NATIONAL

India's performance in Ease of Doing Business (EODB) 2018

India ranked 77th among 190 countries by leapfrogging 23 ranks in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business (EODB) 2018 rankings. In the 2017 rankings, India ranked 100th and had jumped 30 places. In 3 years, India have improved its ranking by 65 points - no country of India's size and complexity has achieved this. EODB 2018 was topped by New Zealand (consecutive for third time), followed by Singapore, Denmark, and Hong Kong. US was placed at eighth and China was ranked 46th while Pakistan is placed at 136th.

10 indicator of EODB

The Ease Of Doing Business based on 10 indicators across the life-cycle of a business, from "starting a business" to "resolving insolvency."These 10 indicators are: Starting business, Dealing with construction permits, Getting electricity, Registering property, Getting credit, Protecting minority investors, Paying taxes, Trading across borders, Enforcing contracts and Resolving insolvency. Each one of these indicators carry equal weightage. In case of India, Delhi and Mumbai are only two cities surveyed by World Bank for this reankings.

Indicator	Rank in 2017	Rank in 2018	Improvement in ranking
Construction permits	181	52	129
Trading across borders	146	80	66
Starting a business	156	137	19
Getting credit	29	22	7
Getting Electricity	29	24	5
Enforcing contracts	164	163	1
Overall rank	100	77	23

What led to the jump in India's ease of doing business ranking?

While India's score on all 10 parameters except "paying taxes" improved, its ranking went up only in six. The jump in overall ranking was driven by the "dealing with construction permits" (from 181 to 52) and "trading across borders" (from 146 to 80) parameters. Enforcement of the single-window clearance system in Delhi and the online building permit approval system in Mumbai helped streamline and centralize the construction-permitting process. Letting exporters seal their containers electronically at their own facilities, limiting physical inspections to 5% of shipments helped in trade facilitation.

➤ This means last year India improved its business regulations in absolute terms – indicating that the country is continuing its steady shift towards global standards.
➤ India reduced the time and cost to export and import through various initiatives, including the implementation of electronic sealing of containers, the upgrading of port infrastructure and allowing electronic submission of supporting documents with digital signatures
➤ India improved on many fronts including the ease of securing construction permits, getting an electricity connection, paying taxes and zero-fee for reducing under the shops and establishments act.

Did GST and IBC have any role in this?

The World Bank could not fully account for GST implementation in its ranking for this year as its deadline for tax-related reforms was 31 December 2017 and GST was only six months old then. Glitches in GST filing may have led to a rise in the number of hours taken in a year to file taxes to 275.4 this year from 214 last year. India's "paying taxes" ranking declined to 121 from 119 last year. IBC is taken into account under the parameter "resolving insolvency" where India's rank dropped to 108 from 103 last year, though its score was almost unchanged. This could be due to other nations undertaking more reforms in this segment.

How will the ranking help?

As the World Bank ranks 190 countries, investors have a comparable template to make cross-border investment decisions. The ranking provides a significant input to their decision-making process.

The annual report, which ranks countries on business-friendliness, procedural ease, regulatory architecture and absence of bureaucratic red tape, could not have come at a more opportune time for the government that is caught in a perception battle with the RBI's autonomy.

What India can do to better its ease of doing business rank

While improvement on quite a few parameters has pushed up its overall ranking, there are some in which it is lagging.

India needs to improve on which parameters?

India's rank is below 100 on five parameters: "starting a business" (137), "enforcing contracts" (163), "registering property" (166), "paying taxes" (121) and "resolving insolvency" (108). By amending the Commercial Courts Act, the government facilitated the establishment of commercial courts in 250 districts. If these courts dispose of cases faster, India may rank higher on this parameter next year. To improve on the other parameters, ownership and titles need to be online. This comes under the local government.

Why does India rank low on "starting a business"?

India did make starting a business easier by integrating multiple application forms into a general incorporation form. It enforced GST, for which the registration process is faster. As many nations have cut down on procedures to improve their rankings, India needs to make drastic changes to rank higher. World Bank factors in cost of starting a business as a percentage of income per capita. India's low income per capita makes the cost look higher.

