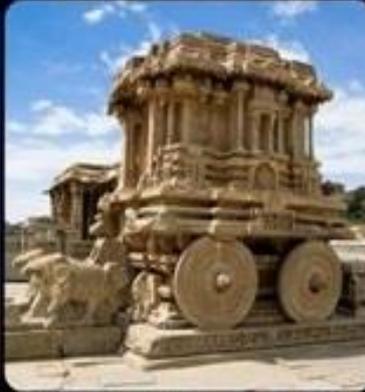


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Over 90 p.c. entrepreneurs oppose order on giving land on 99-year lease: survey

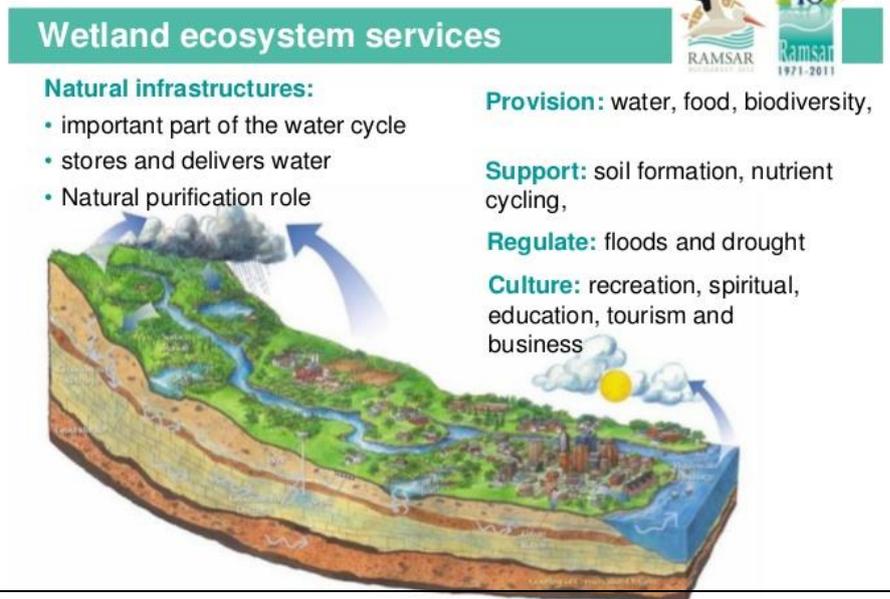
- Under the new Industrial Policy (2014–19), Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) has decided to allot land to industries on 99-year lease and it banned sale of land after expiry of the lease period
- Under the new policy, entrepreneurs have to pay 90 per cent of the land cost to the KIADB for allotment of land. After allotment, industrialists also have to pay monthly maintenance charges.
- The government has implemented 99-year lease policy to prevent sale of land and conversion of land for other purposes such as marriage halls.
- The government has implemented 99-year lease policy to prevent sale of land and conversion of land for other purposes such as marriage halls.
- Granting land on lease basis would deny title deeds for entrepreneurs and they would be left with no assets in case their industries incur losses

It's 150 days of work in drought-hit taluks

- With more than three-fourth of Karnataka reeling under severe drought, the government has increased the number of days of work from 100 to 150 days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) in 135 drought-hit taluks.
- The beneficiary would get a daily wage of Rs. 204 under the job scheme. The State is expected to get Rs. 2,587.35 crore during 2015–16 for taking up various works under the scheme.
- Each gram panchayat (GP) has been asked to provide jobs from minimum 20 people to maximum 100 people a day and GPs across the State would take up 10,000 works related to roads, bridges, lakes, and playgrounds in the next few months.
- A sum of Rs. 369 crore had been released to GPs under the 14th Finance Commission

Wetlands on path to destruction

- The latest report by the ENVIS Technical Committee – prepared by scientists of the Energy and Wetlands Research Group of the Indian Institute of Science – notes



continuing degradation of the more than 400-hectare wetland, which includes the severely polluted Bellandur and Varthur lakes.

- The report notes that since 2013 – when the last technical report was brought out – the storm water canal has narrowed by 1 metre (to 15 metres) at its narrowest point.
- Apart from this, nearly 74 acres of the SEZ has now been fully walled off while construction – which has not been stayed by the NGT's May 7 order – is in full swing.
- With nearly 3.75 acres falling in the lake and the surrounding wetland, the report says that construction, excavation and dumping of debris is affecting the wetland.
- An NGT-appointed expert committee was supposed to prepare a report on wetlands and lakes in the city. However, with the three-month time frame being a constraint, members said that they have studied only the Bellandur wetland so far.
- The need to protect wetlands – which acts like a filtration system for lakes, a system successfully followed in Jakkur Lake – is unfortunately yet to percolate in the system
- In past studies, the group noted that the prevailing laws – all of which are Central legislation – are “ineffective” and have a “fragmented approach”, as they indirectly touch the subject of wetland protection.

Online management system to monitor Bengaluru water: Catch the next drop

- Bengaluru-based start-up NextDrop has bagged a seven-month contract with the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) to roll out an online management system to monitor water across the city. Officials said the cost may come up to just Rs. 80 lakh.
- NextDrop already operates the system in Hubballi-Dharwad. Over 50,000 people have registered with the company – through a toll-free number after which they come under the ambit of the SMS alerts – in the twin cities.
- The system acts like an interface between valvemmen and the consumer. The valve men inform the system each time water is let into pipes of an area. The system then messages consumers in the area.
- NextDrop already operates the system in Hubballi-Dharwad. Over 50,000 people have registered with the company – through a toll-free number after which they come under the ambit of the SMS alerts – in the twin cities.
- The system acts like an interface between valvemmen and the consumer. The valve men inform the system each time water is let into pipes of an area. The system then messages consumers in the area.
- “Instead of waiting for days for water, the consumers – who are primarily women and children – can now go towards the taps only on receiving the message,”

- Apart from this, with enough data gathered by consumers – who can message grievances, water quality and pressure – the system can even predict when an area will get affected
- At present, there is no way for us to verify if valvemmen have indeed turned the valves at the specified time. With this system, we can monitor in real-time the time of letting water in an area

Policy to extract “Sweet Neera”

- Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said while presenting State Budget this year that amendment will be made to the Excise Act to permit the members of the coconut producers’ companies, federations and societies to extract neera.
- However, the process for the ‘Sweet Neera’ policy or the amendment is yet to start.
- Neera is especially important for the farmers as it will give a steady monthly income irrespective of prices of coconuts in the wholesale market.
- The policy must be modelled after the one in Kerala. In the coastal State, members registered in Coconut Development Board can extract sweet neera and sell for Rs. 35 (for 200ml bottle) in the market.
- The policy even prohibits the fermenting of neera into toddy. This system has allowed farmers to get a profit of Rs. 50 per litre per day from one coconut tree.

