

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh unveiled the second edition of the 'Mehar Baba' swarm drone competition by the Indian Air Force (IAF) for Indian start ups to develop a swarm drone based system to detect foreign objects on aircraft operating surfaces. This was unveiled at the IAF Commanders Conference, which began on Wednesday.

The government said it had formed an advisory committee for Semicon India, which will include senior government officials, established academicians as well as industry and domain experts. The panel will be chaired by the Minister of Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw, with the Minister of State Rajeesh Chandrashekhar, as the Vice Chairperson. Secretary, MeitY, will be the committee's convenor. "The committee shall steer the objectives in a structured, efficient and strategic manner, and provide guidance to the India Semiconductor Mission executives," the government said in a statement.

India's vote at the UN General Assembly will be watched closely, as a resolution sponsored by the U.S., U.K. and other countries seeks to suspend Russia's membership of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), where it is an elected member, after the discovery of mass graves and human rights excesses in the Ukrainian city of Bucha.

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) dumped Indian shares worth a record ₹1.4 lakh crore in FY22, mainly on account of a sharp surge (globally) in COVID19 cases, concerns over the risk to economic recovery and the global turmoil triggered by the Russia Ukraine war. This compares with inflows of ₹2.7 lakh crore in FY21.

India will be "glad" to help in bringing about a resolution for the crisis in Ukraine, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Wednesday. Speaking in the Lok Sabha during a discussion under Rule 193 regarding the crisis in Ukraine and its implications, Dr. Jaishankar said that Russia is "a very important partner" but also held that India is against the conflict. He acknowledged the support from Russia, Ukraine and

RNOR TAG

1.Overseas Indians float local trusts to escape Resident but Not Ordinary Resident (RNOR) tag. An RNOR is a non-resident Indian who Has been an NRI in 9 out of the 10 previous years preceding to that year, OR Has, during the 7 previous years preceding that year, been in India for a period of, or periods amounting in all to 729 days or less.

2.OR An Indian Citizen, who is not a tax resident of any other country, and having a total income of Rs 15 lakh and more (Excluding income from foreign sources) OR An Indian Citizen, or a PIO, having Income in India of Rs 15 lakh or more (Excluding Income from foreign sources), and the period of stay in India was 120 days and more but less than 182 days. The status of an RNOR lies in between that of a non-resident Indian who stays more than 181 days in the country and a regular resident Indian.

3.Impacts - An RNOR has to fork out higher tax - unlike an NRI who pays a much lower tax (of 12.5% to 15%) in accordance with the respective tax treaty between India and the country where she is based. But more than the tax impact, there is a fear that this may be the first step towards a mandatory disclosure of all overseas assets.

4.Currently, only resident Indians have to spell out their foreign assets in the Income Tax (I-T) return forms while NRIs and RNORs do not have to make any such disclosure. This may change for RNORs.

SPLINTERNET

1.Russia's invasion of Ukraine does seem as a potential trigger for a splintered internet. The idea of 'Splinternet' was proposed by Clyde Wayne Crews, a researcher at libertarian think-tank Cato Institute. The 'Splinternet' is an internet splintered into disparate realms controlled by different dispensations or powers.

2.It is also referred to as cyber-balkanization or internet balkanization. The fundamental proposal was to have more internets instead of having more regulations. Over the past two decades, a splintering of internet has occurred in some limited ways.

3.For example, China's 'Great Firewall' keeps American tech giants out while pushing online services developed indigenously. In 2019, Russia passed the online Iron Curtain (the sovereign internet law) that enabled it to disconnect its internet from rest of the world.

4.In Iran, a project called the National Information Network (NIN) or National Internet in Iran has been initiated by the state-owned Telecommunication Company of Iran.

STEEL SLAG ROAD

1.Surat has become the first city in the country to get a processed steel slag (industrial waste) six-lane road. Steel Slag Road is a brainchild of the Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), NITI Aayog, and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). This road is built under the 'Waste to Wealth and Clean India' initiative. Steel Slag is an industrial by-product obtained from the steel manufacturing industry.

2.It is generated from a steel furnace burning at around 1,500-1,600 degree centigrade in the form of molten flux material as an impurity. Use in Road - The construction cost of the processed steel slag road is 30% cheaper than roads built from natural aggregates. The thickness of the road is also 30% lesser than normal ones, while the durability is much longer due to the utilisation of steel slag. Utilization of processed steel slag in road construction paves the way for Sustainable use of waste and reduces the reliance on perishable natural aggregates, Reduce GHG emissions and carbon footprint in road construction activity.

3.This process is in line with India's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No. 9 for building resilient infrastructure through inclusive and sustainable industrialization & green technologies.

even Indian nationals based in Eastern Europe during Operation Ganga to evacuate Indian students from Ukraine.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa “has no reason” to resign, the chief government whip told Sri Lankan Parliament on Wednesday, as citizens’ protests expand, now with state sector workers too demanding his resignation.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) forecasts that India’s GDP growth will moderate to 7.5% in 2022-23, from an estimated 8.9% in 2021-22. The multilateral lender, however, sees the pace picking up in 2023-24 to reach 8%. The ADB has factored in the Russia-Ukraine conflict’s implications for India, which would be largely indirect through higher oil prices, and has assumed that the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic would subside with a rise in vaccination rates.

