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17TH AUGUST 2022

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

The Railways conducted a test run of its longest freight train, Super Vasuki, with 295 loaded wagons carrying over 27,000 tonnes of coal, on August 15, as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations. The 3.5km long freight train covered the distance of about 267 km between Korba in Chhattisgarh and Rajnandgaon in Nagpur, and was run by the South East Central Railway (SECR). This is the longest and heaviest freight train ever run by the Railways, the national transporter said, adding that the train takes about four minutes to cross a station.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday handed over several indigenously developed equipment and systems to the Army. They include Future Infantry Soldier as a System (FINSAS), new generation antipersonnel mine 'Nipun', rugged and automatic communication system with enhanced capabilities, upgraded sights system for tanks, advanced thermal imagers and state of the art high mobility infantry protected vehicles and assault boats. The equipment/systems have been jointly developed by Army in collaboration with Defence Public Sector Undertakings, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Industry, a Defence Ministry statement said.

India's ambitious project to translocate African cheetahs has missed an unofficial deadline of August 15, though sources say the wild cats are likely to arrive here within this year. Though agreements have been signed with both South Africa and Namibia, administrative delays, as well as the presence of leopards in the cheetahs' prospective destination — the Kuno Palpur forest reserve, Madhya Pradesh — are believed to be barriers to their arrival. India's action plan, a longterm translocation project made public this February, on re-establishing the cheetah — extinct since 1952 in India — states that a cohort of around 1012 young would be imported from Namibia or South Africa as a founder stock during the first year.

China's satellite tracking vessel Yuan Wang 5 arrived at Sri Lanka's southern Hambantota port on Tuesday, despite India and the U.S. voicing concern with Colombo over the military ship's visit. Hours after the vessel reached the Sri Lankan

ADICHANALLUR EXCAVATIONS

1.The Archaeological Survey of India has undertaken an extensive excavation at Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu. In 1903-04 British archaeologist Alexander Rea unearthed a treasure of over 9,000 objects in Adichanallur. Nearly 100 years later in 2004 and 2005 archaeologists found a lot of iron objects, and a few copper objects but no bronze or gold, as they were more focused on habitations.

2.In October 2021 using the Geological Survey of India (GSI) data and clues discovered from Rea's report, the ASI team zeroed in on the trenches to be dug. The site has about seven possible burials of the heads of important persons of the clans that existed between 500 to 1,000 BCE. The recent excavations have yielded a wealth of materials, including gold, metals and human remains. This will help archaeologists reconstruct the framework of this ancient civilisation.

3.Various Materials unearthed include burial urns, 3000 years old Human skull, Bronze artefacts, Headgear, Spear, Arrowheads, Dog toy and Paddy. Gold diadem - In the first trench, they found objects in bronze and gold similar to the 14 gold diadems discovered by Alexander Rea. Gold was an inland source from the region located north of the present northern borders of Tamil Nadu.

4.Several gold workings are reported from the neighbourhood of the Hutti gold mines, the present Raichur district of Karnataka. Some of them have been dated to about 3,000 years ago. Sanganakallu, a Neolithic and Megalithic site near Ballari in Karnataka, has yielded gold foils but in small quantities and not from a burial context like at Adichanallur.

5.The granulite terrain in Tamil Nadu is also reported to yield gold. From 1,000 BCE onwards since the beginning of the megalithic or Iron Age in south India, gold was a traded commodity. So it is not surprising that it has been found in Adichanallur. However, how long ago this gold was exploited is not known. Adichanallur is the first archaeological site in Tamil Nadu where gold was excavated. Not far from the Adichanallur lies Korkai the ancient port city of the Pandya kings. Archaeologists doubt if Adichanallur was a satellite village of Korkai port city.

6.Maritime trade - Associated materials yielded vital clues for maritime trade activities at the southern rim of the Indian Ocean. Recoveries of many Tamil cultural artefacts in Vietnam, Cambodia and other South East and Far East Asian countries right from the Iron Age till the early 17th Century prove that there were aggressive free sea trade activities that flourished for a long time.

7.Skeletal biological data from the skeletal remains however was insufficient to draw a genuine conclusion on the structure of the ancient community. But the results on pathological skeletal and dental abnormalities were amazing. Such abnormalities had never been reported from anywhere else so far.

PIN CODE

1.The 75th Independence Day marks the 50th year of the introduction of the PIN code. On August 15, 1972, that the Postal Identification Number (PIN) was introduced in India. The initiative was led by Shriram Bhikaji Velankar. At the time of Independence, there were 23,344 post offices in India. They were primarily in urban areas. As the country was growing rapidly and the postal network had to keep pace.

2.The PIN code eased the process of mail sorting and delivery in a country where different places, often, have the same or similar names, and letters are written in a wide variety of languages. The PIN is made up of six digits. The first number indicates the postal region — Northern, Eastern, Western, and Southern. Number 9 signifies the Army Postal Service. The second number denotes a sub-region, and the third represents the sorting district. The remaining numbers narrow the geography further to the specific post office making the delivery.

3.Shriram Bhikaji Velankar – Velankar was then the additional secretary in the Union Ministry of Communications and a senior

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port, China said the “marine scientific research” activities of the vessel were “consistent with international law” and did not impact “any other country’s security interests”.