Government vs RBI

Amid strong rumours that Reserve Bank of India governor Urjit Patel has threatened to step down, upset by an election-bound government meddling with the central bank's regulatory turf, the finance ministry sought

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to de-escalate the situation by issuing a statement where it asserted it respected the RBI's autonomy as an "essential and accepted governance requirement".

How it has started?

The government has sent letters to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) seeking consultations on key regulatory issues under a never-before-used provision in the law, according to sources.

The government has written to the RBI hinting it may invoke Section 7 of the Reserve Bank of India Act 1934 – a provision that has never been used since the inception of the law – to issue directions on relaxing prompt corrective action (PCA) norms, liquidity to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)

What does Section 7 of the RBI Act 1934 say?

According to it, the Central government may issue directions to the RBI as it may "consider necessary in public interest" after consultation with the RBI Governor. Section 7 deals with 'management' of RBI.

This provision took centre stage earlier this year when the Allahabad High Court was hearing a petition from power companies who challenged stringent non-performing assets (NPA) norms notified by the RBI in February, also popularly known as the February 12 circular.

What happened during the Allahabad High Court hearing?

The court had asked the central government to hold consultations with the RBI, under Section 7 of the RBI Act 1934, on the way forward for stressed power assets within 15 days. But the government had decided against using this provision at that time.

Can the government issue directions to the RBI on regulatory and policy matters? The answer is yes, as was noted by the Allahabad High Court. However, till date, the government has never issued directions to the RBI on its regulatory and policy affairs.

The Central Government, however, is not expected to issue any directions, as contemplated under Section 7(1), indiscriminately or randomly. Such directions are possible when there exists sufficient material in support," the high court had observed in its order dated August 28.

The counsel representing RBI had said that Section 7 of the RBI Act "embodies and puts in place a forum for resolution of all questions and is in one sense the repository mechanism for dealing with issues which constitute a "conflict zone"." He argued that the fact that the government has not invoked this provision so far means there is no conflict and the government agrees with the RBI's tightening of the NPA norms. During the hearing, the government had remained silent on whether it wants to invoke Section 7 of the RBI Act to issue directions to the regulator or not.

A similar provision is present in most statutes that deal with the regulators, such as Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority and Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, according to a Mumbai-based lawyer.

The court observed that if the RBI and the government are at variance on any policy or regulatory issue, the latter should "consider whether the circumstances warrant the initiative of the consultation process" under Section 7 of the RBI Act.

The High Court also mentioned observations made by the Supreme Court in the Joseph Kuruvilla Vellukunnel Vs. Reserve Bank case emphasising that "the Reserve Bank, apart from it being a reasonable body, is answerable to the Central Government, and the public opinion is certainly strong and vocal enough for it to heed. If the Reserve Bank were to act mala fide, the Central Government and in the last resort, the Courts, will be there to intervene."

The High Court said that Section 7 of the RBI Act was put on the statute book in a bid to "arrive at a harmonious conclusion and evolve a consensual position."

Various interpretation and issues

Since the clause was never invoked in the past, there were various ways to interpret it. For instance, a senior government official maintained that the provision only relates to the management of the central bank and the central government may not be empowered to issue directions to the RBI on policy-related matters.

Earlier, the finance ministry had not in favour of invoking Section 7 of the RBI Act to issue directions to the regulator for relaxing its February 12 circular. According to documents reviewed by Business Standard, the finance ministry had noted that the powers have never been used in the past, relates to the management of RBI, may lead to litigation, has a likelihood of "severe resistance" and such directions will need "strong legal footing."

However, the Centre had told the Supreme Court during a hearing on demonetisation of old currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 in January 2016, that it has the powers to issue directions to the RBI, citing Section 7 of the RBI Act.

In a report released in January this year, the International Monetary Fund had said that the "RBI Act contains provisions that undermine its independence from the government" citing Section 7 of the RBI Act as an example.