Unfilled posts of backward classes to be carried forward

- In a major policy decision, the posts reserved for backward classes, which include minorities, in various government departments will no longer be filled by general category candidates.
- The State Cabinet, in its meeting held in Bengaluru, decided to carry forward the vacancies – even if candidates belonging to backward classes are unavailable – as backlog to be filled by candidates belonging to the same categories in future recruitments.
- The Cabinet decision comes after the Legislature Committee took serious note of the recruitment policy’s failure to extend reservation in employment made available to the economically and socially backward classes in the society under Article 16(4) of the Constitution.
- the committee — during meetings held from November 2014 to February 2015 — went through recruitments carried out for drivers by KSRTC, lecturers by Higher Education Department, teachers by Primary Education Department, besides various posts in departments of Horticulture, Sericulture, Industries and Commerce, and so on.
- “In all recruitments, several posts reserved for backward classes had been filled by general category candidates due to non-availability of candidates from the reserved category

Judicial commission to probe into BBMP bills scandal

- A week after the BBMP elections, the State Cabinet decided to set up a one-man judicial commission to probe alleged cases of fake bill scandals of the BBMP in road asphaltation works in the city.
- A Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, has decided to withdraw the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) investigation into the fake bill scandal to hand it over all cases of road works to the Judicial Commission.
- A retired judge of the Karnataka High Court would head the panel and the chairman would be assisted by one to two retired engineers.
- The commission would conduct the probe into the misappropriations of funds in the execution of road works in Gandhinagar, Malleswaram and Rajarajeshwari Nagar divisions and other 25 engineering divisions of the city.
- The Rajendra Kumar Kataria report too highlighted alleged irregularities in road works in the BBMP limits.
- the slow progress of probe by the CID, it was decided to set up the judicial commission to expedite the probe into fake bill scandal occurred during 2005-06 – 2011-12.
- It is alleged that BBMP engineers, contractors and officials had swindled thousands of crores by producing fake bills related to road works in the city from 2005-06 to 2011-12.
- The CID has been conducting a probe into the misappropriation of funds in the execution of road works in Gandhinagar, Malleswaram and Rajarajeshwari Nagar divisions.
- In 2011, on instructions from the then BBMP Commissioner Siddaiah, the Technical Vigilance Committee under the Commissioner (TVCC) looked into complaints of fraud and filed a report uncovering a billing scandal in three divisions.
- Siddaiah then filed an FIR with the Bangalore Metropolitan Task Force police.
- On November 20, 2011, a fire broke out on the third floor of the BBMP building, where the BMTF had stored documents relating to the works under investigation. On November 28, 2011, the State government ordered a CID probe into the scandal and the fire.

Fertilizers bring down numbers of blackbuck fawns

- chemicals and fertilizers used in the production of seeds as well as a burgeoning stray dog population near the Jayamangali Blackbuck Conservation Reserve may have resulted in bringing down the number of young blackbucks (fawns) in Tumakuru, according to a survey.
- The survey of blackbucks in the Jayamangali Blackbuck Conservation Reserve in Madhugiri taluk has thrown up good and bad news for animal lovers: the mature blackbuck numbers have gone up, while the number of fawns remain well below expected figures.

- The findings come out of the census commissioned by the Forest Department and Wildlife Aware Nature Club on the blackbuck numbers in Jayamangali Blackbuck Conservation Reserve on August 8 and 9.
- The increase in overall numbers is being attributed to the efforts of the Forest Department's conservation measures, anti-poaching action.
- There has been deficient rainfall for at least 15 years and food sources are becoming scarce. The herds move out of the forest into nearby fields, where multinational companies have leased out land to produce seeds. They use a lot of chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers.
- Blackbucks that eat the grass near the land consume these chemicals. This affects the embryos in the female and the lifespan of the young ones is reduced. And, stray dogs around the reserve prey on fawns. So, the Club has suggested a ban on agricultural chemical usage and control of the dog population in a 10-km radius to ensure a sustainable population.

Reasons for low fawn population:

- Usage of pesticide and chemicals to produce watermelon, tomato and green chilly seeds
- Stray dog population outside the sanctuary preys on the fawns

Bababudangiri: SC asks State to decide title claims of shrine

- Asking it to fairly consider the versions of all interested parties, the Supreme Court directed the Karnataka government to decide the title claims over the disputed cave shrine, Guru Dattatreya Bababudan Swami Dargah, atop Bababudangiri in Chikkamagaluru district.
- The court, meanwhile, allowed the 'Sajjada Nasheen' (descendent of the 'Sufi pir') to appoint 'Mujavar' (priest) to perform rituals in the shrine.
- The court was disposing of civil appeals filed by Syed Ghouse Mohiyuddin Shakhadri, the 'Sajjada Nasheen', and the Citizens For Justice and Peace over five years ago.
- The shrine has a long history of litigations, as in 1978 the property of the dargah was taken over by the wakf board. The 'Sajjada Nasheen' challenged the move and got a decree in its favour.
- Later, the government attempted to take it over. The apex court, which ordered authorities to maintain status quo, asked the State government to take an informed decision.

Pulling vultures back from the brink

- Protecting the last six long-billed vultures in inland south India has become a challenge for the Forest Department even in a protected vulture sanctuary in Ramanagaram.
- With rampant trespassing in 346.14 hectares in and around Ramadevara Betta — which became the country's second vulture sanctuary in January 2012 — the department has now decided to fix a fee to enter the park.
- According to ornithologists and wildlife experts, in the absence of an entry fee, the haven for the endangered species had become an open ground for miscreants. Recently, forest officials arrested two persons for allegedly attempting to harm the vultures. A similar attempt was recorded last October.
- Apart from this, plans include building watchtowers to allow wildlife enthusiasts to have a glimpse of overhead circling and landing of vultures, besides developing an information centre which, apart from mentioning dos and don'ts in the sanctuary, will also explain the behavioural pattern of vultures.

Ideal habitat

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- Long-billed vultures made Ramadevara Betta their home as the crevices of the tall granite hills — which are among the world's oldest granite outcrops — are suitable for their mating and breeding activities, he said.
- Shivananjaiah, environmentalist, who was part of the movement to make the area a sanctuary, recalled that there were hundreds of long-billed vultures a few decades ago. Their habitat was disturbed during the shooting of the iconic Bollywood blockbuster 'Sholay' in the 70s and Hollywood classic 'Passage to India' in the 80s. "Now their number has dwindled to just six," he said.
- Though they returned in later years, their numbers did not increase owing to scarcity of food, water and increase in environment pollution

Tiger Prey Found Across Seasons Outside Five Reserves in Karnataka: Study

- Just outside the protected areas of five tiger reserves in Karnataka, five herbivorous species — four of them tiger prey — have been mapped across seasons despite their vulnerability to poachers and prone to conflicts with humans.
- These findings will help in better planning, chalking out protection measures and prevention of conflicts outside the tiger reserves, feel wildlife experts. The findings were revealed in a new scientific study by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) India Program.

