

NEWS ANALYSIS

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Lead Article

India's neutrino opportunity

What is INO?

- The India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) Project is a multi-institutional effort aimed at building a world-class underground laboratory with a rock cover of approx.1200 m for non-accelerator based high energy and nuclear physics research in India.
- It proposes to build an underground laboratory at Pottipuram in Bodi West hills of Theni District of Tamil Nadu.
- The initial goal of INO is to study neutrinos. Neutrinos are fundamental particles belonging to the lepton family.
- If the project is cleared, INO would house the **largest magnet in the world**, four times more massive than the European Organization for Nuclear Research, CERN's Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) detector's magnet.

How the idea developed?

- In 1960s and 1970s, a group of scientists from TIFR detected some unusual experimental observations, the so-called Kolar events in the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) in Karnataka. But they still remain as science fiction, yet to be explained and unravelled.
- In 1980s, a possibility of neutrino observatory located in India was sowed and in 2002 initiation was made to make it a reality. Since then, fast-paced developments have taken place in neutrino physics.

Importance of studying neutrinos

- Neutrinos are almost massless that travel at near light speed.
- Their birth is as a result of violent astrophysical events such as exploding stars and gamma ray bursts. Because of it, they are abundant in the universe, and can move as easily through matter as we move through air.
- They are very difficult to track down. If one holds their hand towards the sunlight for one second, about a billion neutrinos from the sun will pass through it. This is because they are the by-products of nuclear fusion in the sun.

- Neutrinos hold the blueprint of nature. The INO aims to understand some of the unsolved mysteries of the universe by understanding the neutrinos.

The issue

- In March 2017, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) suspended the environmental clearance (EC) granted to the INO and has ordered to file a fresh application for clearance.
- This was because new facts were found that the proposed INO lab was situated about 4.9 km from Madhikettan Shola National Park in Idukki district of Kerala. Also, as it is within 5km of the interstate boundary, it becomes a category A project.
- This will require clearance under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 from the National Board for Wild Life along with Environmental Clearances.
- Even at the earliest, India shall be able to complete the construction of its underground laboratory by 2022. This is way behind china which is expected to open its neutrino observatory in 2019.
- The procedural lapses and assumptions about the project's agenda have made a project of this scale hard to make positive developments in field of scientific research in India.

Challenges posed by INO?

- According to its critics, the explosives used in construction are a threat to the highly sensitive ecology of the Western Ghats.
- It is also alleged that relevant radiation safety studies for carrying out the long baseline neutrino experiment in the second phase of INO have not been done.

How are they being addressed?

- The proposed excavation is planned to be carried out by a controlled blast, limiting the impact of vibrations with the help of computer simulations.
- The INO involves building an underground lab by accessing it through 2 km-long horizontal access tunnel, resembling a road tunnel which are found extensively across India.

- In the second phase, the INO project initially had planned to be set up as a far detector for the Neutrino Factory. But this may not be necessary as because of the discoveries already being made in the field.

Conclusion:

The 1500 crore investment is not a waste of money as some call it so. In past 50 years, more than half the Nobel Prizes in physics have been awarded to basic research in particle physics, including the 2015 Prize for the discovery of neutrino oscillations.

Many allegations about neutrinos being radioactive particles and INO doubling up the storage of nuclear waste are undermining India's efforts in the world to make pioneering research in science. The public apprehensions in such projects are totally understandable. Hence this requires more communication between the scientific community and the public.

A project of such magnitude and such goal requires to generate public support, especially from the younger ones.

National News

UN Report: India is Top Remittance Receiving Country

According to the 'One Family at a Time' study conducted by the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Indians working across the world had sent home USD 62.7 billion in 2016 making India the top remittance-receiving country surpassing China.

Salient Highlights

Around 200 million migrants across the world have sent more than USD 445 billion in 2016 as remittances to their families.

Top Remittance Receiving Countries: India (USD 62.7 billion), China (USD 61 billion), the Philippines (USD 30 billion) and Pakistan (USD 20 billion). Around 80% of the remittances across the world are received by 23 countries such as India, China, the Philippines, Mexico and Pakistan.

Top Remittance Sending Countries: US, Saudi

Arabia and Russia. These countries account for almost half of annual flow of remittances. The study is the first ever study conducted that analysed a 10-year trend in migration and remittance flows over the period 2007-2016. In the period between 2007 and 2016, India has surpassed China to become the world's largest receiver of remittances. In 2007, India was at the second spot behind China. Asia remains the main remittance-receiving region with 55% of the global flows. The amount of money sent to the families in developing countries have increased by 51% over the past decade. This increase in remittances is expected to lift millions out of poverty and in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The report expects that in the year 2017, one out of every seven people will be involved in either sending or receiving more than USD 450 billion in remittances. The amount of money sent back home by the migrants' averages less than 1% of their host's GDP. In total, these individual remittances account for more than the total foreign direct investment to almost every low-and-middle-income country. The report has also made recommendations for improving public policies to reduce costs and create opportunities for migrants and their families to use their money more productively.

