

Is biodegradable' plastic made in India actually biodegradable? Eight months after the Centre banned single use plastic and paved the way for the use of biodegradable plastic, a lack of coordination among multiple ministries has led to the question remaining unanswered. A consequence of this is that many, who are now unable to manufacture single use plastic goods and invested in making biodegradable alternatives, are unable to produce them and stare at an uncertain future. "The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has established a provisional protocol of testing biodegradable plastic that says 90% biodegradation should be achieved to pass the test which may take up to two years," said Sunil Panwar, CEO, Symphony Environmental India, which offers additive technologies that when added to regular single use plastic makes them biodegradable.

The Supreme Court on Friday declined to entertain petitions challenging the caste census being undertaken in Bihar. Asking whether it was a "publicity interest litigation," a Bench led by Justice B.R. Gavai refused to intervene while giving liberty to the petitioner, Ek Soch Ek Prayas, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), to seek appropriate remedies in law before the High Court concerned. The lawyer had argued that caste survey came under the Central List of the Constitution and a State did not have the authority to conduct it.

Publishers of digital news platforms, being creators of original content, should get a fair share of revenue from big-tech platforms, which act as aggregators, Information and Broadcasting Secretary Apurva Chandra said on Friday. Through an e-mailed statement read at the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA) media conference, Mr. Chandra said that post COVID, there have been issues regarding the financial health of not just the digital news industry but also the parent print news industry.

India did not wait for other bilateral creditors but did "what is right" for Sri Lanka's economic recovery, visiting External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Friday, after talks with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo. "We felt strongly that Sri Lanka's creditors must take proactive steps to facilitate its recovery. India decided not to wait for others but to do what we believe is right. We extended financing assurances to the IMF to clear the way for Sri Lanka to move forward," he said, adding that the decision was a reassertion of India's policy of 'neighbourhood first'.

The Supreme Court on Friday held the state is not obliged to provide the public free access to chargesheets by uploading them on police or government websites. A Bench of Justices M.R. Shah and C.T. Ravikumar declared chargesheets "private documents". Journalist Saurav Das, represented by Prashant Bhushan, had referred to the court's 2016 decision in the

GOVERNMENT INTERNET SHUTDOWNS COST ALMOST \$24 BILLION GLOBALLY IN 2022

1. Findings are part of a recent report by UK-based privacy and security research firm Top10VPN.
2. **Key findings related to India**-India imposed 34 major shutdowns in 2022, significantly more than any other country in the world. Total cost of internet restrictions was \$184.3 million. Shutdowns were highly localised to specific districts, cities and even villages, and tended to be in response to civil unrest, often pre-emptively.
3. Rajasthan and Jammu & Kashmir endured most extensive major internet outages. Internet shutdown is defined as an intentional disruption of internet or electronic communications for a specific population or location, to exert control over flow of information. It can be caused by Internet blackouts, social media shutdowns or Throttling (reduced speed of internet).
4. **Legal provisions related to Internet shutdowns in India**-Until 2017, mostly governed under section 144 of Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Telegraph Act 1885. In 2017, Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency and Public Safety) Rules, were notified. Despite rules, government has also used broad powers under section 144. Section 69(A) of IT (Amendment) Act, 2008 gives power to block particular websites.
5. Only Home Secretary of the Union or a state can pass an internet shutdown order to be reviewed by a committee within 5 days. Under unavoidable circumstances order can be issued by an officer of rank of Joint Secretary or above, authorized by central or state home secretary.

NEW PLATEAU TYPE DISCOVERED FROM MAHARASHTRA

1. A rare low-altitude basalt plateau has been discovered in Thane region in Western Ghats (a global biodiversity hotspot and UNESCO World Heritage site in India). This is the fourth type of plateau to be identified in the region; previous three are laterites at high and low altitudes and basalt at high altitudes.
2. 76 species of plants and shrubs from 24 different families have been found. Plateaus are dominant landscapes in Western Ghats. They are classified as a type of rocky outcrop. Rocky outcrops are geological features that protrude above the surface of surrounding land. They are formed by weathering that happens at different rates, causing the less weathered rock to remain exposed. They are found on all continents, in most climate zones and vegetation types.
3. **Significance of rocky outcrops**-Support high levels of species diversity and endemism. They have seasonal water availability, limited soil and nutrients, making them ideal to study effects of climate change on species survival. They provide critical breeding sites for many top order mammalian and avian predators; nesting sites for colonial species such as seabirds, bats and swifts.
4. Basalt is an igneous rock that is formed from the quick cooling of lava rich in magnesium and iron. It has a very fine-grained structure. E.g, the Deccan plateau. These rocks are also sources of phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), and several micronutrients essential for plant nutrition.

GOVERNMENT MODIFIED WILDLIFE FUND RULES FOR KEY INFRA PROJECTS

1. Centre has exempted road, rail, and transmission line projects from having to deposit 2% and 0.5% of total project cost towards cost of Wildlife Management Plan (WMP) and Soil and Moisture Conservation Plan (SMCP) respectively. WMP and SMCP are prepared in accordance with conditions stipulated by Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
2. Earlier, MoEF&CC made it mandatory for all projects to deposit this cost for obtaining final forest clearance under Forest Conservation Act (FCA) 1980. Now cost for WMP and SMCP will be proportionate to extent of forest land involved instead of total project cost. FCA, 1980 regulates deforestation in the country. It was enacted after State Governments failure resulted in diversion of forest land without any regard to environmental consideration.
3. **Key provisions of the act**: It prohibits felling of forests for any non-forestry use without prior clearance by the central government. Clearance process includes seeking consent from local forest rights-holders and from wildlife authorities. In T N Godavarman case (1996), Supreme Court expanded coverage of FCA, 1980 to all areas that satisfied dictionary definition of a forest; Previously, FCA applied largely to reserve forests and national parks.

