

“Keep your promises and be consistent. Be the kind of person others can trust.”

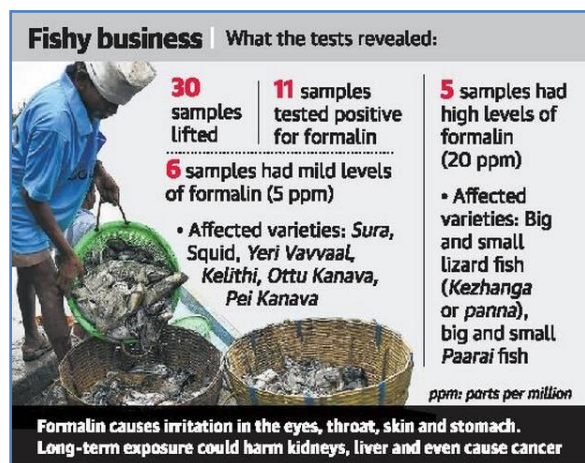
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INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL

FISH SAMPLES IN CHENNAI TEST POSITIVE FOR FORMALIN

As many as 11 out of 30 samples of fish species purchased from two major fish markets in Chennai, on two different days, have tested positive for formalin, a cancer-inducing chemical used illegally to preserve fish.

Both big and small lizardfish or Panna or kezhang and paarai (Malabar trevally) were found to have formalin content of above 20 ppm (parts per million).



For the test, a two-gram piece of meat from the fish was taken and put inside four ml of diluent and shaken so that the formalin will get into it.

Then this diluent was poured into the bottle containing the reagent that turned yellow revealing that it had tested positive.

It is a very sensitive reagent and can detect up to 0.5 milligram per kilo. The actual test takes only 10 minutes.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have been undertaking tests at fish markets and harbours across the State to test for formalin following a scare in neighbouring Kerala that fish sourced from here were chemically contaminated.

Usually, people who buy fish check the gills for freshness, if it is red it denotes freshness when formalin is used the gills remain red for longer periods.

Formalin is 30-45% aqueous solution of Formaldehyde with water.

Formaldehyde is a simple chemical compound made of hydrogen, oxygen and carbon.

All life forms – bacteria, plants, fish, animals and humans – naturally produce formaldehyde as part of cell metabolism.

Formaldehyde is perhaps best known for its preservative and anti-bacterial properties, but formaldehyde-based chemistry is used to make a wide range of value-added products.

Formalin causes irritation in the eyes, throat, skin and stomach. In the long run, continued exposure causes harm to the kidneys, liver and can even cause cancers.

In the fishing industry, formalin or formaldehyde is sprayed on the fish or injected into the fish or the fish is dipped into the solution. This helps keep the fish fresh for a longer time.

NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY TO CONDUCT NET, NEET, JEE (MAINS) EXAMS

National Testing Agency (NTA) to undertake these exams.

Newly formed National Testing Agency (NTA) would now conduct the national-level examinations — NET, NEET, JEE (Mains) that were earlier organized by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

So far, the CBSE conducted NEET on behalf of the Medical Council Of India (MCI) and the Health Ministry and NET on behalf of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

The National Eligibility Test (NET) would be conducted in December.

JEE (Mains) twice a year, in January and April.

NEET would be conducted in February and May.

The students can appear both the times in NEET and the best of the two scores would be taken in account for admission.

NET, a qualifying test for admission in higher educational institutions in the country, would

be the first exam to be conducted by the newly formed body.

The NTA would also conduct National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) and Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT).

The exams will be more secure and at par with international norms.

There will be no issues of leakage and it would be more student friendly, open, scientific and a leak-proof system.

The NTA would benefit the students and they would have the option of going to computer centres from August-end to practice for the exams.

The exams would be held over a span of four-five days and students would have the option of choosing the dates.

National Testing Agency:

It is a agency which will conduct examinations for higher and secondary education.

Its main purpose is to bring reforms in the education system.