IFAD

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was set up in 1977 as the 13th specialised agency of the United Nations. India is a founder member of IFAD and a key contributor among the member countries. IFAD works towards removing poverty and hunger in rural areas all over the world, especially in developing countries. Its goal is to empower poor rural men and women in developing countries to achieve higher incomes and improved food security. IFAD is managed by the two main governing bodies i.e. the Governing Council and the Executive Board. The Governing Council is the highest decision-making body of IFAD.

Union Cabinet approves Proposal to introduce the Financial Resolution

and Deposit Insurance Bill 2017

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal to introduce a Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017 which will provide a comprehensive resolution framework for financial sector entities to deal with bankruptcy situation in banks, insurance companies, and other entities.

Salient Highlights

- The bill will pave way for the establishment of Resolution Corporation. The Resolution Corporation would be mandated to protect the stability and resilience of the financial system; protecting public funds; protecting the consumers of covered obligations up to a reasonable limit. Once enacted, the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance, Bill 2017 will result in repealing of the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961 and repeal/amendment of other resolution related provisions in sectoral acts. With the repeal of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961, the deposit insurance powers and responsibilities will be transferred to the proposed Resolution Corporation. The new bill will complement the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 by providing a comprehensive resolution framework for the financial sector. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 was enacted recently to deal with the insolvency of non- financial entities. The bill envisages to inculcate discipline among financial service providers in the event of financial crisis. It is expected to maintain financial stability in the economy by limiting the use of public money to bail out distressed entities. It will put in place adequate preventive measures and at the same time proposes to provide the necessary instruments for dealing with an event of financial crisis. The bill is proposed to be enacted to strengthen and streamline the current framework of deposit insurance and to decrease the time and costs involved in resolving distressed financial entities.

India ratifies Two Fundamental Global Conventions to combat Child

Labour

India has ratified two key global conventions for combating child labour as a step towards creating full respect for fundamental rights at work.

Salient Highlights

India has deposited the instruments of ratification of the two fundamental ILO Conventions with the International Labour Office (ILO). The two key conventions are related to the elimination of child labour- the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). India has become the 170th member of ILO to ratify the Convention No. 138, which requires the member parties to set a minimum age under which no one should be employed in any occupation, except for light work and artistic performances. India has become the 181st member of ILO to ratify Convention No 182 which requires state parties to prohibit and eliminate worst forms of child labour, including slavery, forced labour and trafficking; the use of children in armed conflict; the use of a child for prostitution, pornography and in illicit activities such as drug trafficking; and hazardous work. The elimination of Child Labour from the country is also essential to achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The ratification of these conventions will help in achieving Goal 8 of the sustainable development goals which aims at complete eradication of child labour by 2025 and calls for prohibition and elimination of its worst forms.

Government Initiatives

The government has recently amended the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 which came into effect in September 2016. This amendment prohibits employment of children below 14 years in any occupation or process. It also prohibits the employment of adolescents (14 to 18 years) in hazardous occupations and processes. The government has also strengthened the National Child Labour Project. It is a rehabilitative scheme that provides bridge education and vocational training to adolescents.

A shift towards Electric Vehicles (EVs)

In news:

In May 2017 Nagpur became the first Indian city to have an electric cab fleet—with about 100 EVs from the Mahindra stable and around 100 e-rickshaws from Kinetic linked to the Ola transport aggregator platform. Also, the state-run power giant NTPC set up its first Electric vehicle(EV) charging stations in Delhi and Noida.

Policy shifts:

- Power minister Piyush Goyal has announced that government officials and agencies will soon be using only EVs.
- Public buses are also expected to go electric.
- Road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari has promised a national EV policy before the end of the year
- The government's think tank, Niti Aayog, has already put out a road map for India's mobility transformation that has three core elements: “shared”, “electric”, and “connected”.
- The goal, according to the power minister, is to have no diesel or petrol car sales in the country by 2030.

This marks a sharp shift from the current policy that incentivizes both hybrid vehicles – which combine fossil fuel and electric power – and electric cars.

NITI Aayog's mobility plan:

In its report Niti Aayog recommends-

- The government must subsidize the EV industry while penalizing conventional cars.
- Taxes and interest rates for loans on EVs should be lowered.
- The sale and registration of conventional cars should be lowered
- Using taxes from diesel and petrol car sales to create electric charging stations.
- It also suggests setting up “a manufacturer consortium for batteries, common components, and platforms to develop battery cell technologies and packs and to procure common components for Indian original equipment manufacturers.”

