

“Keep your promises and be consistent. Be the kind of person others can trust.”**Roy T. Bennett****INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL****‘INDIA A STAKEHOLDER IN KOREAN PEACE’**

India and Republic of south Korea signed 11 MoUs and agreement between them during the visit of South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

India praises the peace process of the Korean peninsula. It considers itself stakeholder and beneficiary of the Korean peninsula peace process.

India and South Korea signed a joint statement agreeing to discuss an ‘early harvest’ package for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) aimed at identifying key areas for enhanced trade between the two countries. Some additional agreement is on Trade remedies, Railway safety research, Cyber strategy, and Cultural exchanges.

The two countries also agreed to try to increase their bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030, up from current levels of \$20 billion.

India and South Korea also signed a joint vision statement on for mutual benefit which includes Strategic ties in the region, Enhance military exchanges, Training and experience-sharing, and Research and development including innovative technologies

The vision statement also talks about encouraging Korean defence manufacturers to “Make in India”.

Hanhwa Techwin, has partnered with Larsen and Toubro to produce K-9 Vajra artillery guns for the Indian Army at a factory near Pune.

The bilateral vision document also committed to building a peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based region based on 3Ps: People, Prosperity and Peace.

Delhi and Seoul also agreed to collaborate on development projects in third countries, beginning with Afghanistan.

Both the country likely to undertake capacity building programmes (training of personnel) in Afghanistan.

Both sides announced central roles for each other in India’s “Act East” policy and South Korea’s recently announced “New Southern” policy.

India hopes to improve bilateral relation between India and south korea at the level of South Korea relation with U.S., China, Russia and Japan.

IRAN WILL END SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO INDIA: DIPLOMAT

A senior Iranian diplomat says that Iran may end “special privilege” to India if India tried to replace Iranian crude with supplies from Saudi Arabia, Russia, and the United States.

S. administration of President Donald Trump asks India to drastically cut down crude supply from Iran.

Iran alleges that India’s response is lukewarm.

Although, India has not spelt out how it would address the concerns of the U.S. government.

The Ministry of External Affairs has maintained that Delhi would consult “all stakeholders” in ensuring energy security.

Massoud Rezvanian Rahaghi observes that if India were to replace Iran with countries like Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, U.S. and others for 10% of its oil demand then it may have to revert to dollar-denominated imports.

This may also leads to higher CAD.

He also hinted that Iran is not satisfied with India’s investment levels in the port of Chabahar.

Although, the official said Iran remains an open market for Indian requirements like petroleum, urea and LNG and Iran understands India’s energy requirement.

He also observe that Iran is essential for India’s quest to access the markets of the emerging economies in the Central Asian region.

He also argued that unilateralism by the U.S. was imposing a heavy cost on the world.

He cautioned that a conflict in the Gulf region would “drive up” the price of crude oil and impact growing powers like India and China.

NATIONAL

THE PROBLEMS WITH THE HECI DRAFT BILL

The draft **Higher Education Commission of India (Repeal of University Grants Commission Act) Bill, 2018 (HECI)**, aims to:

- replace a historical statutory body, the UGC
- push for more government control
- stifle critical thinking on campuses

The nature of the structure of the commission and its advisory council shows that they are bound to have more “government” in decision-making processes rather than academics.

Sweeping powers render the HECI more authoritative than the collective strength of campus authorities.

The powers and functions of the HECI trivialize the concept of autonomy because non-compliance of directions of the HECI could result in fines or jail sentence.

This means that the authority of the HRD Ministry will be strengthened.

Also, under the new terms of engagement, universities will have to take the concurrence of the HECI before offering a course. This restricts the freedom of a university’s Board of Studies.

With its mandate of improving academic standards with a specific focus on learning outcomes, evaluation of academic performance by institutions, and training of teachers, the HECI is likely to over regulate and micromanage universities.

The proposal to empower the Centre to remove the HECI’s chairperson and vice-chairperson for reasons including “moral turpitude” will curtail the regulator’s autonomy, which in turn will impact the autonomy of universities.

Instead of allowing institutions to evolve over time based on their specific needs, focusing on homogeneous, one-size-fits-all administrative models will go against the ethos of academic freedom, diversity, and knowledge production.

The move to replace the UGC with the HECI points to the Centre’s aim to restrict the role of the States in matters relating to education.

Despite being a country with a huge young population, higher education remains a privilege; many do not yet have access to it, mainly because it is not affordable.

The quality of higher education is determined by the quality of lower education, which is extremely poor, and that should be our focus.

The number of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Muslims who have access to even basic education, let alone higher education remains abysmal.

Way Forward:

Education must serve as a ladder for those in the lower rungs of society.

In India, there is no such ladder, and many children continue to lead a poor quality life with no access to education.

Including the excluded should be India’s goal, and reservation and affirmative action are the way forward.

TELECOM COMMISSION APPROVES NET NEUTRALITY, NEW TELECOM POLICY

Internet access in India will remain unfettered with the government accepting the telecom regulator’s recommendations to introduce one of the strongest net neutrality protections in the world.

