

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

For the first time, Nepal will sell its surplus electricity to India at a competitive rate after New Delhi allowed the neighbouring country to trade its power in the Indian power exchange market. The Energy Exchange under India's Power Ministry granted permission to Nepal after persistent lobbying from Kathmandu, as Nepal Electricity Authority is now in a position to sell its surplus energy.

The World Health Organization (WHO) granted Emergency Use Listing (EUL) for Covaixin, the Covid-19 vaccine developed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech. The WHO's decision implies that indigenously developed Covaixin meets the standards set by it for protection against the coronavirus disease.

In a relief to consumers, the Finance Ministry announced a Rs.5 per litre cut in excise duty on petrol and Rs.10 per litre cut in excise duty on diesel. Amid record-high fuel prices, this is the first cut in central excise duties in over three years. A steady rise in crude oil prices and the elevated taxes-both central excise duty as well as state taxes-that have been in effect since May 2020 have played a key role in pushing the price of Auto fuels over the pre-Covid retail price levels.

The services sector, which took the biggest hit when the Covid pandemic hit by the country last year, staged a strong growth in October, driven by an uptick of demand and sentiments ahead of the festive season, a monthly survey said. The monthly survey, by IHS Markit, said the Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) for the sector rose a ten-and-a-half-year high of 58.4 in October as against 55.2 in the previous month. An index reading of 50 or above suggests expansion and below it points at contraction. The report said service companies hired more hands, leading to job generation reaching the highest levels since February 2020, when the pandemic struck. The services sector includes retail, banks, hotels, real estate, education, health, social work, computer services, recreation, media, communications, travel and tourism.

GLOBAL METHANE PLEDGE

1. The Global Methane Pledge launched at the UN COP26 climate conference in Glasgow has been signed by over 90 countries so far. This pledge is an effort led jointly by the US and the European Union. It is essentially an agreement to stop deforestation and cut down global methane emissions by up to 30% from 2020 levels by 2030. Significance - Rapidly reducing methane emissions is complementary to action on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

2. This is regarded as the single most effective strategy to keep the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach. Signatories - Among the signatories is Brazil - one of the five biggest emitters of methane. China, Russia and India have not signed up, while Australia has said it will not back the pledge. The latest IPCC report reveals that the methane accounts for about half of the 1.0 degrees Celsius net rise in global average temperature since the pre-industrial era.

3. Methane is the second-most abundant greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, after carbon dioxide. Methane is more short-lived in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide but 80 times more potent in warming the earth. Methane accounts for about 20% of the heating effects by all of the greenhouse gases combined. The UN says that 25% of the global warming is because of methane. Sources of methane include natural sources (40% of global methane emissions) and human sources (60% of global methane emissions).

4. **Natural sources - Emissions from wetlands and oceans, cows' digestive systems, and from the digestive processes of termites. Human sources - Oil and natural gas systems (largest contributors to human sources),** landfills, agricultural activities, coal mining, wastewater treatment, and certain industrial processes. Uses - Methane is flammable, and is used as a fuel worldwide. It is a principal component of natural gas.

REVIVAL OF ALL-INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE PROPOSAL

1. The Centre has revived the proposed All India Judicial Service (AIJS) to centrally recruit judges on the lines of civil services. At present, various high courts and State service commissions hold exams to recruit judicial officers. The proposal for an AIJS was first suggested in the early 1960s. While the proposal was revived a few times, it could not be implemented due to opposition from some high courts and states. The proposed judicial service will be similar to the IAS and the IPS.

2. This service will incentivise aspirants becoming a lower court judge and hence ameliorate the administration and delivery of justice. This will supply a competent and efficient pool of judicial officers, as the process of intake of judges will solely be focused on their competence. It will also address the issue of social inclusion by enabling suitable representation to marginalised and deprived sections of society. Procedure - The provision of AIJS was included in Article 312 of the Constitution through the 42nd amendment in 1976.

3. But it would still require a bill to decide on its broad contours. If the bill is passed, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) could hold a standardised entrance test to recruit judges for lower courts. Reports have noted that the judge-to-population ratio in India is about 19 judges per 10 lakh population even though the Law Commission had recommended that it should be at least 50 per 10 lakh people.

4. **Need for Social Inclusion-As per the Law Ministry, Other Backward Classes (OBC) accounted for only 12% of the judges in the lower judiciary in 12 states. That is far below the estimated share of OBCs in the Indian population, which is more than 40%.** The decennial Census in India does not compile caste numbers. Dalits and tribals made up less than 14% and about 12%, respectively, of the judges in the lower judiciary. Per Census 2011, Dalits and tribals accounted for more than 16% and little under 9% of the population respectively.

The pandemic induced decrease in carbon dioxide emissions was over and that CO2 emissions this year were expected to return to pre pandemic levels. The Global Carbon Project, an international research group that releases the latest trends on carbon dioxide emissions during the climate meeting every year, said emissions were expected to rise by 4.9 % compared to last year.

