
PANORAMA.....

CURRENT EVENT ANALYSIS

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ENVIRONMENT

Cleaning up the Ganga among Ministry's top priorities

The Union Ministry of Water Resources has identified cleaning up of the Ganga and execution of river water-related provisions under the Telangana Act as its top priorities in the first 100 days of the Narendra Modi government.

The National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA), which is presently under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, is likely to be transferred to the Water Resources Ministry.

Among other priorities are setting up and operating Krishna River Management Board and Godavari River Management Board for overseeing the sharing of Krishna and Godavari waters and regulating projects in the two basins, as defined in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (or Telangana) Act, 2014.

An apex council, chaired by the Water Resources Minister, with the Chief Ministers of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh as its members, will be constituted for the supervision of the two boards. This is also a provision in the Telangana Act.

Setting up a Polavaram National Project Authority for the multi-purpose scheme has also been included in the 100-day priority list.

Melting glaciers, more rain to swell Himalayan Rivers

RUNOFF INTO BIG RIVERS WILL INCREASE OVER TIME



- 1** With a warming climate, flow of water from the Himalayas into the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Salween and Mekong rivers is **set to increase until at least 2050**
- 2** The waters of these five rivers – Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra, Salween and Mekong – **sustain 1.3 billion people in 12 countries**
- 3** Glaciers in basins feeding all five rivers are projected to decrease because of **rising air temperature**
- 4** Increased runoff to the Indus in the coming decades will come from an **accelerated melting of glaciers**
- 5** **More rains along the Himalayas** will increase runoff to the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Salween and Mekong

As the climate warms, increased melting of glaciers and more rain along the Himalayas is likely to enhance the flow of water into the big rivers that arise in this vast mountain range, according to research just published.

Researchers in The Netherlands and Nepal used high-resolution modelling to study how a warmer climate would affect run-off in the Himalayas into the Indus, Ganges, Brahmaputra,

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Salween and Mekong rivers in the coming decades. These five rivers sustain agriculture and 1.3 billion people in a dozen countries.

There would be increased run-off into the five rivers at least until 2050, Arthur F. Lutz and his colleagues noted in a paper carried in *Nature Climate Change*.

As a result of rising temperature, a decrease in glacier extent is projected for all basins.” However, the decrease in glacier area would be compensated by a higher rate of melting. Consequently, the contribution from melting glaciers to the five rivers would not change much till 2050.

If glaciers continue to retreat, at some point in time there will be a net decrease in melt water, The Indus, however, was likely to see increased run-off from accelerated melting of glaciers in the period up to 2050.

In the case of the other four rivers, it would be more rain along the Himalayas that swell their flow. The upper Ganges basin could see its yearly run-off growing by up to 27 per cent. The scientists emphasised that their projections were only until 2050.

Green tribunal taking forward Yamuna clean-up

The NGT was hearing a 2012 application by Manoj Mishra of Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan related to dumping of solid waste and construction debris into the Yamuna along with a 2013 application by the Abhiyaan challenging the covering of the city’s storm water drains by government bodies in particular.

Hearing two petitions relating to dumping of waste and debris into the Yamuna and encroachments on storm water drains (SWDs), the National Green Tribunal (NGT) considered the technical advice submitted by the Civil Engineering Department of IIT-Delhi and set up two committees to look into the issues and submit a report by July 17.

This issue has been divided into three parts.

- ✓ related to drain (natural or artificial) coverage and the pollution from this,
- ✓ Is related to steps required to be taken for ensuring and rendering Yamuna free from pollution,
- ✓ Restoration and beautification of the banks of river Yamuna,

The first committee has been asked to inspect places they consider crucial for data on the number of drains — artificial and natural — in Delhi.

The committee has been asked to study drains that join the river directly or indirectly, as well as gather data on the number of storm water drains and those that carry sewage.

According to the tribunal’s order, the committee will also collect and submit information on the status of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) — how many have been established in Delhi, their working, where new STPs are needed and whether it is possible to restore existing STPs to their optimum capacity.

At present no consolidated data exists on Storm Water Drains (SWDs), though there are multiple agencies — the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the Delhi Development Authority and the Public Works Department — tasked with maintaining SWDs.

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The banks of the river Yamuna should be left free, it should be ensured that no waste, construction debris, or any other material is thrown into the river banks.

US seeks to cut power plant carbon by 30 p.c

The Obama administration unveiled a plan to cut carbon dioxide emissions from power plants by nearly a third over the next 15 years, in a sweeping initiative to curb pollutants blamed for global warming.

Under the plan, expected to be finalised next year, carbon emissions would be reduced 30 per cent by 2030, compared to 2005 levels. It is a centerpiece of Obama's plans to tackle climate change and aims to give the United States more leverage to prod other countries to act when negotiations on a new international treaty resume next year.

But the proposal sets off a complex regulatory process, steeped in politics, in which the 50 states will each determine how to meet customized targets set by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The policy change, which will further diminish the role of coal in U.S. electrical production, carries significant political and legal risks.

Obama's emissions plan could boost climate talks

President Barack Obama's move to limit U.S. carbon emissions may prompt an important shift by China in its climate policies, where officials are increasingly worried about the costs of pollution.

The initiative may be a crucial move in pressuring Beijing to accept binding goals to cut greenhouse gases, while also allowing the U.S. to start catching up with the European Union in the fight against climate change.

The plan would reduce carbon dioxide emissions from U.S. power plants, many of which are coal-fired, by 30 per cent from 2005 levels by 2030.

Governments want an agreement by late next year in Paris to curb emissions of greenhouse gasses blamed for global warming. Unlike the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which exempted developing nations from emissions limits, this deal is supposed to cover every country.

The U.S. never ratified the Kyoto protocol, handing China and others an easy excuse to dodge tougher action as well.

The new initiative is a first firm commitment that puts the U.S. in a serious negotiating position for the upcoming climate talks in Paris. It gives hope that further steps in that direction will be forthcoming.

The U.S. announcement came just ahead of international climate talks starting in Bonn, Germany, where governments will discuss how ambitious to be in tackling global warming over the coming decades. Climate change is also on the agenda at a meeting of the G-7 leaders in Brussels, bringing together Mr. Obama and his counterparts from the other leading Western economies.

China, the world's biggest polluter ahead of the U.S., has promised to curb its output but has so far resisted binding limits. The U.S. move will give incentive to the Chinese to do more.

Obama's plan to cut greenhouse gas may have some impact on China's decision-making. But China's goal will be based on its domestic needs in the transformation of its economy and handling smog.

United Nations climate chief Christiana Figueres insisted she fully expected action by the United States to spur others in taking concrete action.

Greenpeace sounded an optimistic note on China, saying that witnessing high pollution in their own cities had convinced leaders in Beijing that only joint action could tackle the problem. Both countries, the U.S. and China, have seen the consequences of climate change at home and realize now that only joint international action with binding targets can be a solution.

Like many developing countries, China's status has changed drastically since the 1997 agreement. It has grown into an export powerhouse and the world's second-largest economy, prompting American lawmakers to say any new treaty must cover China. Beijing says it is still too poor to take on the limits imposed on rich countries.

China accounted for 29 per cent of global carbon emissions in 2012, more than the United States and the 28-nation European Union combined, according to the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.

Europe welcomed Mr. Obama's plan, if more for the political dynamic than for its ambition.

Mr. Obama has pledged a reduction of 17 per cent of the entire economy's emissions by 2020 compared with the level in 2005, even though that isn't an internationally binding target. It compares to a reduction of about 4 per cent in relation to 1990 levels.

EU officials in Brussels estimate Mr. Obama's new plan will only reduce U.S. emissions sufficiently to meet the overall target of a 17 per cent reduction by 2020. Without the new plan, the reduction would come in at only about 12 per cent.

The EU, in turn, has already reduced its emissions by 19 per cent compared with 1990 and aims to achieve a reduction of about 25 per cent by 2020, and 40 per cent by 2030.

Its successful emissions reduction, however, got a boost from the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1990, which led to the closure of many polluting plants. Activists complain the EU has lost steam in its fight against climate change in the past years since the global financial crisis hit the continent 2008.

Still, one of the EU's most prominent tools in the fight against climate change is a comprehensive emissions trading system, under which companies pay per ton of carbon dioxide they release into the atmosphere, with the pollution certificates traded on the market.

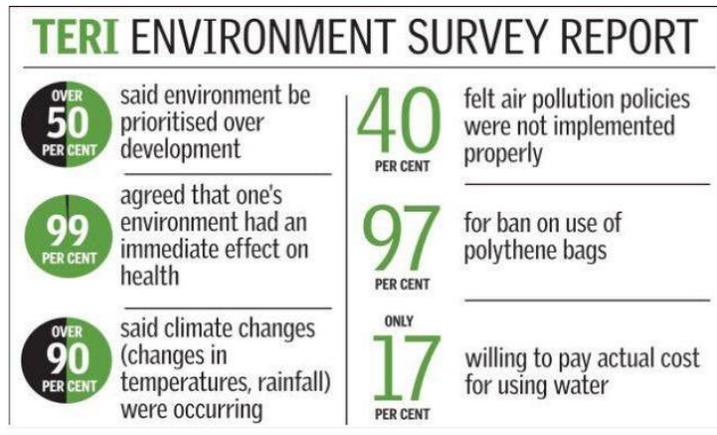
Scientists, however, maintain that far larger cuts will be required to avoid drastic environmental change.

Emissions must drop by 40-70 per cent by 2050 to keep the global temperature rise below the 2-degree C (3.6-degree F) cap set in U.N. climate talks, according to a report in April by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Scientists consider it a key threshold above which the impact of global warming on humans would increase significantly, for example through extreme weather conditions.

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Instead, emissions are rising. The IPCC said that global emissions increased by 2.2 per cent a year between 2000 and 2010, outpacing growth in previous decades to reach “unprecedented levels,” underlining the urgency to reach a global climate deal next year in Paris.

High awareness offers a way out as Delhi faces rising heat and pollution



Ninety per cent of respondents in a recent survey in Delhi agreed that climate change is taking place, with 95 per cent saying that temperatures have increased and 64 per cent saying rainfall have reduced. Half of the

respondents felt that air quality in the Capital has worsened, and 40 per cent are of the view that air pollution policies have not been implemented properly. Nearly 40 per cent said tree cover, surface water, and bird species' habitats had changed for the worse.

These findings are part of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) annual Environmental Survey 2014. The survey threw light on public attitudes on various environmental issues, including the 'environment versus development' debate. The survey had 11,214 respondents spread over Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, Kanpur, Coimbatore, Jamshedpur, Indore and Guwahati.

In Delhi, 50 per cent said the quality and availability of drinking water and waste management have improved. Nearly 70 per cent said citizens use more water than required, but only 17 per cent were willing to pay the actual cost of the subsidised water they use.

Western Railway to limit train speed near Asiatic Lions abode

Western Railway has agreed to reduce speed of trains passing through tracks near Gir forest in Gujarat's Amreli district to prevent accident of Asiatic lions moving in the area.

The Western Railway has agreed to reduce the speed limit of goods trains on the route passing through areas of movement of Asiatic lions so that a driver can prevent an accident if lions or cubs cross the rail tracks. The decision was taken in the wake of the death of six Asiatic lions of Gir forest this year in separate accidents after being run over by trains.

The railway authorities have also agreed to consider the demand of not running goods trains in morning and evening hours when there is more movement of lions on rail track in Amreli district,

The railway authorities have also agreed to impart training to more train drivers to sensitise them about lions, on why big cats need to be protected and what can the drivers do to ensure the safety of animals if found on tracks. The training will be imparted by forest officials.

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The lion population has steadily increased in Gir forest, more than doubling from a low of 180 in 1974 to 411 big cats, comprising 97 adult males, 162 adult females, 75 sub-adults and 77 cubs, as of April 2010.

The Gir national park and wildlife sanctuary in Western Gujarat is the only habitat for Asiatic lions. About 100-150 lions have permanently settled in the coastal areas around Rajula and Jafrabad towns of Amreli.