- It has assessed seasonal distribution patterns of these animals in around 7,500 sqkm area adjoining Dandeli-Anshi, Bhadra, Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple, Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves.
- The five species include elephants, gaur, sambar, chital and wild pig which form the principal prey for tigers in this landscape.
- To examine the patterns of their occurrence, structured interviews were conducted with 3,860 local households in 1,565 villages located within 10 km radius of the tiger reserves.
- A parallel in 2013 had also found that 64 per cent of households reported experiencing crop loss to due to presence of wildlife and losses were similar across the five tiger reserves.
- This approach of assessing and mapping species distribution is vital to focusing where species protection efforts need to be targeted and determining which habitat areas need to be monitored to ensure that the species can move freely
- Of the five species, gaur was the least wide ranging and pigs the most wide-ranging species. As expected, forest cover influenced distribution of all five species, and distance from the tiger reserve and human population densities had a negative influence. Chital was more wide-ranging in dry seasons while elephants in wet seasons. However, the other three species remained unaffected by seasonality.
- Elevation, on the other hand, positively impacted elephant and gaur occurrence, and negatively impacted chital occurrence in both seasons.

Bank launches 'Dhanchayat' for rural people

- HDFC Bank launched 'Dhanchayat', an educational film to create awareness among rural people about the dangers of borrowing from the unorganised sector and to encourage business with the banks near Nanjaraja Bahadur Choultry
- The film's objective is to create a better understanding on clean and convenient banking and showcase the importance of transparency in financial dealings and dignity and self-respect in the borrowing process
- Similar vans have already been launched across the nation and Karnataka is the seventh State to be covered under the initiative.
- It will cover villages in Mysuru, Mandya, Ramanagar, Belagavi, Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu districts
- The van also includes a micro-ATM and biometric facility to enable instant e-KYC and Re-KYC using Aadhaar number

Women GP members trained for their new roles

- To empower the newly elected women gram panchayat members, The Hunger project in association with Jana Shikshana Trust is engaged in capacity building training programme for selected members from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts.
- The training programmes are being imparted to make them function as change agents and bring transformation in their villages.
- A total of 280 women gram panchayat members from 60 gram panchayats have been selected for the programme. Of the selected members, five have been elected as presidents and nine as vice presidents of their respective gram panchayats.
- The training programme helps them to create development agenda by focusing on health, nutrition, education, water, sanitation, employment, rights of an individual and so on. It will also help in tackling problems such as domestic violence, alcoholism and corruption
- It will also create awareness in women about their rights, educates them about their powers and responsibilities as panchayat members, build their capacity to create a vision and plan of actions to achieve it.

IAF-HAL info e-portal

- Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar launched an e-portal that will share real-time information between the Indian Air Force and its main aircraft maker, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.
- Parrikar, who spent most of the day reviewing projects of HAL and other defence agencies in the city, was quoted as saying that the portal also saves considerable time by eliminating the need for frequent joint meetings at various levels.
- This is the first inter-organisation information sharing system (IOIS) under Digital India between a defence service organisation and a defence public sector company
- The customer-centric portal would show repair milestones and give information on status of supply against aircraft on ground and tasks involved.
- HAL said the portal will optimise long-term planning for materials; reduce the repair and overhaul cycle time; and reduce time to finalise tasking and fixed price quotation processes.

Chandrashekhara Patil to return the prestigious Pampa Award

- Noted Kannada writer and activist Chandrashekhara Patil, popularly known as Champa, has decided to return the prestigious Pampa Award conferred on him by the Karnataka government in 2009.

- This, he said, was a symbolic gesture of protest against “the environment created in the country stifling dissent and freedom of expression”, following the murder of close friend and co-writer M.M. Kalburgi in Dharwad last week.

The Hand, foot and mouth disease

- A private school in the city shut down for the day within two hours of commencement of classes after 15 students, mostly from the primary section, reported fever and rash on the hands.
- More than 900 students were sent back home as the administration of Innisfree House School in J.P. Nagar II Phase feared an outbreak of hand, foot and mouth disease after two students who were diagnosed of the disease returned to school
- The school has announced that it will reopen only after sanitation and fumigation of the school premises.
- The Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease (HFMD), a viral illness, is quite common among infants and children during monsoon. However, there has been a sudden increase in HFMD cases in the city in the last fortnight.
- The illness is seasonal
- Cases are usually reported every year when schools reopen or during rains
- Children below five years are more prone to infections. The disease spreads through contact and saliva and is self-limiting. The child recovers in five to seven days
- Symptoms include fever, painful blister-like sores in the mouth and itchy lesions on the palms, feet, elbows, knee joints, and buttocks

StoryWeaver

- StoryWeaver (www.storyweaver.org.in), which is being launched on International Literacy Day, is an open source platform of multilingual children’s content, where over 800 stories – including 150 original stories and translation in 26 foreign and Indian languages – as well a bank of over 2,000 images can be accessed.
- The digital platform will allow people to take the stories, most of which come from Pratham’s catalogue of works, and either translate it to the language of choice (under the translate option which lists 22 languages in unicode) or modify the language to cater to older or younger children (under the relevel option).

State govt. to move tribunal on Mahadayi water diversion

- The government will file an application before the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal seeking interim award on sharing of river water between Karnataka and Goa

- In its interim application, the State government would appeal for awarding 7.56 tmcft of water to meet the drinking water demands in Gadag, Dharwad, Belagavi and Bagalkot districts; 7 tmcft of water for agricultural activities, and 1.56 tmcft for Khanapur taluk in Belagavi district.
- The government has decided to file the interim award considering the severe drought in most districts of north Karnataka
- Farmers and various organisations have welcomed the government's decision, but stated that they will not withdraw their protest till the award is granted.
- The State will appeal for 7.56 tmcft of water to meet drinking water needs in Gadag, Dharwad, Belagavi and Bagalkot districts

HC: collect all details before releasing convicts on parole

- The High Court of Karnataka asked the State and the prisons authorities to secure particulars of convicts' family members and their properties before releasing them on parole.
- Also, the court advised the State government to amend certain provisions in the Government Order of 2004, which was issued under the Rule 191 of Karnataka Prison Rules, to ensure better safeguard while releasing the convicts on parole.
- A Division Bench comprising Justice Mohan M. Shantanagoudar and Justice Budihal R.B. issued the directions while hearing a case suo motu initiated by the court on noticing that 47 convicts, who were released from different prisons in the State, were absconding.
- The Bench said the authorities concerned shall get particulars of the prisoner; names, addresses and phone numbers of his family members; properties owned by the prisoner or his family members, and antecedents of family members before assessing whether the prisoner could be released on parole or not.

Karnataka has built 100% toilets, but yet to tackle dysfunctional ones

- The Swachh Vidyalaya programme, where the state has met the 100 per cent target for building separate toilets for girls and boys in all government schools, but 5,344 of them are "dysfunctional," as per official figures.
- The PM had pushed for toilets in schools across the country in his Independence Day speech in 2014. This year, he congratulated all states for meeting the target. But, as the Karnataka example shows, there has been no attempt to ensure that all of them are usable or actually in use..
- There is a desperate need for the toilets in the schools. Lack of toilets takes a physical toll on the students, who ultimately stop going to school. We have found that several toilets

said to be built by the government are just on paper, while in other places, the teachers use the toilets and don't let the children use them. That is the ground situation.

