.

The reports identify trade barriers to U.S. companies and products due to the intellectual property laws, such as copyright, patents and trademarks, in other countries.

The report contains a “Priority Watch List” and a “Watch List”, containing countries whose intellectual property regimes are deemed of concern.

“Priority Watchlist countries” are judged by the USTR as having “serious intellectual property rights deficiencies” that require increased USTR attention.

“Watch List” countries have been identified by the USTR as having “serious intellectual property rights deficiencies” but are not yet placed on the “Priority Watchlist”.

WORLD BANK TO PROVIDE LOAN FOR NATIONAL BIO FARMA MISSION

The government has secured a loan of about Rs. 1,600 crore from the World Bank to develop new vaccines, medical devices and medicines.

The money will be disbursed over five years and is part of the Department of

Biotechnology-led National Biopharma Mission.

National Biopharma Mission:

The pharmaceutical industry holds a promising future for India, and the National Biopharma Mission is anticipated to be the game changer for Indian Pharmaceutical Industries.

The mission aspires to create a conducive ecosystem to encourage entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector by strengthening technology transfer capabilities in the private and the public sector.

It aims to make India a hub for design and development of affordable, novel and effective biopharmaceutical products and solutions.

The mission strives to encourage entrepreneurship to transform the health standards of the people of India through affordable medicines.

A Public Sector Undertaking of Department of Biotechnology (DBT) – Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) is involved in the implementation of the mission.

The Legal Agreement with World Bank for flexible financing arrangements for this Mission of DBT was executed on April 24, 2018 between the project implementing agency – BIRAC.

This mission will mark the beginning of a new partnership between DBT and World Bank. It is envisaged that this programme will revolutionize the Biotech market.

It will help deliver 6-10 new products in the next five years, create several dedicated facilities for next-generation skills, and hundreds of jobs in the process.

It is anticipated that in the long term it would benefit the Indian population at large due to availability of affordable solutions and products relevant to Indian health needs.

INDIA HAS TO CREATE MORE FORMAL JOBS: WORLD BANK

The World Bank in its draft World Development Report 2019 said in India the

pay-offs in the formal sector are over twice as much as in the informal sector.

It made a strong case for creating more formal jobs in India.

Persistent informality and low-productivity employment pose the greatest challenge to developing countries.

Informal workers show resourcefulness in handling the constraints they face, but the businesses they run are too small to raise the livelihoods of their owners.

Informal firms add only 15% of the value per employee of formal firms.

The size of India's informal sector has remained around 91% despite economic and technological revolution.

In another draft report titled Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) for India released in February, the World Bank said India needs to create regular, salaried jobs with growing earnings rather than self-employed ones.

In a report titled 'Jobless Growth?' released earlier this month, the World Bank said to keep employment rates constant, India needs to create 8 million jobs per year as it adds 1.3 million to the working-age population every month.

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

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

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

NATIONAL

VAN DHAN SCHEME LAUNCHED TO HELP INCREASE TRIBAL INCOME THROUGH VALUE ADDITION

The Govt. launched the Van Dhan Scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED.

Emphasizing the important role of value addition in increasing tribal incomes, the Van Dhan, Jan Dhan and Gobar-Dhan Schemes had

the potential to change the tribal-rural economic system. All these three schemes in tandem need to be promoted for this purpose by the State Governments.

The establishment of “Van Dhan Vikas Kendra” is for providing skill upgradation and capacity building training and setting up of primary processing and value addition facility.

Value addition assumes critical importance in ensuring remunerative prices to the tribals in this approach. Three stage value additions would be the corner stone for enhancing incomes of the tribals under the scheme.

The grass root level procurement is proposed to be undertaken through Self Help Groups associated with implementing agencies. Convergence and Networking with other Govt. departments/scheme shall be undertaken to utilise the services of existing SHGs like Ajeevika, etc.

These SHGs shall be appropriately trained on sustainable harvesting/collection, primary processing & value addition and be formed into clusters so as to aggregate their stock in tradable quantity and linking them with facility of primary processing in a Van DhanVikas Kendra.