Environment Protection under Constitutional Framework of India

World Environment Day ('WED') is celebrated every year on June 5 to raise global awareness to take positive environmental action to protect nature and the planet Earth.

The 2014 theme for World Environment Day is to focus on 'Small Islands and Climate Change', the official slogan for the year 2014 is 'Raise Your Voice Not the Sea Level'.

The constitution of India is not an inert but a living document which evolves and grows with time. The specific provisions on environment protection in the constitution are also result of this evolving nature and growth potential of the fundamental law of the land. The preamble to our constitution ensures socialist pattern of the society and dignity of the individual. Decent standard of living and pollution free environment is inherent in this. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 defines environment as "environment includes water, air and land and the interrelationship which exists among and between air, water and land and human beings, other living creatures, plants, micro-organism and property".

The chapter on fundamental duties of the Indian Constitution clearly imposes duty on every citizen to protect environment. Article 51-A (g), says that "It shall be duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life and to have compassion for living creatures."

The Directive principles under the Indian constitution directed towards ideals of building welfare state. Healthy environment is also one of the elements of welfare state. Article 47 provides that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties. The improvement of public health also includes the protection and improvement of environment without which public health cannot be assured. Article 48 deals with organization of agriculture and animal husbandry. It directs the State to take steps to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines. In particular, it should take steps for preserving and improving the breeds and prohibiting the slaughter of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle. Article 48 -A of the constitution says that "the state shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country".

The Constitution of India under part III guarantees fundamental rights which are essential for the development of every individual and to which a person is inherently entitled by virtue of being human alone. Right to environment is also a right without which development of individual and realisation of his or her full potential shall not be possible. Articles 21, 14 and 19 of this part have been used for environmental protection.

According to Article 21 of the constitution, “no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law”. Article 21 has received liberal interpretation from time to time after the decision of the Supreme Court in *Maneka Gandhi vs. Union of India*, (AIR 1978 SC 597). Article 21 guarantees fundamental right to life. Right to environment, free of danger of disease and infection is inherent in it. Right to healthy environment is important attribute of right to live with human dignity. The right to live in a healthy environment as part of Article 21 of the Constitution was first recognized in the case of *Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State*, AIR 1988 SC 2187 (Popularly known as Dehradun Quarrying Case). It is the first case of this kind in India, involving issues relating to environment and ecological balance in which Supreme Court directed to stop the excavation (illegal mining) under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. In *M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India*, AIR 1987 SC 1086 the Supreme Court treated the right to live in pollution free environment as a part of fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Excessive noise creates pollution in the society. The constitution of India under Article 19 (1) (a) read with Article 21 of the constitution guarantees right to decent environment and right to live peacefully. In *PA Jacob vs. The Superintendent of Police Kottayam*, AIR 1993 Ker 1, the Kerala High Court held that freedom of speech under article 19 (1)(a) does not include freedom to use loud speakers or sound amplifiers. Thus, noise pollution caused by the loud speakers can be controlled under article 19 (1) (a) of the constitution.

Article 19 (1) (g) of the Indian constitution confers fundamental right on every citizen to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. This is subject to reasonable restrictions. A citizen cannot carry on business activity, if it is health hazards to the society or general public. Thus safeguards for environment protection are inherent in this. The Supreme Court, while deciding the matter relating to carrying on trade of liquor in *Cooverjee B. Bharucha Vs Excise commissioner, Ajmer* (1954, SC 220) observed that, if there is clash between environmental protection and right to freedom of trade and occupation, the courts have to balance environmental interests with the fundamental rights to carry on any occupations.

Public Interest Litigation under Article 32 and 226 of the constitution of India resulted in a wave of environmental litigation. The leading environmental cases decided by the Supreme Court includes case of closure of limestone quarries in the Dehradun region (*Dehradun Quarrying case*, AIR 1985 SC 652), the installation of safeguard at a chlorine plant in Delhi (*M.C. Mehta V. Union of India*, AIR 1988 SC 1037) etc. In *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs. Union of India* (1996) 5 SCC 647, the Court observed that “the Precautionary Principle” and “the Polluter Pays Principle” are essential features of “Sustainable Development.”

At local and village level also, Panchayats have been empowered under the constitution to take measures such as soil conservation, water management, forestry and protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspect.

Environment protection is part of our cultural values and traditions. In Atharvaveda, it has been said that “Man’s paradise is on earth; this living world is the beloved place of all; It has the blessings of nature’s bounties; live in a lovely spirit”. Earth is our paradise and it is our duty to

protect our paradise. The constitution of India embodies the framework of protection and preservation of nature without which life cannot be enjoyed. The knowledge of constitutional provisions regarding environment protection is need of the day to bring greater public participation, environmental awareness, and environmental education and sensitize the people to preserve ecology and environment.

“Green” Hospitals and more Public Health Institutes

On the occasion of World Environment Day, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister, Dr Harsh Vardhan, has announced his resolve for greening the health care and to converting All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi into a “green hospital”

With environmental degradation and environmental risks emerging as the single biggest source of diseases –from ordinary water borne diseases to cancers –the Health Minister has announced plans for setting up a network of capacity building institutions all over India modelled on the line of All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health, Kolkata, and the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health in Delhi’s Maulana Azad Medical College.

The Health Minister expressed concern at the insufficient data available with health authorities in India on the adverse health outcomes and disease burden attributable to various environmental hazards. There is scant information available on the adverse impact on health caused by ecological and environmental deprivation at local, regional and national scale. The movement of masses and a sizable population of migrant labourers make this mission difficult without inter-sectoral and inter-state coordination.

For this purpose the Health Minister announced that a Management Information System using IT tools would be developed for the benefit of central and state health departments. The United Nations, WHO and all international institutions have warned of the dangerous link between deteriorating environment and disease outcomes. There is a need to fight this negative impact by applying established tools to gather information and sharing it with community for involving them in this movement of creating healthy and safe environment. We also need to undertake a massive capacity building exercise to create a pool of trained manpower to achieve this mission.

Green AIIMS

“Green” AIIMS is based on the government’s determination to showcase its determination to fight climate change. For this to happen the country’s premier medical facility should move away from using conventional energy that is responsible for polluting environment and adding green house gases. Healthcare institutions should strive to reduce their energy consumption and maximise use of solar energy and other similar sources.

The new-look AIIMS will have water conservation and waste water recycling systems in place. There must be regular energy audits and a phased renewal plan must be developed with a view to making the buildings on the complex more energy efficient. Its entire waste generation including medical waste generation must be brought down by an approach of reduce, reuse and recycling of waste. A scavenging system to deal with nitrous oxide and other waste anaesthetic gases is also the need of the hour. The plantation around the hospital should be of a nature so as

to capture particulate pollution preventing harm to the hospitalized patients, the Minister said.

Public Health Institutions

The health infrastructure of India is inadequate to fight the impact of environmental degradation and consequent adverse health outcomes. The government has therefore decided to focus on expanding the human resource base.

The pyramidal structure of the public health system of the country will soon be equipped with capacities to combat diseases caused by environmental risks and a preventive attitude would be encouraged.

The country's present health infrastructure is unfortunately inadequate at present. We need to quickly develop more trained health workers –whether doctors with post-graduate degree, specialised doctors or nurses or public health engineers – for combating the effects of climate change on human health.

GEOGRAPHY

Southwest monsoon hits Kerala

Delayed by four days, the southwest monsoon set in over Kerala on Friday, marking its entry into the Indian sub-continent amid projections of below-normal monsoon this year. According to Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), New Delhi southwest monsoon has arrived after the weather officials studied the rain pattern in Kerala.

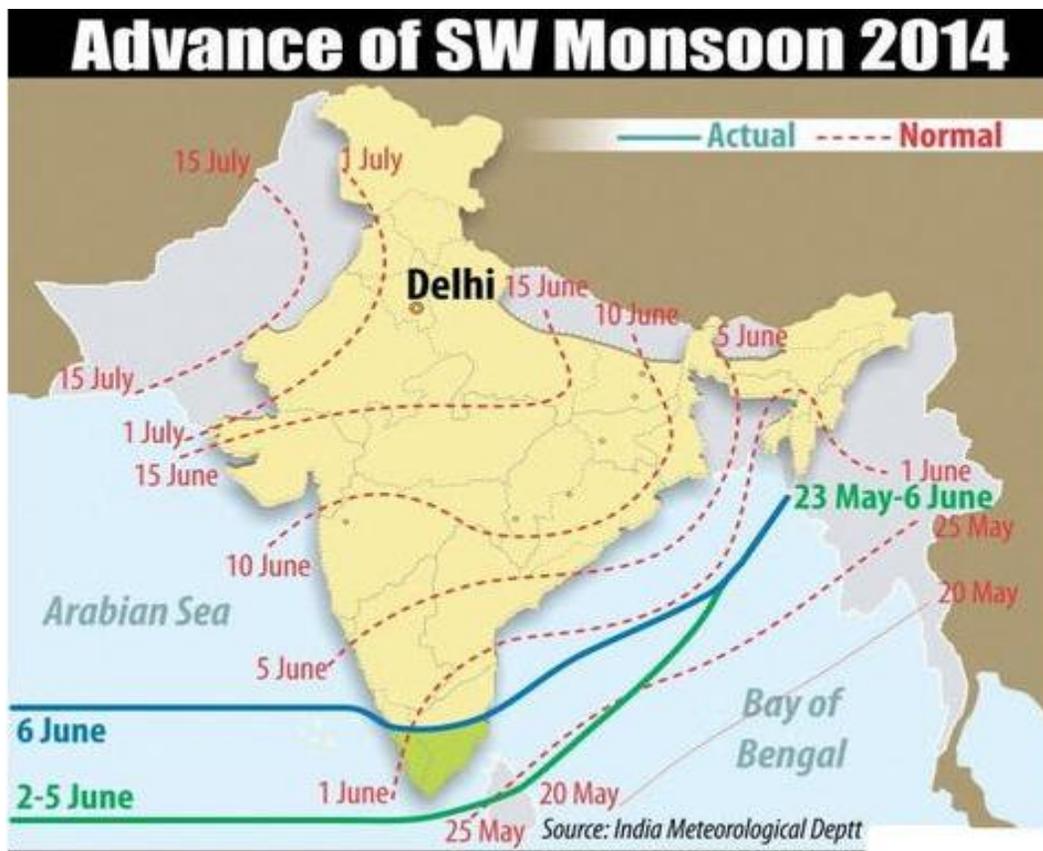
IMD has 13 stations in Kerala and one in Karnataka and have recorded more than 2.5 mm of rainfall over the past two days — one of the most important criteria to declare its arrival.

Continuous rain for over 48 hours with a westerly wind-speed of 15 to 20 knots is among two critical parameters for declaring the arrival of monsoon, which is crucial for the country and its agro-based economy.

After four years of normal and above-normal monsoon, India is expected to have below-normal monsoon this year with rainfall projected to be 95 per cent, which will be disappointing for the farming community.

The monsoon is expected to be below normal because of El Nino effect, which is generally associated with the warming of ocean water.

The South west monsoon, which brings good rainfall to most parts of the country, is a crucial component for agriculture and also for power generation.



POLITY – GOVERNANCE

EC should exclude divisive politicians from elections

Former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi - It is most ridiculous to suggest that the Election Commission should have a permanent machinery to conduct elections. "How will we employ 11 million people for two weeks' time"? He admitted that the Election Commission has to go a long way before curbing the widespread use of black money during elections.

"EC seized Rs. 1,000 crore black money in the past four years. Rs. 300 crore was seized this year alone. But I agree that there is 10 to 20 times more black money spent during the elections. But it is done so well that they hoodwink the system. We have to work on that".

Mr. Lyngdoh emphasised on the need for the Commission to exclude divisive politicians from the polling process. The Election Commission, under section 324 of the Constitution, will have to find ways to exclude candidates who divide the country.

He blamed the computers for the recent mass deletions in the voters' lists during these elections, and suggested that the Commission should stop relying heavily on computers.

