

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has constructed and completed blacktopping the world's highest motorable road at Umling La in Eastern Ladakh, located at an altitude of 19,300 ft, the Defence Ministry said. The strategic road built under 'Project Himank' passes through the Umling La Top and connects Chisumle and Demchok villages. The road is close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and will allow quick movement of troops and equipment.

Virtually half of the belated ₹2,200 crore allotted for completing the ongoing MPLADS projects in 2020-21 simply lapsed, as the Finance Ministry granted "barely a week" to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to release the funds — inviting the ire of the Standing Committee on Finance. The resultant funding crunch would have hit several local area development projects under implementation across the country, especially in the five States that went to polls this year as no funds were released for these States and constituencies citing the model code of conduct (MCC).

The much awaited sea trials of the country's maiden indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC1), built by the public sector Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL), began in Kochi. The 40,000 tonne behemoth, whose keel laying was done in 2009, is expected to join the Navy as INS Vikrant late next year.

Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana on recused himself from hearing a petition filed by Andhra Pradesh accusing Telangana of depriving its people of their legitimate share of water for drinking and irrigation. The Chief Justice, who said he hailed from both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, withdrew after A.P. rejected the court's suggestion to send the case for mediation.

The Cabinet approved the continuation of 1,023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) for another two years. Since October 2019, the Department of Justice of the Ministry of Law and Justice has been implementing the Centrally sponsored scheme for expeditious trial and disposal of pending cases of rape and offences against children

NET ZERO CARBON TARGETS MAY NOT BE ENOUGH TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

1. Tightening the Net report by Oxfam stated that net zero carbon targets that many countries have announced (including UK, USA, China) may be a distraction from the priority of cutting carbon emissions.
2. Net zero emissions, also referred to as carbon neutrality, are achieved **when anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere are balanced by anthropogenic removals over a specified period.**
3. It is even possible for a country (Ex-Bhutan) to have negative emissions, if the absorption and removal exceed the actual emissions.
4. Some of the strategies to achieve carbon neutrality are using Renewable energy in the electricity sector (single largest source of CO₂ emissions), Carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) etc. Challenges associated with net zero targets- Net zero targets are vague and poorly defined- **It either relies on virtually unproven new technologies, or on a level of Land use (mainly afforestation) that is completely impossible.**
5. Total amount of land required for planned carbon removal could potentially be five times the size of India.

GOVERNMENT FINALISING 'INDIA DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM OF AGRICULTURE (IDEA)' WHICH WILL DOWN A FRAMEWORK FOR AGRISTACK

1. A concept paper on IDEA has already been floated (by Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmer Welfare) with a vision to Build a National Digital Agriculture Ecosystem. Elevate Indian Agriculture Sector to higher levels of efficiency and productivity. Improve the welfare and income of farmers.
2. IDEA finalization **would help in laying down architecture for Agristack, a collection of technologies and digital databases that focuses on farmers and agricultural sector.** It may include a Farmer's Stack (farmer data with Aadhar), a Farm Stack (geospatial information on each farm) and a Crop Stack (crop data linked to farms) integrated on a technology platform.
3. Agristack will **Enable farmers to realize higher income and better profitability through access to right information** at the right time, and from innovative services. Enhance efficiencies in the usage of resources including land, water, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and farm mechanization.
4. Help in building innovative **agri-focused solutions (crop insurance product, financial support etc).** However, there are concerns over Agristack including issues of data security, lack of digital access and literacy, exclusion errors etc.

NITI AAYOG AND ROCKY MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE RELEASED "TURNING AROUND THE POWER DISTRIBUTION SECTOR" REPORT

1. Most distribution companies (DISCOMs) are making **major losses (estimated at Rs 90,000 cr for FY 21) as a consequence of expensive long-term power purchase agreements**, poor infrastructure, inefficient operations etc.
2. Key reforms/suggestions highlighted in report-DISCOM Restructuring-**For state-owned utilities to succeed, there should be a clear separation between utility and state.** Insulating regulatory functions from political pressures by creating regional electricity regulatory commissions with participation of central government.
3. **Higher private participation for greater efficiency-For ex-Franchise models implemented in Odisha and Maharashtra. PPP model can be useful in loss-making areas**, where commercial operation might not be feasible without government support.
4. Operational Reforms-Improve their billing efficiency by using prepaid or smart meters. Encourage the use of solar pumps for agriculture. Renewable energy (RE) integration Reforms-Discoms may need to deploy large-scale energy by providing battery

under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012.

The Lok Sabha passed the Bill to formalise the Commission for Air Quality Management For National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas. The body has a fulltime chairperson and a range of members, including representatives from several Ministries and independent experts, and will have the final say on evolving policy and issuing directions to address air pollution in Delhi and the adjoining regions.

A ₹38 hike in the daily cash wage of labourers has been a major factor in price realisation of tea declining markedly below the cost of production, a tea planters' body has said. The North Eastern Tea Association (NETA) said the tea industry was struggling for survival due to an 18% dip in the price realisation of tea compared to that in 2020.

The government said that the labelling of tweets as "manipulated media" by Twitter does not come under the purview of the new IT Rules. However, the U.S. headquartered microblogging platform has been told that by doing so it violates "the principle of natural justice".

The proposal of the Election Commission of India to link the electoral roll with the Aadhaar ecosystem in order to check multiple enrolment of the same person is under consideration of the government, Law Minister Kiren Rijju informed the Lok Sabha.