Establishment of NTA will free CBSE, AICTE and other agencies from conducting various exams and enable them to focus on their core areas and work on improving the quality of education.

Initially, the CBSE staff will be deployed in this department and but later on the specialized people will be hired in the NTA.

CENTRE PLANS STRONGER DEFENSES FOR KEY DATA

Worried about sensitive information making its way into the Internet, the Home Ministry is upgrading policy to secure government data and control access to it.


Earlier the files were locked in a cupboard and accountability could be fixed, but with the advent of Digital India, a number of issues were in a grey area.

In light of the evolving cyber threats, MHA directed that the **National Information Security Policy and Guidelines (NISPG)** be

upgraded and updated for the government sector.

Strengthening critical infrastructure

The National Information Security Policy and Guidelines (NISPG), developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, will help protect classified information possessed by Ministries and departments



PURPOSE

- NISPG highlights baseline information security policy, concepts and best practices which Ministries and departments should implement to protect their classified information
- These practices will help establish minimum security processes and controls across govt. departments
- Guidance to organisations to prioritise and focus attention and efforts in classification of information and securing such classified information

There are issues relating to the physical security of a computer. If it becomes obsolete then the hard disk discarded poses a threat of leakage.

There are issues relating to the network as well.

If the information is riding on own cyber cable, then everything can be encrypted, but if it is riding on a commercially available one, then it will have to make sure that guidelines are complied with.

The whole policing system in India that began in 1860 now needs to be replicated in cyberspace. It will evolve gradually.

The new guidelines will also take care of that.

PURCHASE OF FIGHTER JET

Six global aircraft manufacturers have responded to a Request for Information (RFI) from the Indian Air Force to supply 110 fighter aircraft.

All six manufacturers have earlier bid for the Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA), which was cancelled in 2015.

Officials confirmed that six bids have been received, of which Lockheed Martin F-16 and SAAB Gripen are single-engine fighters, while Boeing F-18, Dassault Rafale, Eurofighter Typhoon and United Aircraft Corporation MiG-35 are twin-engine ones.

The bids will be evaluated after which the IAF will issue the Request For Proposal (RFP) with the exact specifications of the aircraft to be procured.

The government plans to buy 110 fighters jets, of which 85% will have to be built in India under the 'Make in India' programme in partnership with a "Strategic Partner/Indian Production Agency."

The **procurement will be processed through the Strategic Partnership (SP) model** under the Defence Procurement Procedure. However, the SP model itself needs some clarification which could delay the process.

Earlier, the IAF was looking for a single-engine jet to replace the MiG-21s and MiG-27s being phased out of service, but the RFI did not specify it, opening up the contest to both single-and twin-engine jets.

The move comes almost two decades after the IAF began the last major effort to acquire fighters in large numbers. The effort culminated in the global tender for 126 fighters under the MMRCA deal which was cancelled in 2015 after the Modi government decided to buy 36 Rafale fighters from France under a government-to- government deal.

IT ENABLED MECHANISM TO TAB TRANSACTION

In a move aimed at widening the crackdown on black money and following the money trail flowing in and out of thousands of shell companies, the Centre is planning to set up an **information technology (IT)-based mechanism to keep a tab on all non-cash, financial transactions in the country.**

Highly-placed government sources involved in devising the initiative said the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had been asked to develop the IT infrastructure for this purpose. There have been a series of interactions over the past one month to discuss the issue, with these parleys attended by top government officials from the Ministries of Finance and Corporate Affairs as well as RBI officials.

Currently, the idea is to make the RBI the sole repository of such information, which will not be made available to other agencies such as the income tax department and the enforcement directorate as a default.

Such agencies may be required to make specific requests to the central bank if they want information on a particular set of entities.

Although the data will be captured for all transactions irrespective of the size of the transactions, the large ones would be relevant for enforcement purposes. Under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, banks and financial institutions are already required to alert the **Financial Intelligence Unit**, under the Finance Ministry, to any suspicious transactions, cash or otherwise. Cash transactions of more than ₹10 lakh (including a series of transactions integrally connected to each other and exceeding ₹10 lakh in a month), need to be reported to the FIU.