Mr. Gill - the runoff voting system which is practised in France will curb communal and casteist overtures in elections. In such a system, no one will be able to appeal to religion or caste, because there will remain no constituency where you won't have to hug people you don't like. It will destroy the business of one caste and one religion.

Mr. Gill also appealed to the educated voters to shrug off apathy and come out to vote.

Maharashtra Governor K. Sankaranarayanan suggested NOTA should be removed.

CJI proposes 365 working days for courts

In a bid to wipe out pendency and give relief to litigants, Chief Justice of India R.M. Lodha has suggested to Chief Justices of High Courts that courts function all 365 days a year.

In a letter to the Chief Justices of High Courts seeking their response to the proposal, he said judges should be given the choice of holidays and vacations. About 60,000 cases are pending disposal in the Supreme Court and over 42 lakh cases in High Courts.

People with legal problems, like people with pain, want relief and they want it as quickly and as expeditiously as possible. All of us are aware of the pain of the people with legal problems.

He clarified that this was not to suggest that vacations or holidays available to judges be curtailed. They should be permitted as many days of holidays and vacations as they are entitled to, but it should be whenever they choose rather than on fixed days and at fixed periods in the year. The Registry will then finalise the sittings.

Road safety has been a victim of India's policy paralysis

Every four minutes a life is lost in a road accident in India with 1, 40,000 deaths recorded in 2012 alone. In the past decade, over a million people have lost their lives in road accidents in the country and over 5 million have been left seriously injured or permanently disabled.

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According to Save LIFE Foundation, an advocacy group which aims to reduce the high number of road accident deaths in India through rapid emergency care for injured victims, road safety has been a victim of India's policy paralysis since 2001.

Detailed investigations into road crashes are a rarity, official's in-charge of road safety are almost never held accountable, road design continues to be dangerous, and Indian laws around road safety remain deficient and poorly enforced.

The sole statute governing road safety in India, the Motor Vehicles Act-1988 (MVA), has proved ineffective in addressing any of these issues decisively. Even the last tabled Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2012, which was passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2012, was archaic and contained recommendations which will not solve the current situation on Indian roads.

There is an urgent need to actualise the five pillars on which the goals of the ongoing UN Decade of Action for Road Safety are based: road safety management; safer roads and mobility; safer vehicles; safer road users; and better post-crash response.

The World Health Organization 2013 Global Status Report on Road Safety indicates that worldwide the total number of road traffic deaths remain unacceptably high at 1.24 million per year.

Only 28 countries, covering 7 per cent of the world's population, have comprehensive road safety laws on five key risk factors: drinking and driving, speeding, and failing to use motorcycle helmets, seat-belts, and child restraints. For India, the report notes the rising fatalities in road accidents – rising from 8 deaths per lakh of population to nearly 12 in 2010. Sixteen per cent of all such deaths occur in four wheeled cars and 32 per cent in two or three wheelers.

Cut the red tape, Cabinet Secretary tells officials

Cabinet Secretary Ajit Seth has asked all government Secretaries to formulate a plan of action immediately on sprucing up the workspace and simplifying procedures.

Mr. Seth has asked the Secretaries to identify and repeal at least 10 rules or processes...that are redundant. The PM had told the officials to do away with rules and processes that complicated and delayed decision-making.

He added that passages and stairs should be cleaned up to make it unobstructed and no office material/almirah etc should be found in these spaces. Inside the rooms too, the files, papers etc should be neatly stacked.

Following the meeting with the PM, several Secretaries had initiated measures to clean up offices, Mr. Seth has said he would review and monitor interim progress on these points, asking for details of achievements under each every month.

Mr. Seth has ordered that all government forms be restricted to one page as far as possible, and levels of decision-making should not exceed four. He has also called for modalities of fulfilling promises made to the people.

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Sumitra Mahajan elected Lok Sabha Speaker

Eight-term member Sumitra Mahajan was unanimously elected Speaker of the 16th Lok Sabha, becoming the second woman presiding officer of the Lower House after her predecessor Meira Kumar.

RTI applies to private schools: CIC

Every recognised school, including private ones, is bound to the Right to Information (RTI) Act, as per the Central Information Commission.

The CIC order gains significance as it gives private education sector employees, especially teachers, a fighting chance to seek transparency on any calls made by the school managements. The school, whether a public authority or private body, has a duty to comply with the regulations of the Delhi Education Act and maintain records, which in turn gives the employee an inherent right to access information on those records. Hence, the school is directed to discharge its obligation under law by furnishing the information sought by the appellant.

Awareness Programme under Pensioner's Portal

The Department of Pension and Pensioners Welfare, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions is implementing a web based mission mode project on pensions namely Pensioner's Portal under the National e-Governance Plan. Under the project, the Department has Centralized Pension Grievances Redressal and Monitoring System (CPENGRAMS).

The basic objective of the project is to facilitate redressal of Pensioners' Grievances as also to provide information and guidance to pensioners on various pension and retirement related matters.

12th Agricultural Science Congress

The National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) is organizing the 12th Agricultural Science Congress at National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal during February 3-6, 2015. The theme of the 2015 Agriculture Science Congress has been specifically chosen as "Sustainable Livelihood Security for Small Holder Farmers".

The future of agriculture is in the hands of small farmers who constitute the majority of vast farming community. We have already demonstrated our technological strength in practising profitable agriculture, attuned to social and environmental milieu.

The year 2014 is Year of Family Farming' (YFF) based on the significant contributions made by family farmers. Although family farming has contributed immensely towards enhancing agricultural production and reducing rural poverty, it is experiencing new challenges due to globalization and trade liberalization.

Indian economy has now reached a stage where labour has started moving out of agriculture in a big way and workforce in agriculture has started falling in absolute terms. Though this is considered positive change from economic transformation point of view, it has implications for agriculture. The family farming demands that besides economics, continuous up gradation of knowledge levels, entrepreneurship and benefits to environment should be duly considered. The need is to make agriculture more exciting and rewarding for family farms so that self-employed

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workers in agriculture are not pushed to move out to non agriculture under distress. The approach hence of Family Farms is 'Farm, Feed & Flourish.

NAAS, the think tank of Indian Agriculture, has been organizing Agricultural Science Congress, brainstorming sessions on important issues, consultations, lectures and dialogues on research, innovation, development and policy issue. NAAS is also communicating their outcomes to the concerned stake-holders towards promoting ecologically sustainable, economically vibrant and socially equitable agriculture. Academy is going to celebrate Silver Jubilee in 2015.

SOCIAL ISSUES

Lack of toilets proves a serious threat to women's safety

The acute shortage of toilets across the country has come to the fore again with the gang-rape and murder of two teenage Dalit girls in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh who went missing on the night of May 27th after they went to relieve themselves in the open because they did not have access to a toilet at home.

The lack of toilets impacts the safety of women and this had been highlighted by Amnesty International (India) when it had noted that besides being a health hazard the lack of adequate sanitation facilities across India also poses a serious threat to the safety of women and girls forced to practice open defecation, making them more vulnerable to violence.

The lack of adequate toilet facilities had earlier been termed a major health hazard by the World Health Organisation (WHO) while the World Bank had identified it as one of the major contributors to malnutrition in India.

More than 600 million people – over half of India's population – defecate in the open, noted a World Bank report, worse not one State in the country is free of Open Defecation (OD).

While the WHO has estimated that at any given moment, half of the developing world's populace suffers from diseases associated with contaminated water and bad sanitation, Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak of non government organisation Sulabh International, who has long worked on the subject, believes the situation is far worse in India. According to him the Central Government claims that currently there is a shortfall of 43 per cent toilet access to general public. However, the truth is that only 30 per cent of the Indian populations have access to safe and clean toilets.

The lack of toilets poses a serious health hazard; States including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are among the worst offenders, though there is no State – including the Capital – where everyone has access to toilets.

The 2011 Census of India provides some startling results: Nearly 12 per cent of urban households resort to OD and another 8 per cent use public or shared toilet facilities. The situation is far worse in smaller cities (population below 100,000), with OD rates around 22 per cent.

Though significantly less prevalent than in rural India, OD in urban settings poses more serious challenges. With higher population densities and lack of safe spaces, OD affords little dignity and poses grave security risks for women.

Meanwhile, a World Bank working paper released earlier found that children exposed to more faecal germs don't grow as tall as children with less exposure. Studies have shown physical height is an important economic variable reflecting health and human capital.

Rape

Rape is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms sexual penetration initiated against one or more individuals without the consent of those individuals. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority or against a person who is

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incapable of valid consent, such as one who is unconscious, incapacitated, or below the legal age of consent.

Rape in India is the fourth most common crime against women in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau 2013 annual report, 24,923 rape cases were reported across India in 2012.

Out of these, 24,470 were committed by relative or neighbor; in other words, the victim knew the alleged rapist in 98 per cent of the cases. According to 2012 statistics, New Delhi has the highest number of rape-reports among Indian cities, while Jabalpur has the per capita incidence of reported rapes. Several rape cases in India received widespread media attention and triggered protests since 2012.

Sulabh to build toilets in Badaun village

Shocked by the Badaun gang-rape and murder case, Sulabh International, which works in the field of sanitation, has decided to construct toilets in all households at Katra Sadatganj village where the horrific crime took place.

By providing toilet facility in the village, Sulabh wants to exhort the government and corporate houses to come forward and participate in providing toilet facilities to poor people in villages and towns across India. Lack of toilet facility was the main reason for the rape and murder of the two girls ... By adopting this village, sulabh is trying to set up an example.

Sexual harassment panel a must, media houses told

The Press Council of India (PCI) has reiterated that the media houses must comply with the guidelines of Supreme Court pertaining to constitution of sexual harassment inquiry committees as per Vishaka judgement.

Chairman of PCI Justice (retd.) Markandey Katju added that if some media houses have yet not formed committees, bring to notice of PTI, and they will write to media house to comply with the rules and establish the Sexual harassment panel in the organization.

Another publisher forced to censor textbooks

Another case filed by the Shiksha Bachao Andolan Samiti (SBAS) against a textbook published a decade ago has resulted in Orient Blackswan (OBS) — a publisher specialising in academic books — undertaking a pre-release assessment of books that might attract similar reaction.

One such book, Megha Kumar's *Communalism and Sexual Violence: Ahmedabad since 1969* was withheld from release after it was put on sale. The publishers had announced the book on their website under the segment New Books and Events in March along with several other books which continue to be available.

Citing concern for the security of authors, staff and their families, OBS said the assessment would include examining the possibility of legal proceedings, especially under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), being filed against them and the company.

The pre-release assessment was ordered after SBAS convener Dinanath Batra served a notice on OBS for the textbook, *Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*. Written by Sekhar

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Bandopadhyay, a history professor at the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, the book, according to an article in the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser*, spread canards against the Sangh.

Earlier, Penguin India had withdrawn American Indologist Wendy Doniger's book, *The Hindus: An Alternative History*, from India as part of an out-of-court settlement with SBAS. And, Aleph Book Company decided to reprint her book, *On Hinduism*, only after objections raised by SBAS were examined by lawyers, independent writers and scholars.

In both cases, the British-vintage 295-A of the IPC was invoked by SBAS.

West Bengal, Maharashtra ink pact on victims of trafficking

The governments of West Bengal and Maharashtra have signed a memorandum of understanding to ensure identification and repatriation of women and children who are victims of trafficking.

Taking exception to the Maharashtra Police sending victims of trafficking who speak Bengali back to West Bengal, the government signed the MoU to follow a standard operating procedure to establish identities of those rescued.

In most cases when the Maharashtra Police rescue some women or children and find that they are Bengali-speaking, they send them to the State without ascertaining their identity or following any procedures

Since the identities of those rescued are not ascertained sometimes, rescue homes in the State are flooded with women and girls from Bangladesh. On several occasions, police from other States brought the victims to the shelters without informing the State government adding to the victims' ordeal.

With the MoU Maharashtra will repatriate the women directly to Bangladesh once the place they are from is confirmed. Under no circumstances will women [victims] who speak Bengali be transferred to West Bengal till family tracing is done.

