

KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

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NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

From December, India will move to a system that will count tigers and elephants as part of a common survey. The tiger survey is usually held once in four years and elephants are counted once in five years. According to the most recent 2018-19 survey, there were 2,997 tigers in India. According to the last count in 2017, there were 29,964 elephants in India.

The maiden bilateral naval exercise between India and Saudi Arabia named 'AL- Mohed AL-Hindi' got under way on Thursday, the Navy said.

Senior officials of Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. met in a video conference for the first Quad meeting since March, when the leaders of the grouping had decided on a number of initiatives including cooperation on countering the COVID19 pandemic. An "in person" Quad Foreign Ministerial meeting, as well as the possibility of a Quad summit involving Prime Minister Narendra Modi, U.S. President Joe Biden, Australian PM Scott Morrison and Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga are being discussed for September this year.

A day after dramatic scenes were witnessed in the Rajya Sabha during the passage of the General Insurance (Amendment) Bill on the last day of the monsoon session, top Opposition leaders on Thursday charged that "outsiders" were brought in — in the guise of marshals — to "manhandle" MPs, including women members.

Afghan government negotiators in Qatar have offered the Taliban a power sharing deal in return for an end to fighting, a government negotiating source said.

A technical anomaly preventing the ignition of the GSLVF10 rocket's cryogenic upper stage spelt disappointment for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as the national space agency could not accomplish the mission to launch earth observation satellite EOS03 into the intended orbit.

Retail inflation cooled slightly to 5.6% in July, slipping below the central bank's upper tolerance

CONSUMER DISPUTE REDRESSAL PANELS

1.The Supreme Court has given the Centre and the States eight weeks to fill the vacancies in the consumer disputes redressal commissions. The Court has also asked the Centre to conduct a comprehensive "legislative impact study" on the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

2.Concerns expressed by the Court: **The laws have been made for the benefit of people. But, states are defeating the purpose for which the consumer protection laws have been made.** The court also questioned if governments, both at the Centre and in the States, had deliberately kept the vacancies pending to dissuade people from filing complaints.

3.Centre's arguments on why it is being delayed? There is litigation in the court regarding the tenure of tribunal members. The Centre is waiting for its outcome. Also, the to and fro of litigation and legislation had caused "confusion", delaying appointments.

4.Dispute redressal under Consumer Protection Act, 1986: The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 provides for a 3-tier structure of the National and State Commissions and District Forums for speedy resolution of consumer disputes. **They are quasi-judicial bodies.** Composition: Each District Forum is headed by a person who is or has been or is eligible to be appointed as a District Judge and each State Commission is headed by a person who is or has been a Judge of High Court.

5.Latest Amendment: **As per the latest Consumer Protection Act , 2019 dispute redressal Commissions will be set up at District, State and National level, with pecuniary jurisdiction up to Rs one crore, Rs one crore to Rs 10 crore, and above Rs 10 crore,** respectively. In case of unfair contracts, the State Commissions will hear complaints where the value is up to Rs 10 crore, and National Commissions will hear complaints above that value. These Commissions can declare unfair terms of such contracts to be null and void.

WHIP

1.Congress has appointed MPs Syed Naseer Hussain and Chhaya Verma as Rajya Sabha whips.What is a whip? A whip is an official of a political party who acts as the party's 'enforcer' inside the legislative assembly or house of parliament. Parties appoint a senior member from among their House contingents to issue whips — this member is called a Chief Whip, and he/she is assisted by additional Whips. India inherited the concept of the whip from the British parliamentary system.

2.Role of whips: **They try to ensure that their fellow political party legislators attend voting sessions and vote according to their party's official policy.** What happens if a whip is disobeyed? A legislator may face disqualification proceedings if she/he disobeys the whip of the party unless the number of lawmakers defying the whip is 2/3rds of the party's strength in the house. Disqualification is decided by the Speaker of the house.

3.Limitations of whip: There are some cases such as Presidential elections where whips cannot direct a Member of Parliament (MP) or Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) to vote in a particular fashion.

RIGHTS TO SPECIFY OBC GROUPS

1.The Constitution 127th Amendment Bill, 2021 was passed with unanimous support in Lok Sabha, recently. The Bill amends the Constitution to allow states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes.

2.Need for: On May 5, while **scrapping a separate quota for the Maratha community in Maharashtra, the Supreme Court had ruled that after a 2018 amendment in the Constitution (102nd constitutional amendment), only the central government could notify socially and educationally backward classes (SEBCs) - not the states.** The 102nd constitutional amendment (Inserted Articles 338B and 342 A after Article 342) was related to giving constitutional status to the National Commission of Backward Classes and interpretation of this constitutional amendment effectively struck a blow to the

threshold of 6% for the first time in three months, even as industrial output growth halved from 28.6% in May to 13.6% in June, as base effects from the lockdown of 2020 begin to fade.

Landslips in Himachal Pradesh cause concern Erosion, geological forces make the region prone to disasters, and the worry is that they may be part of a larger climate shift.

