

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Continuing its infrastructure build up in Tibet, China has completed a key section of the Beijing Lhasa expressway, a 295 km stretch from Lhasa to Nagqu. This section is located at an average altitude of 4,500 metres above sea level, which Chinese state media have termed the world's highest expressway. In a separate development opposite the Central sector in Uttarakhand, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has set up surveillance equipment and cameras opposite the Kio Dhura pass, according to intelligence inputs. "Yellow balloon shaped surveillance equipment are co-located with a windmill and solar panel at the site. The Lhasa Nagqu section is part of the G6 Beijing - Lhasa expressway and is the first expressway linking Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region to north Tibet.

Setting the stage for an overhaul of the multiple tax rates under the Goods and Services Tax regime, the government has tasked a Group of Ministers (GoM), led by Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj S. Bommai, with proposing a rationalisation of tax rates and considering the merger of different tax slabs within two months. Currently, the GST regime has five broad tax rate slabs of zero, 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%, with a cess levied over and above the 28% on some goods, and special rates for items like precious stones and diamonds.

The proportion of all cancer cases was higher in men (52.4%) than women (47.4%), noted the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) 'Clinicopathological Profile of Cancers in India: A Report of the Hospital Based Cancer Registries, 2021' released on Sunday. In women, gynaecological cancers, including breast cancer, comprised over half of all cancers. Childhood (0-14 years) cancers constitute 7.9% of all cancers. The report said that cancers of the head and neck region accounted for nearly one third (31.2%) of the cancers among men.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the Pradhan Mantri Digital Health Mission (PMDHM) on September 27 via video conferencing. Currently, the PMDHM is being implemented in a pilot phase in six Union Territories. According to a release issued by the Central government, the PMDHM

CHINA'S EVERGRANDE CRISIS

1.Chinese real estate conglomerate Evergrande Group has been in the news recently over its inability to pay interest on its huge debt obligations.

2.What is the trouble at Evergrande? The Evergrande Group is China's second-largest real estate company in terms of total sales and employs over 200,000 employees. Its core business deals with buying land, developing them into houses, restaurants and so on and selling them to interested buyers. **The company uses large amounts of debt from banks and investors as well as short-term loans to fund its business.** It has total liabilities worth over \$300 billion and has to pay around \$37 billion in interest and maturing debt over the next year. Its share price has dropped over 80% in the last one year and hit a 10-year low. The company has also taken money in advance from buyers and from its own employees but has defaulted on these products.

3.Why is the company in trouble? **Almost a third of the Chinese GDP is made up of the property sector with Chinese authorities traditionally encouraging businesses to take on huge amounts of debts.** But the recent Chinese government's rules for property developers called 'three red lines' that states how much a property developer can borrow given its financial position as measured by three debt metrics. This policy practically cut off Evergrande from taking on any more debt on its balance sheet. Some analysts argue that the company's business model has been unsustainable for a long time. It was said that the company held properties that it could not sell on its balance sheet as inventory to avoid booking of losses.

4.What lies ahead? **Any bailout by Chinese government will require the creation of a fresh supply of money which in turn will debase the value of the Chinese currency.** Foreign investors with exposure to Evergrande may experience losses. Any slowdown in the Chinese economy in the course of rebalancement away from the property sector will have effects on the global supply chain. For instance, metal stocks in India have witnessed a sharp correction in attribution to fears of a slump in Chinese demand.

THE STATE OF AGRICULTURE IN INDIA

1.National Statistical Office's Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of agricultural households for the 2018-19 agricultural year holds importance given the unprecedented crisis in India's agricultural economy.

2.What are the causes for crisis in agriculture? Sharp slowdown in the economy. Rise in input costs driven by rising wages. Faulty implementation of India's fertilizer-subsidy reforms. Higher fuel prices. Back-to-back drought in 2014 and 2015. Demonetization caused disruptions. Covid pandemic.

3.What does the SAS 2018-19 say? **The average income of an agricultural household from farm and non-farm incomes increased in real terms from Rs.6,436 in 2012-13 to Rs.7,683 in 2018-19.** This was mainly due to higher wage incomes which rose 6.7% per annum. For a majority of the farmers engaged in crop cultivation, real incomes from it declined 1.3% per annum which led to fall in investment in productive assets. Net investment in productive assets in 2018-19 was less than half the level in 2012-13, even in nominal terms.

4.Why is the estimate of the SAS worrisome? **A large proportion of rural households in India are engaged in agriculture and within agriculture, an overwhelmingly large proportion is dependent on crop production.** The fall in real cultivation incomes has been partly responsible for hurting demand and in turn economic growth. While the increase in wage labour may have protected agricultural households from a decline in real incomes, it doesn't warrant that the non-farm sector will protect farmers' incomes in the future. These estimates pertain to two years before the pandemic and now the situation would have worsened on account of a rise in input costs driven by energy and fertilizer prices.

will create a seamless online platform through the provision of a wide range of data, information and infrastructure services by leveraging open, interoperable, standards based digital systems, while ensuring the security, confidentiality and privacy of health related personal information.

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana backed 50% representation for women in judiciary. "It is your right. It is not a matter of charity... Enough of this thousands of years of suppression," Chief Justice Ramana said.

The geographical influence of Maoists has contracted to only 41 districts in the country, a sharp reduction from 96 such districts in 10 States in 2010, according to data provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to Chief Ministers and other officials at a meeting held on Sunday.