According to West Bengal Commission for Women chairperson Sunanda Mukherjee the SOP would force Maharashtra to take responsibility. Not only West Bengal, women were trafficked from the entire eastern region, including from neighbouring countries. Representatives of different NGOs from the State have welcomed the development and said the SOP would help in quick repatriation of the victims.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is the trade in humans, most commonly for the purpose of sexual slavery, forced labor or commercial sexual exploitation for the trafficker or others; or for the extraction of organs or tissues, including surrogacy and ova removal; or for providing a spouse in the context of forced marriage. Human trafficking can occur within a country or trans-nationally. Human trafficking is a crime against the person because of the violation of the victim's rights of movement through coercion and because of their commercial exploitation. Human trafficking is the trade in people, and does not necessarily involve the movement of the person from one place to another.

Human trafficking represents an estimated \$31.6 billion of international trade per annum in 2010. Human trafficking is thought to be one of the fastest-growing activities of transnational criminal organizations.

Human trafficking is condemned as a violation of human rights by international conventions.

Although it can occur at local levels, human trafficking has transnational implications, as recognized by the United Nations in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (also referred to as the Trafficking Protocol), an international agreement under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) which entered into force on 25 December 2003. The protocol is one of three which supplement the CTOC. The Trafficking Protocol is the first global, legally binding instrument on trafficking in over half a century, and the only one with an agreed-upon definition of trafficking in persons. One of its purposes is to facilitate international cooperation in investigating and prosecuting such trafficking. Another is to protect and assist human trafficking's victims with full respect for their rights as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Trafficking Protocol, which now has 159 parties, defines human trafficking as:

[...] the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in above the article; "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

Human trafficking differs from people smuggling, which involves a person voluntarily requesting or hiring another individual to covertly transport them across an international border, usually because the smuggled person would be denied entry into a country by legal channels. Though illegal, there may be no deception or coercion involved. After entry into the country and arrival at their ultimate destination, the smuggled person is usually free to find their own way.

Human trafficking outside India, although illegal under Indian law, remains a significant problem. People are frequently illegally trafficked through India for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced/bonded labour.

Women and girls are trafficked within the country for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced marriage especially in those areas where the sex ratio is highly skewed in favour of men. A significant portion of children are subjected to forced labour as factory workers, domestic servants, beggars, and agriculture workers.

India is also a destination for women and girls from Nepal and Bangladesh trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation.

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The Government of India penalises trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation through the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act (ITPA). Prescribed penalty under the ITPA – ranging from seven years' to life imprisonment – are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those for other grave crimes. India also prohibits bonded and forced labour through the Bonded Labor Abolition Act, the Child Labor Act, and the Juvenile Justice Act.

Proposal to ban junk food in schools across the country

To improve nutrition among school-going children, Women and Child Development Minister Maneka Gandhi plans to propose a ban on unhealthy or 'junk' food in school canteens across the country.

The objective is to make available good quality, safe food to students in school canteens. The idea is also to specify what constitutes 'junk' food and making children aware why they are harmful.

The proposal would be discussed with the Health and Human Resource Development (HRD) ministries. The mid-day meal scheme comes under the HRD ministry.

The Health ministry's Food Safety and Security of India (FSSAI) is already working on guidelines proposing healthy food on school premises.

The Delhi High Court has also been studying into the regulation of sale of junk food and aerated drinks in and around school premises in the country.

The court is hearing the PIL filed by Uday Foundation seeking an immediate ban on junk food and carbonated drinks in all unaided and private schools.

The NGO has also sought a direction to initiate measures to discourage availability of fast food within 500 yards of schools in Delhi, apart from a canteen policy.

The court has also been asking FSSAI to come out with comprehensive guidelines for regulating sale of junk food and aerated drinks in and around school premises in the country.

INDIA AND WORLD

Sri Lankan navy arrests 29 Tamil Nadu fishermen

As many as 29 Indian fishermen were caught by the Sri Lanka Navy, on charges of poaching. The fishermen were arrested off Thalaimannar, and the Navy seized six trawlers used by them.

The arrest assumes significance, as it is the first instance of Indian fishermen allegedly engaging in bottom-trawling on the Sri Lankan side of the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL) after the second rounds of talks between fishermen of both countries.

Fisher leaders from the two countries could not reach a consensus at an earlier meeting in Colombo, with Indian fishermen unwilling to meet their northern Sri Lankan counterparts' demand that they stop bottom-trawling immediately.

While the Indians agreed to stop using pair-trawling (rettai madippu valai) and purse seine (surukku madi valai) nets – which are banned in Sri Lanka – but asked for three years' time to completely phase out trawling. Sri Lankan fishermen, however, said allowing bottom-trawling – Indian fishermen are charged of crossing the IMBL, and engaging in illegal fishing activity – any longer would further endanger marine resources, causing permanent damage.

The Palk Bay conflict has been a challenge area in the bilateral relations of the two countries. In the recent meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Mahinda Rajapaksa in New Delhi, the leaders emphasised the need to address the fisheries issue affecting the livelihoods of fishermen in both countries, particularly those in the war-torn Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

Abbas swears in Palestinian unity government



For the first time in seven years, the Palestinians have one government in charge of both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A long-awaited government of national unity headed by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah was sworn in by President Mahmoud Abbas in Ramallah.

India and China - Films, TV Serials & New-Age Media

A Chinese delegation led by Mr Jiang Jianguo, met the Secretary, I&B Shri Bimal Julka here. The delegations of both countries also had extensive discussion on issues pertaining to the mutual exchange of products, services and knowledge in the field of Media and entertainment. Both sides agreed to identify a roadmap for enhancing bilateral cooperation. Secretary, I&B invited China as the "Focus Country" in International Film Festival of India (IFFI) to

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be held in Goa in the month of November. The Chinese counterpart Mr Jiang readily agreed to actively consider the proposal.

I&B proposed a student exchange programme between the Film Institutes of both Countries as a step for strengthening the cultural ties between the two Nations. Both sides also emphasized the need for increasing participation in International Book Fairs like Delhi Book Fair to enhance cooperation in the public sector.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A Godzilla among planets

A 'Godzilla' planet that is 17 times the size of our earth has been discovered, leaving the scientific fraternity in shock as anything so hefty would grab hydrogen gas as it grew and become a Jupiter-like gas giant.

This planet, though, is all solid and much bigger than previously discovered "super-earths" — making it a "mega-earth".

This is the 'Godzilla' of earths. But unlike the movie monster, it has positive implications for life. The newly-found Kepler-10c circles a sun-like star once every 45 days. It is located about 560 light years from earth in the constellation Draco and has a remarkably fast, 20-hour day.

Kepler-10c has a diameter of about 28,900 km — 2.3 times as large as the earth. Using the HARPS-North instrument on the Telescopio Nazionale Galileo (TNG) in the Canary Islands the team found that Kepler-10c weighed 17 times as much as the earth, meaning it must have a dense composition of rocks and other solids.

Kepler-10c did not lose its atmosphere over time. It is massive enough to have held onto one if it ever had it.

The discovery also has profound implications for the history of the universe and the possibility of life. The Kepler-10 system is about 11 billion years old, which means it formed less than three billion years after the Big Bang.

Finding Kepler-10c tells us that rocky planets could form much earlier than we thought. And if you can make rocks, you can make life.

Zebras without borders

Migration is a very interesting phenomenon, and the distances that birds, animals, butterflies and fish can cover in this process is stunning and holds surprises. A recent study, done in Africa, has identified the longest known terrestrial cross-country migration in Africa.

The researchers have identified large numbers of zebras covering nearly 500 km in a round trip from Chobe river in Namibia to Botswana's Nxai Pan National park..

In a paper published recently in *Oryx*, members of WWF and Namibia's Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) in collaboration with Elephants Without Borders, a conservationist group, have described this study in detail. Using GPS collars to track eight adult Plains Zebras, the group monitored their travel between the above-mentioned destinations, over a period of two years.

Naturally, the animals were not restricted by national borders. During the period they were observed, the zebras travelled a distance equivalent to that between Delhi and Jaipur and back, crossing Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola.

Of course, several species are known for their long-distance migrations, such as monarch butterflies, wildebeest and humpback whales. But coming at a time when many migratory patterns have been extinguished or are being threatened by human interventions, this study is important in the study of animal behaviour and conservation.

The researchers believe that the discovery of this behaviour at a time when land is dominated by humans only underlines the need for efforts in conservation.

Not just that, this also brings to the fore the importance of the fact that animals do not necessarily confine their wanderings to country borders and, therefore, there is a need for conservation efforts to take on a cross-country approach.

Though this phenomenon has been observed over a period of two years, prolonged research will be needed to show that this migration has a fixed annual pattern. This also leaves open the question of how this behaviour is conveyed to successive generations — whether it is genetically coded or transmitted from parent to child.

Will tax hike reduce tobacco consumption in India?

The Union Health Minister, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, recently said he “supports” higher taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products. But even if he were to substantially increase the tax rates, will it make cigarettes and other tobacco products very expensive and hence reduce consumption?

In the case of India, as per the current taxation practices, increasing the tax component is quite unlikely to reduce consumption drastically. This is unlike the situation in the developed countries.

The paradox becomes clear only if certain basic elements are understood. Ever wondered why cigarettes are available in five different lengths (<65 mm; 65-70 mm; 70-75 mm; 75-85 mm; > 85 mm) in India? Or, why chewing tobacco products (such as pan masala) are available in different quantities? Why nearly 98 per cent of beedis available in the market are handmade though mechanisation is possible? Why the number of small-scale beedi manufacturers has reduced by more than 50 per cent with a concomitant increase in households involved in beedi rolling? Or why tobacco products have become a lot more affordable in the last decade despite tax increase?

Behold! Tobacco companies have remarkable ingenuity and lobbying to make sure their customer base remains intact even when taxes are raised. After all, high tax rates lead to reduced consumption, and they are fully aware of it. Hence, the tax structure for tobacco products in India has been made complex and provides much leeway for companies to escape the brunt of any tax hike.

Historically, taxes have been low for beedis compared with other tobacco products. Handmade beedis are taxed just Rs.12 per 1,000 sticks, machine-made ones are taxed Rs.30 per 1,000 beedis. It is therefore not surprising that handmade beedis constitute nearly 98 per cent of those sold in India.

The inconsequential tax rate on beedis goes against the grain of reducing consumption through higher taxation. That probably is the reason why beedi consumption in India constitutes 35-40 per cent of the total tobacco consumption. Its consumption is far greater than that of cigarettes.

Besides the low tax incentive, beedi manufacturers also enjoy the benefit of not paying any tax if they produce less than two million beedis per year. According to a 2010 International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) report (“The economics of tobacco and

tobacco taxation in India”), “52 per cent to 70 per cent of all beedis consumed in India have no taxes paid either due to non-compliance” or because the manufacturers supposedly produce less than two million beedis per year.

That is the reason why beedi production is being outsourced to households.

In the case of cigarettes, unlike the system followed abroad, the taxation in India is based on the length of the cigarette. Cigarettes of various lengths are taxed at different specific rates. As a result, longer cigarettes attract the most tax. This taxation structure encourages a company to manufacture cigarettes of varying lengths.

Since longer cigarettes attract more tax, consumers shift from longer cigarettes to shorter ones to escape higher taxes. Increase in tax is not uniform across lengths. Because of that, all kinds of product substitution take place.

The tax on cigarettes is about 43 per cent of the retail price. This is way below the WHO’s recommended excise duty of 70 per cent of the retail price. There is huge room for the government to increase cigarette tax.

But any increase in tax will translate to higher prices and lower consumption only if the number of tiers based on cigarette length is reduced. There should be taxes based on just one or two lengths, there should be a uniform tax for cigarettes immaterial of their lengths. That would simplify the tax structure.

The taxation structure in India is not linked to income growth and inflation and this makes any increase in tax less relevant. As a result, tobacco products become cheaper relative to income affordability. What is required is an annual systematic inflation-adjusted increase built into the process.