- As per official records, the "dysfunctional" toilets are those that do not have a water source for cleaning. Also, they pointed out that in several districts of backward North Karnataka, there is cultural resistance to using a toilet, as that is considered "unclean" when compared to defecating in the open.
- But no separate fund has been allocated either by the state or by the Centre exclusively for school toilets in Karnataka, unlike the model states of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, listed by the Ministry of Human Resources Development. About 225 toilets built by the corporate and PSU sectors are also in the dysfunctional list.
- SSA officials in Karnataka hope that the Centre's rural development department funds under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme could extend to supplying water.

Dharwad Wins Race for IIT

- Dharwad has won the race for the Indian Institute of Technology.
- The Union HRD Ministry took this decision and a government order in this regard will be issued
- Along with Dharwad, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's home district Mysuru and Raichur were in the race for the country's premier technical education institute.
- The Union government had sanctioned IIT to Karnataka in its 2015 budget. The proposed IIT will come up on a 200-acre plot near Belur Industrial Area on the outskirts of Dharwad. A team from the HRD Ministry had recently visited all three cities to assess the plots offered by the respective district administrations.

Nehru centre inks pact with U.K. agency for collaborative research on Ebola

- The Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Public Health England (PHE), an executive agency of the U.K. Department of Health, for collaborative research on development of a drug for Ebola.
- The agreement will include co-developing two small molecular compounds (membrane active agents and lipophilic amino-acid conjugates), which they have jointly patented.
- It will also involve programmes to develop novel compounds to beat anti-microbial resistance with the JNCASR and to address emergency preparedness and response with the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases, Bengaluru (RGICD).

Kannada University gets first woman Vice-Chancellor

- Writer and academic Mallika Ghanti, who takes over as Vice-Chancellor of the Kannada University, Hampi, will be the first woman to occupy the post in the 22-year-old university.
- Indeed, she is among the few women chosen to occupy the post of the Vice-Chancellor in the universities in Karnataka.
- Known to be a writer who is outspoken, she was one of the agitators who participated in the struggle on getting the ban on entry to women in Kumaraswamy temple, near Sandur, lifted. She has several works of poetry and literary criticism to her credit.
- Kannada University, also called as Hampi Kannada University or Hampi University, Kannada University, Hampi is a research oriented Public University in Hampi, Karnataka, founded in 1991 by the Government of Karnataka through Kannada University Act, 1991 with the aim to develop the Kannada language and to promote the literature, traditions, culture, and folklore of Karnataka.

KIA fifth busiest airport in India

- Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) stood fifth among the 15 Indian airports in terms of foreign tourist arrivals from January to August this year.
- The KIA handled 6.91 per cent of the total foreign tourists arriving in the country during the period.
- The KIA, which also handles the highest passenger traffic in south India, is being touted as the “Gateway to the South” due to its proximity to several important tourism destinations. It also handles business travellers coming into the city on work.
- The New Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport tops the list with a share of 27.81 per cent of foreign tourist arrivals followed by the
- Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport, Mumbai, (17.34 per cent), Chennai International Airport (10.66 per cent), and Haridaspur Land check-post (8.83 per cent), according to the figures released by the Union Tourism Ministry on Wednesday for top 15 airports in the country.
- At the top of the list of 15 source countries was Bangladesh with 15.79 per cent, followed by the U.S., the U.K., Sri Lanka and Malaysia.

Karnataka declares drought, seeks Rs3,050 cr in assistance

- Confirming the worst fears of the fallout of deficient rains, Karnataka became the first state to declare a drought and ask for central assistance. States like Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh are equally bearing the brunt of a sub-par monsoon but are yet to declare a drought.
- The Karnataka government has declared drought in 127 talukas in 27 out of 30 districts

- The state has asked for a central assistance from the National Disaster Response Fund for Rs.3,050.7 crore
- An inter-ministerial team is visiting the state to take stock of the situation.
- Maharashtra and Karnataka are the worst affected by this year's sub-par monsoon.
- The Marathwada region has recorded a deficit of 48% of the average rainfall and central Maharashtra saw a deficit of 42% till Wednesday. In north interior Karnataka, the deficit is 34%.
- Technically, 12 of Karnataka's 30 districts received deficient rainfall till September and two received scanty rainfall. The situation is similar in Maharashtra, where 27 of the 35 districts received deficient or scanty rainfall, and in Uttar Pradesh, where 56 districts received deficient or scanty rainfall, the Met department said.
- Areas facing the most rainfall deficit includes Marathwada, central Maharashtra, northern interior Karnataka, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab and Haryana.
- More than half of India's crop area that lack assured irrigation depends on the June to September southwest monsoon. The monsoon is projected to see a deficit of 12%.
- The year 2015 will be the second consecutive year of sub-par monsoon; it ended with a deficit of 12% last year, with some regions like Telangana, Marathwada and Uttar Pradesh going through the second consecutive drought year.
- Weather woes over the past year has aggravated farm distress by impacting production and income.
- Deficit rains in 2014 and unseasonal showers just ahead of the winter harvest in 2015 led to a 4.7% dip in foodgrain production, while agriculture growth rate nosedived to a poor 0.2% in 2014-15.
- This year is unlikely to be any better with rain-fed crops like pulses, coarse grains, oilseeds alongside sugarcane and cotton likely to see a dent in production. An added worry is that reduced water levels in reservoirs and little moisture in the soil will spell trouble for the upcoming winter crop, for which sowing begins in October

69 small oilfields on the block

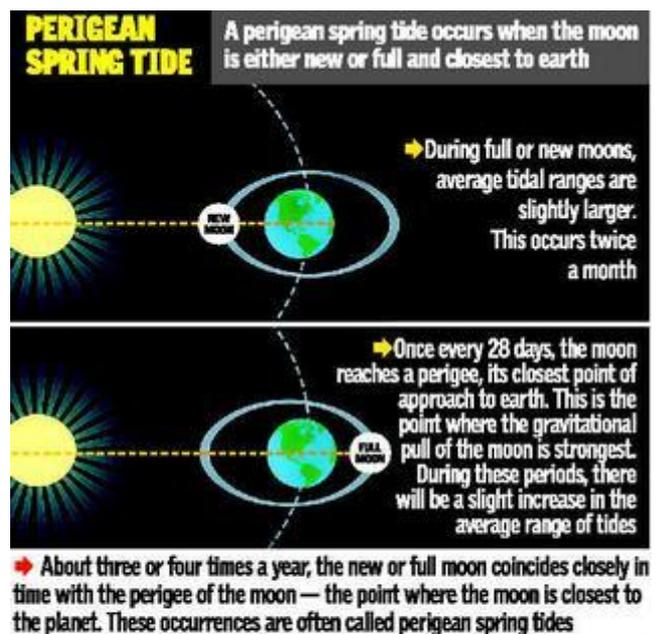
- The Union Cabinet approved a new policy for the auction of 69 small and marginal oilfields to private and foreign companies that could unlock hydrocarbon reserves estimated at around Rs. 70,000 crore.
- Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said this "paradigm-changing" model — of sharing revenue instead of profits and giving out unified licences for all hydrocarbons in the field instead of a licence for each — could later be considered for the entire sector.
- As a move forward on the Modi government's "Minimum government, maximum governance" agenda, the successful bidders of the fields on auction would be free to sell

crude oil or natural gas at market-determined prices, without any government interference

