

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

At a time when the rural local bodies in nine newly constituted districts are going to the polls, some Chola era inscriptions bear testimony to the qualifications required for members of the village administrative council. The inscriptions at Thenneri village in Kancheepuram district also shed light on how farm produce was taxed. “The inscriptions of Uthiramerur in Kancheepuram district that dwells upon ‘Kudavolai’ — a system to elect members to annual committee (‘variyaam’), garden committee, tank committee and other committees for 30 wards — are wellknown. But very little is known about the Thenneri inscriptions laying down qualifications for candidates to village administrative committees (‘perumkuri sabai’).

The Council Of Scientific And Industrial Research National Geophysical Research Institute (CSIRNGRI) has launched an ‘Environmental Seismology’ group to develop a ‘Landslide and Flood Early Warning System’ for the Himalayan region based on real time monitoring with dense seismological networks, coupled with satellite data, numerical modelling and geomorphic analysis. “This would enable a crucial warning several hours prior, which will save human lives and property”. The need for such an early warning system was necessitated following February’s rockslide flood disaster in Chamoli (Uttarakhand), where a steep glacier on the Nandadevi peak in Garhwal Himalaya got detached, causing a major avalanche and inducing flash floods in the Rishi Ganga and Alaknanda rivers.

The Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) has said that deliberations and file notings regarding the Centre’s announcement in 2018 to collect data on Other Backward Classes (OBC) as part of Census 2021 is not available with it. The RGI, in its response to an RTI query filed by The Hindu, added that data on castes, communities and OBCs, other than the notified Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are not collected in the Census. On August 31, 2018, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced that OBC data would be collected for the first time in the next Census.

VANISHING LAKE OF BENGALURU

1. In order to protect Bengaluru lakes, the Karnataka High Court ordered the state government to issue necessary instructions to remove encroachments from the water bodies in accordance with the Land Revenue Act.
2. Terrain of Bengaluru with hills and valleys provide a natural drainage system with small streams originating from ridges to form major streams that flow into major and minor lakes. But these lakes are disappearing.
3. Reasons for decline - Encroachment of the lakes by real estate developers, and also by the government agencies to set up bus stands, research centres, etc is a major reason that the lakes are disappearing. In 2015, the Koliwad Committee stated that real estate developers and government bodies were major encroachers of lakes in Bengaluru.
4. During 2015-16 period, 98% lakes were encroached for illegal buildings, slums, etc and that sewage is flowing into 90% of the lakes in the city. Consequences - Lakes are contaminated due to the sustained inflow of untreated industrial effluents and domestic sewage.
5. **The groundwater in the vicinity of lakes is contaminated which is evident from the higher nitrate levels and heavy metal in the groundwater.** Indiscriminate dumping of municipal solid waste has also led to the contamination of groundwater.

AKASH PRIME MISSILE

1. A new version of the Akash Missile - ‘Akash Prime’ has been successfully flight tested from Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha.
2. Akash Prime is a medium-range mobile surface-to-air missile (SAM) system developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and produced by Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL).
3. It can be fired from a tank or a wheeled truck to attack an aerial target. It was developed to replace the Russian 2K12 Kub (SA-6 Gainful) missile.
4. Advantages - **Akash Prime is equipped with an indigenous active Radio Frequency seeker for improved accuracy.** Other improvements also ensure more reliable performance under low temperature environments at higher altitudes.
5. Modified ground system of the existing Akash weapon system has been used for the current flight test. Akash Prime system will further boost the confidence of the Indian Army and Indian Air Force as the Akash system is already inducted and now getting improved with more lethal missiles.

EXTENDING THE FOREIGN TRADE POLICY

1. The Centre has decided to extend the existing foreign trade policy (FTP) 2015-20 till March 31, 2022. On March 31, 2020, the government had extended the FTP 2015-20 for one year till March 31, 2021, amid the coronavirus outbreak.
2. It was later extended until September 30, 2021 as the pandemic continued. The FTP 2015-20 was formulated by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, an arm of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
3. Also known as Exim Policy, the FTP 2015-20 provides guidelines for Enhancing exports of goods and services to push economic growth Generating employment, and Increasing value addition in the country.
4. The focus of the government is to support both the manufacturing and services sectors, with a special emphasis on improving the ease of doing business. Under this policy, the government provides incentives via different schemes such as Duty Free Import Authorisation (DFIA) and Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG).
5. Features of the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-2020- **Market Linked Focus Product Scheme (MLFPS), Focus Product Scheme (FPS), Agriculture Infrastructure Incentive Scrip (AIIS), Focus Market Scheme (FMS), Vishesh Krishi Gramin Upaj Yojana (VKGUY).**

The transgression by Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldiers at Barahoti in Uttarakhand in August is part of a pattern of largesize patrols by China to assert their claim while also testing India across the Line of Actual Control (LAC), say Defence Ministry officials. In this regard, there is a need for better operational synergy between the Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), to avoid any surprises as in Galwan, which is presently severely lacking, Army and Defence officials said.