While beedis and cigarettes have ‘specific excise taxes, chewing tobacco products are taxed *ad valorem* (at a percentage rate based on retail price). As the *ad valorem* system is linked to the retail price, the tax component can be reduced by making the products cheaper. For several reasons, it is difficult to propose a uniform tax for chewing tobacco. So *ad valorem* can be computed from specific tax levied for cigarettes.

Consumption can be reduced substantially through taxation only if India changes the taxation structure.

The first challenge is to ensure that excise duty is “consistent across tobacco products so as to prevent product substitution.

Second, taxation of all tobacco products should be inflation-adjusted and corrected annually. As a rule tobacco products should be taxed higher relative to other goods.

Third, is putting in place a “simple and enforceable system to tax and prevent revenue leakage.

Fourth comes removing the differential tax system between handmade and machine-made beedis.

Fifth, is to have a long-term plan to remove the tax exemption to those who produce less than two million beedis a year.

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But tinkering with the beedi taxation system and increasing taxes on beedis will be the most difficult part. However, huge gains will accrue if that is done. People from the lower socio-economic stratum consume beedis. Consumption will come down if beedi prices are increased. All these measures are needed as India is the second highest consumer of tobacco products in the world — nearly 35 per cent of the adult population consumes tobacco products. Tobacco consumption kills one million Indians annually; the global burden is 5.5 million.

Google funds technology to bring entire planet online

Nearly 4.8 billion people — or two-thirds of the world's population — are not yet online. This is going to change soon. Google is planning to launch 180 satellites to provide web access for them.

The multinational firm is reported to be spending over \$1 billion on the technology, to be developed by Greg Wyler, founder of satellite-communications start-up O3b Networks.

The small yet high-capacity satellites will orbit the earth at lower altitudes than traditional satellites.

Project Loon, a separate project by Google, is designing high-altitude balloons to provide broadband service to remote parts of the world, the report added.

Smartphone battery that gets charged in 30 secs

While experts the world over are looking for ways to stop smartphone batteries from dying within a few hours of charging, a Tel Aviv-based start-up StoreDot is developing a battery that would get fully charged in 30 seconds.

Based on nanodots, the new battery is capable of moving electric current at the speed of lightning.

This is way faster compared to batteries that we currently have.

At the moment, the battery design is only in the prototype stage. In about two years, these magic batteries will be hitting the stores

To make nanodots, the researchers used tiny organic crystals that were only two nanometres long. Through a self-assembly process, these crystals were able to form nanodots. They possess a natural glow, something that could be used to illuminate the display of the handsets. This will be equivalent to the kinds of displays that are currently in use.

The progress of the battery was demonstrated recently at the 'Think Next' symposium in Tel Aviv, where the battery charged a Samsung Galaxy S4 smartphone in just 26 seconds.

Learn how plants reproduce

Plants give us life, but how do they reproduce has long been a mystery. Now, biologists from the University of Leicester have undressed the genetic hierarchy in plant sperm cell formation.

The researchers have discovered a pair of proteins made by flowering plants that are vital for the production of the sperm present within each pollen grain.

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“We often take for granted sexual reproduction in plants and its role in our lives. It is a complex process and it is only recently that we are beginning to get a grip on the underlying mechanisms,” explained David Twell, professor at University of Leicester’s department of biology.

Flowering plants require not one but two sperm cells for successful fertilisation — one to join with the egg cell to produce the embryo and the other to join with a second cell to produce the nutrient-rich endosperm inside the seed.

The mystery of this “double fertilization” process is how each single pollen grain is able to produce twin sperm cells.

Researchers have found a pair of genes called DAZ1 and DAZ2 that are essential for making twin sperm cells.

Plants with mutated versions of DAZ1 and DAZ2 produce pollen grains with a single sperm that is unable to fertilise.

DAZ1 and DAZ2 are controlled by the protein DUO1 that acts as a “master switch”.

DUO1 and the DAZ1/DAZ2 genes work in tandem to control a gene network that ensures a pair of fertile sperm is made inside each pollen grain.

Interestingly, DAZ1 and DAZ2 perform their role by cooperating with a “repressor” protein called TOPLESS.

TOPLESS acts as a brake on unwanted gene activity that would otherwise halt sperm and seed production.

Scientists hope to further demystify the fascinating process — of how plants make the fertile sperm inside the pollen grains — that are essential for the vast majority of our food crop production.

Such information may become increasingly important as we strive to breed superior crops that maintain yield in a changing climate, scientists concluded in a study published in the journal *Plant Cell*.

ECONOMY

Beef up supply chain to check food inflation: CRISIL

A deadly combination of high minimum support prices for food grains, poor supply chains and huge amounts of wastage and pilferage has been the primary driver behind high food inflation in recent times, according to a new study.

The report, which was issued by ratings agency CRISIL, points out that food inflation, has averaged 8.1 per cent in the last decade despite agriculture growth surging to 3.6 per cent in the last ten years from 2.9 per cent in the decade before.

Between fiscals 2005 and 2013, the production [of fruits and vegetables] surged close to 5.3 per cent per year compared with a paltry 1.3 per cent previously (fiscals 1998 to 2004). Yet, their inflation rose to an average 8.9 per cent, with no dramatic change in the number of mouths to feed.

Reduce wastage

Cranking up agricultural productivity, therefore, should be a secondary mission. The primary goal should be to improve the country's supply chain and reduce waste and pilferage.

High MSPs have kept the cropping pattern biased towards food grains and have led to excessive production. But the government's inability to intervene and release excess food stocks on time has allowed prices to hold firm at higher levels.

According to the report Inflation has remained close to 89 per cent even as the governments stocks of rice, wheat and coarse cereals have more than tripled since 2008.

As for wastage and pilferage, the report points out the value of fruits and vegetable wastage stood at Rs. 70,000 crore in 2010-11 and Rs. 63,000 crore in 2008-10—or a third of the entire production.

Truck freight rates up 4-5 % in May

The truck freight rates went up by 4-5 per cent during the period. The increase in truck rentals was mainly driven by agri cargo, increase in rural spending, and election-related spending.

Truck rentals recovered during May after 4-5 per cent drop in April. While increase in diesel price by Rs.1.21 per litre and 15-20 per cent growth in fruit and vegetable cargo, among others, aided the increase of rentals during May, factory output remained flat barring some improvements in cargo in FMCG, consumer durables, general merchandise and construction material segments in Tier 1 and 2 cities, according to IFTRT (Indian Foundation of Transport Research and Training).

RBI keeps key policy rates unchanged

Despite intense pressure and widespread anticipation, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to keep the policy rate unchanged. In doing so, it has indicated that it is prepared for a wait-and-watch approach. Perhaps, it has chosen to await the budget of the new Government at the Centre so as to get a sense of direction of the new fiscal managers.

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The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) unchanged at 8.0 per cent. It has also decided to keep the cash reserve ratio (CRR) of scheduled banks unchanged at 4.0 per cent of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL).

However, it has reduced the statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) of scheduled commercial banks by 50 basis points from 23.0 per cent to 22.5 per cent of their NDTL with effect from the fortnight beginning June 14. The RBI has also reduced the liquidity provided under the export credit refinance (ECR) facility from 50 per cent of eligible export credit outstanding to 32 per cent with immediate effect. However, it has introduced a special term repo facility of 0.25 per cent of NDTL to compensate fully for the reduction in access to liquidity under the ECR with immediate effect.

The apex bank has also decided to continue to provide liquidity under 7-day and 14-day term repos of up to 0.75 per cent of NDTL of the banking system.

Consequently, the reverse repo rate under the LAF will remain unchanged at 7.0 per cent, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate at 9.0 per cent.

Coal India to diversify

Coal India Ltd. (CIL) has decided to alter its memorandum of association to get into the business of producing fertilizers and chemicals using coal gas.

The amendment will allow CIL to produce, store, distribute, sell, import and export gas and other by-products from coal-gasification, and use them to produce ammonium nitrate and fertilizers. The amendment also allows it to install and operate such plant here and abroad.

The CIL board recently approved the proposal. CIL has decided to seek shareholders' nod on this issue through a postal ballot.

Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilisers had signed a memorandum of understanding with GAIL (India) for jointly exploring the potential use of gas produced from the surface coal gas project in the fertilizer industry. GAIL had approached CIL for co-operating in the studies required and the project development for surface coal-gasification in coal-bearing States in India, including the area in and around Talcher in Odisha.

This development is linked to the move to revive the Talcher unit of the Fertiliser Corporation of India, which has been awarded to a consortium of GAIL, RCF and CIL. It is envisaged that a new urea-ammonium nitrate project would be set up at the site of the defunct fertilizer plant of FCI at Talcher.

There would be two joint ventures — one for coal gasification and gas purification with GAIL and the other for setting up a downstream fertilizer-cum-ammonium nitrate unit.

Equity-Linked Pension Schemes

Corporates should run their own pension funds for their non-EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) category employees and invest funds in the equity market, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) according to Chairman U. K. Sinha. This would make reliable, long-term capital available for investment.

It is not easy for the government to make drastic changes and requested industry to come forward and take steps to improve market depth.

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While acknowledging regulatory hurdles to initial public offerings (IPOs), Mr. Sinha also pointed out that reluctance on the part of companies to comply with the prescribed governance norms was equally responsible for the lacklustre IPO market, advising companies not to push back but project best practices to attract domestic and international investors.

SEBI was adopting measures to ensure that filing of information just once with the market regulator would be adequate compliance through the Annual Information Memorandum. This should be operational within three months. On adoption of other facilitative initiatives, KYC norms across the financial sector would be integrated with the co-operation of all other financial sector regulators.

National Pension Scheme

The National Pension System (NPS) is a defined-contribution-based pension system launched by the Government of India with effect from 1 January 2004. Like most other developing countries, India did not have a universal social-security system to protect the elderly against economic deprivation. As a first step towards instituting pension Jan reforms, the Government of India moved from a defined-benefit pension to a defined-contribution-based pension system. Apart from offering a wide gamut of investment options to employees, this scheme would help the Government of India to reduce its pension liabilities. Unlike existing pension fund of the Government of India that offered assured benefits, NPS has defined contribution and individuals can decide where to invest their money. The scheme is structured into two tiers:

- ✓ Tier-I account: This NPS account does not allow premature withdrawal and is available to all citizens from 1 May 2009.
- ✓ Tier-II account: This NPS account permits withdrawal for exceptional reasons only, prior to the retirement age.

Since 1 April 2008, the pension contributions of Central Government employees covered by the National Pension System (NPS) are being invested by professional Pension Fund Managers in line with investment guidelines of government applicable to non-Government Provident Funds. A majority of state governments have also shifted to the defined contribution based National Pension System from varying dates. Twenty-nine state/UT governments have notified the NPS for their new employees. Of these, five states have already signed agreements with the intermediaries of the NPS architecture appointed by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) for carrying forward the implementation of the National Pension System. The other states are in the process of finalization of documentation.

The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) is the prudential regulator for the NPS

NPS was made available to all citizens of India on voluntary basis and is mandatory for employees of central government (except armed forces) appointed on or after 1 January 2004. All Indian citizens between the age of 18 and 55 can join the NPS.

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NPS is designed to leverage network of bank branches and post offices to collect contributions and ensure that there is seamless transfer of accumulations in case of change of employment and/or location of the subscriber.

The following contribution guidelines have been set by the PFRDA:

- ✓ Minimum amount per contribution: Rs. 500 per month
- ✓ Minimum number of contributions: 1 in a year
- ✓ Minimum annual contribution: Rs 6,000 in each subscriber account.

Under the investment guidelines finalized for the NPS, pension fund managers will manage three separate schemes, each investing in different asset class. The three asset classes are equity, government securities and credit risk-bearing fixed income instruments. The subscriber will have the option to actively decide as to how the NPS pension wealth is to be invested in three asset classes:

- ✓ E Class: Investment would primarily be in Equity market instruments. It would invest in Index funds that replicate the portfolio of either BSE Sensitive index or NSE Nifty 50 index.
G Class: Investment would be in government securities like GOI bonds and state government bonds;
- ✓ C Class: Investment would be in fixed-income securities other than government securities;
Liquid Funds of AMCs regulated by SEBI with filters suggested by the Expert Group; Fixed deposits of scheduled commercial banks with filters; Debt securities with maturity of not less than three years tenure issued by bodies corporate; including scheduled commercial banks and public financial institutions; Credit-rated public financial institutions/PSU bond; Credit-rated municipal bonds/infrastructure bonds.

