

KSG:NEWSPAPER CRUX

24TH JULY, 2021

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

- **China's President Xi Jinping this week became the first Chinese leader in many years to visit Tibet as well as its southeastern border region with India, as he inspected a newly opened and strategically important railway line.**
- **Parliament failed to function for the fourth day in a row following protests from the Opposition on issues ranging from the Pegasus spyware controversy to the farmers agitation.**
- **A drone (unmanned aerial vehicle) with explosives was shot down in Jammu's Akhnoor sector on Friday and the tying material used "resembles the ones found with the payloads dropped" on the technical airport at the Air Force Station, Jammu, on June 27 that left two IAF personnel injured.**
- **News and opinion website The Wire on Friday reported that Delhi-based Kashmiri journalists, a prominent civil society activist critical of the official policy towards Jammu and Kashmir and over 25 people from Kashmir were selected as potential targets of surveillance between 2017 and mid-2019 by an as yet unidentified government agency that was believed to be a client of the NSO Group of Israel.**
- **The Supreme Court on new Delhi Friday dismissed a challenge to a National Green Tribunal (NGT) ban on the sale and use of firecrackers during the COVID19 pandemic in the National Capital Region (NCR) and all cities and towns where the ambient air quality is in the poor or above categories.**
- **The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the Personal Data Protection Bill was on Friday given an extension till the Winter Session of Parliament to submit its longpending report.**
- **The 1991 economic reforms lifted millions out of poverty, unleashed the spirit of free enterprises, and catapulted India into a \$3 trillion economy, but the road ahead is even more daunting than the 1991 crisis, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said.**

ESSENTIAL DEFENCE SERVICES BILL, 2021

1.The government introduced the Essential Defence Services Bill, 2021 in Lok Sabha. It seeks to replace the ordinance issued in June 2021 and prohibits any agitation and strike by anyone engaged in the essential defence services.

2.**It includes any service in any establishment or undertaking dealing with production of goods or equipment required for defence related purposes or any establishment of the armed forces or connected with them or defence.**It also includes services that, if ceased, would affect the safety of the establishment engaged in such services or its employees.

3.Employers violating the prohibition order through illegal lock-outs or lay-offs will be punished with up to one year imprisonment or Rs 10,000 fine, or both.

GENOME OF SALT-SECRETING MANGROVE SPECIES DECODED

1.The scientists for the first time have decoded the reference-grade whole genome sequence of a highly salt-tolerant and salt-secreting mangrove species, *Avicennia marina*. This study was led by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT)-Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar.

2.*Avicennia Marina*: It is one of the most prominent mangroves species found in all mangrove formations in India. It is a salt-secreting and extraordinarily salt-tolerant mangrove species that grows optimally in 75% seawater and tolerates >250% seawater.

3.**This study assumes significance as agriculture productivity globally is affected due to abiotic stress factors such as limited water availability and salinization of soil and water.**Salinity is prevalent in 900 million hectares globally (with an estimated 6.73 million ha in India), and it is estimated to cause an annual loss of 27 billion USD.

NORD STREAM 2 PIPELINE

1.The US has approved the Germany-Russia Nord Stream 2 Pipeline (NS2P) project - which significantly increases Europe's energy dependence on Russia. The US had previously imposed sanctions to prevent the completion of this gas pipeline between Russia and Germany.

2.This is a 1,200-km pipeline that runs from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany through the Baltic Sea. It will carry 55 billion cubic metres of gas per year. It was decided to build this pipeline in 2015.

3.**EU's Dependence on Russia: It will increase Europe's dependence on Russia for Natural Gas, currently EU (European Union) countries already rely on Russia for 40% of their gas needs.**

4.There is an existing pipeline between Russia and Europe through Ukraine, once the NS2P project is completed it would bypass Ukraine and deprive it of a significant transit fee of around \$ 3 billion per year.

SUBSIDY SCHEMES TO BOOST MERCHANT SHIPS

1.The Union Cabinet has approved a scheme for providing subsidy support to Indian Shipping companies in global tenders floated by Ministries and Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) for import of government cargo.

2.**The scheme envisages an increase in flagging and would link access to Indian cargo to investment in Indian ships.**

3.Rationale of the Scheme: Small Size of Indian Shipping Industry: Despite having a 7,500 km long coastline, a significant national EXIM (Export-Import) trade, a policy of 100% FDI in shipping since 1997, the Indian shipping industry and India's national fleet is proportionately small when compared with its global counterparts.