

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

A New Delhi citybased technology startup has come up with the innovative idea of an aerial seeding campaign as a solution for the reforestation challenge. Marut Drones, which had earlier deployed drones successfully in agricultural operations and for delivery of vaccines, is now using them for greening large swathes of denuded forest lands through its “Hara Bhara” initiative in Telangana. The seed balls contain a variety of seeds rolled within a ball of clay, together with organic manure and fertilizer. The balls, after being dispersed in a barren area, are expected to dissolve when it rains, and result in germination of the seeds. Marut Drones has engaged the services of local people, self help groups and NGOs in the preparation of seed balls, and identified the locations for dispersal with the help of the Forest Department.

China’s top state owned energy companies have been ordered to ensure there are adequate fuel supplies for the approaching winter at all costs, a report said on Friday, as the country battles a power crisis that threatens to hit growth in the world’s number two economy. The country has been hit by widespread power cuts that have closed or partially closed factories, hitting production and global supply chains. The crisis has been caused by a confluence of factors, including rising overseas demand as economies reopen, record coal prices, state electricity price controls and tough emissions targets.

The Iranian Army’s ground forces began holding manoeuvres near the country’s border with Azerbaijan on Friday, state media reported, despite criticism from its neighbour. The exercises took place in north western Iran, said state television, which showed tanks, howitzers and helicopters firing at targets on the ground.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana said he was in favour of forming standing committees headed by the Chief Justices of the High Courts to investigate complaints received from the common man of “atrocities” committed by the bureaucracy, especially police officers. The CJJ’s oral observation comes even as some police officers are in the spotlight for committing serious crimes.

PM POSHAN SHAKTI NIRMAN SCHEME

1.The existing Mid-Day Meal scheme, which provides hot meals to students, has been renamed as the National Scheme for PM Poshan Shakti Nirman.

2.Key propositions in the PM POSHAN Scheme: Supplementary nutrition: The new scheme has a provision for supplementary nutrition for children in aspirational districts and those with high prevalence of anaemia. States to decide diet: It essentially does away with the restriction on the part of the Centre to provide funds only for wheat, rice, pulses and vegetables. Currently, if a state decides to add any component like milk or eggs to the menu, the Centre does not bear the additional cost. Now that restriction has been lifted. Nutri-gardens: They will be developed in schools to give children “firsthand experience with nature and gardening”.

3.Women and FPOs: **To promote vocals for local, women self-help groups and farmer producer organisations will be encouraged to provide a fillip to locally grown traditional food items.** Social Audit: The scheme also plans “inspection” by students of colleges and universities for ground-level execution. Tithi-Bhojan: Communities would also be encouraged to provide the children food at festivals etc, while cooking festivals to encourage local cuisines are also envisaged. DBTs to school: In other procedural changes meant to promote transparency and reduce leakages, States will be asked to do direct benefit cash transfers of cooking costs to individual school accounts, and honorarium amounts to the bank accounts of cooks and helpers. Holistic nutrition: The rebranded scheme aims to focus on “holistic nutrition” goals. Use of locally grown traditional foods will be encouraged, along with school nutrition gardens.

4.About the Mid-Day meal scheme: The scheme guarantees one meal to all children in government and aided schools and madaras supported under Samagra Shiksha. Students up to Class VIII are guaranteed one nutritional cooked meal at least 200 days in a year. **The Scheme comes under the Ministry of HRD. It was launched in 1995 as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP – NSPE), a centrally sponsored scheme.** In 2004, the scheme was relaunched as the Mid Day Meal Scheme. The Scheme is also covered by the National Food Security Act, 2013.

GLOBAL ROADMAP TO DEFEAT MENINGITIS BY 2030

1.The Global Roadmap to Defeat Meningitis by 2030 was recently released by the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners. This is the first-ever global strategy to defeat meningitis. It aims to eliminate epidemics of bacterial meningitis and to reduce deaths by 70 per cent and halve the number of cases.

2.The new roadmap will aim for: Achievement of high immunisation coverage, development of new affordable vaccines and improved prevention strategies and outbreak response. Speedy diagnosis and optimal treatment for patients. Good data to guide prevention and control efforts. Care and support for those affected, focusing on early recognition and improved access to care and support for after-effects. Advocacy and engagement, to ensure high awareness of meningitis, accountability for national plans, and affirmation of the right to prevention, care and after-care services.

3.Significance: **The strategy could save more than 200,000 lives annually and significantly reduce disability caused by the disease.** About Meningitis: **Meningitis is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord.** It is predominantly caused by bacterial and viral infection. Meningitis caused by bacterial infection causes around 250,000 deaths a year and can lead to fast-spreading epidemics. It kills a tenth of those infected — mostly children and young people — and leaves a fifth with long-lasting disability.

NATIONAL EXPORT INSURANCE SCHEME(NEIA)

1.Government approves continuation of the National Export Insurance Account (NEIA) scheme and infusion of Rs. 1,650 crore Grant-in-Aid over 5 years. Significance of the move: Capital

Environment Minister of Delhi Gopal Rai visited the recently installed smog tower at Connaught Place and said that preliminary reports show it is cleaning up to 80% of the air. He said that a 16 member committee has been constituted to closely monitor the smog tower and give three reports to the government at an interval of three months each.