Finance Ministry mulls nodal agency to take over bad loans

The Finance Ministry is considering a proposal to set up a National Asset Management Company, which may act as a nodal agency, for taking over bad loans of banks and help revive sick units.

There is a proposal to form such an entity, for which public sector banks can jointly put in capital, sources said.

Banks are asked to prepare some modalities for setting up of this company, which could look at the stressed asset issue holistically, including taking over non-performing assets (NPAs) and revival of sick units, the proposal was part of a presentation made to the Finance Minister by the Financial Services Department. As per the proposal, it could act as an aggregator of NPAs and clear such assets quickly.

At present, there are 14 asset reconstruction companies — of which four are very active — which can take over part of a stressed account.

Once set up, the proposed National Asset Management Company can pick up large stressed assets entirely from a consortium instead of the normal practice of a partial takeover.

Stressed assets have been on the rise due to the economic slowdown and the delay in infrastructure projects.

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Gross NPAs of banks increased to 4.4 per cent of advances at the end of December last from 3.84 per cent at the end of March, 2013.

Bad loans of PSU banks rose by 28.5 per cent to Rs.1.83 lakh crore in March, 2013, over the preceding September.

The top 30 NPAs of state-owned banks account for 40.2 per cent of their gross bad loans.

The Finance Ministry has asked public sector banks to act tough in case of wilful defaulters and has suggested that they go in for a change of management of defaulting companies.

There is also a proposal to finance the acquisition of bad assets. In such cases, bank finance would be made available to a financially strong buyer to acquire stressed assets or a sick company.

This facility is at present not available, and the Reserve Bank of India is looking into the matter.

Bad Loans/debt

A bad debt is an amount owed by a debtor that is unlikely to be paid due, for example, to a company going into liquidation.

Bad loans in India have jumped to a record high, hurting profits and stocks of state-owned banks. With India's expansion slowing to a decade low and higher interest rates taking hold, companies are struggling to pay back what they have borrowed after a credit binge in recent years.

As a percentage of total loans, nonperforming assets at Indian banks climbed to 4.2% in September, up from 2.4% in 2009, according to the latest data available from India's central bank. Analysts expect the ratio to rise as high as 5.7% in the next four months.

India is coming off a lending boom that was partly powered by cash turning to emerging markets over the past few years as investors sought higher yields. That drove down borrowing costs and added liquidity to the financial system. Now with domestic interest rates rising to curb inflation just as growth slows, an increasing number of borrowers are struggling to pay back what they owe to the banks.

Banks need to own up to the problems, Bad loans are an economic reality but at this level and at this pace, something needs to be addressed over and above the economic environment. The pressure on lenders has led the government to inject cash into state-run banks for the past six years, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India. In the fiscal year ending in March, state banks will be receiving a 140 billion rupee (\$2.25 billion) infusion, up from 125 billion rupees the year before.

While private-sector lenders such as ICICI Bank Ltd. and HDFC Bank Ltd. have been able to keep their books relatively clean, state-run banks like Punjab National Bank, Central Bank of India and United Bank of India have seen their bad loans jump in recent years.

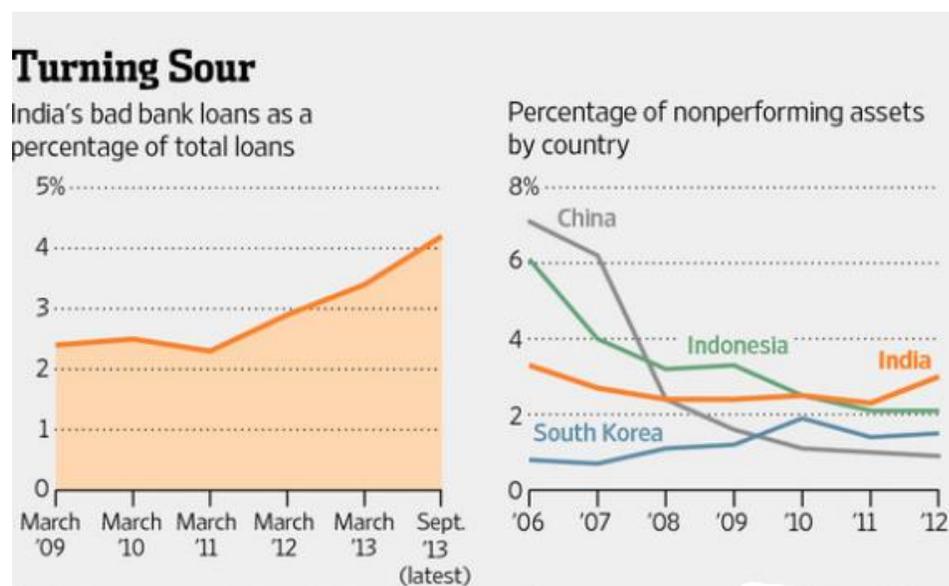
India's banking system is dominated by public-sector lenders that account for three-fourths of the total lending in the country and they also shoulder close to 90% of the country's bad and stressed loans, according to the RBI.

One of the reasons is that in India lending portfolios are less diversified than those of private-sector bank. They lend more to big, government-controlled companies as well as small

entrepreneurs and farmers. Iron-and- steel companies, followed by infrastructure, are some of the industries that state banks focus on and have been the source of most of the defaults.

In the quarter ended September, State Bank of India, the country's largest bank by assets, saw its profit fall by 35% as loan-loss provisions soared. Bad loans were at 5.6% of its total loans. Central Bank of India and United Bank of India posted huge losses in the three months because of large provisions for loan losses.

The nonperforming loan ratio at Indian banks is much higher than elsewhere in Asia. Japan's nonperforming assets are around 2.4% of all loan and even Indonesia's are closer to 2% according to the latest data from the World Bank.



'Smartphone sales in India to touch 80.57 million in 2014'

As a large chunk of Indian users is migrating to affordable smarter devices from feature phones, smartphone sales in India are expected to reach 80.57 million units by the end of this year, research firm IDC said.

Also, the sales would continue to grow at a CAGR of about 40 per cent over the next five years, it said. According to IDC, India witnessed the highest rate of growth — over 186 per cent — in smartphone sales in Asia Pacific region during January-March 2014, outshining countries like China.

The overall mobile phone market in the country grew by just 1 per cent to about 61.07 million units in Q1 2014 compared to the previous year. On sequential basis, the numbers declined 10 per cent.

The dip in the overall mobile phone market shipments can be attributed to the 18 per cent decline in feature phone shipments from Q4 2013 to Q1 2014. This was offset by smartphone market, where units shipped grew by close to 17 per cent in Q1 2014 compared to Q4 2013.

The consistent growth in the smartphone market is driven by enhanced consumer preference for smart devices and narrowing price differences.

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Compared to India's 186 per cent growth, China registered a year-on-year growth of 31 per cent in Q1 2014.

The smartphone penetration in India still hovers at 10 per cent and it is expected to grow due to a variety of factors including greater availability of low-cost devices and additional sales emphasis by top-flight vendors on less populous parts of the country.

In the first quarter of 2014, vendors in India shipped a total of 17.59 million smartphones compared to 6.14 million units in the same period of 2013.

SEBI eases short selling norms

Capital market regulator Sebi eased norms for entities trading in the Securities Lending and Borrowing segment. SLB mechanism, also referred to as short-selling, allows an investor to sell securities by borrowing them from a market intermediary after putting up collateral.

Under the new rules, Clearing Members will not be required to enter into agreement with clients for trading in the SLB segment. At present, rules require execution of a master agreement having two parts - the first between Authorised Intermediary (AI) and Clearing Members, while the other has to be between CMs and clients.

The Authorised Intermediaries shall enter into an agreement with Clearing Members for the purpose of facilitating lending and borrowing of securities

The modifications have been effected after taking into account suggestions made by the market participants. According to the regulator, the agreement would have to specify the rights, responsibilities and obligations of the parties to the agreement. The agreement shall include the basic conditions for lending and borrowing of securities as prescribed under SLB framework. Further, the agreement would have to lay out the exact role of AIs/CMs vis-à-vis the clients in the agreement. The Authorised Intermediaries AIs shall ensure that there shall not be any direct agreement between the lender and the borrower.

The rights and obligation document shall be mandatory and binding on the CMs and the clients for executing trade in the SLB framework. Sebi has asked the stock exchanges and depositories to take necessary steps, and put in place systems for implementation of the new norms, among others.

RBI moves away from sector-specific refinance

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), decided to limit access to export credit refinance while compensating fully with a commensurate expansion of the market's access to liquidity through a special term repo facility from the central bank (equivalent to 0.25 per cent).

It reduced the liquidity provided under the export credit refinance (ECR) facility from 50 per cent of eligible export credit outstanding to 32 per cent with immediate effect, while introducing a special term repo facility of 0.25 per cent to compensate fully for the reduction in access to liquidity under the ECR with immediate effect.

The RBI said that this was in pursuance of the Dr. Urjit R. Patel Committee's recommendation to move away from sector-specific refinance towards a more generalised provision of system liquidity without preferential access to any particular sector or entity.

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This should improve access to liquidity from the Reserve Bank for the system as a whole without the procedural formalities relating to documentary evidence, authorisation and verification associated with the ECR.

This should also improve the transmission of policy impulses across the interest rate spectrum and engender efficiency in cash/treasury management. The RBI also decided to continue to provide liquidity under 7-day and 14-day term repos of up to 0.75 per cent of the banking system.

This measure will continue to provide liquidity in the banking system.

With a view to improving the depth and liquidity in the domestic foreign exchange market, the RBI will now allow foreign portfolio investors to participate in the domestic exchange traded currency derivatives market to the extent of their underlying exposures plus an additional \$10 million. Furthermore, it also decided to allow domestic entities similar access to the exchange traded currency derivatives market.

Also, in view of the recent stability in the foreign exchange market, it was decided to enhance the eligible limit for foreign exchange remittances under the liberalised remittance scheme (LRS) to \$125,000 without end use restrictions except for prohibited foreign exchange transactions such as margin trading, lottery and the like. Earlier, as a prudential measure, the RBI had reduced it to \$75,000 last year.

In order to facilitate travel requirements of non-residents visiting India, the RBI decided to allow all residents and non-residents except citizens of Pakistan and Bangladesh to take out Indian currency notes up to Rs.25, 000 while leaving the country.

At present, only Indian residents are allowed to take Indian currency notes up to Rs.10,000 out of the country and non-residents visiting India are not permitted to carry any Indian currency notes while leaving the country.

Refinance by RBI

Reserve Bank of India (RBI), wholly owned by the Government of India, is the central bank of the country having monetary authority, as well as regulatory and supervisory power on the financial system. It's also the issuer of Indian currency as well as the manager of exchange control. Refinance by RBI is meant to help individuals, corporations as well as the overall economy of the country.

Types of Refinance by Reserve Bank of India

There are various types of refinance offered by RBI. Reserve Bank of India permitted the banks to offer refinance on various loans like home, auto etc. However, refinance companies have the restriction to use floating provisions instead of specific provisioning. Refinance by RBI is also offered to boost the growth of SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), especially those which are currently facing credit crunch. RBI also offers refinance facility to help out the exporters. In 2008, RBI offered credit lines of 5,000 crore to Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) to support the export sector.

Export Credit Refinance Facility

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RBI offers export credit refinances facility to the scheduled banks under Section 17(3A) of RBI Act 1934. Presently, credit refinance is offered up to 15% of the outstanding export credit. Repo Rate is applicable on the export credit refinance. The monthly payable interest is calculated on daily balances, which gets debited to the account. The maximum duration for repayment is 180 days. One can apply for an export credit refinance of Rupees one lakh and multiple of thereof.