History of the provision

Going back in history, the RBI had itself drafted a provision combining the provisions of the Bank of England Act, 1946 and Commonwealth Bank of Australia, 1945, on the central government's powers to issue directions to the central bank. It had, however, suggested that the Act makes it clear "when government decided to act against the advice of the (RBI) Governor, they took the responsibility for the action they wished to force on the (Reserve) Bank," according to the Volume I of the History of the Reserve Bank of India (1935-1951).

However, the government at that time was not in favour of this provision and the clause was re-drafted accordingly. Though the Reserve Bank of India had sought for a more elaborate provision requiring the

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government to 'accept responsibility' for the action resulting from its directions, the Section 7 of the RBI Act was amended in 1949 to empower the central government to issue directions to the central bank in public interest.

CSIR develops Less Polluting Firecrackers

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) scientists has developed less polluting green firecrackers named SWAS,SAFAL,STAR. Green crackers are so named because they do not contain harmful chemicals that would cause air pollution.

SWAS stands for safe water releaser, SAFAL stands for safe minimal aluminum and STAR stands for safe thermite cracker.

The new crackers have been developed by Central Electrochemical Research Institute (CECRI) based in Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu and National Environmental Engineering Research Institute in Nagpur.

The crackers will come in the market after the approval from Petroleum and Explosive Safety Organization (PESO), which is the nodal agency for safety requirements in manufacture, storage, transport of all types of explosives.

Technical Details:

SWAS crackers eliminates usage of (KNO3) Potassium nitrate and Sulphur with consequent reduction in particulate matter (30-35%) SO2 and NOx. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 105-110 dBA. SWAS has been tested for shelf life upto 3 weeks with consistent performance.

STAR eliminates usage of KNO3 and S with consequent reduction in particulate matter (35-40%), SO2 and NOx. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 105-110 dBA.

SAFAL has minimal usage of aluminium (only in flash powder for initiation) with consequent significant reduction in particulate matter (35-40 %) compared to commercial crackers. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 110-115 dBA.

About CSIR –NEERI

The CSIR-National Environmental Engineering Research Institute is a research institute created and funded by Government of India under the Ministry of Science and Technology. It works in the field of environmental science and engineering and is a part of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research. It was established in Nagpur in 1958.

India's first container movement on inland waterways from Kolkata

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) transported container cargo belonging to the food and beverage giant PepsiCo (India) from Kolkata to Varanasi on river Ganga (National Waterway-1).It is country's first container movement on inland vessel post-independence, and a milestone moment in the history of India's Inland Waterway Transport (IWT) sector.

The government of India is developing a project, NW-1 (River Ganga) under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs 5369 crore. The project would enable commercial navigation of vessels with capacity of 1500-2,000 DWT.States covered under NW-1: States: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal.

Even as pilot movements on National Waterways are currently being done on various stretches, more than 15 of them have already been successfully completed, including integrated movements through NW-1 (Ganga), Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route and NW-2 (Brahmaputra). Shipping Minister Nitin Gadkari had earlier said that his ministry was working on a plan to convert more than 100 rivers into national waterways.

Ganga - Bhagirathi -Hooghly River System
National Waterway No. I

The economic benefits of inland waterways

The IWT advantages are several. Among all the transport modes, it is the least capital-intensive, is environment-friendly, can supplement rail and road transport, help in the decongestion of roads, is best suited to carry over-dimensional cargo (ODC), requires minimum land acquisition and has low infrastructure costs. Yet, despite the runaway benefits, IWT constitutes less than 1% of the total inland cargo movement in the country. The amount of goods transported by IWT in other countries is still fairly modest when compared with other modes of inland transport, such as rail and road, but the percentage is significantly higher.

The greater fuel economy of waterborne freight transport means scarce resources are conserved and pollution is reduced.

Coal for the power sectors along the river front, food grains to the Northeastern states, fertilisers from the factories to the various nodal points and cumbersome cargo such as machines and wooden logs could well be the principal commodities that will propel inland waterways as a viable alternate mode of transport. Another important commodity that is only just beginning to enter IWT is freight containers, from inland

container depotsboth domestic and international. These pockets need to be adequately linked to inland waterways, through rail-linked jetties and last-mile road connectivity.