NEMMP & FAME India Scheme:

In 2015, as part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP), the government had launched the FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles) scheme with an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles, offering incentives on electric and hybrid vehicles. The FAME India scheme is aimed at accelerating sales of eco-friendly vehicles to up to 7 million vehicles by the year 2020. However, sales of EVs have been abysmally poor.

Mainstreaming electric vehicles will require :

- An overhaul of the country's energy and transport infrastructure. For example, EV charging stations will have to be set up on a war footing.
- Electricity generation will have to improve significantly even as its piggybacks on the push for solar energy.
- EV technology (especially the battery) will have to become much cheaper before it can perform well in a price-sensitive market like India.

If these challenges can be tackled effectively and India can leapfrog to EV technology, then of course, the benefits to be had are numerous.

Benefits of EVs:

- Environment-friendly EVs will reduce air pollution and thus contribute to the fight against climate change. As per NITI Aayog's report EVs will help in cutting down as much as 1 gigatonne (GT) of carbon emissions by 2030
- Lower India's dependence on imported oil
- Will cut India's energy demand (from the road sector for passenger mobility).
- Save the country \$60 billion in energy bills on petrol and diesel by 2030(As per Niti Aayog)
- EVs efficient—with regenerative braking capturing energy otherwise wasted and also due to the inherent efficiency of motors, especially at low speeds

The focus should not only be on EVs:

Apart from EVS there also other technology options which shouldn't be ignored. Like,

Hydrogen-powered fuel cells

It offer an equally eco-friendly option.

Both are zero emission, and the hydrogen-powered fuel cells can in fact be recharged faster. They also give more mileage than the lithium-ion batteries commonly used in EVs today.

CNG vehicles

They are cheap, almost as clean as EVs, and the related infrastructure is already in place.

The government should not be deciding the winner?

Issue:

Governments generally do not have a good track record when it comes to picking tech winners. For example,

After the 1970s energy crisis in the US, the Carter administration pumped millions of dollars into thermal solar technology which did not yield any viable commercial results even as the old photovoltaic cell technology continued to evolve. Later, corn-based ethanol was all the rage and the government again put good money into developing a market for it but eventually it too collapsed.

These examples indicate there are many risks associated with the government picking the winner—a job that is better left to the market and industry.

Conclusion:

The government should have a role. However, instead of trying to pick winners, the government should focus on building an enabling business environment that supports research and innovation. Thus, instead of pumping money into one project or firm, it should support clean energy research in general. That way, the government does its part in steering the policy ship towards clean energy while still being technology-agnostic.

Tele-Law through CSCs To Mainstream Legal Aid in Rural India

In its effort to make legal aid easily accessible to the marginalized communities and citizens living in rural areas, the Government of India has launched the ‘Tele-Law’.

What you need to know about the scheme?

Under the scheme, a portal called ‘Tele-Law’ will be launched, which will be available across the Common Service Centre (CSC) network. This will connect the citizens to legal service providers with the help of technology enabled platforms.

‘Tele-Law’ will enable people to seek legal advice from lawyers through video conferencing available at the Common Service Centres (CSC). Additionally, law school clinics, District Legal Service Authorities, voluntary service providers and Non-Government Organisations working on legal aid and empowerment can also be connected through the CSCs anywhere and anytime, in order to strengthen access to justice for the marginalized communities.

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) will provide a panel of lawyers from State capitals, who will be available through video conferencing to provide legal advice and counselling to the applicants, across the 1000 Common Service Centres (CSC).

A robust monitoring and evaluation system is also being designed which will help in assessing the quality of legal advice provided and the ensuing benefit to those accessing it.

PLVs:

Under this scheme, every Common Service Centre (CSC) will engage a Para Legal Volunteer (PLV), who will be the first point of contact for the rural citizens and will help them in understanding the legal issues, explain the advice given by lawyers and assist in further action required in cases as per the advice of the lawyer.

- Women PLVs will be encouraged and trained under the Scheme. One thousand women PLVs will work for mainstreaming legal aid services through the CSCs. The aim is to promote women entrepreneurship and empowerment and ensure women participation. The selected PLVs will also be provided with relevant training to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.
- A trained PLV will be available in a CSC for ten days in a month under the Scheme. These PLVs will help the applicant connect with a

lawyer through the video conferencing facility at the CSC and will keep a track of the progress of the applicants' cases and grievances and maintain a record.