A Britishera bungalow on a hillock that used to be the 17 th century military office of the Ahom rulers has been converted into a heritage centre depicting life along the Brahmaputra. VicePresident M. Venkaiah Naidu on Sunday inaugurated the Mahabahu Brahmaputra River Heritage Centre on Guwahati's Barphukanar Tila, meaning Barphukan's Hillock. A Scottishtype wooden bungalow standing since 1850 was renovated and converted into the heritage centre.

More than a dozen heads of state and government, including the King of Jordan and the Czech Prime Minister, have hidden millions in offshore tax havens, according to an investigation published on Sunday by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) — media consortium. The so-called "Pandora Papers" investigation — involving some 600 journalists from media including The Washington Post, the BBC and The Guardian — is based on the leak of some 11.9 million documents from 14 financial services companies around the world.

North Korea has warned the UN Security Council against criticising the isolated country's missile programme, in a statement on Sunday that included unspecified threats against the international body. During an emergency closed-door meeting of the top UN body on Friday, France circulated a proposed statement that expresses concern over North Korea's missile launches and calls on it to fully implement council resolutions that ban its ballistic missile firings.

Women voters voiced disappointment after none were elected in Qatar's first legislative polls with all eyes on whether the Emir will use his powers to appoint 15 lawmakers to boost representation. Thirty men were elected to Qatar's Shura Council at Saturday's polls despite more than two dozen women standing for the

FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION

- 1.The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare released the first advance estimates of production of major kharif crops for 2021-22. During the summer kharif season, the total food grain production estimated to reach an all time high of 150.50 million tonnes.
- 2.**Rice production is estimated to be 10.7 crore tonnes this year, slightly higher than the 10.4 crore tonnes produced last year.** The acreage sown with paddy also increased by almost 1 lakh hectares.
- 3.Oilseeds - Both major oilseed crops (groundnut and soyabean) in the kharif season saw slight dips in production. Groundnut acreage dropped almost 4%, resulting in an estimated production of 82.5 lakh tonnes.
- 4.Soyabean production (affected by patchy rainfall in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh) may amount to 1.27 crore tonnes, slightly lower than last year, and short of the 1.47 crore tonnes targeted. Pulses - Main kharif pulse crop, toor dal, may surpass both last year's production and this year's targets, with a harvest of 44.3 lakh tonnes. Coarse cereals' production is pegged to drop to 3.4 crore tonnes in comparison to 3.6 crore last year.
- 5.**Cash crops are likely to see record production, with an estimate of 41.9 crore tonnes in the case of sugarcane and 3.6 crore bales of cotton.**

LOW-CARBON BRICKS

- 1.Researchers have developed energy-efficient low-carbon bricks using construction and demolition waste (CDW) and alkali-activated binders. These low-carbon bricks were developed from CDW waste through an alkali activation process using fly ash and ground slag.
- 2.Low-carbon bricks do not require high-temperature firing, and avoid the use of high-energy materials such as Portland cement.
- 3.**The technology will be a solution to, Disposal problems associated with C&D waste mitigation, Conservation of mined raw material resources and Reduction of emission.**
- 4.Annual consumption of bricks and blocks in India is about 900 million tonnes. Construction industry generates 70-100 million tonnes per annum of CDW.

SIMPLIFICATION OF THE COFFEE ACT

- 1.Ministry of Commerce & Industry decided to simplify the Coffee Act, 1942. The Coffee Act enacted in 1942 has some regulatory issues. Registration - Any person owning land with coffee plants planted on it, or divided amongst different estates has to apply for registration at the registration officer appointed by State Government. They have to do so within a month of the date when they became owner.
- 2.Once registered, it can only become invalid if the registering officer cancels it. Punishment for non-compliance to above mentioned procedure is a fine of up to Rs. 1000 and a fine of up to Rs. 500 for each subsequent month.
- 3.**Coffee Board of India is a statutory organization constituted under the Coffee Act, 1942. It functions under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.** Curing means the application to raw coffee of mechanical processes other than pulping for the purpose of preparing it for marketing.
- 4.Selling - All saleable coffee has to have been cured at licensed curing establishment or delivered to the buyer through a curing establishment licensed under the Act. It can also be sold in accordance to a license procured from the Coffee Board. Owners can also sell uncured coffee.
- 5.Every establishment made with the purpose of curing coffee must get a license from the Board for the same. The Act states that Coffee cannot be exported from India by anyone except the Board or with the authorization of the Board.

BLUE DOT NETWORK

- 1.In 2019, the Blue Dot Network (BDN) was announced as a joint initiative of the US, Japan and Australia to certify infrastructure projects that meet international quality standards. It brings together governments, the private sector and civil society to promote principles of global sustainable infrastructure development.
- 2.It will help attract private capital to infrastructure projects in developing and emerging economies. It is seen as a direct counter to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- 3.**BDN certification will serve as a globally recognized symbol**

body which is seen as a nod to democracy rather than a fullfledged parliament.

U.S. President Joe Biden vowed on Friday to get his sweeping domestic agenda over the line as he visited the U.S. Congress to energise Democrats negotiating for a second day on the twin make or break spending Bills that could define his legacy — or spell crippling political failure.

of market-driven, Paris Agreement-aligned, and financially, socially, and environmentally sustainable infrastructure projects. But, unlike the BRI, the BDN would not offer public funds or loans for the project.