- The revenue-sharing and royalty-sharing mechanism will be benchmarked against the prevailing market price of oil.
- If the company manages to sell at a higher price than the market rate, then the sharing will be based on this higher price
- The earlier profit-sharing mechanism meant that the government had to scrutinise the various costs incurred by the private companies, which often led to delays and disputes. Of the 69 fields to be put on the block, 63 are owned by the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and six by Oil India Ltd.
- As an additional change from the existing regime, companies operating these new fields will be able to sell gas to any customer of their choice and not be bound by the government's allocation policy.
- In addition, under the unified licence policy, companies will be able to exploit any and all hydrocarbons (oil, gas, shale oil, shale gas and so on) found in the field, unlike the current system which requires a separate licence for each.
- The bid document is to be made public in three months. The winning bidders — who will be given a licence for 20 years — have been set strict targets by which they have to start production. "The production deadline is three years from the signing of the contract for on-line fields, four years for shallow fields and six years for deep fields

Spring tide, swell waves caused tidal flooding

- The tidal flooding and high wave activity reported from parts of the southern Kerala coast over the past few days were caused by the combined effect of a perigean spring tide and high swell waves originating in the southern Indian Ocean, according to scientists at the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad.
- While the freak flooding since August 29 had triggered panic along the Alappuzha coast, the Vizhinjam coast in Thiruvananthapuram was battered by high waves, affecting fishing activities.



Swell waves

Swell is an ocean wave system raised at some distance away due to winds blowing there. Swell waves travel out of a stormy or windy area. The swell may travel for thousands of miles before dying away. As the swell wave advances, its crest becomes flattened and rounded and its surface smooth

- The INCOIS issued a tidal flood alert on August 29, followed by a high wave warning for the coastal belt from Vizhinjam to Kasaragod
- Spring tides are especially strong high tides that occur during the full moon and new moon when the sun and moon are aligned with the earth, resulting in a collective gravitational pull on the earth's water.
- When spring tide coincides with high swell waves, it results in coastal erosion and flooding.
- It is estimated that the tidal surge since August 29 is two metres high.
- A perigean spring tide, also known as King tide, occurs during a Supermoon when the moon is closest to the earth (less than 3,60,000 km) during its orbit. Supermoons during the year 2015 are January 20 (new moon), February 18 (new moon), March 20 (new moon), August 29 (full moon), September 28 (full moon) and October 27 (full moon).
- The perigean spring tide on August 29 had coincided with high swell waves that originated in the southern Indian Ocean near Australia.
- Triggered by turbulent weather conditions, such swells are known to propagate northward to the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, causing freak flooding along the southern Indian coast.

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Use smart card to travel anywhere in India

- To make inter-State travelling easy, the Urban Development Ministry came out with a smart card that will help passengers swipe and buy tickets anywhere in the country.
- Known as Smart National Common Mobility Card, it can be used for buying tickets in different metros and public transportation across the country
- This card can also be used as a credit/debit card
- This card meets travel requirements “based on stored value of money.”

Railways on a zero-accident mission

- It is a mission which envisages renewal of tracks, more railway bridges, better signalling and rolling out of accident-proof coaches and engines.
- Once this mission is implemented fully, the accident rate is

WAKING UP TO SAFETY

The Railways will launch a zero-accident mission, according to Minister Suresh Prabhu

1 | NEW EXPERIENCE



Once we implement the mission fully, accident rate will go down and speed and facilities will improve, quality of service will go up and revenue will increase. Customer experience will itself go up significantly

2 | BETTER INVESTMENT



Train accidents, delay of trains and deterioration of service are all happening because of the under-investment in past. The 'zero-accident mission' is an expensive proposition, but that is the only way to have safe travel

3 | MONEY MANAGEMENT



I am also putting in place a reformed accounting system... Beyond going from budgeting to outcomes'

KEY PLANS

- Renewal of tracks
- More railway bridges
- Better signalling
- Safe coaches, engines

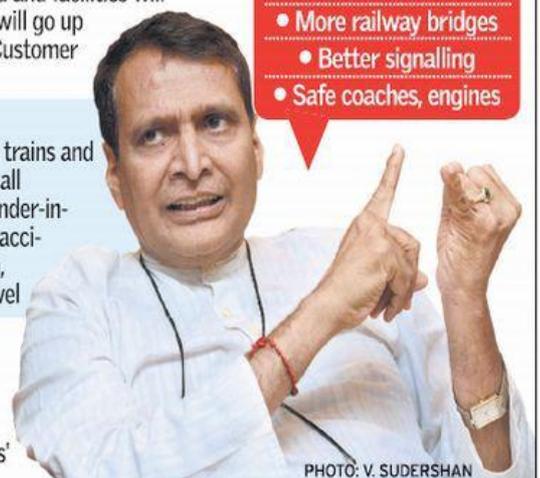


PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

expected to go down and speeds will improve, facilities will improve, quality of service will go up and revenue will increase.

- Hence, customer experience will go up significantly.
- The plan has come at a time when accidents on the tracks are on the rise. Train accidents, delay of trains and deterioration of service, all are happening because of the under-investment in the past. The 'zero-accident mission' aims to improve the overall service.
- To achieve this objective, the Railways Ministry has planned an investment of Rs. 8.5 lakh crore in the next five years. Since, all investments could not come from fares or freight, additional funds will be raised through prudential borrowing from institutions such as the LIC, the World Bank and other multilateral agencies, which would be repaid in the next 30-40 years through an increase in revenues.

Supreme Court lifts stay on Santhara ritual of Jains

- The Supreme Court has restored the Jain religious practice of a ritualistic fast unto death by staying an order of the Rajasthan High Court, which compared it to an act of suicide.
- The order came based on petitions filed by Jain community members. They had complained that the High Court, based on incorrect observations on Jainism, criminalised the philosophy and essential practice of Sallekhana/Santhara, a fundamental component of the Jain principle of ahimsa (non-violence).
- The petitions also said the High Court order infringed on secularism. It criminalised Santhara without even consulting scholars or findings.
- Santhara means a fast unto death. A person after taking a vow of 'Santhara' stops eating and even drinking water and awaits death.
- In Jainism, the concept of choosing the manner and time of one's death is a centuries-old ritual.
- According to the ritual, which Jains believe has been prevalent for thousands of years, a person voluntarily gives up food and water, either because of an incurable illness or due to the belief that the end is near. It is reserved only for the old and the invalid and is practised rarely.

Sabarimala to be national pilgrim centre

- The Union government recently said that it will take necessary steps to declare Sabarimala a national pilgrim centre.
- The Union Ministry of Tourism would initiate steps to include Sabarimala in the national pilgrim tourism circuit by bringing it under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spirituality Augmentation Drive (PRASAD) scheme.