- They will also submit the records maintained to the District Legal Service Authority every week. The National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) will provide a panel of lawyers who will be sitting in the State capitals and will be available through video conferencing to provide legal advice/ counselling to the applicant at the CSCs.

Key facts you should know:

- The Ministry of Law and Justice partnered with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), which anchors the Digital India programme, to provide legal aid services through its Common Service Centres (CSC) at the panchayat level, spread across the country.
- In the first phase, the 'Tele-Law' scheme will be tested as a pilot across 500 Common service Centres (CSC) in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to understand the challenges and make necessary corrections to the scheme before it is scaled up and rolled out across the country in a phased manner.

QS World University Rankings 2018

QS World University Rankings 2018 have been released. The QS World University Rankings are published annually by British company Quacquarelli Symonds (QS). The team at QS has analysed over 75 million citations from more than 12 million papers, 115,000 survey responses from employers and academics and considered more than 4,000 universities before evaluating 980 of them.

- The QS rankings give highest weightage of 40% to academic reputation, followed by faculty-student ratio and citations per faculty (20% each), and employer reputation (10%).

Performance of Indian institutions:

- Only 12 Indian institutions and universities have made it to the top 700 this year with IIT-Delhi topping at 172 rank while IISc, Bengaluru gets 190th rank. IIT- Bombay is at 179th

- Only four universities — University of Delhi (481-490); Jadavpur University (601-650), University of Hyderabad (601-650) and Anna University (651-700) figured in the top.

Global performance:

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has been ranked as the world's best university for the sixth consecutive year. The second and third place in the overall rankings has been occupied by Stanford University and Harvard University respectively.

Union Cabinet approves Interest Subvention on Short-Term Crop Loan to Farmers June 14, 2017

The Union cabinet has approved the Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS) for farmers for the year 2017-18. The Government has allocated Rs. 20,339 crore for this scheme.

Salient Highlights

The objective of the scheme is to make available agricultural credit for Short Term crop loans at an affordable rate.

The scheme is expected to boost agricultural productivity and production in the country. Under this scheme, farmers will be given a short term crop loan up to Rs. 3 lakh payable within one year at an interest rate of 4% per annum.

The scheme will be continued for 1 year and will be implemented by NABARD and RBI. The interest subvention will be provided to Public Sector Banks (PSBs), Private Sector Banks, Cooperative Banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and to NABARD for refinancing to RRBs and Cooperative Banks. Interest subvention of 5% per annum will be provided to those farmers who pay the short term crop loan in time.

Farmers will have to effectively pay only 4% as interest. For farmers who do not pay crop loan in time the interest subvention of only 2% will be applicable as against 5% available above.

This institutional credit is expected to demotivate farmers from taking loans from non-institutional sources of credit at high rates of interest.

Background

Interest Subvention Scheme (ISS) has been running since 2006-07. Under this scheme, crop loans are offered at 7% rate of interest for loans up to Rs.3 lakh. Further subvention of 3% will be provided to farmers who prompt repay the loans within a period of one year from the date of advance. The scheme also offers post-harvest loans for storage in accredited warehouses against Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWRs) for a period of 6 months to check distress sale.

India to be Co-Partner Country in ANUGA 2017

India has signed the Memorandum of Understanding for Participation in the ANUGA Exhibition with Ms Katharina C Hamma, Chief Operating Officer, Koelnmesse GmbH (Organizers of ANUGA).

ANUGA Background:

ANUGA – an acronym for Allgemeine Nahrungs Und Genußmittel Ausstellung (General Food and Non- essential Provisions Exhibition) is **the world's biggest and most important trade fair for Food and beverage trade**. It takes place biennially (every 2 years). ANUGA 2017 is the 34th edition.

- ANUGA offers an extensive supporting programme with Lectures, Special exhibition and attractive industry events
- ANUGA is the leading export platform with 7,189 exhibitors from 109 countries with over 85% of Exhibitors from abroad.
- 1,60,000 decision makers from the retail and out-of-home market from 192 countries visited during last ANUGA. 66% of the industry visitors are foreigners.

India ratifies two key ILO conventions on child labour

India has ratified two key ILO conventions on child labour concerning the elimination of child labour, the Minimum Age Convention (No 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No 182).

- India is the 170th ILO member state to ratify convention No 138 and 181st member to ratify convention No. 182.

Minimum Age Convention:

The Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, is a Convention adopted in 1973 by the International Labour Organization.

It requires ratifying states to pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work.

Countries are free to specify a minimum age for labour, with a minimum of 15 years. A declaration of 14 years is also possible when for a specified period of time. Laws may also permit light work for children aged 13–15 (not harming their health or school work). The minimum age of 18 years is specified for work which “is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons”. Definitions of the type of work and derogations are only possible after tripartite consultations (if such a system exists in the ratifying country).