The Opposition parties sent out their message in one voice — a debate in Parliament on the alleged Pegasus cyberattack first, rejecting a peace deal offered by Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu. Five Bills — three in the Rajya Sabha and two in the Lok Sabha — were passed amidst shrill protests from Opposition members holding placards and shouting slogans against the government.

As Jammu and Kashmir completes two years as a Union Territory, militancy remains a major challenge to the security apparatus amid growing fears that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is likely to increase the striking capabilities of militant outfits, especially the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and the Harkatul Mujahideen (HuM).

systems or pumped hydro-storage systems.

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RISING EMPLOYMENT

1. It has been tabled in the parliament by the Standing Committee on Labour.
2. Key data highlighted - Nearly half of formal salaried workers moved into informal employment in 2020. Overall rate of unemployment increased from 8.4% to 23.8% as of March, 2020. More than 40 crore informal workers in India got pushed into deeper poverty (ILO's Monitor 2nd edition - COVID-19 and the world of work).
3. Suggestions - **Exploring cash transfers for informal workers during adverse conditions like Covid-19. Converting loan guaranteed to street vendors under PM-SVANidhi Scheme to direct cash grants.** Under PM-SVANidhi scheme, street vendors can avail a working capital loan of Rs. 10,000.
4. **Increase maximum days of work guaranteed under MGNREGS** and mandatory health insurance to workers. Putting in place Employment Guarantee Programme for urban workforce in line with MGNREGA.
5. **Formalising employment, increasing its productivity, strengthening existing livelihood are major thrust areas** to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Government steps during Covid-Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana, One Nation One Ration Card, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Yojana, SWADES initiative for Indians Working abroad.

SABKI YOJANA SABKA VIKAS

1. **Sabki Yojana Sabki Vikas (2018)** is a People's plan campaign to make Gram Panchayat Development plans (GPDP) comprehensive and participatory.
2. It involves people from grassroot in planning at Gram sabhas and through Audit of previous year works done by Panchayats.
3. **It helps Gram Panchayat in preparation of plans for economic development and Social Justice (mandated under Article 243 G).**
4. It helps in effective and efficient implementation of flagship schemes/programmes through convergence on 29 developed subjects listed under XI schedule of the constitution.

FLEX FUEL VEHICLES

1. Minister of Road Transport and Highways urged automakers to roll-out FFV within a year's time. FFV is a modified version of vehicles that could run both on petrol and blended petrol with different levels of ethanol blends.
2. India plans to achieve 20% ethanol blending by 2025.
3. Benefits of FFVs - **Provide option for using biofuels which are better than petrol (cost-effective, pollution free and import substitute)**, addressing problem of surplus food grains etc.

USE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY FOR CROP PRODUCTION FORECASTING

1. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' welfare is funding various projects for Crop Production Forecasting, which includes -
2. **FASAL Scheme** (Forecasting Agricultural output using space, Agro-meteorology and Land based observations) for allowing 9 crops - Rice, wheat, Tur, Rabi Pulses, Rapeseed and Mustard, Rabi Jowar, Cotton, Jute and Sugarcane.
3. **CHAMAN** (Coordinated Horticulture Assessment and Management using geo-informatics) for Potato, Onion, Tomato, Chili, Mango, Banana and Citrus.
4. **KISHAN** project for evaluating the role of satellite technology in crop yield estimation. In addition to this satellite based indices are used for drought assessment.

DRAGON FRUIT (KAMALAM)

1. For first time, Dragon Fruit grown by farmers of Gujarat and West Bengal exported to United Kingdom.
2. **Dragon fruit also known as Kamalam (in India) is a tropical fruit belonging to Cactaceae family and is native to Central America.**
3. It is rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
4. It has three main varieties as - white flesh with pink skin, red flesh with pink skin and white flesh with yellow skin.

HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT

1. India is home to around 27,000 Asian elephants with 30 Elephant Reserves in 14 major Elephant states of India.

The Centre plans to pay students their Right to Education (RTE) entitlements in the form of cash transfers as part of a revamp and extension of its flagship school education scheme that was approved by the Cabinet on Wednesday. The Samagra Shiksha scheme, which has been extended till March 2026, will have a financial outlay of ₹2.94 lakh crore.

Firefighting resources from European Union nations are on their way to Greece, Italy, Albania and Northern Macedonia to help fight forest blazes, the EU crisis management commissioner said.

2. Due to loss of habitat, 1,401 human and 301 elephant lost life in Human-Elephant conflicts from 2018-20.

3. Steps to reduce conflicts-Project Elephant. States/UT guidelines. E.g. Tamil Nadu government guidelines on creation of barriers (Elephant proof trench), periodic inspection of electric wires.

4. Recently, Chhattisgarh Government started a pilot project of setting aside paddy outside the villages, to pre-empt conflict.

NATIONAL CHILD LABOUR PROJECT

1. In 2020-21, over 58,000 children were rescued across India from work, rehabilitated and mainstreamed under the project.

2. NCLP is a Central Sector Scheme for mainstreaming rescued children into formal education.

3. Children in age group of 9-14 years are withdrawn from work and put into NCLP special Training Centres, where they are provided with bridge education, vocational training, etc.

4. District Project Societies (DPS) are set up at district level under Collector/DM for overseeing implementation.