"You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." Jim Rohn

INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL

US TO PULL OUT OF THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

US President Donald Trump has announced he is pulling out of the Iran nuclear deal. He described the agreement as "decaying and rotting".

The agreement, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), has been on the rocks since Trump's election, and the resulting climate of uncertainty spooked many large firms from doing business in Iran, thus diminishing the economic incentives that drew Iran to the agreement in the first place.

Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.

Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.

The JCPOA established the Joint Commission, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

It had been hit with devastating economic sanctions by the United Nations, United States and the European Union that are estimated to have cost it tens of billions of pounds a year in lost oil export revenues. Billions in overseas assets had also been frozen.

Trump and opponents to the deal say it is flawed because it gives Iran access to billions of dollars but does not address Iran's support for groups the U.S. considers terrorists, like Hamas and Hezbollah. They note it also doesn't curb Iran's development of ballistic missiles and that the deal phases out by 2030. They say Iran has lied about its nuclear program in the past.

The agreement was signed by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: The **United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China, plus Germany** — and **Iran**. The deal was also enshrined in a UN Security Council resolution, incorporating it into international law.

Some of the US' closest allies, the UK, France and Germany, issued a statement expressing "regret and concern" about the decision, emphasizing Iran's compliance with the deal and their "continuing commitment" to the deal. The leaders of those countries failed in their attempts to convince Trump to preserve the deal.

Russia meanwhile said the deal was "new confirmation of Washington's incompetence," and underscored that the US, not Iran, is now technically in violation of the deal.

NATIONAL

INDIA MERGES ANTI-DUMPING, IMPORT SAFEGUARD BODIES

India has finally merged the two separate bodies handling **anti-dumping and import safeguards to form the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR).**

This is in line with US International Trade Commission (USITC).

Currently, Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD) deals with anti-dumping and countervailing duty cases, while Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) deals with safeguard measures and DGFT deals with quantitative restriction (QR) safeguards.

The finance ministry had administrative control over **the DGS**. The commerce ministry has **DGAD** under its control.

Functions of new body:

The refurbished DGTR will also bring safeguards (quantitative restrictions) functions of Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) into its fold.

DGTR will also provide trade defense support to India's domestic industry and exporters in dealing with increasing instances of trade remedy investigations instituted against them by other countries.

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Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR):

The Government of India carried out an Amendment to the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 for the creation of an integrated single umbrella National Authority to be called the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) for providing comprehensive and swift trade defense mechanism in India.

The amendment of Allocation of Business Rules has also mandated Department of Commerce with work pertaining to the recommendation of Safeguard measures.

The DGTR will bring DGAD, DGS and Safeguards (QR) functions of DGFT into its fold by merging them into one single national entity

DGTR will deal with Anti-dumping, CVD and Safeguard measures

The DGTR will function as an attached office of Department of Commerce

The recommendation of DGTR for the imposition of Anti-dumping, countervailing & Safeguard duties would be considered by the Department of Revenue

GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED GREEN LICENCE PLATES E-VEHICLES

The government has approved green licence plates bearing numbers in white fonts for private e-vehicles and yellow for taxis.

The government has approved distinctive green licence plates for electric vehicles to encourage people to use electric vehicles. Such vehicles will be fitted with green licence plates bearing numbers in white fonts for private cars and yellow font for taxis.

The purpose behind distinctive number plates is their easy identification for preferential treatment in parking, free entry in congested zones besides other proposed benefits like concessional toll.

The government also plans to allow youth in the age bracket of 16-18 years to drive electric scooters, besides mandating taxi aggregators to have a certain percentage of e-vehicle fleet.

The measure is aimed at promoting e-vehicle's use and the government is considering exemption from permits for such vehicles.

The government is also contemplating to ask taxi aggregators to have an incremental share of electric vehicles from 2020 onwards, which could be 1 per cent of the fleet every year.

The government is considering exemption from permits for such vehicles. Exemption from permit will be a game changer as restricted permit regime is a major concern.

E-rickshaw growth is attributable to the permit exemption and there is scope to extend the exemption to the e-buses, e-taxis, e-autos and e-bikes.

E-auto and e-buses may have a big impact since getting a new permit is extremely difficult.

India, currently, has four kinds of number plates white licence plates with numbers on black font for private cars, (2) yellow plates with fonts in black for commercial vehicles, (3) black plates with yellow font letters for self-driven rental vehicles and (4) blue plates with white font letters for Embassies and High Commissions.

MADHYA PRADESH GETS INDIA'S FIRST SMART CITIES CONTROL CENTRE

In a major step towards realising the centre's smart city mission (SCM), the Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday launched the country's first Integrated Control and Command Centre (ICCC) for all seven smart cities of the state in Bhopal.

ICCC:

ICCC is a cloud-based Universal Internet of Things (UIoT) platform developed by Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE). It can run multiple city command centre operations through its multi-efficiency capabilities.

ICCC would integrate a multitude of citizens' services applications and sensors running across selected cities of Madhya Pradesh. It would enable the authorities to monitor the status of various smart civic amenities in real-time through the sensors connected to it.

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The GPS sensors installed in public transport buses, dial 100 vehicles, 108 ambulance services, smart poles, smart lights, traffic management cameras, public bike sharing, solid waste management, meteorological department updates, smart maps etc. would be linked to this centre, enabling the authorities to monitor the status of the civic amenities in real-time.

Smart City mission:

Under the scheme that was launched in 2014, around 100 cities in the country will be developed.

The selection is based on the scores cities get for carrying out urban reforms in areas including sanitation and governance. Cities that score the highest will be picked for the project, to be implemented over a 10-year period.