Assessing progress on a number of infrastructure and energy projects, and Sri Lanka's need for economic assistance, will be at the top of the agenda as Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla arrives in Colombo on Saturday for a four-day visit to Sri Lanka. An MEA release announcing the visit said, "The visit of Foreign Secretary will provide an opportunity to review our bilateral ties, progress of ongoing bilateral projects and ongoing cooperation to tackle COVID-related disruptions." The release said that Sri Lanka occupies a "central place" in India's "neighbourhood first" policy.

India and the United States have agreed in principle to establish an Indo-U.S. Industrial Security Joint Working Group, the Defence Ministry said. "This group will meet periodically to align the policies and procedures expeditiously that will allow the defence industries to collaborate on cutting edge defence technologies," a Ministry statement stated. This was agreed during the Industrial Security Agreement summit held between the two sides.

India imposed reciprocal quarantine measures on citizens of the United Kingdom. Sources said the new regulations would enforce a 10-day quarantine on all British nationals in the way that the U.K. currently enforced similar quarantine measures on fully vaccinated Indian nationals.

Taiwan said 25 Chinese military planes crossed into its defence zone on Friday, the same day that Beijing marked the founding of the People's Republic of China and its biggest incursion there in months. The show of force on China's National Day near the self-ruled democratic island, which Beijing claims as part of its territory, came in the same week it accused Britain of sending a warship to the Taiwan Strait with "evil intentions".

A new study has found under-reported debts to the tune of \$385 billion in projects carried out in dozens of countries under China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with a rise in "hidden" debt on account of

infusion in the NEIA will generate output from the vast potential of project exports in the focus market. The infusion can be seen as a part of different measures to provide a boost to the exports sector.

2.NEIA Trust: The NEIA Trust was set up in 2006 to promote project exports from India that could be of strategic and national importance. The Trust promotes medium and long-term (MLT)/project exports by extending (partial/full) support to covers issued by ECGC (ECGC Ltd, formerly known as Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India Ltd) to MLT/project export and to Exim Bank for Buyer's Credit (BC-NEIA) tied to project exports from India.

3.National Export Insurance Account (NEIA): It has been set up by the Government of India to facilitate medium and long-term exports, which are commercially viable, considering the limitations of the ECGC Limited in providing adequate cover on its own and non-availability of reinsurance cover to such exporters. NEIA aims to ensure the availability of credit risk cover for projects and other high-value exports, which are desirable from the point of view of national interest, but which ECGC is unable to underwrite at terms which will not affect the competitiveness of the exports.

INDIAN SCIENTISTS DEVELOP REACTOR FOR COST-EFFECTIVE PRODUCTION OF HYDROGEN USING SUNLIGHT AND WATER

1. Scientists have, for the first time, developed a large-scale reactor which produces a substantial amount of hydrogen using sustainable sources like sunlight and water, which is a cost-effective and sustainable process. They have used an earth-abundant chemical called carbon nitrides as a catalyst for the purpose. This work is supported by the DST Nano Mission NATDP project.

2. How does the reactor work? **The team employed a low-cost organic semiconductor in carbon nitrides which can be prepared using cheaper precursors like urea and melamine at ease in a kilogram scale.** When the sunlight falls on this semiconductor, electrons and holes are generated. The electrons reduced the protons to produce hydrogen, and holes are consumed by some chemical agents called sacrificial agents.

3. If the holes are not consumed, then they will recombine with the electrons. The reactor is about 1 metre square, and the photocatalyst was coated in the form of panels where water flow is maintained. Upon natural sunlight irradiation, hydrogen production occurs and is quantified through gas chromatography.

4. Significance of the development: Hydrogen generated in this manner can be used in many forms like electricity generation through fuel cells in remote tribal areas, hydrogen stoves, and powering small gadgets, to mention a few. Eventually, they can power the transformers and e-vehicles, which are long-term research goals under progress.

UNECE WATER CONVENTION AND SENEGALO-MAURITANIAN AQUIFER BASIN

1. The four West African countries- Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal- have signed a joint declaration to advance transboundary cooperation in the Senegal-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin (SMAB). They have agreed to establish a legal and institutional framework for cooperation on SMAB. This would be the first such mechanism in West Africa and pave the way for strengthened collaboration on shared groundwater resources worldwide.

2. About SMAB: **The Senegalo-Mauritanian aquifer basin is the largest basin in the Atlantic margin of north-west Africa, having an area of 350,000 square kilometres.** More than 24 million inhabitants of the region are dependent on it for drinking water and other needs.

3. Need for: Senegal, upon accession to the UNECE Water Convention in 2018, had requested for such a declaration. The Water Convention Secretariat, together with the Geneva Water Hub and the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre, subsequently facilitated the declaration.

4. About the Water Convention: **The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was adopted in Helsinki in 1992 and entered into force in 1996.** The Convention is a unique legally binding instrument promoting the sustainable management of shared water resources, the

an increasing number of deals struck not directly between governments but structured through often opaque arrangements with a range of financing institutions.

As many as eight Tamil prisoners in Sri Lanka's Anuradhapura prison on Thursday petitioned the country's Supreme Court, seeking relief after a 'gunwielding' Prisons Minister allegedly threatened them a fortnight ago. The prisoners stated that they fear for their lives, asking to be transferred to a prison in the Tamilmajority Northern Province. Jaffna parliamentarian and senior lawyer M.A. Sumanthiran will appear for them in the case.

implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the prevention of conflicts, and the promotion of peace and regional integration.