All suspicious transactions need to report to the unit within seven days after it is concluded that those are suspicious in nature.

The move to track all financial transactions is the latest in a series to curb black money and identify shell companies.

Following the 2016 demonetization exercise that rendered more than 86% of the currency in circulation invalid, it was found there had been a significant spurt in the operations of shell firms that typically have no assets or active businesses.

The Centre has shut down more than two lakh such entities. More than two lakh other firms that have not been carrying out operations have been sent notices. Depending on their responses, a decision would be taken on how many would be deregistered.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT: HUB-AND-SPOKE MODEL TO HELP TRAIN HEALTH WORKERS

One of the biggest challenges in the rollout of Ayushman Bharat is manpower training for the 1,53,000 health and wellness centres.

But a hub-and-spoke model developed by the University of New Mexico (UNM) has come to the rescue.

The ECHO Model for Telemedicine:

Developed by Indian-origin doctor Dr Sanjeev Arora in Albuquerque, ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is a

collaborative model of medical education and care management that empowers health workers.

For the HWCs, ECHO is one of several programmes that will be used to train ASHAs as, for the first time, primary care in India moves beyond reproductive health and vaccination to include screening for non-communicable diseases, geriatric care and mental health.

The ECHO model does not actually “provide” care to patients, but it dramatically increases access to specialty treatment in rural and underserved areas through the use of teleconferencing.

The goal is to use the telemedicine platform so that healthcare performance may be enhanced by access to knowledge. This programme is to conduct the training of ASHAs.

A team from UNM travelled to India to kick off the first installment of the training. The first batch of 160 officials from four states was trained in ECHO.

Participants were acclimatized with the ECHO model consisting of: an essentially non-hierarchical system of knowledge sharing; Zoom, the software used for teleconferencing facility; the essentials for setting up their own ECHOs; and also an actual ECHO session where UNM professors joined in.

The participant states — Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra — also clarified their doubts during the exercise.

Under Ayushman Bharat, the plan is to create eight ECHO hubs, including in AIIMS Delhi, AIIMS Bhopal, KGMU Lucknow and PHI Nagpur.

RUPEE MAY FALL TO 70 AGAINST DOLLAR ON OIL, CAD

The Indian rupee is likely to touch 70 a U.S. dollar as weakness in the currency market is continuing with the upward trend in crude oil prices and strengthening of the U.S. dollar index, aided by a widening current account deficit (CAD) and steady capital outflows

which have weighed on the rupee, according to experts.

The outlook for the Indian rupee, in the near term, would be dominated by the sentiment towards the U.S. dollar, the risk of trade wars, movements in yuan, as well as the trend charted by crude oil prices.

While the yuan movement would affect many emerging market currencies, crude oil prices would have a substantial impact on the currencies of oil importing nations such as India. If crude oil prices chart a sustained uptrend, the negative sentiment related to a rising current account deficit as well as inflationary concerns may spur the rupee to intermittently test the previous all-time lows.

The 70 level could continue beckoning Indian rupee and U.S. dollar exchange rate. Surging oil price is a major worry.

Lately, the sentiment in the foreign exchange market had been further weakened by the reported comments of government officials that the rupee needs to retain trade-weighted parity against competing exporter nations, especially in the face of a likely global trade conflict.

Given the present scenario, said Mr. James, the prospects of rupee hinges on the extent of private investment that can come in, for which the debt overhang had been a cause of big worry.

Forecast for normal monsoon may cool inflation expectations for now, but the pace of resolution of debt-ridden companies as well as revival of capital expenditure cycle and lending growth would be closely watched.

FIIIs have become more reluctant in Indian equities lately. CAD is also projected to edge higher, while inflation at both consumer and wholesale level has reversed the declining trend. All of these put pressure on rupee.