Conference on "CCTNS–Good practices and success Stories" is being held in New Delhi

Conference on "CCTNS–Good practices and success Stories" is being held in New Delhi.Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) project will help in containing crime and criminality in a huge democracy like India.Two-day conference on "CCTNS - Good practices and Success Stories", organised by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB).

Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems

The Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems, abbreviated to CCTNS, is a project under Indian government for creating a comprehensive and integrated system for effective policing through e-Governance. The system includes nationwide online tracking system by integrating more than 15,000 police stations across the country. The project is implemented by National Crime Records Bureau.

The concept of CCTNS was first conceived in the year 2008 by the then Home Minister, P. Chidambaram in the aftermath of 2008 Mumbai attacks. This was then approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs(CCEA) in 2009 and was allocated a fund of Rs. 2,000 crore. A pilot phase of the project was launched on 4 January 2013 by the then Home Minister Sushilkumar Shinde.

Functioning

CCTNS aims to integrate all the data and records of crime into a Core Application Software (CAS), which is presently spreading across 29 states and 7 union territories of India. CAS was developed by the Bangalore based IT firm, Wipro.

The Project will interconnect about 15000 Police Stations and additional 5000 offices of supervisory police officers across the country

➢ It will digitize data related to FIR registration, investigation and charge sheets in all police stations.
➢ It would help in developing a national database of crime and criminals
➢ The full implementation of the project with all the new components would lead to a Central citizen portal having linkages with State level citizen portals that will provide a number of citizen friendly services.
➢ The total outlay for the project is 2000 crore rupees, and also includes Operation and Maintenance phase for additional five years up to March 2022.

Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)

The CCEA also decided to implement Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS). It will be done through integrating CCTNS with e-Courts, e-prisons, Forensics and Prosecution, which are the key components of the Criminal Justice System. e-prosecution in Delhi has already launched by ICJS team. Japan Babu Nodal officer is looking after the E-prosecution in Delhi

Implementation of ICJS will ensure:-

➢ Quick data transfer among different pillars of criminal justice system, which will not only enhance transparency but also reduce processing time.
➢ Enable National level crime analytics to be published at increased frequency, which will help the policy makers as well as lawmakers in taking appropriate and timely action.
➢ Enable pan-India criminal/accused name search in the regional language for improved inter-state tracking of criminal movement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates Statue of Unity

➢ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 'Statue of Unity' on the occasion his 143rd birth anniversary on october 31.
➢ Located on Sadhu-Bet Island, near the Sardar Sarovar Dam in Narmada district Gujarat, the 182-metre tall statue project cost is estimated to be Rs. 2,989 crore.
➢ The height of the statue is 182 meter which is the more than the height of Spring Temple Buddha (153 meters) in China.
➢ The size of the statue is double than the size of the Statue of Liberty in New York City in the United States.
➢ The viewing gallery at the height of 135 meters, can accommodate 200 visitors at a time.
➢ Engineering majors Larsen, and Toubro Ltd built the statue.Over 70,000 tonnes of cement, 24,000 tonnes of steel and about 1,700 tonnes of bronze have been used for the construction. Construction time:-3year 9 month.
➢ Around 15,000 tourists are expected to visit the statue every day.
➢ On this occasion, PM Modi also inaugurated the 'Wall of Unity'.
➢ The birthday of India's Iron Man is being observed as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas or National Unity Day since the year 2014.

Vision of Sardar Patel for India

Sardar Patel was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. He joined India's freedom struggle. He started the peasant movement in various parts of Gujarat and took up the cause of the farmers against heavy taxes levied on them by the British. He became the president of India National Congress in 1931. He took active participation in Salt Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement, and was considered one of the most influential leaders during the Freedom Movement.

Sardar Patel and Independent India

Modern Indian history is incomplete without Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. His vision, his work, and his principles were highly remarkable in Independent India.

