

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Late into the night, a construction crew quietly worked to dismantle one of Hong Kong's most distinctive statues and works of art. The timing of the statue's removal — as well as the scaffoldings carefully put in place to obscure any views of the process — underlined the sensitivity of the decision by Hong Kong University (HKU) to remove what was a popular fixture on its campus for close to 25 years. The Pillar of Shame, a haunting eight metre tall sculpture showing intertwined bodies with hollowed eyes and open mouths — an anguished mass of humanity — was created by Danish artist Jens Galschiot as a tribute to the victims of China's crackdown in Tiananmen Square in June 1989. It has been at HKU since 1997, installed shortly after one of Hong Kong's annual June vigils at Victoria Park, where thousands gathered every year to mark the anniversary.

Scientists have resumed tagging of Olive Ridley turtles at Rushikulya rookery along the Odisha coast, which would help them identify the migration path and places visited by the marine reptiles after congregation and nesting. Researchers of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) are carrying out tagging of the Olive Ridelys at three mass nesting sites — Gahirmatha, Devi River mouth and Rushikulya. The exercise was undertaken in Odisha in January 2021 after a span of about 25 years and 1,556 turtles had been tagged.

A provision in delimitation Acts from 1952 onwards, which says that other than population, factors like physical features, boundaries of administrative units, communication facilities and public convenience should be taken into account while drawing constituency boundaries. While officials of the Delimitation Commission say they have followed the rule in recommending six additional seats in Jammu and one in Kashmir. The increase in seats would tilt the balance of power towards Jammu and away from the Kashmir Valley.

Democracy should be restored in Myanmar "at the earliest", Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla conveyed to the military rulers of Myanmar during his December 22-23 visit. He met Chairman, State Administrative Council, Senior

NATIONAL RETAIL TRADE POLICY

1.A draft National Retail Trade Policy has been prepared by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to streamline retail trade and development of all formats of retail trade sector in a harmonious manner.

2.Objectives of the National Retail Trade Policy To promote e-commerce all over the country. To leverage retail trade as a tool for the socio-economic development of the country.

To encourage skill development and create more employment opportunities for all sections of society involved in retail trade. To identify and address existing infrastructure gaps affecting the retail trade industry. To accelerate investment flow to underdeveloped regions across the country.

3.This Policy aims at improving the ease of doing business by ensuring easy and quick access to affordable credit. It also aims at providing an effective consultative and grievance redressal mechanism for the retail sector, for welfare of traders & their employees.

4.It will also address the issue of physical infrastructure in setting up of data centres along with power supply, connectivity etc, It also aims to encourage foreign investment in the marketplace and e-commerce platform, in which foreign investment has been made.

BEEJ GRAM YOJANA

1.The Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, is implementing Beej Gram Yojana (Seed Village Programme) since 2014-15 to upgrade the quality of farmer's saved seeds. Objectives - To improve the stock of farm saved seeds for enhancing crop production/productivity. So, seed production, seed distribution and other aspects must be strengthened at the farmers' level.

2.The seed produced in these seed villages will have to be preserved/ stored till the next sowing season. To encourage farmers to develop storage capacity of appropriate quality, assistance will be given to farmers for making/procuring of Pusa Bin/Mud bin/Bin made of paper pulp to store seeds on their farms. Financial assistance for distribution of foundation/certified seeds is available for up to one acre per farmer These seeds are distributed at 50% of seed cost for cereal crops and 60% for pulses, oilseeds, fodder and green manure crops.

3.The assistance will also be given to train the farmers on seed production and seed technology @ Rs.15000/- for a group of 50-150 farmers. To the encourage farmers to develop storage capacity of appropriate quality, Assistance @ 33% subject to a maximum of Rs. 3000/- for SC/ST farmers and @ 25% subject to maximum of Rs. 2000/- for other farmers for procuring seeds storage bin of 20 qtl. capacity. Assistance @ 33% subject to maximum of Rs. 1500/- to SC/ST farmers and @ 25% subject to maximum of Rs. 1000/- for other farmers for making seeds storage bin of 10 qtl. capacity in the seed villages where seed village scheme is being implemented.

4.Implementing agencies - State Departments of Agriculture, State Agriculture Universities, KVKs, State Seeds Corporation, National Seeds Corporation, State Farms Corporation of India, State Seeds Certification Agencies, Dept of Seed Certification. One implementing agency will be identified for the area/locality and is to be authorized by the State Government.

PRALAY

1.Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted maiden flight test of indigenously developed surface-to-surface missile 'Pralay', from Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha.

2.'Pralay' is India's first conventional ballistic missile and is an answer to any conventional missile attack from northern or western borders. Pralay is a solid-fuel, surface-to-surface battlefield missile developed by DRDO based on Prithvi Defence Vehicle from the Indian ballistic missile programme.

3.'Pralay' is a 350-500 km short-range missile with a payload capacity of 500-1,000 kg. It can be launched from a mobile

General Min Aung Hlaing, who has been internationally isolated because of the violent crackdown on protesting citizens, and conveyed India's desire to engage various stakeholders to end the crisis in the Southeast Asian country.

Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal held a virtual meeting with his Australian counterpart Dan Tehan to fast track negotiation regarding the bilateral Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). Both sides had pledged in September that an "early harvest announcement" for an interim trade deal would be achieved by December.