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention:

The Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, known in short as the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, was adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1999.

By ratifying this Convention, a country commits itself to taking immediate action to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is responsible for assisting countries in this regard as well as monitoring compliance. One of the methods used by IPEC to assist countries in this regard are Time-bound Programmes.

The convention includes forms of child labour, which are predefined worst forms of child labour. They are also sometimes referred to as automatic worst forms of child labour.

Background:

India is a founder member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which came into

existence in 1919.

- At present, the ILO has 187 members.
- The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up of International standards in the form of Conventions, Recommendations and Protocol.

India had so far ratified 45 Conventions, out of which 42 are in force. Out of these 4 are Fundamental or Core Conventions.

External Affairs Minister inaugurates KIP for Young Overseas

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj has inaugurated Know India Programme (KIP) for NRI and PIO youth with a view to provide them with an exposure to the country of their origin so that they can understand India better and more closely. External Affairs Minister has also launched a portal for the Know India Programme (KIP). The government has also announced the openings of 149 new post office passport seva kendras in the country (POPSK). The Ministry has announced that it is taking measures to open more passport seva kendras so that a person need not travel more than 50 kilometers to get his/her passport. POPSKs is an initiative undertaken jointly by the MEA and the Department of Post. Know India Programme (KIP) Know India Programme is an initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs for the Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) between the age group of 18 to 30 years. The Know India Programme is a three-week orientation programme which is aimed at promoting awareness on different facets of life in India as well as the progress made by the country in fields such as economic and education. The KIP offers a platform for the young PIOs to visit India share their views, expectations and experiences and forge closer bonds with the India of present times. The scheme was launched in 2004 and has so far had 40 editions in which some 1,293 PIO youths have participated. In the year 2016, the scheme was revamped to extend the number of days from 21 to 25 days including a 10-day visit to one or two states. Also from 2016, six KIPs are being organised by the Ministry of External Affairs in a year.

International News:

Panama dumps Taiwan, supports One-China policy

In a jolt to Taiwan and boost to Beijing's diplomacy, Panama has severed ties with the country and recognised it as an "indispensable" part of China under the "One-China Policy". With Panama switching sides, Taiwan's decades-old attempt to act as a "sovereign country" would likely face fresh challenges.

Over the years Beijing has tried to choke Taiwan diplomatically in a bid to force the self-ruled island to accept itself as a part of China.

What is One-China Policy?

The policy states in diplomatic acknowledgement that there is only one Chinese government. Under the policy, any country that wants diplomatic relations with mainland China must break official ties with Taipei that it considers a 'breakaway province.'

How China has been trying to choke Taiwan in recent years?

Beijing doesn't trust present Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and her ruling party, which advocates independence for Taiwan. After Tsai came to power last year, China had cut official communication channels with her government in a bid to pressure her to accept that Taiwan is part of China.

A year ago, Taiwan had diplomatic ties with 23 countries. But in the last one year itself, as many as three countries have severed diplomatic ties with the country, which is claimed by China as its own — a part of the mainland.

In 2007, Costa Rica was the first of Taiwan's Central American partners to switch allegiance to China. It was southern African nation of Malawi in 2008. Gambia in West Africa followed suit in 2013. Last year, small African states Sao Tome and Principe switched ties from Taiwan to China.

Science and Technology

Scientists conjure up largest virtual universe:

Researchers from the University of Zurich have simulated the formation of our entire universe with a large supercomputer. A gigantic catalogue of about 25 billion virtual galaxies has been generated from 2 trillion digital particles. This catalogue is being used to calibrate the experiments on board the Euclid satellite, that will be launched in 2020 with the objective of investigating the nature of dark matter and dark energy.

China launches its First X-ray Space Telescope

China has launched its first X-ray space telescope to study black holes, pulsars and gamma-ray bursts. The telescope weighing 2.5 tonne was sent to the space using China's Long March-4B rocket. The satellite was launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center.

Black hole refers to the remains of a supergiant star that has collapsed into itself. It is so dense and has a gravitational field so intense, that light itself cannot escape from it. Pulsars are highly magnetized, rotating neutron stars that emit a beam of electromagnetic radiation. They are spherical, compact objects that are about the size of a large city but contain more mass than that of the sun. Scientists are using pulsars to study extreme states of matter, search for planets beyond Earth's solar system and measure cosmic distance. In recent years, China sees its multi-billion-dollar space programme as a symbol of its rise. In April, China had launched its first cargo spacecraft and successfully docked it with an orbiting space lab. This launch was

hailed as a key development toward China's goal of having its own crewed space station by 2022. Recently, China also opened a "Lunar Palace" laboratory on earth to simulate a moon-like environment. In the lunar palace laboratory, China is conducting experiments by housing students for up to 200 days to prepare for its long-term goal of sending humans to the moon. In 2016, China had also successfully launched experimental X-ray pulsar navigation satellite XPNAV-1, which was world's first pulsar navigation satellite or spacecraft.

