

### NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Israel's Naftali Bennett arrived in the United Arab Emirates for the first official visit by a Prime Minister of the Jewish state, after they established diplomatic ties last year. The trip announced by Mr. Bennett's office comes amid Israel's renewed diplomatic push against resumed international talks with its arch foe Iran over the Islamic republic's nuclear programme.

Tigray rebels recaptured the north Ethiopian town of Lalibela, home to a UNESCO world heritage site, local residents said, 11 days after Ethiopian forces said they had taken it back.

Voters in the French island territory of New Caledonia chose overwhelmingly on Sunday to remain part of France, in a referendum boycotted by pro-independence forces and closely watched around the South Pacific. French President Emmanuel Macron hailed the result as a resounding confirmation of France's role in the Indo-Pacific, and announced negotiations on the territory's future status.

The S400 missile system deal is a symbol of the strength of India's "sovereignty", said a Russian official, denying that the deal or other major agreements that were due to be signed during the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin, had been put on the back burner due to concerns over U.S. sanctions. The two sides announced 28 agreements and issued a 99point joint statement. However, key agreements that had been lined up for signing during the meetings, including the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) and a Navy-to-Navy cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by diplomats ahead of Mr. Putin's visit were not inked. This led to speculation that New Delhi had chosen to hold off on these as well as other expected deals for fighter jets and short range missiles until there was more clarity on whether the U.S. would impose sanctions over the delivery of the S-400 Triumph missile systems.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das indicated that the banking regulator will ring in sweeping regulatory changes to reform urban cooperative banks that have been plagued by a spate of failures, and warned people against

### SHANGHAI'S DATA EXCHANGE TO FUEL FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

1. With Shanghai's launch of data exchange, Chinese companies are starting to join government-backed platforms that aim to create open marketplaces for data. **Significance**-It's widely perceived that the Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by a fusion of technologies would undoubtedly be driven by data. The digital universe is now expected to be doubled every two years, and by 2025, an estimated 463 exabytes of data will be created each day globally. A 2011 World Economic Forum report described data as a "new asset class" and argued that personal data is generating a new wave of opportunity for economic and societal value creation. Data is considered as a new factor of production—a resource like oil that shapes the entire economy.

2. **Advantages of data sharing**-Problem solving- Businesses can collaborate using data to develop new technologies, insights, and capabilities that they would otherwise be unable to solve. One interesting possibility is a hackathon, where external data scientists are given access to the data to work on problems defined by industry problem owners for a fixed period. Supply chain optimization- By launching a data-sharing platform that is utilized by supply chain partners, supply chain efficiency can be increased by designing processes that will reduce the time. Sector-specific challenges- The availability of trusted data makes it easier to benchmark organizations and address sector-specific challenges.

3. **To overcome these challenges**-Addressing these concerns call for a complex analysis that necessitates the Balancing of multiple elements such as business objectives and measurable benefits Operationalizing the actual sharing of data to reduce overheads and prevent oversharing. A local law specifically for data usage and management covering detailed regulations about how the government handles data collected from residents has to be in place. Just weeks ago, the European Union (EU) Parliament and Council reached an agreement on the new Data Governance Act (DGA) which lays out a framework for sharing industrial data across the bloc.

### IMPORTANCE OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF KASTURIRANGAN COMMITTEE IN WESTERN GHATS

1. Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai informed the Centre that the state is opposed to the Kasturirangan Committee report on Western Ghats. Importance of Western Ghats-The Western Ghats is spread across the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the eight "hottest hot-spots" of biological diversity in the world. **It hosts properties including national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, world heritage sites, etc. It has over 7,402 species of flowering plants, 1,814 species of non-flowering plants, 139 mammal species, 508 bird species, 179 amphibian species, 6,000 insects species and 290 freshwater fish species.** Thus, the demarcation of an ESA is an effort to protect the fragile ecosystem from indiscriminate industrialisation, mining and unregulated development. Two committees – Gadgil and Kasturirangan – were appointed in the last eight years to identify the areas that needed to be kept out from such activities.

2. **Significance of recommendations of the Kasturirangan committee report**-The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), also known as the Gadgil Commission has designated the entire hill range as an Ecologically Sensitive Area and classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 and 3. **It suggested the formation of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA), a statutory authority which enjoys the powers under the Environment (Protection) Act.** The Kasturirangan committee report proposes 37% of the total area of Western Ghats, which is roughly 60,000 square kilometres, to be declared as eco-sensitive area (ESA). Out of this, 20,668 sq km of the area falls in Karnataka covering 1,576 villages.

parking their savings in banks offering high returns.

The 400 metre long Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi connecting the ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva to the banks of the Ganges would be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju's reply in Parliament that there is no proposal to scrap sedition charge from the Indian Penal Code comes almost five months after Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana made scathing remarks in open court to the Government about the chilling effect of the "colonial law", which suppresses the freedoms of ordinary people. In a hearing on July 15, the CJI compared the use of sedition charge (Section 124A of the IPC) to a tool given to a carpenter "to cut a piece of wood and he uses it to cut the entire forest itself". The CJI wondered why a democracy needed such a law which was used by the British to imprison Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

The High Court of Meghalaya has asked the State Government to file a report on the measures taken to stop illegal coal mining. The National Green Tribunal had in April 2014 banned the hazardous rathole coal mining in Meghalaya. But mine owners have been extracting and transporting coal illegally, with some operations leading to major accidents killing at least 30 people in the past five years.