13.93 %, the wholesale price based inflation in July which eased to a five month low due to the softening of food prices and manufactured products. The WPI based inflation softened for the second consecutive month in July, raising hopes of further decline in the months to come. Inflation of food articles in July eased to 10.77% from 14.39% in June. The rate of price rise in vegetables declined substantially to 18.25% in July against 56.75% the previous month.

The Union Home Ministry on Tuesday in the Supreme Court said a petition claiming attacks on the Christian community was based on “falsehood” and “selective self-serving documents”. Even family feuds and private land disputes were being shown as communal targeting, the Ministry countered.

China announced a slew of perks aimed at encouraging families to have more babies, as birth rates hit a record low and officials warned that the population will start to shrink by 2025. The policy guidelines issued by the National Health Commission Tuesday urge both the central and provincial governments to increase spending on reproductive health and improve childcare services nationwide.

China imposed visa bans and other sanctions on Tuesday on Taiwanese political figures as it raises pressure on the self-governing island and the U.S. in response to successive congressional visits. The sanctions come a day after China announced more military exercises in the seas and skies surrounding Taiwan because of what it called “collusion and provocation between the U.S. and Taiwan.” There’s been no word on the timing and scale of the Chinese exercises.

Russia’s Defence Ministry said on Tuesday that a fire that set off explosions at a munitions depot in Moscow annexed Crimea was caused by an act of “sabotage”.

Sri Lanka will not extend a state of emergency imposed to control anti-government protests as the situation

member of the Posts and Telegraphs Board. He was also a Sanskrit poet of eminence. He had been conferred the President’s Award for Sanskrit in 1996. Among Velankar’s 105 books and plays in Sanskrit the Viloma Kavya is a literary masterpiece.

4.It comprises verses in praise of Lord Rama when read from one side and, when to read backwards, it is transformed into verses dedicated to Lord Krishna. Velankar had set up a cultural group in Mumbai, called the Dev Vani Mandiram, which worked to create awareness about Sanskrit in India and foreign countries. Velankar was also the chairman of the World Philatelic Exhibition, called Indipex, which was held in New Delhi in 1973 and featured 120 countries.

ETHANOL BLENDING

1.India has achieved the target of blending 10% ethanol in petrol ahead of schedule. India is the world’s fifth largest producer of ethanol after the U.S., Brazil, the EU and China. India is the world’s third-biggest oil importing and consuming nation.

2.Ethanol is produced from molasses a by-product of the sugar industry. Ethanol worldwide is largely used for consumption but nations like Brazil and India also dope it in petrol. As the availability of ethanol increases, the equivalent amount of crude (used for petrol production) import is reduced. In a bid to cut reliance on imported oil, the government is pushing for the mixing of ethanol, made from sugarcane and other Agri commodities, in petrol.

3.During surplus production, sugar mills get low prices for sugar. In such times converting molasses to ethanol for blending will help save the sugar mill owners. To achieve this Ethanol Blended Petrol programme was launched in January 2003 in 9 states and 4 UTs. It seeks to blend Ethanol with motor spirit with a view to reducing pollution, conserving foreign exchange and increasing value addition in the sugar industry. Initially, the Oil Marketing Companies were directed to sell 5% Ethanol Blended Petrol. In April 2019 the programme has been extended to the whole of India except the Union Territories of Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands wherein OMCs sell petrol blended with ethanol up to 10%. 4.The Central Government has scaled up blending targets from 5% to 10% under the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP). In 2018-19 5% blending of ethanol was achieved using 189 crore litres of ethanol supplied by sugar mills and grain-based distilleries to OMCs. During 2020-21 blending 8.5% blending was achieved. Now the target of blending 10% ethanol was achieved in June 2022 ahead of the original schedule of November 2022. Encouraged by this success, the government advanced the target of making petrol with 20% ethanol by five years by 2025.

5.10% ethanol blending had resulted in a saving of about ₹50,000 crores of foreign exchange. reduced greenhouse gas emissions. alternate source of income for farmers. The Centre had announced an additional duty of ₹2 per litre on unblended fuels starting October 2022 to incentivise blending. That duty will no longer be effective as the target of a 10% blend has been achieved.

BAL AADHAR INITIATIVE

1.Context: Over 7.9 million children aged up to five were enrolled under the Unique Identification Authority’s Bal Aadhaar initiative from April to July. About: The Bal Aadhaar, a precursor to a standard Aadhaar, is issued in blue colour to children aged up to five.

2.Upon expiration, a regular Aadhaar is issued. Benefits: Bal Aadhaar works as a facilitator in availing several welfare benefits, and also works as a digital photo identity for children. Difference with regular Aadhaar: Biometrics to establish uniqueness for the Bal Aadhaar is not collected unlike in the case of Aadhaar.

3.A facial image of a child is instead taken for enrolment. Biometric authentication of the parent/guardian and a proof of relationship document, preferably a birth certificate, are collected at the time of enrolment.

4.CAG criticism of Bal Aadhaar: The audit was also critical of UIDAI’s move to issue Aadhaar cards to children and newborns

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in the impoverished nation has “stabilised”, the President’s office said Tuesday. Ranil Wickremesinghe invoked the tough laws four days after his predecessor fled the country and resigned on July 14 after months of protests over acute shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

without biometrics under an initiative known as Bal Aadhaar. This needs to be reviewed because anyway after 5 years, a child has to apply for a new regular Aadhaar.