NATIONAL LEVEL STEERING COMMITTEE REVIEWS OVERALL PROGRESS OF ATAL BHUJAL YOJNA

1. Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal) is a Central Sector Scheme for facilitating sustainable ground water management. It will be implemented over a

Youth Bar Association of India case, which had directed copies of FIRs to be posted within 24 hours of their registration on police or government websites. Putting chargesheets in the public domain would enhance transparency in the criminal justice system, Mr. Bhushan had argued.

India and Egypt are likely to seal around half a dozen agreements during the visit of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi who is slated to arrive here on January 24 ahead of the Republic Day celebrations where he will be the chief guest. Apart from dialogues on defence, security and new energy initiatives, the two sides have been brought closer by Egypt's pragmatic diplomacy in arenas such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation where Cairo has increasingly maintained a cautious position while responding to Pakistan's aggressive campaign on Kashmir.

Raising the need to develop a new vaccine for tuberculosis, Soumya Swaminathan, former chief scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO), said India, considering its accelerated timeline for TB elimination, should be in the lead. She also called on scientists and researchers around the country as well as globally to come together to develop a better vaccine.

The Centre on Friday released the endorsement guidelines for celebrities and social media influencers, mandating compulsory disclosure of monetary or material benefits of a product or a brand they are promoting through social media platforms. Failing to do so will attract a penalty of up to ₹50 lakh. Releasing the guidelines, Union Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh said the disclosures must be prominently and clearly displayed in the endorsement and terms such as 'advertisement', 'sponsored' or 'paid promotion' should be used for all sort of endorsements.

Chinese commercial entities in India being used by the neighbouring country to collect personal data to gain "economic control" and "influence minds" is among the key topics to be discussed at the ongoing annual police conference in Delhi, according to a senior government official. According to the official, sustained investigation by the intelligence agencies since 2020 has revealed a "disturbing picture" of the role of such entities in India.

period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25). One of the main objectives of scheme is to bring about behavioural change at ground level. Scheme is being taken up in nearly 8350 water stressed Gram Panchayats of 7 states namely Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. It is funded by Government of India and World Bank on a 50:50 basis.

2. **Scheme has two components:** Institutional Strengthening & Capacity Building component by facilitating strong data base, scientific approach, and community participation in ground water sector. Incentive Component for incentivizing states for achievement of pre-defined results.
3. **Scheme uses a four-pronged strategy:** Decision support tools for ground water management, strengthen community based institutions to foster management, Improve water use efficiency and enhance ground water recharge and Fiscal decentralisation.
4. Scheme envisages active participation of the communities and panchayats in various activities such as formation of Water User Associations, preparation of Gram Panchayat-wise Water Security Plans etc.

INDIA AND NEW EURASIA

1. Recently several countries including Japan, South Korea, Australia etc. have taken initiatives suggesting a growing focus over better relationship between European and Asian countries. About Eurasian Region Geographically represented by Eurasian Plate, covering most of Europe and Asia, there is a lack of an agreed international understanding of what constitutes the region.
2. **New dynamics in the Eurasian region-**As Russia and China unveiled a Eurasian alliance this led to strengthening of Western alliance in Europe. It also provided the basis for a new kind of alliance between China's East Asian neighbours and Russia's West European neighbours (through initiatives like QUAD, AUKUS etc). This new dynamic presents certain challenges for India in terms of: Managing coalition with both the blocks (Russia-China and Western alliances) becoming difficult. Rising proximity between Russia and China.
3. **Significance of Eurasia for India-**Region is richly endowed with commodities such as crude oil, natural gas, cotton, gold, copper, aluminium, and iron. It is strategically positioned as an access point between Europe and Asia. Apart from checking Chinese influence, it will help India to overcome hostile alliances in the region (e.g., Turkey-Pakistan alliance).

ADJUDICATORY BOARD FOR MAJOR PORTS NOTIFIED

1. Major Port Authorities Act, 2021 envisages constitution of an Adjudicatory Board. Adjudicatory Board shall consist of a Presiding Officer and two members. Presiding Officer shall be a retired Judge of Supreme Court or a retired Chief Justice of a High Court.
2. Presiding Officer and Members of the Adjudicatory Board shall be appointed on recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of: Chief Justice of India or his nominee Secretary of Department of Personnel and Training Secretary of Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.

DRONE JAMMERS

1. Recently, Indian Army issued Proposal for vehicle-based drone jammers. Various ways of drone jamming: Radio Frequency jamming which disrupts link between drone and its operator by generating radio frequency interference.
2. Satellite link disruption through which drone would lose GPS assistance for deciding its flight path.
3. Spoofing through which a wrong navigation link is fed to drone by jammer to misdirect the drone. Dazzling through which camera of drone is blinded through a high intensity laser or light beam.



“Two things.
Others are not as bad as you think.
Second, you are not as good as
you expect others to think about you.”

DR. KHAN
(KSG)