Special Refinance Facility (SRF)

Special refinance facility was introduced under Section 17(3B) of RBI Act, 1934. It allows scheduled commercial banks (except Regional Rural Banks) to refinance up to 1% of Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) of each bank. Repo rate under LAF (Liquidity Adjustment Facility) is applicable for this facility.

Centre initiates Hindustan Zinc valuation process

The Finance Ministry has started the process for fresh valuation of Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL), seeking to push through a long-pending sale of the government's residual stake in the company in the current financial year.

The Department of Disinvestment has invited proposals from merchant bankers or chartered accountant firms with experience in handling valuation of companies.

The government has decided to undertake fresh valuation and assessment of fair share value of HZL.

HZL had a paid-up capital of Rs.845 crore as on March 31, 2013. The government holds a 29.54 per cent stake in the company.

The government sold majority stake in the erstwhile PSU to the Vedanta group during 2001-03. At present, London-listed Vedanta holds 64.92 per cent stake in HZL. Last October, Vedanta shareholders approved increasing the offer to acquire the government's remaining stake in HZL. The Vedanta board is now empowered to make an offer of up to Rs.21, 636.56 crore for the government's stake.

At the current share price of Rs.172.50, the HZL stake sale would fetch about Rs.21, 500 crore.

The department was waiting for the general elections to get over before proceeding with the appointment of valuers for HZL.

Disinvestment policy of India

The salient features of the Policy are:

- ✓ Citizens have every right to own part of the shares of Public Sector Undertakings
- ✓ Public Sector Undertakings are the wealth of the Nation and this wealth should rest in the hands of the people
- ✓ While pursuing disinvestment, Government has to retain majority shareholding, i.e. at least 51% and management control of the Public Sector Undertakings

Approach for Disinvestment

On 5th November 2009, Government approved the following action plan for disinvestment in profit making government companies:

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- ✓ Already listed profitable CPSEs (not meeting mandatory shareholding of 10%) are to be made compliant by 'Offer for Sale' by Government or by the CPSEs through issue of fresh shares or a combination of both
- ✓ Unlisted CPSEs with no accumulated losses and having earned net profit in three preceding consecutive years are to be listed
- ✓ Follow-on public offers would be considered taking into consideration the needs for capital investment of CPSE, on a case by case basis, and Government could simultaneously or independently offer a portion of its equity shareholding
- ✓ In all cases of disinvestment, the Government would retain at least 51% equity and the management control
- ✓ All cases of disinvestment are to be decided on a case by case basis

The Department of Disinvestment is to identify CPSEs in consultation with respective administrative Ministries and submit proposal to Government in cases requiring Offer for Sale of Government equity

National Investment Fund

The Government of India constituted the National Investment Fund (NIF) on 3rd November, 2005, into which the proceeds from disinvestment of Central Public Sector Enterprises were to be channelized. The corpus of the fund was to be of permanent nature and the same was to be professionally managed in order to provide sustainable returns to the Government, without depleting the corpus. NIF was to be maintained outside the Consolidated Fund of India.

Salient features of NIF

- ✓ The proceeds from disinvestment of CPSEs will be channelised into the National Investment Fund which is to be maintained outside the Consolidated Fund of India
- ✓ The corpus of the National Investment Fund will be of a permanent nature
- ✓ The Fund will be professionally managed to provide sustainable returns to the Government, without depleting the corpus. Selected Public Sector Mutual Funds will be entrusted with the management of the corpus of the Fund
- ✓ 75% of the annual income of the Fund will be used to finance selected social sector schemes, which promote education, health and employment. The residual 25% of the annual income of the Fund will be used to meet the capital investment requirements of profitable and revivable CPSEs that yield adequate returns, in order to enlarge their capital base to finance expansion/ diversification

The NIF corpus was thus managed by three Public Sector Fund Managers. The income from the NIF corpus investments was utilized on selected social sector schemes, namely the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY), Accelerated Power Development and Reform Programme, Indira Awas Yojana and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS).

Restructuring of NIF

On the 5th of November 2009, CCEA approved a change in the policy on utilization of disinvestment proceeds. In view of the difficult situation caused by the global slowdown of 2008-09 and a severe drought in 2009-10, a one-time exemption was accorded to disinvestment proceeds being deposited into NIF for investment; this exemption was to be operational for period April 2009-March 2012. All disinvestment proceeds obtained during the three year period were to be used for selected Social Sector Schemes allocated for by Planning Commission/ Department of Expenditure.

The three year exemption, mentioned above was extended by CCEA on 1st March 2012 by another year, i.e. from April 2012 – March 2013, in view of the persistent difficult condition of the economy. The utilization of disinvestment proceeds were thus continued for funding of Social Sector Schemes till 31st March, 2013.

The Government on 17th January, 2013 has approved restructuring of the National Investment Fund (NIF) and decided that the disinvestment proceeds with effect from the fiscal year 2013-14 will be credited to the existing 'Public Account' under the head NIF and they would remain there until withdrawn/invested for the approved purpose. It was decided that the NIF would be utilized for the following purposes:

- ✓ Subscribing to the shares being issued by the CPSE including PSBs and Public Sector Insurance Companies, on rights basis so as to ensure 51% ownership of the Government in those CPSEs/PSBs/Insurance Companies, is not diluted.
- ✓ Preferential allotment of shares of the CPSE to promoters as per SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2009 so that Government shareholding does not go down below 51% in all cases where the CPSE is going to raise fresh equity to meet its Capex programme.
- ✓ Recapitalization of public sector banks and public sector insurance companies.
- ✓ Investment by Government in RRBs/IIFCL/NABARD/Exim Bank;
- ✓ Equity infusion in various Metro projects;
- ✓ Investment in Bhartiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited and Uranium Corporation of India Ltd.
- ✓ Investment in Indian Railways towards capital expenditure

The allocations out of the NIF will be decided in the Government Budget. For F.Y. 2013-14 Government have approved allocations from the NIF towards spending on recapitalization of Public Sector banks and capital expenditure of Indian Railways.

India Ranks Second in Global Textiles Exports

India has improved its ranking as per the recent data released by 'UN Comtrade' in Global Textiles as well as Apparel Exports. In Global Textiles Exports, India now stands at second position beating its competitors like Italy, Germany and Bangladesh, with China still retaining its top position.

Despite having slow recovery in USA and EU, India's biggest traditional markets as well as prevailing global slowdown coupled with sustained cost of inflationary inputs, India made the best possible efforts to reach here. The Government policy of diversification of market and product

base has helped the industry and it ventured into the newer markets, which paid huge dividends. Country also leveraged our raw material strengths and followed sustained better compliance practices which attracted the buyers and international brands across globe to source from India. India's share in Global Textiles has increased by 17.5% in the year 2013 compared to the previous year. Currently India's textiles exports to the world is US\$ 40.2 billion. This growth is phenomenal as the global textiles growth rate is only 4.7% compared to India as it has registered the growth of 23% beating China and Bangladesh which has registered 11.4% and 15.4%, respectively.

Total global textiles exports are to the tune of US\$ 772 billion with India commanding 5.2% of the share. This growth in the increase in share of the Textiles Exports from India is largely attributed to the growth in the Apparel and Clothing sector as it accounts for the almost 43% of the share alone. The Apparel Exports ranking has also improved from 8th position in 2012 to 6th position in 2013. India's apparel exports, was to the tune of US\$ 15.7 billion in 2013, as against US\$ 12.9 billion in 2012. Among the top five global clothing suppliers except for the Vietnam; India's Apparel Exports growth was highest registering 21.8% growth during the year 2013. Apparel exports from India accounts for 3.7% of share in the global readymade garment exports. The availability of specialty fabric is a big bottleneck for which AEPC has been aggressively demanding 5% duty scrip for the imports of fabrics. It must be considered favorably by the new Government to boost India's apparel exports. Garment exporters may be permitted to import it with 5% duty scrip on the input, so as to increase exports and optimally use to the fullest extent our potential. The rising interest rate is another issue which hampers growth for which AEPC once again has put in its request to the Government for a Separate chapter for pre and post shipment export credit at fixed rate of 7.0% interest, as was done in the past also to the apparel export sector and treat Readymade Garment as the priority sector lending. Increasing labour cost in China, non-compliance of large number of factories in Bangladesh provide India a big opportunity in view of its relative advantage, risk appetite of Indian entrepreneurs and a small push from the Government may help India to get more business as overseas buyers are looking at India as safe and reliable option for the sourcing. But to capture the space in market left by China and Bangladesh, India have to be competitive in pricing, apart from meeting strict timelines, better quality delivery by Indian exporters and therefore, Government agencies active support is very crucial.

SECURITY

Modi briefed on nuclear command structure



Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been briefed that sweeping modifications to the command and control structure of India's nuclear weapons are urgently needed.

The proposals, which come as India becomes just one of six nations with a nuclear submarine operational, centre on the appointment of a tenured four-star general to wield operational responsibility for the arsenal.

The briefing on India's most closely held secrets, was given last week by outgoing National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon and Strategic Forces Command chief Vice-Admiral P.S. Cheema, along with Defence Research and

Development Organisation and Department of Atomic Energy experts.

Mr. Modi, the sources said, was told that the Naresh Chandra Committee on national security reforms had called for operational control of the arsenal to be given to a full-time chairman of the joint chiefs of staff committee, or the CJSOC, a four-star officer with a two-year tenure drawn by rotation from the three armed forces.

India's Nuclear Command Authority, chaired by the Prime Minister, has control of the country's estimated 90-110 nuclear warheads. In the event of a crisis, the NCA orders the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) to ready the arsenal. The SFC, working with experts at the DAE and the DRDO, is then tasked to work through the CJSOC to mate the warheads with air and missile-delivery platforms held by the three armed forces.

However, the CJSOC position now goes to the senior-most of the three service chiefs, leading to changes in just a few months sometimes — which, the Naresh Chandra Committee said in its classified 2011 report, created a weak link in the command chain.

There are many complex issues that will present themselves in the course of an evolving nuclear crisis, which someone who is also struggling to command an armed service during a war will just not be able to handle. India is unique in this gap among nuclear-weapons States.

Earlier, a Group of Ministers, led by the then Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, had recommended the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff, a supreme military office that exists in other nuclear weapons States.

The then Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, however, shelved the idea after resistance from politicians wary of creating a single-point military leadership as well as the air force.

Nuclear Command Authority

The Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) of India is the authority responsible for command, control and operational decisions regarding India's nuclear weapons programme.

India's first Nuclear test was conducted on 18 May 1974 with the code name Smiling Buddha. Since then India has conducted another series of tests at the Pokhran test range in the state of Rajasthan in 1998, which included a thermonuclear test, code named Operation Shakti. India has an extensive civil and military nuclear program, which includes nuclear reactors, uranium mining and milling sites, heavy water production facilities, a uranium enrichment plant, fuel fabrication facilities, and extensive nuclear research capabilities.

Though India has not made any official statements about the size of its nuclear arsenal, different estimates indicate that India has anywhere between 100 and 200 nuclear weapons. India is the first nuclear weapons country to have a no first use policy.

On January 4, 2003, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) constituted the Political Council and the Executive Council of the NCA. The Executive Council, chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) gives the inputs to the Political Council, which authorises a nuclear attack when deemed necessary. The Political Council is chaired by the Prime Minister, and advised by the Executive Council. This mechanism was implemented to ensure that Indian nukes remain firmly in civilian control and that there exists a sophisticated Command and Control (C2) mechanism to prevent their accidental or unauthorised use.

The directives of the NCA are to be operationalised by the Strategic Forces Command under the control of a Commander-in-Chief of the rank of Air Marshal (or its equivalent) in charge of the management and administration of the tactical and strategic nuclear forces.

The NCA may be seen as the first stage in the development of an effective and robust Command and Control (C2) and Indications-and-Warning (I&W) systems and infrastructure for its strategic nuclear forces.