The Supreme Court ordered Amazon and Future to move the Singapore International Arbitration Centre-governed arbitral tribunal to resume arbitration proceedings in a dispute concerning Future’s proposed ₹24,500 crore deal with Reliance.

A military court in Burkina Faso on Wednesday handed down a life term to former president Blaise Compaoré over the 1987 assassination of revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara.

The Union government has extended the scheme to provide ₹40 crore grants in aid to the Dalai Lama’s Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC) for another five years, up to fiscal year 2025-26, the Rajya Sabha was informed.

As differences with the U.S., the E.U. and other allied partners grow over India’s position on Russia and Ukraine, the Union government is planning a number of high-level diplomatic meetings in the next few months, sources said. External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will travel to Washington over the weekend for “2+2” ministerial talks with Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Defence Secretary General Lloyd Austin (ret.) and other meetings from April 11 to 13 and visit Tokyo later this month for another “2+2”.

With India having recorded the hottest March in 121 years, Science Minister Jitendra Singh said in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday that “global warming” was to blame.

4. Other uses - **Steel slag can be used as aggregates in concrete to replace natural aggregates, because it has favorable mechanical properties, and high resistance to abrasion and impact.** It is used to treat acidic water. In the agricultural sector, due to its ability to correct soil acidity, it is used as silicate fertilizer that is capable of providing silicon to the plants.

ATTAPPADY

1. Prehistoric relics were discovered along the banks of three rivers flowing through Attappady hills. Attappady Block came into being in 1962 and the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) in 1976. It is situated in the Western Ghats in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

2. Main source of income of scheduled tribes living in this area is from agriculture and allied sectors and collection of minor forest produce. Major chunk of minor forest produce collected in Kerala is from Attappady.

3. Lack of irrigation and deforestation are the serious constraints to agricultural development in this area. The main water sources are the river Bhavani, Siruvani and Varagar. Along with agricultural activities, cattle rearing is also the main source of income.

WWF REPORT ON ONLINE WILDLIFE TRADE

1. A report by the World Wildlife Fund shows illegal purchases of wildlife online are growing in Myanmar in a threat both to public health and to endangered species. The report found that enforcement of bans on such transactions has weakened amid political turmoil following a 2021 military takeover.

2. **The number of such dealings rose 74% over a year earlier to 11,046, nearly all of them involving sales of live animals. For the 173 species traded, 54 are threatened with global extinction.** The animals bought and sold included elephants, bears and gibbons, Tibetan antelope, critically endangered pangolins and an Asian giant tortoise.

3. The most popular were various species of monkeys, often bought as pets. Most of the animals advertised for sale were taken from the wild. They included civets, which along with pangolins have been identified as potential vectors in the spread of diseases such as SARS and COVID-19.

AIR QUALITY DATABASE 2022

1. Ahead of the World Health Day (7th April), the World Health Organisation (WHO) has released Air Quality Database 2022, which shows that almost the entire global population (99%) breathes air that exceeds WHO’s air quality limits. The WHO for the first time has taken ground measurements of annual mean concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

2. It also includes measurements of Particulate Matter with diameters equal or smaller than 10 µm (PM₁₀) or 2.5 µm (PM_{2.5}). The findings have prompted WHO to highlight the importance of curbing fossil fuel use and taking other tangible steps to reduce air pollution levels.

3. Key findings: According to the report “Air quality is poorest in the Eastern Mediterranean and Southeast Asia regions, followed by Africa”. The highest concentrations of Nitrogen dioxide were found in the eastern Mediterranean region. In low and middle-income countries, air quality in less than 1% of the cities complies with WHO recommended thresholds.

GREEN HYDROGEN

1. Hydrogen when produced by electrolysis using renewable energy is known as Green Hydrogen which has no carbon footprint.

2. Significance of Green Hydrogen: **Green hydrogen energy is vital for India to meet its Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) Targets and ensure regional and national energy security, access and availability.**

3. Green Hydrogen can act as an energy storage option, which would be essential to meet intermittencies (of renewable energy) in the future.

4. In terms of mobility, for long distance mobilisations for either urban freight movement within cities and states or for passengers, Green Hydrogen can be used in railways, large ships, buses or trucks, etc.

5. Applications of green hydrogen: Green chemicals like ammonia and methanol can directly be utilized in existing applications like fertilizers, mobility, power, chemicals, shipping etc. Green

In a significant development, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to convert civil passenger aircraft to multi mission tanker transport (MMTT) aircraft in India.

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022, which seeks to authorise the collection, storage and analysis of biometric samples of convicts and others involved in criminal matters. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill on Monday.

Hydrogen blending up to 10% may be adopted in CGD networks to gain widespread acceptance.

6.Benefits: It is a clean-burning molecule, which can decarbonize a range of sectors including iron and steel, chemicals, and transportation. Renewable energy that cannot be stored or used by the grid can be channelled to produce hydrogen.