At 7 per cent, India remains fastest growing major economy

- India remained the fastest growing major economy of the world for a second straight quarter, with GDP growing at 7 per cent during April-June 2015 against 6.7 per cent in April-June 2014.
- Data released the Central Statistics Office (CSO)
- showed marginal improvement in private consumption expenditure but gross capital formation rate — a barometer for investments — continued to decline. It was down to 27.8 per cent from 29.2 per cent in April-June 2014.
- A source at the CSO explained that growth would have been better had it not been for the poor rabi crop.
- Growth during the quarter was driven primarily by the services sector. The manufacturing and construction industries recorded favourable growth too. The agriculture sector saw a decline, growing at a mere 0.6 per cent. Growth also slowed in the sectors 'mining and quarrying' and 'electricity, gas, water supply and utility services'.
- In terms of the gross value added, (GVA) growth was 7.1 per cent against 7.4 per cent in April-July 2014. The revised methodology for GDP (Gross Domestic Product) calculation subtracts subsidy and adds taxes to the GVA to arrive at the GDP.
- India had overtaken China as the world's fastest growing major economy in the January-March quarter, growing 7.5 per cent against the neighbouring economy's rate of growth of 7 per cent.
- The International Monetary Fund forecast in July that India will grow 7.5 per cent in the current year, compared with China's 6.8 per cent, an average 4.2 per cent for emerging markets and 3.3 per cent for advanced nations.

RBI declares SBI, ICICI Bank systemically important banks

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) declared State Bank of India and ICICI Bank as Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs).
- The RBI had issued the framework for dealing with Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) on July 22, 2014.
- The D-SIB framework requires the RBI to disclose the names of banks designated as D-SIBs every year in August starting from August 2015
- The framework also requires that D-SIBs may be placed in four buckets depending upon their Systemic Importance Scores (SISs). Based on the bucket in which a D-SIB is placed, an additional common equity requirement has to be applied to it, as mentioned in the D-SIB framework
- The D-SIB framework specifies a two-step process of identification of D-SIBs. In the first step, the sample of banks to be assessed for systemic importance has to be decided. The

additional Common Equity Tier-1 (CET1) requirements applicable to D-SIBs will be applicable from April 1, 2016 in a phased manner and would become fully effective from April 1, 2019. The additional CET1 requirement will be in addition to the capital conservation buffer

No death except for terror crimes: Law Commission

- The Law Commission of India has recommended abolition of the death penalty for all crimes except terrorism-related offences and waging war against the state.
- Noting that the ultimate goal is absolute abolition which could be brought about through a moratorium or law, the commission has suggested that a debate on death for terror be left to Parliament.
- Law Commission Chairperson Justice A.P. Shah presented the commission's 262nd Report, titled 'The death penalty', to Law Minister Sadananda Gowda.

Government Accepts Shah Panel Report

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has announced that the government has accepted Justice AP Shah Panel's recommendations on not levying MAT on Foreign Institutional Investors. Now, the government will not impose levy on FIIs prior to 1st April, 2015. This decision has come as a big relief to Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs).
- Finance Minister has also assured that an amendment to the Income Tax Act to reflect the same will be made possibly in the winter session of Parliament in November/December.
- Justice AP Shah Panel had submitted its final report on the issue of applicability of MAT on capital gain made by FIIs prior to April 1, 2015 to government few weeks ago.
- Foreign investors have invested about USD 20 billion in Indian stocks in the past year and USD 28 billion in bonds.

Implications:

- This move will help promote India as a favourable investment destination.
- This will also be viewed very positively by the foreign investor community, which can help boost sentiment and FII investment in the stock market.
- The decision will also help further the government's position that it discourages tax terrorism and welcomes foreign investment in India.

Women to get permanent commission in the Navy

- The Delhi High Court has allowed women to be granted permanent commission in the Navy, ensuring that women naval officers enjoyed rights similar to their counterparts in the Army and the Air Force.
- Women can now have full-term service in the Navy and enjoy retirement benefits, including pension.
- A permanent commission means a career in the Army/Navy till one retires. A permanent commission also entitles 20 years of service and a pension.
- The decision came based on a bunch of writ petitions moved by a group of women naval officers. Some 19 women naval officers petitioned the court asking for similar rights as their counterparts in the other forces. In their petition, they alleged gender discrimination.

Greenpeace India's registration cancelled

- The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has cancelled the registration of Greenpeace India. Five months back the ministry had suspended its licence to receive foreign donations.
- The decision came in the wake of "prejudicially affecting the public interest and economic interest of the state," which violates the conditions of grant of registration. The government has also alleged that Greenpeace India has violated the law by funding political activities.
- The measure under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), means that the NGO, part of an international network by the same name, would not be able to receive any kind of foreign donations from now on

Govt announces OROP for ex-servicemen, pension to be revised every five years

- The government has decided to implement the One Rank One Pension (OROP) scheme for veterans
- The pension would be refixed every five years and the scheme will be with effect from July 1, 2014.
- But the ex-servicemen said they were not "fully satisfied" with the government's decision. Maj Gen (retd) Satbir Singh, spearheading the campaign for OROP said they will take a decision later on whether to continue with the agitation for the implementation of the scheme.
- Parrikar said that the arrears for the much-awaited scheme will be paid in four half-yearly instalments. Widows and war widows will get it first in one instalment.

- OROP will be fixed on the basis of calendar year 2013. Pension will be refixed for all pensioners on the same rank and with the same length of service as the average of minimum and maximum pension in 2013
- The minister said that personnel who opt for premature retirement will not be covered under the OROP scheme. "In future, the pension will be refixed every five years."
- Over 25 lakh veterans would benefit from the implementation of the OROP scheme. The veterans have been protesting at Jantar Mantar for nearly three months to demand the implementation of the OROP scheme. They had said they would step up their protest if their demand was not met.
- The announcement comes ahead of the upcoming Bihar assembly election. There had been intense speculation that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may announce the OROP scheme during his August 15 Independence Day address to the nation. But, he only said that the scheme had been accepted in principle.
- Parrikar made the announcement in the presence of the army chief, General Dalbir Singh, the naval chief, Admiral R.K. Dhowan, the air force chief, Air Chief Marshal Aroop Raha and Defence Secretary G. Mohan Kumar.

Muslim board to launch 'save religion and constitution' movement

- All India Muslim Personal Law Board, the apex body of Indian Muslims, announced that it will launch a nation-wide campaign against attempts by the government to impose a particular religious culture.
- The board has also involved other minority groups and organisations from depressed classes in its campaign 'deen aur dastur bachao' (save religion and constitution).