Defence

Successful Flight Test of ATGM Nag:

- The Anti-Tank Guided Missile Nag was successfully flight tested in the desert ranges of Rajasthan.
- Nag is a third-generation, fire-and-forget, anti-tank guided missile developed by India's state-owned Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to support both mechanised infantry and airborne forces of the Indian Army.
- The missile incorporates an advanced passive homing guidance system and possesses high single-shot kill probability. It is designed to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets.
- Nag can be launched from land and air-based platforms. The land version is currently available for integration on the Nag missile carrier (NAMICA), which is derived from a BMP-2 tracked infantry combat vehicle.
- The Nag missile was indigenously developed under the Indian Ministry of Defence's integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP), which also involved the development of

four other missiles that are Agni, Akash, Trishul and Prithvi.

Environment & Ecology

Floating solar farm reflects China's clean energy aims:

China has launched the world's largest floating solar farm. The 40-megawatt power plant has 1,60,000 panels resting on a lake that emerged after the collapse of a coal mine in central Anhui province. It is part of Beijing's effort to wean itself off a fossil fuel dependency that has made it the world's top carbon emitter, with two-thirds of its electricity still fuelled by coal.

India, UNOSSC launch partnership fund to promote sustainable development

India and the UN Office for South-South Cooperation have launched a partnership fund that will support sustainable development projects across the developing world.

Key facts:

- Managed by [UNOSSC](#), the India-UN Development Partnership Fund will support Southern-owned and led, demand-driven, and transformational sustainable development projects across the developing world.
- Focusing on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), United Nations agencies will implement the Fund's projects in close collaboration with partnering governments.
- The India-UN Development Partnership Fund will implement country-level projects that are catalytic towards

achieving the 17 sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.

- The collaborative initiative is aimed at reducing poverty and hunger, improving health, education and equality, and expanding access to clean water, energy and livelihoods.

Know about UNOSSC:

The United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) was established to promote, coordinate and support South-South and triangular cooperation globally and within the United Nations system. UNOSSC, hosted by UNDP since 1974, was established by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to advocate for and coordinate South-South and triangular cooperation on a global and UN system-wide basis. UNOSSC receives policy directives and guidance from the General Assembly and through its subsidiary body, the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation. UNOSSC submits its strategic planning frameworks to the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS Executive Board for approval and funding. The Director reports to the UNDP Administrator and has also been appointed Envoy of the Secretary-General on South-South Cooperation.

Awards

Bhupen Hazarika Award conferred to Yeshe Dorjee Thongshi

The Bhupen Hazarika National Award, 2017 has been conferred upon the noted writer Yeshe Dorjee Thongshi. This is the fifth edition of the award which was first conferred in 2012. The award has been instituted by Sarhad, a Maharashtra-based organisation. The award honours an outstanding literary work at national and

international level. The award consists of 51,000 rupees, a memento and a certificate.

Yeshe Dorjee Thongshi

Yeshe Dorjee Thongshi belongs to the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. He graduated from Cotton College, Guwahati and did his MA from Guwahati University. In spite of having Sherdukpen as his mother tongue, Yeshe Dorjee Thongshi started writing his works in Assamese over which he has excellent command. So far, he has written about a dozen novels and numerous short stories and plays. His famous novel includes Mauna Onth Mukhar Hriday (Silent lips, murmuring hearts) which won the Sahitya Akademi award in 2005. Yeshe Dorjee Thongshi joined the Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service in 1977 and was elevated to the IAS in 1992. He is the founder and president of Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society.

Israeli Author David Grossman wins Man Booker International Prize

Israeli author David Grossman has won the Man Booker International Prize for his novel "A Horse Walks Into a Bar". David Grossman has become the first Israeli author to win the Man Booker International Prize. He will share the £50,000 (\$64,000) award money with his translator Jessica Cohen. David Grossman has also won other international awards. David Grossman's 1986 novel "See Under: Love" is hailed as a masterpiece of his work which revolved around Holocaust and the generation of Jews that followed. Other important works of David Grossman includes The Yellow Wind, To the End of the Land. His works have been translated into over 30 languages. He is also a recipient of France's Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1998. David Grossman is one among the seven

noted writers who appealed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to sanction the Syrian government over its actions in 2011.