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Integrating India: When our country became independent in 1947, Sardar Patel was appointed as the deputy prime minister for a home ministry of the country. He took over the role as a deputy PM at a time when Indian history was in a very critical stage. Since day one, he had a vision for India to consolidate it into one united country. As the first Home Minister of Independent India, he played an important role in bringing the 565 self-governing princely states and territories into the Indian federation. To the astonishment of his critics and fellow politicians, almost within a year, he drew a new map of India with every princely State being a part of the Indian union and thus, paved the way for cultural unity and harmony.

Civil services in Independent India: According to many, the actual acknowledgment for the formation of the Indian Civil Service in free India goes to Sardar Patel. The Indian Civil Service, formed by the British Government was to protect and strengthen their rule in India. Sardar Patel, on the other hand, wanted a strong and independent civil service. He had put his support for a Federal Civil Service. The Civil Service established in Democratic India should serve the people of India. His argument led to form a groundwork for Unified National Administration. And today, we do have the Indian Administrative Service, the Indian Police Service, and the Indian Forest Service for the people. But, we cannot say whether Patel's ideology in the true sense has been followed or not as most of these civil servants, barring a few, are in the clutches of corruption and politicians. However, we cannot deny the fact that Patel had the vision to create a strong and vibrant administrative system but unfortunately he did not live long to fulfill his dream.

Concern about border security: Patel conceptualized some of the greatest policies to keep our country secured from border countries' attack. He wrote a letter to Nehru, pointing out few facts like as:

o Cautioning him about the threat to India and impending war from China.
o The need for strengthening defense force.
o Examining and reshuffling the military position in various borders.
o Strengthening Northern and North-Eastern frontier.
o Improvement of transport and communication in these border areas.

However, this was not taken seriously by Nehruji and we had to pay a heavy price in the 1962 Indo-China war. Not only that, certain precautionary measures were taken at that point of time, as pointed out Sardar Patel could have definitely saved our country from the constant fear of terrorism today.

Privatization: In addition, Sardar Patel was favorable for private enterprises, as opposed to public sector favored by Nehru. He was in very close terms with many top Indian businessmen at that time. His views on Indian business were just appropriate for modern India today.

INTERNATIONAL

World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) released its Living Planet Report 2018

World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) released its Living Planet Report 2018 titled " A warning sign from our planet: Nature needs life support". The key aspect of this year's report was threat to soil biodiversity and pollinators, the two key drivers of biodiversity. These two key drivers loss were due to over exploitation of natural resources and agriculture.

Soil Biodiversity: It encompasses presence of micro-organisms, micro-fauna (nematodes and tardigrades for example), and macro-fauna (ants, termites and earthworms).

Millions of microbial and animal species live and make up soils, from bacteria and fungi to mites, beetles and earthworms. Soil biodiversity, thus is total community from genes to species, and varies depending on environment.

The immense diversity in soil allows for great variety of ecosystem services that benefit species that inhabit it, the species that use it and its surrounding environment.

WWF's 'risk index' for globe:
Population of fish, mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles has dwindled by average of 60% from 1970 to 2014 and fresh-water species have declined by 83% in same period. Globally, extent of wetlands is estimated to have declined by 87% since 1970.

Since 1960, the global ecological footprint has increased by more than 190%.

The Earth is estimated to have lost about half of its shallow water corals in the past 30 years and 20% of the Amazon has disappeared in just 50 years.

A key aspect of this year's report is the threat to soil biodiversity and pollinators [such as bees].

According to report, economically, pollination increases the global value of crop production by $237-$577 billion per year to growers alone and keeps price down for consumers,".

India's case:
India was coloured red on atlas and is among countries whose soil biodiversity faces the highest level of risk. Other countries in this category include Pakistan, China, several countries in Africa and Europe, and most of North America.

WWF-India pointed to threat to pollinators like bees which have direct consequences on food security. More than 75% of leading global food crops depend on pollinators, it said

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University study that observed that while 150 million bee colonies were needed to meet the pollination requirements of about 50 million hectares of agricultural land in India, only 1.2 million colonies were present.

While India's per capita ecological footprint was less than 1.75 hectares/person (which is in the lowest band, among countries surveyed) its high population made it vulnerable to an ecological crisis, even if per-capita consumption remained at current levels, the WWF warned.