Govt to develop Bodh Gaya as spiritual capital

- Describing Bodh Gaya as the "land of enlightenment", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said his government would develop the site as the spiritual capital for it to serve as a civilisational bond between India and the Buddhist world.
- The government of India would like to provide all possible support that its Buddhist cousin nations need for the satisfaction of their spiritual needs from this holiest of holy places for them," he said
- Describing Buddha as a "crown jewel" of India, which accepts all ways of worship, he said he revered Buddha as a reformer of not only Hinduism but also the world, who gave a new world view and vision which is critical for survival of all.
- This is Modi's first visit as prime minister to Bodh Gaya, a holy place for Buddhists

Floating test range for missile defence system

- India is building a unique floating testing range — a huge ship — to overcome the limitations imposed by the land mass for carrying out missile tests of varying ranges for the two-tier ballistic missile defence (BMD) system to protect important cities.
- The system seeks to engage and destroy incoming enemy missiles at different altitudes in the endo- and exo-atmospheres.
- The first phase of the programme envisages development of interceptors to annihilate incoming missiles with a range of 2,000 km, while the second phase aims to build such weapons to destroy missiles with a longer range.
- The system will waylay a ballistic missile and destroy it in mid-air.
- India has so far conducted 10 interceptor missile tests, eight of them successful. Most of the trials were conducted in the endo-atmosphere, and a few in the exo-atmosphere. The first phase of the system is expected to be deployed after some more interceptor trials in deployable configuration.
- Currently the missile testing range on Wheeler Island posed certain limitations as people needed to be evacuated from the villages every time a trial took place. More important, the range of the missile had to be confined to less than 300 km. Also, different trajectories could not be tested.
- To overcome these problems, scientists at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) designed the floating testing range — a huge ship with a designated displacement equivalent to 10,000 tonnes.
- The state-of-the-art range would have many facilities such as a launch-pad, a launch control centre and a mission control centre.
- The construction of the range, which has just started, might take at least three to four years for the ship to be ready to conduct the first trial
- It will pave the way for conducting trials for different trajectories, varying altitudes and also for higher ranges. We can go up to 1,000-1,500 km without any problem. Currently, we have to conduct simulation tests for longer ranges. Once, this FTR is ready we will be able to carry out live tests

ISRO to help put railway safety back on track

- The Indian Railways will join hands with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to get online satellite imagery for improving safety and enhancing efficiency.
- a massive exercise of GIS [Geographical Information System] mapping of the entire rail route and assets including buildings, land, workshops and other facilities in the network using geospatial technology
- The technology involves GPS (Global Positioning System), GIS, and remote sensing.

- geospatial services would be available from satellite-assisted navigational support through the GPS-aided geo-augmented navigation (GAGAN) system of ISRO.
- The MoU will facilitate getting images and communications through the satellite system. While the images will help map the area, communications will enable the introduction of Wi-Fi service in trains in a larger way. The technology will come in handy during accidents to ascertain the exact location of trains and the topography.
- The satellite images will be used for geo-fencing of stations for the paperless ticketing system. Geo-fencing is a virtual barrier which uses GPS or radio frequency identification to define geographical boundaries.

Spices Board to open signature outlets in foreign markets

- The spices Board is gearing up to open premium retail outlets in key countries to sell the choicest spices and value-added products under brand names 'Spices India' and 'Flavourit' as a part of broadening its brand-building exercise beyond the nation's boundaries.
- The products will be sold through signature stalls set up in overseas market in partnership with private investors
- It is expecting that those stalls would help the board to gain access to more international markets and further promote the popularity of Indian spices abroad.
- The stalls are part of the board's efforts to bring about systematic diversification and sustainability of the industry
- Designed in Indian ethnic style, the signature stalls sell wide range of products consisting of more than 30 spices and culinary herbs. Apart from whole spices, the store also has a line of lifestyle and personal care products such as beauty creams, clearness oils, bathing bars, shower gels and shampoos all flavoured with spices. Spice-flavoured chocolates are added attractions.

Trees, grass turfs to make NH stretches green

- The National Highway (NH) stretches will be made green corridors by planting trees, landscaping, and laying grass turfs and ornamental shrubs.
- The initiative of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) to make the NH stretches eco-friendly is part of the green highways policy to "tree-line" 96,000 km of NHs across the country.

Green Highways Fund

- In a communication to all States, the Ministry said a Green Highways Fund would be set apart utilising 1 per cent of the civil work cost while arriving at total road project cost.

- The funds to be transferred to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) would be used exclusively for plantation and maintenance on all NH stretches being developed on the Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) and Build Operate Transfer (BOT) mode.
- The NHAI will act as Fund Manager for maintaining the account and for release of the payments made by the Regional Officer or Project Director based on the recommendation of the monitoring agency-Indian Highways Management Company Ltd (IHMCL).
- At least one NH corridor in each State would be taken up for model plantation, which would be replicated in other stretches subsequently. The plantation and maintenance would be done through empanelled agencies of MoRTH through competitive bidding.
- The participation of community, farmers, non-governmental organisations, private sector, government agencies and the Forest Department will be ensured for effective plantation and better impact.

IAF's IJT set for spin test

- The Intermediate Jet Trainer (IJT), which is being developed as the second rung of the Indian Air Force's three-level training programme for rookie pilots, is set to undergo its most critical 'spin' test this month, according to a top executive of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL).
- The spin test, which is at least eight months behind schedule, is seen as an 'agnipariksha' when it comes to safety of the pilot and the aircraft during combat.
- The IAF requires 85 IJTs. Currently into limited series production, the two prototypes have flown around 1,000 hours since the first flight in March 2003.

Hindi makes foray into China through AIR

- For the first time, the External Services Division of All India Radio has started broadcasting Hindi lessons in China and Southeast Asia.
- Broadcast every Sunday, the 20-minutes programme, officials say, is aimed at countering the powerful China Radio International, which broadcasts in over 56 world languages, including Indian languages, right into India and other nations.
- The teaching of Hindi in AIR's Chinese language service started on August 15, in an attempt to project India's image and point of view to listeners abroad.
- The programme, Xue Xi Yindiyu Jie Mu (Learning Hindi programme or Aao Hindi Seekhein), has a Chinese family learning the language from a teacher of the School of Foreign Languages at Jawaharlal Nehru University.
- At present, major broadcasters such as the BBC and Deutsche Welle offer language lessons.

- The Urdu service of the division, celebrating its 50th year, has continued without interruption.
- The External Services Division, which currently broadcasts in 27 languages, is planning to add Dzongkha, which is spoken in Bhutan, says an official. The languages in which AIR reaches its foreign audience are English, French, Russian, Swahili, Arabic, Persian, Tibetan, Chinese, Thai, Burmese and Bahasa Indonesia. The services in Hindi, Bangla, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada and Gujarat are aimed at overseas Indians, and those in Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi, Saraiki, Sinhala and Nepali are meant for listeners in the Indian subcontinent and immediate neighbourhood.

Govt bans import of ammonium nitrate in loose form

- In a major relief for domestic manufacturers of ammonium nitrate (AN) and security agencies, the Ministry of Home Affairs is learnt to have asked Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) not to allow bulk import of this chemical in loose form on the ground that it poses threat to national security.
- As per the directive, ammonium nitrate has to be imported in bagged form only irrespective of quantity in each bag and the consignment has to be packed at the point of origin.
- import in loose form and its possible indiscriminate import had raised concerns on threat to Indian's national safety and security as ammonium nitrate is an extremely dangerous explosive substance.
- AN is so dangerous that the Home Ministry, in its latest order, has made it mandatory to make provision for two arm guards with GPS system to provide security for vehicles transporting AN inside India.
- India consumes about 7,00,000 tonnes of AN, a basic raw material for producing civil explosives used in mining and infrastructure industry. Since imported AN is 15 to 20 per cent cheaper, explosive manufacturers, who supply to mining and infrastructure companies, have been lobbying for bulk import that too in loose form to make it even more cheap.
- Manual handling in loose form has chances of material loss and there is potential risk to national security. Besides, ammonium nitrate, lying scattered on the wharf, also poses risk of explosion like the recent one at port of Tianjin in China.
- Globally, the entire trade of AN for explosive, be it export or import is done in big bags of 1 to 1.2 tonnes. Bagged AN is the pre-condition of all major ports. This has to be adhered to in India as well

POINTERS:

1. With this, the mid-August notification of the Ministry of Shipping that had allowed a port in South India to facilitate bulk import of ammonium nitrate in any form has become null and void.
2. Domestic manufacturers such as Rashtriya Chemicals, GSFC and Deepak Fertilizers had, though their association, raised objections as cheaper imports would have severely impacted their business.
3. India consumes about 7,00,000 tonnes of ammonium nitrate, a basic raw material for producing civil explosives used in mining and infrastructure industry.
4. Though the local industry has no major issues with imports in bagged form, it wants a level playing field .