The current status of delivery systems for Indian nuclear weapons is unclear and highly classified. India has developed and tested nuclear weapons that could be delivered on the Prithvi and Agni missiles, although its extent and operational preparedness in this respect remains unclear.

India first tested the 150 km range Prithvi-1 in 1988, and the 250 km range Prithvi-2 in 1996, and the Prithvi missiles were inducted into the Indian armed forces by the early to mid 1990s. India was slow to develop the Agni missiles. It first tested the Agni technology demonstrator in 1989, the two-stage 2000 km range Agni-2 in 1999, and the one-stage 700 km range Agni-1 in 2001. It first tested the 3,000 km range three-stage Agni-3 in 2006.

Since India had a few nuclear weapons prior to the availability of these missiles, especially the Agni, it is probable that the current Indian nuclear weapons inventory includes weapons designed for delivery using aeroplanes. One or more of the following aircraft types might be used for this purpose. There are no open-source reports suggesting which if any of these planes have been

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equipped to deliver air-dropped atomic weapons. The MiG-27 and the Jaguar were originally designed to perform ground attack missions, and would require only modest modification to deliver nuclear weapons. The Indian Air Force also operates several other older and less capable types of ground-attack aircraft which would seem rather less likely candidates for delivering nuclear weapons. The MiG-29, Sukhoi Su-30 MKI and Mirage 2000 were originally designed to perform air-to-air combat missions, though they could potentially be modified to deliver air-dropped nuclear weapons. Plans are also on for the delivery of nuclear weapons via the Arihant class submarine using the SLBM/SLCM Sagarika.

Indo-French air exercise begins

The fifth Indo-French bilateral air exercise — Garuda-V — began at the Jodhpur Air Base on Monday. It is aimed at enhancing operational cooperation and validating capabilities. The exercise will involve the assets of IAF's main operational formations, including the Gandhinagar-based South Western Air Command and the Allahabad-based Central Air Command.

Frontline fighter aircraft of the IAF, including the SU 30, Mig-27 (UPG), MIG- 21 Bison, and force multipliers such as the AWACS and Flight Refueller Aircraft IL 78 are participating while the French have fielded their frontline Rafale Fighter aircraft along with the KC 135 Refueller.

In the war games both the Air Forces will practice aerial warfare, including manoeuvres to carry out surgical strikes. In this fortnight-long exercise the Air Forces would also engage in operations based on their 'operational philosophy' and methodology of operations practising various challenging air situation scenarios. The exercise would help both in appreciating the intricacies of planning and conducting combat missions in an operational environment.

The exercise, whose previous edition was held at Istres, France, in 2010.

Arihant propels India to elite club, but with a headache

India's first indigenously built nuclear submarine quietly pushed out of its base for sea trials, its 6,000-tonne, 111-metre bulk powered by an 83-megawatt uranium reactor. The submarine is capable of lurking effectively undetectable at depth almost indefinitely, as long as there is food for its 110-man crew. In early 2015, if all goes well, *INS Arihant* will get the nuclear missiles it is designed to carry.

India will join a club of just six nations with nuclear submarines carrying ballistic missiles — and a doctrinal headache.

For more than a decade now, India has kept warheads separate from the missiles that carry them, in an effort to prevent accidents. In times of crisis — like the 2001-02 standoff with Pakistan — delivery platforms and warheads have been brought together, but by some accounts, even then, they were not mated or joined together for delivery.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed on classified reports calling for a full-time four-star General to take charge of India's nuclear arsenal — and the case of *Arihant* explains why.

Nuclear challenge

Last week, Mr. Modi received the most secret briefing he would get — on his role as head of the Nuclear Command Authority, which is empowered to order the nuclear missiles on the *Arihant*,

along with other weapons in the strategic arsenal, to be fired. Mr. Modi, government sources say, was briefed on progress in the submarine tests, as well as the status of the missiles that will arm it.

In March, the Defence Research and Development Organisation conducted the first test of the K-4 missile —capable of delivering a two-tonne nuclear warhead on targets up to 3,000 kilometres away.

Fitted four apiece on to the three nuclear submarines India plans to operate, K-4 will ensure that the country has what experts call an assured second-strike capability — the capacity to ensure retaliation even if the rest of the arsenal is wiped out in a surprise first-strike.

India's nuclear arsenal, as that of Pakistan has been physically separated from the delivery platforms — the missiles controlled by the Army, and soon the Navy, as well as the Air Force's combat jets. The logic is simple: keeping warheads and missiles apart reduces the risks of accidents or unauthorised use.

For obvious reasons a nuclear submarine is going to have to carry warheads as well as missiles. This raises significant issues of control, which need to be worked out.

In addition, nuclear submarines can lose contact with their bases — and officers must decide if this has happened because of technical problems, or because their nation has been obliterated. In 1961, the Soviet submarine B-59, believing that war had broken out, almost fired a 10-kilotonne warhead at the U.S. Flotilla; sub-commander Vasili Arkhipov, one of three officers who had to consent to the decision, alone demurred — averting a nuclear apocalypse.

There are also risks of accidents involving nuclear weapons on board ships and submarines: dozens of warheads ended up at the bottom of the sea during the Cold War, and though technology has improved, it is not fail-safe.

Green Footprint of A Blue Water Navy

As guardians of maritime frontiers, the Indian Navy deploys ships, submarines and aircraft that consume energy resources for operational roles. With diminishing energy resources, price volatility and to minimise the impact of fossil fuels on the environment, there is an emerging and compelling need to ensure optimal utilisation of these resources and 'stretch each rupee to the maximum' by increasing operational efficiency of maritime platforms and associated administrative processes within the Navy. Accordingly, the Indian Navy has embarked on an ambitious path of whole heartedly embracing 'Green Initiatives'. Admiral RK Dhowan, Chief of the Naval Staff, has stressed on the need to implement measures which would cover all aspects – operations, administration, maintenance, infrastructure and community living.

To start with, a framework to measure the energy consumption level has been initiated. Based upon its findings, future energy reduction goals would be identified. In addition, all future plans for augmentation and acquisition of assets/infrastructure projects would incorporate concepts of energy efficiency from the ab initio stages. Sustainable green technologies/norms based on GRIHA and LEEDS are being adopted to include Green fuels, MARPOL compliance, alternative energy & power. On the infrastructure and community living projects, the key result areas (KRAs) include Green buildings, Waste Recycling & Management, Water Conservation & Harvesting,

renewable/alternative energy and power, environmental remediation etc. with an aim to achieve a 'zero carbon foot print'.

As a pioneering initiative the Karwar Naval Base (Project Seabird) is being planned holistically to embrace resource (water, energy and material) conservation to ensure environment friendly and green facility for the future Indian Navy. (It may be recalled that Karwar Naval harbour situated South of Goa, is a 100% MARPOL compliant port).

In various ships and shore establishments, energy efficiency is being improved through regular energy audits and use of energy efficient equipments viz. LEDs, CFLs etc. Exhaustive guidelines in form of an "Energy Conservation Roadmap" have also been drawn up to implement the "Green Initiatives" and all the formations have been directed by Naval Headquarters to closely monitor the progress.

Awareness drives and programs on "Energy Conservation and Environment Protection" are being organised regularly in all the formations and commands of the Navy to integrate the philosophy of energy and environment consciousness amongst all echelons of the Service. The Indian Navy is confident that these steps would go a long way to add the much needed "Green Footprint" to its blue water capabilities. Indian Navy is 'committed and geared up' to move towards pursuance of the Energy and Environment goals of our country to ensure a 'greener and cleaner tomorrow for our future generations'.

HISTORY – CULTURE

Tagore's 1921 speech preserved at Humboldt

A treasured 1921 speech of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, recorded on a shellac disc, is preserved in a sound archive at Humboldt University.

Tagore delivered the lecture, "The message of the forest", in Berlin's Friedrich Wilhelm University (present-day Humboldt University) for the first time on June 1, 1921. He went on to give an encore in front of thousands of listeners at the University on June 2 owing to the overwhelming response the speech received.

The recording of the final passage of the speech is kept in the varsity's Lautarchiv (sound archive). This archive was founded by the linguist Wilhelm Albrecht Doegen in 1920.

The archive owns some 7,500 historic shellac discs with the voices of important personalities from the early-20th century as well as sample recordings of different German dialects and foreign languages as, for instance, Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, Sinhalese, Tamil, as well as Nepalese Gurung and Limbu.

At present, the only publicly visible memorial for Tagore's connection with Humboldt University is his large bust by Gautam Satya Pal, a gift from the Government of India unveiled in the Institute for Asian and African Studies in 2006. After the 1921 visit, Tagore, Asia's first Nobel laureate, visited Germany in 1926 and again in 1930.

A copy of the recording of the lecture travelled to India in 1959 when the former German Democratic Republic Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl sought to get his Indian counterpart Jawaharlal Nehru's support for the official recognition of the East German State, according to official sources at the German Consulate here.

Intergovernmental Com for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

India has been elected for the next four years (2014-2018) to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

In the elections to this Committee at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, India won the election by a resounding 135 votes against a total of 142 votes cast by Member States who were present and voting. India recorded the highest number of votes amongst the ten countries which contested the election and have won.

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has 24 members who are elected for a term of four years. The core functions of the Committee are to safeguard the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), ensuring respect for the intangible cultural heritage of nations, groups and individuals, as also to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

This is the second time that India has been elected to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the earlier term being from 2006-2010.

MISCELLANEOUS

Dhondutai Kulkarni

A noted singer of the Jaipur-Atrauli gharana, died

Born in Kolhapur in western Maharashtra, she was initiated into music at a young age, becoming an AIR performing artist at eight.

Ms. Dhondutai received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1990.

International football academy comes up in Pune

Liverpool FC's former player Jamie Carragher inaugurated an international football academy in Pune. The Liverpool FC-DSK Shivajians international football academy, a sprawling state-of-the-art residential school, is set to start training programmes from this month.

The inauguration comes close on the heels of a just concluded three-month long nationwide scouting camp held in six cities. The initiative witnessed over 2,500 participants who underwent a selection processes under the supervision of Liverpool FC coaches Ray Curtis and Michael Rice.

The 64 best players would be finally selected to form the first intake of the academy, located at Loni, on the outskirts of Pune, in under-17 and under-19 age groups; it was announced at the launch.

The academy, collaboration between Liverpool and DSK, a Pune-based realty firm, is built to global standards and consists of a residential complex with 840 air conditioned and fully furnished single rooms, a release said.

It also features two full-size pitches, one 4G synthetic turf and one natural grass, and an outdoor swimming pool along with practice areas, lecture theatre, classrooms, changing rooms, a gymnasium, canteen, convenience store and entertainment facilities.

Sharapova

Sharapova won her second title at Roland Garros in the last three years, overcoming 12 double-faults Saturday to beat fourth-seeded Simona Halep 6—4, 6—7 (5), 6—4 in the final.

Questions

1. Decision by the President of USA to limit the carbon emission can be considered as first concrete step in formulation of an inclusive roadmap to deal with climate change problem globally. Comment
2. Hospitals and Medical Institutes are institutions for life, but the Public health Scenario in India in contrast with it. Critically Examine with respect to Public health Scenario in India and also discuss the remedies to improve it.
3. Discuss the significance of Monsoon on socio- economic conditions of India.
4. What it means by the general used term “Red tape” with reference to Indian Policy Making Process? Is there any correlation between Red tapism and underdevelopment in certain sectors of Indian Economy, supplement your point with an example.
5. Although family farming has contributed immensely towards enhancing agricultural production and reducing rural poverty, it is experiencing new challenges due to globalization and trade liberalization. Discuss
6. What you understand by the term Human Trafficking? What are the Provisions in India meant to deal with the issue?
7. The India Banks lend more to big, government-controlled companies as well as small entrepreneurs and farmers which are most responsible for Bad loans. Harming the overall economic structure of country in long term, but they still are necessities. Explain the Paradox?
8. Write a note on
 - I. Liquidity Adjustment Facility
 - II. Kepler-10c
9. Explain the Approach towards following Disinvestment Policy of Government of India.
10. Explain the Concept and Significance of the term “Blue Water Navy”.