India will take all necessary steps to ensure safety of Hindu and Sikh minority community members in Afghanistan, said an official of the Ministry of External Affairs.

Afghan government forces are collapsing even faster than U.S. military leaders thought possible just a few months ago when President Joe Biden ordered a full withdrawal. But there's little appetite at the White House, the Pentagon or among the American public for trying to stop the rout and it probably is too late to do so.

A new government blueprint issued by China to promote "rule of law" has called for "more legal and institutional efforts" to tighten what it called "unjust" microeconomic activities, signalling the ongoing crackdown on a number of sectors is likely to continue.

Officers from the U.S. and Taiwanese Coast Guards have met to discuss improving cooperation and communication despite efforts by China to isolate the self-governing island democracy.

A prominent international human rights group on Thursday accused Hamas of committing war crimes during a recent 11day conflict with Israel by indiscriminately firing thousands of rockets toward Israeli population centers.

Blazes raged across northern Algeria as the country observed a national day of mourning for dozens of people killed in the latest wildfires to sweep the Mediterranean. The North African country has been in the grip of devastating fires since Monday that have claimed 69 lives — 41 civilians and 28 soldiers.

China dismissed Canada's protests of harsh sentences handed down by Chinese courts to Canadians whose cases are seen as linked to the arrest in Vancouver of a top executive at Chinese tech giant Huawei.

authority of state governments in identifying backward classes and provide them with reservation benefits.

3.Highlights of the 127th Amendment Bill: The Bill seeks to restore the power of State governments to identify Other Backward Classes that are socially and economically backward. Please note that In May 2021, the Supreme Court, in an order, had empowered only the Central government for such identification. The Bill amends this to provide that the **President may notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes only for purposes of the central government. This central list will be prepared and maintained by the central government. The Bill enables states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes. This list must be made by law, and may differ from the central list.**

FREE UP AREA IN THE SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES(SEZs)

1.The government has proposed to free up unused built-up area worth about ₹30,000 crore and idle land inside Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for other economic activity.

2.Need for: SEZs account for about 30% of India's exports. But, there is 10 crore square feet of space idle in built-up accommodation in over 250 SEZs. In money terms, at ₹3,000 per square foot, that is ₹30,000 crore of built-up area idle, which can be brought into play for anything else.

3.What are SEZs? Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are geographically delineated 'enclaves' in which regulations and practices related to business and trade differ from the rest of the country and therefore all the units therein enjoy special privileges. **The basic idea of SEZs emerges from the fact that, while it might be very difficult to dramatically improve infrastructure and business environment of the overall economy** 'overnight', SEZs can be built in a much shorter time, and they can work as efficient enclaves to solve these problems.

4.Concerns with present SEZ: SEZs in India have not been as successful as their counterparts in many other countries. Several Asian economies, particularly China, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore, have greatly benefited from these zones. **Most of India's new generation SEZs came up not for exporting, but for avoiding taxes.** Large fiscal sops, in the form of a bunch of reliefs from central and state taxes, lured developers into building SEZs.

5.Most manufacturing SEZs in India have performed below par due to their poor linkages with the rest of the economy.

Weak connections of coastal SEZs with their hinterlands inhibited these zones from utilising their full potential. Many states did not match the central SEZ Act with State-level legislation, which rendered the single window system ineffective. Lack of a robust policy design, efficient implementation and effective monitoring have seriously jeopardize India's effort to industrialise through SEZs.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ELDERLY INDEX

1.The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) released the Quality of Life for Elderly Index. The share of elders, as a percentage of the total population in the country, is expected to increase from around 7.5% in 2001 to almost 12.5% by 2026, and surpass 19.5% by 2050.

2.EAC-PM is a non-constitutional, non-statutory, independent body constituted to give advice on economic and related issues to the Government of India, specifically to the Prime Minister.

3.The Index has been created by the Institute for Competitiveness at the request of EAC-PM and it sheds light on an issue often not mentioned- problems faced by the elderly.

4.State-wise Rankings: **Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are top-scoring regions in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively.** The Aged States refer to States with an elderly population of more than 5 million, whereas Relatively Aged States refer to States with an Elderly population of less than 5 million.

INDIA PLASTIC PACT

1.The India Plastics Pact, the first in Asia, will be launched in September in collaboration with Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Recently, a report published on closing the plastic circular Gap, suggested that there is a dire need to make large scale global interventions to manage plastic waste.

2.The Plastics Pacts are business-led initiatives and

The government has not levied any extra taxes to manage the COVID19 crisis, Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserted, adding that revenues were now so buoyant that the Centre was confident of paying States their entire GST compensation dues this year.

transform the plastics packaging value chain for all formats and products. The Pacts bring together everyone from across the plastics value chain to implement practical solutions.

3.The India Plastics Pact is an ambitious, collaborative initiative that aims to bring together businesses, governments and NGOs across the whole value chain to set time-bound commitments to reduce plastics from their value chains.