Philips unveils web-enabled lighting in India

- Targeting the upper middle class and middle class in India, lighting solution provider Philips Lighting has launched its latest solution in India.
- The solution termed Philips Hue is an intelligent web-based LED lighting solution with Internet of Things concept, which allows users to control home lighting anytime, anywhere.
- Philips Hue allows users to create and control home lighting using their smartphone or tablet and works seamlessly across both iOS and android mobile platforms.

Cabinet approves much awaited spectrum trading guidelines

- The Union Cabinet approved much awaited spectrum trading guidelines that will allow telecom companies to buy and sell spectrum.
- This is expected to help address the problem of shortage of spectrum, leading to better quality of services for mobile phone users.
- This is expected to help address the problem of shortage of spectrum, leading to better quality of services for mobile phone users.
- The decision comes close on heels of the government allowing companies to share airwaves in the same band so as to reduce call drops.
- Presently, spectrum can be acquired by companies only through government auctions. Industry has been demanding clarity on these guidelines for a long time.
- Spectrum trading would provide exit opportunity to operators who have not been able to build scale in india and have been facing unprofitable operations by selling off their spectrum

- it would provide bigger players who have congested networks to buy new spectrum and improve the quality of service for customers. They do not have to wait for the spectrum auction to get additional spectrum
- These guidelines will also aid in consolidating the industry.
- The companies entering into trade agreements are not need to seek approval but have to only inform the government. However, the firms are required to give an undertaking that all rules and regulations are complied with.

Offshore wind energy

- The union Cabinet gave its nod to the policy for offshore wind energy.
- The approval paves the way for offshore wind energy development, including setting up of offshore wind power projects and research and development activities.
- Under the policy, there will be energy mapping of the country and locations with high potential will be identified
- There is a potential of generating 1,06,000 MW power through offshore wind source on Gujarat's coastline alone and 60,000 MW on Tamil Nadu's coastline

Government clears two gold schemes

- The Union Cabinet approved two schemes — the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme and the Gold Monetisation Scheme — that could bring an estimated 20,000 tonnes of idle gold lying with Indian consumers into the economy and also reduce India's dependence on gold imports.
- Through the Gold Monetisation Scheme, gold in any form can be deposited with banks for a period of one to 15 years. This gold will earn interest and redemption will be at the prevailing market value at the end of the tenure of deposit.
- The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme is aimed at customers looking to buy gold as an investment. Under the Scheme, "there will be no need to buy actual gold as customers can buy gold bonds which will be relatable to the weight of gold,"
- The bonds will be issued in denominations of 5 grams, 10 grams, 50 grams and 100 grams for a term of five years to seven years with a rate of interest to be calculated on the value of the metal at the time of investment
- While the gold deposited with banks under the monetisation scheme will be allowed to be sold to jewellers in order to boost domestic supply

China flaunts military might

- China has sent a resounding message to the rest of the world about the scale, depth and sophistication of its military deterrent, coupled with an olive branch that its growing technologically intensive armed forces would be scaled down by 300,000 troops.
- At the perfectly choreographed military parade at Tiananmen Square marking the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, China, for the first time rolled out an array of sophisticated missiles — the core of its nuclear and conventional deterrent — that could credibly engage the United States on land and sea.
- China has sent a resounding message to the rest of the world about the scale, depth and sophistication of its military deterrent, coupled with an olive branch that its growing technologically intensive armed forces would be scaled down by 300,000 troops.
- Nearly 200 planes also took part in parade including the J-11 multirole fighter jets — an adaptation of Russia's highly capable Su-27 fighters — the J-15 newly developed aircraft-carrier borne planes and the KJ-500 early warning command post in the sky. Most of the weaponry demonstrating China's full-spectrum fighting skills, was indigenous, including the Beidou satellite navigation system, which is set to compete with US-owned Global Positioning System (GPS), following a recent alliance between Chinese entrepreneur Jack Ma's Alibaba group and Norinco, a state-run military enterprise.
- Four missiles, capable of the shifting the strategic balance of power in the Pacific, were the star attractions of the parade, which took place in the context of the US Pivot to Asia, a doctrinal shift by Washington towards the Asia-Pacific. Out of them, the DF-21D came under the scanner, for these are seen as the most potent weapons to neutralise the military dominance so far exercised in the Pacific by the US aircraft carrier fleet.
- The unique weapon first acquires a ballistic trajectory and then re-enters the atmosphere, defeating most defences, by attacking ships at 10 times the speed-of- sound.
- The Chinese also unveiled the DF-5B Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) — apparently a vast improvement over the earlier DF-5, as it can attack, almost unchecked, up to range of 12000 km because of its highly sophisticated Multiple Independently-Targeted Reentry Vehicle (MIRV) warhead.
- The mobile solid fuelled DF-31D missiles, capable of escaping destruction on account of their mobility were rolled out at Tiananmen Square.
- The DF-26 intermediate-range ballistic missile capable of targeting Guam — the U.S. military base in the West Pacific-was the fourth eye-catching weapon, among missiles, that was observed during the parade
- Eurasia led by Russian President Vladimir Putin, along with Presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, was strongly represented at the parade.

President Putin, his South African counterpart Jacob Zuma along with host China, seemed to well represent Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) core as well.

- General V.K. Singh, the Minister of State for External Affairs represented India, which had played a sterling role in defeating Japanese militarism, by contributing forces and keeping supply lines open to the Chinese resistance through the Assam-Burma Stilwell road during World War II.

Australian panel gives conditional nod for N-deal with India

An Australian Parliamentary Committee has given a cautious go ahead to its government to export uranium to India by listing a set of conditions. The merits of selling uranium to India were being examined by experts as part of the Treaties Committee's inquiry into the Government's proposal.

Recommendations made by the Australian parliamentary committee include:

- Set up an independent nuclear regulator in Australia.
- Separate India's civil and military nuclear facilities and allow safety inspections for transfer of uranium.
- India should be encouraged to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). India is not a signatory of the NPT nor CTBT.
- The bilateral treaty only be ratified if India manages to achieve the full separation of civil and military nuclear facilities.
- India should establish a new, fully independent, nuclear regulatory body.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency verify that inspections of India's nuclear facilities live up to international standards.