Tests of Russia's Zircon hypersonic cruise missile are nearing completion and deliveries to the navy will begin in 2022, president Vladimir Putin said. The move is part of a bid by Moscow to forge ahead in a race with the US and others to deploy the next generation of weapons that are harder to detect and intercept. Putin said that in testing, the missile has successfully hit both ground and sea targets when fired from under water or from surface ships.

The United Nations children's agency said it was planning to set up a system to directly fund Afghan teachers after the international community placed a freeze on funding the Taliban led administration. UNICEF is setting up a system that will allow direct payments to teachers without the funds being channelled through the de facto authorities. In preparation UNICEF would begin registering all public school teachers. The best way to support the education of girls in Afghanistan is to continue supporting their schools and teachers. UNICEF is calling upon donors not to let Afghanistan's children down.

Researchers have advised that screening for diabetes should begin at 25 years, much earlier than the government recommendation of 30 years. In a country-wide study, published in the medical journal Diabetes and Metabolic Syndrome-Clinical Research and Reviews, the researchers say data from multiple tertiary diabetes centres across the country shows a trend of increasing prevalence of diabetes in the younger age group in the last decade. The recommendation from the government and ICMR is to begin screening for diabetes at 30 years. The researchers found that 77.6 per cent of those below 30 were either overweight or obese. India has around 77 million people with diabetes.

Cairn Energy PLC has agreed to drop litigations to seize Indian properties in countries ranging from France to the UK as it has accepted the Indian government's offer to settle tax dispute relating to the levy of tax

REASONS BEHIND THE STRUGGLE TO REDUCE COAL DEPENDENCE

1. Earth needs people to stopping the burning of coal (the biggest source of greenhouse gases) to avoid the most tragic impacts of climate change. While stopping the burning of coal may be possible for some developed nations, it is not so simple for developing countries. Developing countries argue for the 'carbon space' for them to grow as developed nations have, by burning cheap fuels like coal. Coal is the world's biggest source of fuel for electric power and so many people depend on it for their very lives. In India, there are roughly 3,00,000 people working directly with government-owned coal mines. There are nearly 4 million people in India whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly linked to coal.

2. India's coal belt is dotted by industries that need the fuel, like steel and brick making. Indian Railways, India's largest employers, earns half their revenue by transporting coal, allowing it to subsidise passenger travel. Consequences will be felt both globally and locally. According to the IPCC report, unless the world drastically cuts greenhouse gas emissions, it will suffer even more extreme heat waves, erratic rainfall and destructive storms in coming years.

3. A 2021 Indian government study found that Jharkhand state - the state with the nation's largest coal reserves - is the most vulnerable state to climate change. So, India and other countries with coal-dependent regions have to diversify their economies and retrain workers to protect their livelihoods.

PALESTINIAN PM CALLS FOR INDIAN SUPPORT

1. Indian and Palestinian Prime Ministers held meetings in Glasgow recently on the sidelines of the COP26 summit. Outcomes of the meet: Palestine asked India to play a stabilising role in West Asia by maintaining cooperation with "all related parties". It said, India had a historic tradition of supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and its technical support should be "parallel to the political support". India should support the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

2. Why is India's support significant? India is serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2021-22 and was re-elected to the Human Rights Council for the 2022-24." Also, in recent years, India has broken the tradition of supporting Palestine at the U.N. In 2019, India voted in favour of Israel at the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) to deny observer status to a Palestinian organisation named Shahed. In June, India abstained during the voting on a resolution calling for investigation into Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip at the Human Rights Council which drew strong protest from Foreign Minister Riyad Al Malki who wrote a letter critical of India's abstention.

3. India-Palestine: India's support for the Palestinian cause is an integral part of the nation's foreign policy. In 1974, India became the first Non-Arab State to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. India's position on Palestine is independent and consistent. It is shaped by independent views and interests, and not determined by any third country.

4. The trend is clear - India's decisions are based on a mature understanding and evaluation of the Israel- Palestine issues and New Delhi is following the same approach now as Israel and Palestine exchange rocket fire. India has refused to pick a side and called for de-escalation and dialogue.

KAMENG RIVER

1. Studies have indicated that landslides caused by an earthquake of 3.4 magnitude close to the border with China led to mass fish death in the Kameng river in Arunachal Pradesh. The landslips dumped several tonnes of mud and rock into the river, substantially reducing the flow of water.

2. The river turned blackish due to very high turbidity resulting in low dissolved oxygen that killed the fish. The Kameng River: It is the right-bank tributary of the Brahmaputra river. It rises in the Tawang district in the eastern Himalayas.

3. It forms the border between the East Kameng district and the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. In Assam, it flows through the Sonitpur district before joining the Brahmaputra at Tezpur.

4. The Kameng River consists of two sections- the west consisting of the Akka hills and resided by the Akka tribes and the east consisting of the Dafla hills resided by the Daphla tribe.

retrospectively.

5.The Kaziranga National Park and the Pakkhui Wildlife Sanctuary are located near the Kameng river.