Man Booker Prize

The Man Booker Prize is world's most prestigious English-language literary award. It was launched in 1969 and presented by the Man Group. The international edition of the Man Booker Prize was introduced in 2005. From 2016, the prize is awarded for a single work of fiction that has been translated into English and published in the United Kingdom. The award aims at promoting the finest literary work in fiction by rewarding the best novel of the year written in English and published in the United Kingdom. It carries a cash prize of 50,000 pounds. The authors are shortlisted by judges from a wide range of disciplines and all with a passion for quality fiction. Last year, the prize was won by South Korean author Han Kang for her novel The Vegetarian.

Economy

IOC, BPCL, HPCL Sign Agreement to set World's Largest Refinery

The Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies, Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum has have signed the joint venture agreement to jointly set up the world's largest refinery and petrochemical complex in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra.

Salient Highlights

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) will hold 50% stake and the Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd (HPCL) and Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) will each hold a stake of 25% each

in the new complex. The refinery is expected to be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 3 lakh crore. The new complex is expected to be completed by 2022. The new complex will have a 60 million tonnes refining capacity. The complex would come up at Babulwadi, Rajapur in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra located very close to the West coast. Being on the West coast will be helpful in easily sourcing the crude oil from the Middle-East, Africa and South America. The refinery complex will have three crude units of 20 million tonnes each. The refinery will produce petrol, diesel, LPG, ATF and feedstock for making petrochemical. The refinery complex will have an accompanying mega petrochemical plant which will include an aromatic complex, naphtha cracker and polymer complex.

Background

Although India is world's third largest energy consumer after US and China, the per capita energy consumption in the country is one-fourth of the world average. However, according to the International Energy Agency (EA) the domestic oil demand in the country will increase to 458 million tonnes by 2040. Against this, the domestic refining capacity remains 230-235 million tonnes, which exceeds the demand of 194.2 million tonnes in 2016-17 fiscal. The new refinery complex is being set up keeping in mind the future fuel demand and the export potential of the country. At present, IOC has 11 refineries with a total capacity of 81.2 million tonnes. BPCL has 4 refineries with a total capacity of 33.4 million tonnes. HPCL has 3 refineries with a total capacity of 24.8 million tonnes.

RBI identifies 12 Bank Accounts accounting 25% of NPAs to initiate Bankruptcy Proceedings

RBI's Internal Advisory Committee (IAC) has identified 12 bank accounts constituting nearly 25% of the gross bad loans for immediate referral and resolution under the bankruptcy law. Each of the 12 identified accounts was having more than 5,000 crore rupees of outstanding loans, of which at least 60% was classified as non-performing by banks as of March 31, 2016. The RBI, however, has not disclosed the names of the accounts.

Salient Highlights

RBI's internal advisory committee (IAC) mainly comprises of its independent board members. Based upon the recommendations of the IAC, the RBI will issue directions to the banks to initiate insolvency proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC). These cases will be accorded priority by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT). The NCLT is the arbitration authority for cases filed under IBC. For those loan accounts which do not meet the criterion recommended by the IAC, the concerned banks should finalise a resolution plan within six months. The details of the resolution framework for these other non-performing accounts will be released soon by the central bank.

Background

Indian banks have an estimated Rs 10 trillion as stressed assets. Of this, gross bad loans amounts close to Rs 7.7 trillion and the rest constitutes the restructured loans. In May, the Union Cabinet had cleared an ordinance that amended the Banking Regulation Act and gave more powers to

Reserve Bank of India to deal with non-performing assets (NPAs) in the banking sector. The Amendments has empowered the RBI to act against loan defaulters and defaulting companies under the bankruptcy code. These amendments would pave for faster resolution of the NPAs as the bankruptcy code provides for a time-bound winding up of companies and recovery of secured loans. The assets of the banks which don't perform are called Non-Performing Assets (NPA) or bad loans. If customers don't pay either interest or part of principal or both, the loan turns into a bad loan. According to RBI, loans on which interest or instalment of principal remains overdue for a period of more than 90 days from the end of a particular quarter will be classified as a Non-performing Asset.

Sports

ICC ODI Player Rankings: Virat Kohli becomes No.1 ODI Batsman

Indian Skipper Virat Kohli has reclaimed the top spot in the recently released ICC ODI batting rankings. He overtook South Africa's AB de Villiers and Australia's David Warner to reach the number one position. In January, Kohli managed to reach the top spot but was able to stay at the top only for just four days. Among other players, Shikhar Dhawan has managed to return to top 10. Yuvraj Singh has also improved his rankings and currently stands at 88th position. Rankings:

- First Place: Virat Kohli (India)
- Second Place: David Warner (Australia)
- Third Place: AB de Villiers (South Africa)
- Fourth Place: Joe Root (England)
- Fifth Place: Kane Williamson (New Zealand)

Bowlers

Josh Hazlewood of Australia is at the top spot in the bowlers' rankings. Bhuvaneshwar Kumar has improved his rankings by 13 places to rank 23rd. Ranks of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja have dropped to 20 and 29 respectively.