India's envoy to China has called on Beijing to "avoid shifting goalposts" by conflating the immediate challenge of managing disputed border areas with the longer term negotiations to resolve the boundary dispute, saying both sides needed to follow past agreements and pursue both objectives on parallel tracks.

Before the pandemic started, the major players in India's room air conditioner market had no plans to invest in larger manufacturing operations, relying instead on convenient imports for over 80% of ACs. Over the past week, despite COVID19 denting AC sales, global brands like Hitachi as well as domestic majors like Voltas, have announced investments of about ₹5,000 crore to reverse the reliance on imported parts from 80% to 20% over the next five years.

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar reiterated that conducting a caste based census in the country is the "need of the hour". Mr. Kumar said he would be holding an all party meeting after the Central government informed the Supreme Court that conducting such a census was not feasible. On September 23, the Centre told the Supreme Court that a caste census was not feasible as it was "administratively difficult and cumbersome, and excluding such information from the purview of census is a conscious policy decision".

Cyclone Gulab crossed the north Andhra Pradesh and south Odisha coast about 20 km north of Kalingapatnam on Sunday evening, triggering widespread rain in the region.

5. Also data from the wholesale price index suggests that farm-gate prices for a majority of crops have either declined or remained stagnant. Periodic Labour Force Survey showed an actual increase in workers dependent on agriculture which would cause sharp reduction in real incomes per agricultural worker. The agrarian issues are taking centre-stage with the intensification of the farmer agitation against three farm laws. The survey raises a serious concern not only on the implications of working conditions of Indian farmers but also on the sustainability of growth itself.

NATIONAL MISSION ON EDIBLE OILS-OIL PALM

1. Arunachal Pradesh has identified 1.33 lakh hectares of wasteland for taking forward the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP).

2. NMEO-OP is a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme that will help in, Reducing the heavy dependence on imports for edible oils, Increasing the domestic production of edible oils to 3 times (11 lakh MT by 2025-26), and productivity of oil palm, Increasing an additional area of 6.5 lakh hectare (ha.) for oil palm till 2025-26 and thus reaching the target of 10 lakh ha ultimately, Increasing the income of the farmers.

3. NMEO-OP has a special focus on the North east region and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The production of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) is expected to go up to 11.20 lakh tonnes by 2025-26 and up to 28 lakh tonnes by 2029-30. Viability Price (VP) will be the price assurance given by the Government of India to the oil palm farmers for their Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFBs) from which oil is the industry extracts. This VP shall be the annual average CPO price of the last 5 years adjusted with the wholesale price index to be multiplied by 14.3%.

4. Formula price (FP) will also be fixed which will be 14.3% of CPO and will be fixed on a monthly basis. Viability gap funding will be the VP-FP and if the need arises, it would be paid directly to the farmers accounts in the form of DBT. To give impetus to the North-East and Andaman, the Government will additional bear a cost of 2% of the CPO price to ensure that the farmers are paid at par with the rest of India. There is a sunset clause for the scheme which is 1st November 2037.

5. Assistance - A substantial increase of assistance for planting material for oil palm, rejuvenation of old gardens, seed gardens, etc with the special focus on North-East & Andaman regions.

OCEAN STATE REPORT 5

1. The Copernicus Marine Environmental Monitoring Service has released the 5th edition of the Ocean State Report (OSR 5). The report has said that the global ocean is undergoing severe changes from natural variations, over-exploitation and anthropogenic influences. These changes caused the sea level to rise by 3.1 millimeters each year on an average between January 1993 and May 2020.

2. The report showed that the sea ice is steadily decreasing in the Arctic. It has also showed that the warming ocean waters have caused many marine species to move towards cooler waters. This migration has led to the introduction of non-native and invasive species to different marine ecosystems. Around 50% of Earth's oxygen production takes place in the ocean, sustaining marine life cycles.

3. This is threatened by growing human activities leading to climate change and eutrophication. This deoxygenates the oceans and seas and has adverse consequences on the marine life. Tools & technologies - The report suggested new tools for monitoring ocean changes: Forecast alert systems in Malta, Prediction models for jellyfish blooms in the Mediterranean Sea, Real-time monitoring programmes for tailored sea ice data.

4. These tools can help scientists and policy-makers adapt to a changing ocean on a local, regional and global scale.

LIFI NETWORK

1. Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), India's highest altitude educational organisation, has become the 1st institute in the Union Territory to have an internet connection using LiFi technology. Light Fidelity (LiFi) is a wireless communication technology that transmits data with a light beam spectrum through open space in outdoor and indoor environments.

2. It is a Visible Light Communications (VLC) system has, Solid-state lighting (SSL) such as LED bulbs, Photo-detector (photodiode) to receive light signals and Signal processing

Over 14 hectares of forest land in east and northeast Delhi having 5,104 trees is proposed to be diverted for the construction of a stretch of a sixlane highway. The NHAI has sought permission from the Delhi forest department for the development of a 14.75km stretch of the sixlane access controlled Delhi-Saharanpur highway, according to official documents.

element to convert the data (embedded in the light beam) into 'stream-able' content.

3.Data is fed into an LED light bulb (with signal processing technology). Then the LED bulb sends data at rapid speeds to the photo-detector. Uses - LiFi systems provide ultra-fast, safe and cheap data connections.

4.They are chiefly useful in urban areas where radio spectra are congested. They are also very useful in rural areas wherein Fiber Optic Cables or networks are not reachable. Specialty - LiFi can be up to 100 times faster than Wi-Fi.