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World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)
It is an international non-governmental organization working in the field of the wilderness preservation and reduction of human impact on the environment. It was formerly named World Wildlife Fund. It is world's largest conservation organization with over five million supporters worldwide, working in more than 100 countries, supporting around 1,300 conservation and environmental projects. It was founded in 1961 and is headquartered in Gland, Switzerland. WWF aims to stop degradation of planet's natural environment and build future in which humans live in harmony with nature. Currently, its work is organized around these six areas: food, climate, freshwater, wildlife, forests, and oceans. It publishes Living Planet Report every two years since 1998 and it is based on Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculation.

19th meeting of FSDC held in New Delhi
The 19th meeting of Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was held in New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. The meeting was attended by RBI Governor Dr. Urjit R. Patel, SEBI chairman, IRDAI Chairman along with heads and other senior officers of Government and financial sector regulators.
Economic Review: It reviewed health of economy, both domestic and global, financial sector performance and issues due to rising oil prices. It also discussed issue of real interest rate, current liquidity situation, including segmental liquidity position in NBFCs and mutual fund space.
Cyber Security in Financial Sector: It also reviewed developments regarding strengthening of Cyber Security in Financial Sector and progress made towards setting up of Computer Emergency Response Team in the Financial Sector (CERT-Fin) under Statutory Framework. It also deliberated on need for identifying and securing critical information infrastructure in financial sector.
Crypto Currency: It also deliberated on issues and challenges of Crypto Assets and Currency. It was briefed about deliberations of High-level Committee chaired by Secretary (Economic Affairs) to devise appropriate legal framework to ban use of private crypto currencies in India and encouraging use of distributed ledger technology (blockchain), as announced in Budget 2018-19.
RegTech and SupTech: It also discussed market developments and financial stability implications of use of RegTech and SupTech by financial firms and regulatory and supervisory authorities. It also discussed implementation of recommendations of Sumit Bose Committee on measures, such as promoting appropriate disclosure regime for financial distribution costs
Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)
➢ It is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India. Recommendations for such a super regulatory body were first mooted by the Raghuram Rajan Committee in 2008.
➢ Finally in 2010, the then Finance Minister of India, Pranab Mukherjee, decided to set up such an autonomous body dealing with macro prudential and financial regularities in the entire financial sector of India. FSDC has replaced the High Level Coordination Committee on Financial Markets (HLCCFM), which was facilitating regulatory coordination, though informally, prior to the setting up of FSDC. It is not a statutory body.
Composition: Union Finance Minister is chairman of FSDC. Its members are heads of all financial sector regulatory authorities (i.e, RBI, SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA), Chairman of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board, Finance Secretary and Secretary, Department of Economic Affair; Secretary, Department of Financial Services and Chief Economic Adviser. FSDC can invite experts to its meeting if required.
Mandate: To strengthen and institutionalise mechanism of maintaining financial stability, financial sector development, inter-regulatory coordination along with monitoring macro-prudential regulation of economy and promoting financial sector development.

BILATERAL
Narendra Modi in Japan highlights: PM, Shinzo Abe sign six agreements, agree to '2+2' dialogue
The annual bilateral summit of India –Japan was held on 28, 29 October 2018 in Japan & the Indian prime minister visited Japan to attend the summit. The two sides agreed for a 2+2 dialogue between our foreign ministers and defence ministers to further work towards world peace. India and Japan sign $75 billion currency swap agreement. The agreement will help bring greater stability to foreign exchange and capital markets. Japan investors have announced they would invest $2.5 billion in India. Both countries will cooperate for the first time in the areas of traditional medicinal systems such as Yoga and Ayurveda. A Memorandum of Cooperation between Kanagawa prefecture and Ministry of Ayush in the field of healthcare and wellness was exchanged. Both the countries have agreed to synchronize upon sharing benefits of the Ayushman Bharat scheme and the Japanese healthcare programme. There will be commencement of talks on a military logistics pact, the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement, between the two nations that will ensure the access to each other's military bases and naval bases. Japan will invest more significantly in the up gradation of infrastructure in the Northeast which will also link India to Southeast Asia. Japan-India Investment Promotion Roadmap enhanced the contribution of Japan in India's Make in India initiative with establishment of Business Support Centre in Ahmedabad. PM Modi said, "India is progressively moving toward Industry 4.0 with the help of the latest developments in the field of technology such as AI, IoT, 3D, Printing, Robotics. Cooperation between India and Japan in the field of electric mobility can prove highly beneficial".
Japan joins International Solar Alliance
In a boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi-initiated International Solar Alliance (ISA), Japan announced joining the group submitting the instrument of ratification. Japan will be the 71st country to sign and 48th country to ratify the ISA Framework. ISA Membership- 121 nations. Headquarters: Gwal Pahari, Gurugram