First Place: Josh Hazlewood (Australia)

Second Place: Imran Tahir (South Africa)

Third Place: Mitchell Starc (Australia)

Fourth Place: Kagiso Rabada (South Africa)

Fifth Place: Sunil Narine (West Indies)

Men's Tennis ATP Rankings: Rafael Nadal moves up to No.2

Rafael Nadal has increased his rankings by two spots to stand at No.2 in the ATP rankings which is his highest since October 2014. Previous year French Open champion Novak Djokovic has moved from second place to fourth place in the ATP rankings, which is his lowest ranking in seven years. Incidentally, Novak Djokovic got knocked out in quarterfinals of the French Open.

Men's Tennis ATP Current Rankings

First Rank: Andy Murray (Great Britain)

Second Rank: Rafael Nadal (Spain)

Third Rank: Stan Wawrinka (Switzerland)

Fourth Rank: Novak Djokovic (Serbia & Montenegro)

Fifth Rank: Roger Federer (Switzerland)

WTA Current Rankings French Open Champion Jelena Ostapenko has jumped from 47th place to a career-high 12th in the WTA rankings. French Open title was her first tour-level title of her career. Last year, Jelena was knocked out of the tournament in the first round itself. In the WTA rankings, Angelique Kerber retains her No. 1 position despite losing in the first round of French Open.

- First Rank: Angelique Kerber (Germany)
- Second Rank: Simona Halep (Romania)
- Third Rank: Karolina Pliskova (Czech Republic)
- Fourth Rank: Serena Williams (USA)
- Fifth Rank: Elina Svitolina (Ukraine)

ISSF World Cup: Jitu Rai-Heena Sidhu Clinch Gold Medal

Indian shooters Jitu Rai and Heena Sidhu have clinched the gold medal in mixed team 10m air pistol event of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup held at Gabala, Azerbaijan. However, Jitu Rai and Heena Sidhu narrowly missed out making to the finals of the individual men's and women's 10m air pistol event. While Jitu Rai finished 12th, Heena Sidhu finished 9th in their respective qualification rounds. Only top 8 are eligible to compete in the finals. Significantly, mixed team events have been approved as medal events for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. This win is the Indian pair's second World Cup gold together. A total of 430 athletes from 45 nations are participating in the Gabala World Cup to qualify for the the ISSF World Cup Finals (WCF). The event will be the last chance for Rifle and Pistol shooters to qualify as only eight best shooters of the world in each Olympic discipline along with reigning Olympic and World Championship medalists and wild-cards will be able to compete in the WCF. China leads the medal tally at Gabala.

IOC Approves New Events for Tokyo Olympics

The International Olympic Committee has approved a number of new events for the 2020 Tokyo Games at the IOC's Executive Board meeting held at Lausanne, Switzerland. The new events were added to reflect the IOC's focus on gender equality and appeal to young people.

- **Salient Highlights**

The Tokyo Olympics would include 321 events which is an increase from 306 events held at Rio 2016. The new additions include a mixed 4x400m relay along with 14 other events such as 3-on-3 basketball, the mixed relay, mixed swimming, mixed team archery, BMX freestyle etc. In addition, Mixed triathlon will also be included in the Tokyo games for the first time. Further, a mixed team event for judo will be included. Each team of judo will have 3 men and 3 women, all representing different weight classes. At the judo world championships, team events on mixed-gender basis have not taken place.

Mixed Doubles Table Tennis competition will also be included. The mixed event was recently featured in the world championships held in Germany. The 10 minute 3-on-3 basketball event which will be played on a half-sized court is known for its speed. The game was adopted by the International Basketball Federation as an official discipline with common rules in 2007. Totally, the number of mixed events at Tokyo Olympics will double to 18 up from 9 held in Rio Olympics. The IOC's focus in selecting the new events was for their appeal to young and urban audiences as well as for redressing long-standing imbalances between male and female athletes. IOC also reduced the number of athletes who will be competing in Tokyo olympics by 285 compared to Rio in order to prevent the games from being increasingly bloated and costly.

IOC

The IOC is the supreme authority of the Olympic Movement headquartered at Lausanne, Switzerland. It is a not-for-profit independent international organisation comprised of volunteers. It was founded on 23rd June, 1894. The IOC Session and Executive Board are responsible for making important decisions for the organisation.

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