Criminal proceedings against an accused person cannot be quashed merely because the chargesheet was not filed by the police against some of his coaccused in the case, the Supreme Court has clarified. An accused person whose involvement in a crime has been prima facie proved during a thorough investigation cannot claim to be treated on a par with others against whom no material was found to be chargesheeted, the court noted in a recent order.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has requested Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia to make it mandatory for the country's airlines and airports to play Indian music. "We urge you that if it can be made compulsory for Indian airlines to play Indian music, it will reach the people. We have seen that airlines in India often only play foreign music, which neither one can enjoy, nor does one understand," said President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Rajya Sabha MP, Vinay Saharabudhe.

Russian President Vladimir Putin urged the West on Thursday to "immediately" meet Russia's demand for security guarantees precluding NATO's expansion to Ukraine, saying the U.S. is "on the threshold of our home". Speaking during a marathon annual news conference, the Russian leader welcomed talks with the U.S. that are set to start in Geneva next month as a "positive" move, but warned that Moscow expects the discussion to produce quick results.

Shares rose for a third straight session on Thursday, led by gains in information technology and energy stocks on improved investor sentiment after a study showed Omicron's risk was lower compared with the Delta coronavirus variant.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to defer the implementation

launcher. The missile guidance system includes state-of-the-art navigation system and integrated avionics.

SOUTH-SOUTH INNOVATION PLATFORM

1. Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) rolled out their first AgriTech Challenge cohort under the South-South Innovation Platform.

2. South-South Innovation Platform was launched by the AIM, NITI Aayog, UNCDF, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Rabo Foundation in 2021. This Platform was launched to enable cross-border exchange of innovations, insights and investments.

3. Through this platform, cross-border collaborations among emerging markets across India, Indonesia, Malawi, Malaysia, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia would be enabled.

STUDY ON MIGRATION OF RIVER DELTA

1. In order to understand how their course may change in future, a new study has examined 48 river delta systems across the world from a variety of climatic and socioeconomic contexts. The researchers identified 4 aspects that determine the movement and migration of river delta systems: Interplay between the effects of rivers, tides, and waves Amount of sediment that the channel carries (aka sediment flux) Frequency & magnitude of floods that occur Average size of the channel. Also, high tides increase the input of the saline seawater in the delta and interact with the river discharge.

2. Researchers hypothesised that increases in the sediment flux will cause greater changes in the delta channel and so, cause it to migrate more. The study found that all deltas exhibiting large migration rates, in excess of 3 metres per year, are dominated by river action rather than tides. During high tides, there is increased input of seawater in the delta and the sediment that has already flowed out of the channel is pushed back into the delta, 'acting as a stabilising force'. However, there are deltas that have a low migration rate but are dominated by river discharge.

3. Reason - The study argues that the reason could lie in the sediment being transported by the river (fluvial sediment flux). Merely because the delta is river-dominated and has a significant tendency to change its channel does not necessarily mean it will do so. **Sediment flux is a key driver for channel migration, as the course of the water naturally changes when sediment gets deposited/ discharged at the mouth of the delta.**

4. Another reason is the Biome classification. River deltas in frigid zones of the Earth will naturally have permafrost balance out all ingredients for a high migration rate. Combined effects of all these factors, especially flood forcing, were also considered. Types - Juxtaposition of all these shows that when there is high sediment flux, high flood frequency, and high degrees of river forcing, the systems have the highest rates of channel migration.

5. Examples - **The Godavari River, India and the Yellow and Yangtze River deltas in China. When there is low sediment flux, low flood frequency, and low degrees of river forcing, the systems have the lowest rates of channel migration.**

Examples - The Vistula, Poland; Ebro, Spain; Rhine, Germany and Tone, Japan. The Ganges river delta is an example of a system where a combination of migration-enhancing and migration-dampening factors balances each other out.

6. Ganges has large volume, high sediment flux, and high flood frequency; but, experiences almost 50% tidal forcing, acting as a stabiliser. This data on the changes delta systems have undergone in the recent past can help governments manage population density and plan future city development.

KERALA'S SILVER LINE PROJECT

1. The project entails building a semi high-speed railway corridor through the state linking its southern end and state capital Thiruvananthapuram with its northern end of Kasaragod. The line is proposed to be 529.45 kms long, covering 11 districts through 11 stations. When the project is realised, one can travel from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram in less than four hours on trains travelling at 200 km/hr.

2. The current travel time on the existing Indian Railways network is 12 hours. The deadline for the project, being executed by the Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited (KRDCL), is 2025. KRDCL, or K-Rail, is a joint venture between the Kerala government and the Union Ministry of Railways.

3. Hurdles- **There are several concerns around the project.**

of tokenisation of debit and credit cards for online transactions by a further six months following representations from stakeholders. “The timeline for storing of CoF data [actual card data] is extended by six months till June 30, 2022; post this, such data shall be purged,” the central bank said on Thursday. “In addition to tokenisation, industry stakeholders may devise alternate mechanism(s) to handle any use case (including recurring e-mandates, EMI option) or post transaction activity (including chargeback handling, dispute resolution, reward/loyalty programme) that currently involves/requires storage of CoF data by entities other than card issuers and card networks,” the RBI said in a circular to Payment System Providers and system participants.

Critics feel that the massive cost will push the State further into debt. There is scepticism about the projected passenger patronage. But most of all, there are environmental concerns in the backdrop of the 2018 deluge that inundated almost the entire State.