What is this Currency Swap Arrangement (CSA)?

This is an arrangement, between two friendly countries, which have regular, substantial or increasing trade, to basically involve in trading in their own local currencies, where both pay for import and export trade, at the pre-determined rates of exchange, without bringing in third country currency like the US Dollar.

In such arrangements no third country currency is involved, thereby eliminating the need to worry about exchange variations.

Significance of the agreement:

The currency swap agreement is an important measure in improving the confidence in the Indian market and it would not only enable the agreed amount of capital being available to India, but it will also bring down the cost of capital for Indian entities while accessing the foreign capital market.

The swap arrangement should aid in bringing greater stability to foreign exchange and capital markets in India. With this arrangement in place, prospects of India would further improve in tapping foreign capital for country's developmental needs. This facility will enable the agreed amount of foreign capital being available to India for use as and when the need arises.

ODISHA

Odisha launches disaster alert system for its coast

The Odisha government has launched the much-awaited Early Warning Dissemination System, the first-of-its-kind technology in India, to simultaneously warn coastal communities and fisherfolk about impending cyclone and tsunami through siren towers.

Sirens will go off from 122 towers installed along the 480-km-long coast of the State if a button is pressed in the State emergency centre in Bhubaneswar.

Key features

➢ The EWDS of Odisha government has been implemented under the assistance of World Bank with a cost of around 82 crores.

➢ Sound producing from the towers can be heard in communities within a radius of 1.5 km.

➢ The button will be pressed from the state emergency centre in Bhubaneswar during an emergency situation.

➢ Six coastal districts named Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara, Puri and Ganjam have been covered under the system.

➢ It's a part of the last-mile connectivity programme under the National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project an aimed at protecting people from the cyclone effects.

➢ The system will prove to be boon for the fisherman of the state.

Disaster preparedness of Odisha

➢ The Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) was established in 1999.OSDMA was the first disaster management authority centre established in India.

➢ Odisha has active State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA).

➢ Odisha, has built close to 800 multipurpose cyclone and flood shelters in cyclone prone areas.

➢ All vulnerable regions in Odisha have active Cyclone Management Centres.

➢ Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) is a well known name in cyclone hit areas.

➢ The continuous focus on developing manpower, skill, and infrastructure, state of Odisha has emerged as one of the most disaster-ready states in the world today

Odisha launches scheme to increase solar energy use

➢ Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik launched a scheme to increase the use of solar energy in the agriculture sector. Under the "Soura Jalanidhi" scheme, 5,000 solar pumps will be given to farmers with up to 90 per cent subsidy. It will create irrigation potential for 2,500 acres in the state.

➢ The state government has taken the initiative to promote solar photovoltaic pump sets in areas which are unserved and underserved by electricity connectivity with the aim of increasing the irrigation potential and cropping intensity in the state.

➢ The government has also made a provision of Rs 27.18 crore for the scheme in the 2018-19 financial year.

MISCELLANEOUS

Agni-I ballistic missile

India has successfully carried out night user trial of Agni-I short-range nuclear-capable ballistic missile. The test flight was conducted by Indian Army's Strategic Forces Command off Abdul Kalam Island in Bay of Bengal, off the coast of the Indian state of Odisha.