To implement Net neutrality, the regulator had recommended that the terms of license agreements that govern the provision of Internet services in India be amended “to incorporate the principles of non-discriminatory treatment of content along with the appropriate exclusions and exceptions.”

It had then suggested that Internet of Things, as a class of services, should not be excluded

from the scope of restriction on non-discriminatory treatment but certain critical services should be exempt from these rules.

DoT will also frame a policy on traffic management practices for service providers and separately set up a body of industry representatives and civil society to monitor and enforce net neutrality norms.

It has further recommended establishing a multi-stakeholder not-for-profit body for the monitoring and enforcement of these principles.

In a move that will ensure open and free internet in India, the government has approved the principle of net neutrality.

This means that telecom and Internet service providers must treat all data on the Internet equally, and not discriminate or charge differently by user, content, site, platform, or application.

They cannot engage in practices such as blocking, slowing down or granting preferential speeds to any content.

The Telecom Commission (TC) — which is the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecom, approved the recommendation made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

Certain emerging and critical services will be kept out of the purview of these norms.

A separate committee has been set up under the Department of Telecom (DoT) to examine what these critical services will be.

These may include autonomous vehicles, digital healthcare services like remote surgeries or disaster management.

COLLAPSE OF THE CITADEL OF SECTION 377 IPC

Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra indicated that collapse of the citadel of Section 377 IPC will open the gates for people from the LGBTQ community to come to court to overcome discrimination and claim their individual rights.

SC observes that choice of a partner is a person's fundamental right, and it can be a same-sex partner.

A Constitution bench hearing petitions challenging the **constitutionality of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, a colonial-era provision that criminalizes private consensual sex between adults.**

Bench is led by chief justice Dipak Misra. Other Judges of the bench are Justice Chandrachud, Justice R.F. Nariman, A.M. Khanwilkar and Indu Malhotra



SC revisiting its December 2013 verdict in **Suresh Kaushal case which had upheld section 377.**

It had considered LGBT community as a negligible part of the population and virtually denies them the right of choice and sexual orientation.

However, in 2010, Delhi HC had protected the LGBT community from section 377.

During hearing senior advocate Arvind Datar argue that the right to sexual orientation was meaningless without the right to choose a partner.

SC drew its observations from the March 2018 judgment in the Hadiya case, which held that neither the State nor one's parents could influence an adult's choice of partner. That would be a violation of the fundamental right to privacy.

SC will also decide whether **Section 377 stood in conformity with Articles 21 (right to life), 19 (right to liberty) and 14 (right to equality) of the Constitution.**

172nd Law Commission report had recommended deletion of section 377.

The CJJ agreed that a "declaration their relationship is constitutional will even remove the "ancillary disqualification" for people joining services, contesting elections. It will no longer be seen as moral turpitude".

EAT RIGHT MOVEMENT

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has unveiled **'The Eat Right Movement' with a view to get industry on board for implementation of draft food labelling regulation.**

The movement aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years.

It is built on two broad pillars of **'Eat Healthy' and 'Eat Safe'**.

It also aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.

FSSAI:

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 which consolidates various acts & orders that have hitherto handled food related issues in various Ministries and Departments.

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.

Food Safety and Standards (Labeling and Display) Regulations 2018:

The proposed regulations will prescribe the labeling requirements of pre-packaged foods and display of essential information on premises where food is manufactured, processed, served and stored.

The draft Regulation also states that HFSS (high in fat, sugar or salt) food products shall not be advertised to children in any form.

It also introduces labelling of genetically modified (GM) food.

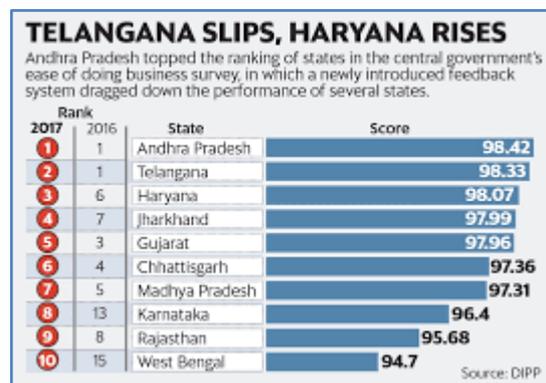
EASE OF DOING BUSINESS RANKING OF STATES

Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has released the final rankings of States in Ease of Doing Business.

The top rankers are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana. Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.

Delhi is placed at 23rd among 34 states and Union territories. Its rank also worsened from 18th in 2016.

Karnataka has occupied the eighth spot, against 13th in 2016.



The rankings are based on the performance of states in implementing the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP).

DIPP, Ministry of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with the World Bank conducted an annual reform exercise for all States and UTs under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP). The aim of this exercise is to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.

The reform plan includes 372 recommendations for reforms on regulatory processes, policies, practices and procedures spread across 12 reform areas including labour regulation enablers; contract enforcement; registering property; inspection reform enablers; single window system; land availability and allotment; construction permit enablers etc.

BRAP 2017 includes two new sectors i.e. Healthcare and Hospitality.