The need for a booster or additional COVID19 vaccine dose or reduction in time gap between two doses of the available vaccines are being examined, Samiran Panda, Head, Epidemiology and Communicable Diseases, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), said on Sunday adding that an alarmist intervention does not help. "Vaccines are not known to prevent COVID19 but reduces the severity.

Russia faces massive consequences and severe costs if President Vladimir Putin attacks Ukraine, the Group of Seven (G7) warned in a statement on Sunday. U.S. intelligence assesses that Russia could be planning a multifront offensive on Ukraine as early as next year, involving up to 1,75,000 troops. Russia denies it plans to invade and says the West is gripped by Russophobia. Moscow says the expansion of NATO threatens Russia and has contravened assurances given to it as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Anne Rice, the gothic novelist best known for writing Interview with the Vampire, died on Saturday aged 80.

3.The report recommended a blanket ban on mining, quarrying, setting up of red category industries and thermal power projects. It stated that the impact of infrastructural projects on the forest and wildlife should be studied before permission is given for these activities. It also stated that the boundary of the 39 UNESCO Heritage sites are in most cases, boundaries of the legally demarcated national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, tiger reserves and forest divisions which are already accorded with high level of protection. The state of Karnataka has the highest percentage of the ESA- 46.50 %.

### WATERWAYS FOR FREIGHT TRANSPORT

1.India has an extensive network of cost-effective and environment-friendly inland waterways which are highly underutilized for freight transport and hinterland connectivity. Which are the key inland waterways? The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has declared 111 waterways (5 existing and 106 new) as National Waterways (NWs) under the National Waterways Act, 2016.

2.The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) says 25 of the 111 National Waterways (NWs) are fit for cargo and passenger traffic and developmental activities are underway for 13. The Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River system designated as National Waterways 01 is 1,620 km long and runs across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal. Gujarat, Kerala, Goa, Assam, and Andhra Pradesh are also among the states that have inland waterways under development.

3.How will they help the economy? Inland water transport is significantly cost-efficient compared to rail and road transport. Development of inland waterways transport will also help with the de-congestion of overcrowded rail and road networks in India. Already, the development of inland waterways has been effective in increasing the movement of cargo by about 13% in 2020-21, compared to 2019-20.Using inland waterways wherever feasible could help lower transportation costs and time.

4.How's India promoting inland waterways? **The Jal Marg Vikas Project** for increasing the capacity of waterways was undertaken by the IWAI, and was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on 3 January 2018. To promote inland waterways as a supplementary mode of transport, the Ministry of Ports, shipping, and waterways last year waived user charges for a period of three years. The government also came up with digital solutions such as CAR-D (Cargo Data) Portal and PANI Portal.

5.**CAR-D (Cargo Data) Portal** - It is a web-based portal for the collection and compilation, analysis, and dissemination of all cargo and cruise movement data of NWs to the stakeholders. It is expected to promote ease of doing business. **PANI Portal or the Portal for Asset and Navigation Information** is an integrated solution that compiles river navigation and infrastructure information on a single platform.

### LATEST OUTCOMES OF THE BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO SCHEME

1.**The Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women has noted in its report that the Government spent 80% of the funds under the 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' (BBBP) scheme on media campaigns.** What needs to be done now? Over the last six years, through focussed advocacy BBBP has been able to capture the attention of political leadership and national consciousness towards valuing the girl child. The government must now revisit this strategy and invest in measurable outcomes in health and education for girls.

2.**About BBBP:** Launched in January 2015 with the aim to address sex-selective abortion and the declining child sex ratio, which was at 918 girls for every 1,000 boys in 2011. The programme is being implemented across 640 districts. It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.

3.**Outcomes of the scheme: As per the Ministry of Health, the sex ratio at birth is showing promising trends of improvement and has improved by 16 points from 918 (2014-15) to 934 (2019-20).** Health percentage of first trimester Antenatal Care (ANC) has shown an improving trend from 61 per cent in 2014-15 to 71 per cent in 2019-20. The education gross enrolment ratio of girls in the schools at the secondary level has also improved from 77.45 per cent (2014-15) to 81.32 per cent (2018-19-provisional figures).

4.Way Ahead- Over the last six years, through focussed

**A group of Opposition MPs in Sri Lanka, representing Tamils from the north and east, hill country (Malaiyaha Tamils), and Tamil-speaking Muslims on Sunday sought the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to ensure “existing rights are not snatched away”. The contentious 13th Amendment, born out of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987, has remained in Sri Lanka’s Constitution for nearly four decades without seeing full implementation, as successive regimes have refused to part with power over crucial areas, including land, and law and order.**

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