Agni-I is short range nuclear capable surface-to-surface ballistic missile. It is first missile of the Agni series launched in 1983. It was developed by premier missile development laboratory of DRDO in collaboration with Defence Research Development Laboratory and Research Centre Imarat and integrated by Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad.

The Agni I has a range of 700–900 km.

It weighs 12 tonnes and is 15-metre-long. It is designed to carry payload of more than one tonne (both conventional and nuclear warhead). It is single stage missile powered by solid propellants.

The missile already has been inducted into armed forces. Since its induction it has proved its excellent performance in terms of range, accuracy and lethality. It is also claimed to be a part of India's minimum credible deterrence under No first to use policy.

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NASA Sets World Record With Its Mars 2020 'Supersonic Parachute'
➢ NASA's "supersonic parachute" that will play a key role in landing its state-of-the-art Mars 2020 rover has created a world record by deploying in just four-tenths of a second and surviving 37,000 kg load.
➢ Less than two minutes after the launch of a 17.7-metre Black Brant IX sounding rocket, a payload separated and began its dive back through Earth's atmosphere.
➢ When onboard sensors determined the payload had reached the appropriate height (38 kilometers altitude) and Mach number 1.8, the payload deployed a parachute.

ISRO successfully tests lander for soft landing on the moon
➢ Indian Space Research Organisation said on Friday, that it has successfully conducted a scaled-down test for the soft and safe landing of its Chandrayaan-2 lander for India's second Moon mission.
➢ The moon lander, Vikram, named after the father of Indian space programme Vikram Sarabhai, will carry out various tests on the moon surface. "Scaled-down version of Chandrayaan-2 Lander Vikram completed, critical Lander Actuator Performance Test (LAPT) to demonstrate capabilities of navigation, guidance and control system of Vikram for a safe, soft and precise landing on the Moon
➢ ISRO intends to launch Chandrayaan-2 sometime in January next year. The Mission will have an orbiter, lander and a rover.India's first lunar mission Chandrayaan 1 was successfully launched in October 2008.

WHO's First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health:
The first Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health will be held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva.
The conference is being held in collaboration with UN Environment, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
Participants will include Ministers of Health and Environment and other national government representatives; representatives of intergovernmental agencies, health professionals, other sectors (e.g. transport, energy, etc.), as well as from research, academia and civil society.
Background: The conference responds to a World Health Assembly mandate to combat one of the world's most significant causes of premature death, causing some 7 million deaths annually. Air pollution in most cities exceeds recommended WHO Air Quality levels and household air pollution is a leading killer in poor rural and urban homes. Up to 1/3 of deaths from stroke, lung cancer and heart disease are due to air pollution.

93 per cent children breathe toxic air globally
➢ Every day, around 93 per cent of the children globally under the age of 15 years (1.8 billion children) breathe air that is so polluted it puts their health and development at serious risk, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said.
➢ The report, "Air pollution and child health: Prescribing clean air", examines the heavy toll of both ambient (outside) and household air pollution on the health of the world's children, particularly in low and middle-income countries.
➢ The air pollution related mortality and disease burden India faces is also the highest in the world. More than two million deaths occur in India prematurely every year, accounting for 25 per cent of the global deaths due to poor air quality.

NMCG approves 12 projects worth Rs 929 crore under Namami Gange programme
The Executive Committee (EC) of the National Mission for Clean Ganga on October 29, 2018 approved 12 projects worth Rs 929 crore under the Namami Gange programme in its 16th meeting.
About Namami Gange Programme:
Namami Gange programme was launched as a mission to achieve the target of cleaning river Ganga in an effective manner with the unceasing involvement of all stakeholders, especially five major Ganga basin States – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.
The programme envisages: River Surface Cleaning, Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure, River Front Development, Bio-Diversity, Afforestation and Public Awareness.
Implementation:
The program would be implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
In order to improve implementation, a three-tier mechanism has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of a) High level task force chaired by Cabinet Secretary assisted by NMCG at national level, b) State level committee chaired by Chief Secretary assisted by SPMG at state level and c) District level committee chaired by the District Magistrate.
The program emphasizes on improved coordination mechanisms between various Ministries/Agencies of Central and State governments.

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