The stock after primary processing shall be supplied by these SHGs to the State Implementing Agencies or direct tie up for supply to corporate secondary processor. For creation of secondary level value addition facility at district level and tertiary level value addition facility at State level, Big Corporates shall be involved under PPP model.

This PPP model will be based on utilising Private entrepreneur skills in undertaking processing as well as marketing of the produce and Central/ State Govt. support in terms of creating infrastructure and providing enabling environment for undertaking value addition of systematic scientific lines. These will be sophisticated large value addition hubs managed by Private entrepreneur.

The Van Dhan Vikas Kendras will be important milestone in economic development of tribals involved in collection of MFPs by helping them in optimum utilization of natural resources

and provide sustainable MFP-based livelihood in MFP-rich districts.

DAC APPROVED PROCUREMENT OF DRDO'S DESIGNED NAG

In a boost to indigenization and in realization of India's growing technological prowess, the DAC has approved procurement of Defence Research and Development Organization's (DRDO's) designed and developed NAG Missile System (NAMIS) at the cost of Rs 524 crore.

NAG missile and the system:

The NAG missile is a third generation anti-tank guided missile, which has top attack capabilities that can effectively engage and destroy all known enemy tanks during day and night.

The system includes a third generation Anti-Tank Guided Missile, the NAG, along with the Missile Carrier Vehicle (NAMICA).

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated DAC. It is headed by the Defence Minister.

The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.

The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans. It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

DEATH SENTENCE FOR RAPE OF GIRLS UNDER THE AGE OF 12

A formal amendment to the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) making death sentence gender neutral is being moved.

The Centre will amend the POCSO Act to provide death sentence for rape of boys under the age of 12.

There will be same punishment as that for the rape of girls in this age bracket.

The ordinance promulgated for POCSO amendment seeks to amend Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code to enhance the punishment of rape and gangrape of minors under two different age groups – “woman” fewer than 12 years and 16 years.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

RESOURCE PROSPECTOR MISSION TERMINATED

NASA has cancelled Resource Prospector Mission, a mission to assay the resources that may be available to humans on the moon.

Resource Prospector Mission:

The Resource Prospector mission would have sent a rover to the moon’s polar regions to learn about water and other deposits on and just beneath the lunar surface.

The Resource Prospector mission consisted of a lander and a solar-powered rover equipped with a drill. The rover would have scouted the lunar surface, digging up soil for analysis.

Scientists know that water ice exists on the moon, but the Resource Prospector would have provided scientists with a more complete understanding of these deposits.

Such knowledge is crucial in expanding a human presence on the moon. Lunar ice can potentially be melted and split into oxygen and hydrogen, providing a local source of water, oxygen and rocket propellant. Not only would this help make human activities more self-sustaining, but it would also dramatically reduce launch costs, because much of these vital resources could be produced on site.

HUBBLE CAPTURED FIRST IMAGE OF SURVIVING COMPANION TO SUPERNOVA

NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope has captured the first image of a surviving companion to a supernova, compelling evidence that some supernovas originate in double-star systems.

Seventeen years ago, astronomers had witnessed a supernova go off 40 million light-years away in the galaxy called NGC 7424, located in the southern constellation Grus, the Crane, the NASA statement said. The image of the companion star was seen in the fading afterglow of that supernova, called SN 2001ig. SN 2001ig is categorised as a Type IIb stripped-envelope supernova. This type of supernova is unusual because most, but not all, of the hydrogen is gone prior to the explosion.

Hubble Space Telescope:

The Hubble Space Telescope is a large telescope in space. NASA launched Hubble in 1990.

It was built by the United States space agency NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency.

Hubble is the only telescope designed to be serviced in space by astronauts.

Expanding the frontiers of the visible Universe, the Hubble Space Telescope looks deep into space with cameras that can see across the entire optical spectrum from infrared to ultraviolet.