These cities will be developed to have basic infrastructure through assured water and power supply, sanitation and solid waste management, efficient urban mobility and public transport, IT connectivity, e-governance and citizen participation. Bottom-up approach has been the key planning principle under Smart City Mission.

Under the scheme, each city will get Rs 500 crore from the Centre for implementing various projects. An equal amount, on matching basis, will have to be contributed by the state or urban local bodies. The mission will provide central funding of Rs 48,000 crore to the selected cities.

The implementation of the Mission at the City level will be done by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) created for the purpose. The SPV will plan, appraise, approve, release funds, implement, manage, operate, monitor and evaluate the Smart City development projects. Each smart city will have a SPV which will be headed by a full time CEO and have nominees of Central Government, State Government and ULB on its Board.

FIFTEENTH FINANCE COMMISSION CONSTITUTED ADVISORY COUNCIL TO ADVISE AND ASSIST

The Fifteenth Finance Commission has constituted an Advisory Council to advise and assist the Commission.

To advise the Commission on any issue or subject related to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Commission, which may be of relevance.

To assist in the preparation of any paper or research study which would enhance the Commission understands on the issues containing in its ToR.

To help in broadening the Commission's ambit and understanding to seek best national and international practices on matters pertaining to fiscal devolution and improving the quality and reach and enforcement of its recommendations.

Finance Commission:

It is a body set up under Article 280 of the Constitution. Its primary job is to recommend measures and methods on how revenues need to be distributed between the Centre and states.

The Constitution provides that Finance Commission shall consist of a Chairman and four other members to be appointed by President. The Chairman or members are eligible for reappointment. The Constitution authorizes Parliament to make provisions related to qualifications, conditions of service of members or powers of Finance Commission. So Parliament enacted Finance Commission Act in 1951 to determine provisions related to qualifications or disqualifications, conditions of service or miscellaneous powers to perform functions provided under constitution.

Qualifications:

The Chairman shall have vast experience in Public affairs and other four members shall be selected among persons who a) have qualifications as par with a judge of HC, b) has special knowledge of Finance and Accounts of govt, c) have vast experience in financial matters and d) have special knowledge of economics.

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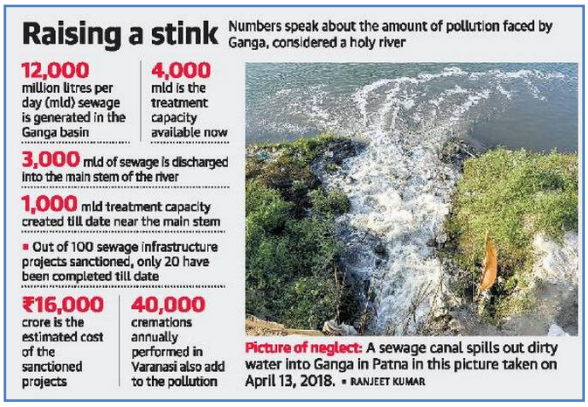
NATIONAL CLEAN GANGA MISSION

Only about a fifth of the Rs. 20,000 crore allotted for the National Clean Ganga Mission (NCGM) has been utilised till March 2018.

That is roughly the same proportion of the sanctioned money utilised the same time last year.

Amid complaints that the government's marquee Ganga-cleaning exercise was dawdling, Union Water Resources Ministry had romised(in 2017) a "visible change" in the Ganga water quality by 2019.

It says that as of March 2018, Rs. 20,601 crore had been sanctioned for 193 projects. So far, only Rs. 4,254 crore had actually been spent on their implementation.



About half the money, or Rs. 2,814 crore, had been spent on establishing sewage infrastructure.

At present, the capacity for sewage treatment is just 4,000 MLD; of this, 1,000 MLD is functional.

Also, till date, only 24 of the 65 'entry-level' projects had been completed.

Main source of pollutants:

Though the industrial pollution, volume-wise, accounts for about 20%, its toxic and non-biodegradable nature has a disproportionate impact.

The industrial pollutants largely emanate from tanneries in Kanpur and distilleries, paper mills and sugar mills in the Kosi, Ramganga and Kali river catchments.

The municipal sewage, at a billion litres a day, accounts for 80% of the pollution load.

MAGNETOSPHERIC MULTISCALE SPACECRAFT (MMS)

In a new find, NASA scientists have discovered a new type of magnetic event in turbulent space surrounding Earth. Scientists analysed the data obtained by the NASA's Magnetospheric Multiscale spacecraft (MMS) to find the new magnetic event in near-Earth environment.

Magnetic reconnection is one of the most important processes in the space — filled with charged particles known as plasma — around Earth.

This fundamental process dissipates magnetic energy and propels charged particles, both of which contribute to a dynamic space weather system that scientists want to better understand, and even some day predict, as we do terrestrial weather.

Magnetic reconnection has been observed innumerable times in the magnetosphere — the magnetic environment around Earth — but usually under calm conditions. The new event occurred in a region called the magnetosheath, just outside the outer boundary of the magnetosphere, where the solar wind is extremely turbulent.

Magnetospheric Multiscale Mission:

MMS investigates how the Sun's and Earth's magnetic fields connect and disconnect, explosively transferring energy from one to the other in a process that is important at the Sun, other planets, and everywhere in the universe, known as magnetic reconnection. Four identically instrumented spacecraft measure plasmas, fields, and particles in a near-equatorial orbit that will frequently encounter reconnection in action.

By observing magnetic reconnection in nature, MMS provides access to predictive knowledge of a universal process that is the final governor of space weather, affecting modern technological systems such as communications networks, GPS navigation, and electrical power grids. MMS will establish knowledge, methods and technologies applicable to future space weather missions and the future growth and development of space weather forecasting.

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