

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

The Union government recruited 78,264 people in Central Ministries and departments in the financial year 2020-21. On March 1, 2020, the total number of vacancies in central government offices stood at 8.72 lakh, the Ministry of Personnel informed the Rajya Sabha. "The details regarding persons engaged through outsourcing by various Ministries/Departments as per their requirement are not maintained centrally," the reply stated. It added that filling up of vacancies is a continuous process. "Government issues instructions to all the Ministries from time to time to fill up the posts.

India plans to execute the Chandrayaan-3 mission this August, Minister Jitendra Singh told the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. Though the government had stated that the mission was scheduled for 2022, this is the first time that a specific month has been announced. The Chandrayaan-3 mission is a follow up of Chandrayaan-2 of July 2019, which aimed to land a rover on the lunar South Pole.

The government is open to resolving genuine problems and reservations of cryptocurrency traders arising from the new taxation regime for virtual digital assets, but is of the firm view that there is no economic rationale for lowering the proposed 30% tax on profits from crypto assets' trading. While a review of the 1% tax deducted at source (TDS) rate for all virtual assets' trades could perhaps be considered, top Finance Ministry officials pointed out that even investments in equity and debt instruments which create value for the economy, involve the levy of a Securities Transaction Tax.

Terming China's decision to field a People's Liberation Army (PLA) soldier involved in the June 2020 Galwan clashes as the torchbearer for the Winter Olympics Games in Beijing as "regrettable", India announced a diplomatic boycott of the games just ahead of the opening ceremony.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court on Thursday granted an interim stay on the controversial law for reservation of 75% jobs in private companies, societies and trusts for local Haryana candidates.

Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi has

RASHTRIYA VAYOSHRI YOJANA

1. The Department of Social Justice & Empowerment launched a Central Sector Scheme namely "Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana" (RVY) in 2017. This is a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Central Government. **RVY provides Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens (aged above 60 years) belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category and suffering from any of the age related disability/ infirmity.** [Age related disability/infirmity viz. Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability.]
2. These living devices could restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/ infirmity manifested. Coverage - Under the scheme, the assisted-living devices are provided to the senior citizens belonging to the BPL category and also to the senior citizens with monthly income not more than Rs. 15000/-. The Government aims to cover all the districts of the country under the Scheme.
3. The Government ensures that about 30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women. Implementation - The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund". The Scheme will be implemented through the sole implementing agency - Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO), a PSU under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

NATIONAL POLICY ON OLDER PERSONS 1999

1. Announced in 1999, the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) envisages State support to ensure financial and food security, health care, shelter, protection and other needs of older persons.
2. It also covers issues like social security, intergenerational bonding, family as the primary caretaker, role of NGOs, training of manpower, research and training. The policy refers to the legal rights of parents without any means to be supported by their children having sufficient means. These rights are enshrined in the Cr. PC as well as in the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956.
3. **Implementation - Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. National Council of Older Persons was constituted in 1999 to monitor the implementation of the Policy** and advise the Government on issues related to the welfare of senior citizens.
4. The Council has been reconstituted in 2012 as National Council of Senior Citizens with wider national impact. Similar Councils have been constituted at the State level also. 1999 - Declared as the International Year of Older Persons by the UN. 2000 - Declared as the National Year of Older Persons by the Government of India.

GREEN HIGHWAY POLICY 2015

1. The Green Highways (Plantation, Transplantation, Beautification & Maintenance) Policy was launched in 2015. It covers all the National Highways of the country with the aim to promote greening and development of eco-friendly National Highway corridors across the country.
2. 1% of the total project cost of all highways projects will be kept aside for the highway plantation and its maintenance. Objective - To reduce the impact of air pollution and dust by planting trees and shrubs along the National Highways. They will act as natural sink for air pollutants and arrest soil erosion at the embankment slopes.
3. Stake holders - **Contracts for greening highways will be given to NGOs, agencies, private companies and government organisations.** These stakeholders will be responsible for the survival and health of trees. Planting of trees in any particular area will depend on the soil suitability and climatic conditions.
4. Monitoring Agency will be responsible for monitoring the plantation status continuously by carrying out the site visit for field verification to check survival, growth & size of plantation and maintenance of the same.
5. Performance audit of executing agencies will be regularly conducted by the agency on an Annual basis. New contracts will

returned to the Assembly Speaker a Bill seeking to dispense with NEET-based admissions for undergraduate medical degree courses, the Raj Bhavan said on Thursday. Within hours of the Raj Bhawan release, the Tamil Nadu government said it would take steps to adopt the same Bill in the Assembly again.

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has fined five tyre makers and ATMA ₹1,788 crore for 'cartelisation'.

The Indian government may reduce by as much as ₹600 billion its planned record market borrowing of ₹14.95 trillion for the next fiscal year, two government sources said. The sources said the latest bond switch conducted by the government with the central bank at the end of January was not factored into Budget estimates.

India's services sector activity moderated further in January as new business rose at a noticeably slower rate amid the escalation of the pandemic, reintroduction of restrictions and inflationary pressures, a monthly survey showed on Thursday. The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 51.5 in January, from 55.5 in December, pointing to the slowest rate of expansion in the six month sequence of growth.

The leader of the Islamic State (IS/ISIS), Abu Ibrahim alHashimi al-Qurayshi, died in a U.S. counterterrorism operation in Idlib province, in northwestern Syria, President Joe Biden announced on Thursday. The death is a serious blow to the terrorist group, whose capabilities have been severely degraded and dispersed, since coalition forces destroyed their 'caliphate' about three years ago.

Air traffic controllers (ATCOs) at some of the busiest airports in the country such as Delhi are unable to get their mandatory break of 30 minutes after every two hours because of manpower crunch, and at airports such as Guwahati, they work 365 days a year without even a day off. The shortage of staff has also led to women employees being denied childcare leave.

Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijju told the Rajya Sabha that the Centre was not planning on amending the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to enable a common electoral roll and simultaneous elections to all electoral bodies in the country.

NATO said Russia had stepped up deployments to Ukraine's northern

be awarded to the agencies based on their past performance audit. Implications - The policy will strike a balance between highways development and environmental protection. It will also help in providing employment to 5 lakh people of the rural areas.

SAFFRON BOWL PROJECT

1. North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) under Saffron Bowl project has identified few locations in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya for saffron cultivation. The saffron bowl of India, so far confined to parts of Kashmir, has now spread its wings to parts of the North East through the focused efforts of the NECTAR.

2. Under this project, the NECTAR is an autonomous body under the Department of Science & Technology. **It supports the pilot project to explore the feasibility of growing saffron in North East region of India, with the same quality and higher quantity.**

3. It focused on post-harvest management and value addition of saffron so that quality saffron drying and efficient post-harvest processing can improve saffron recovery, thereby improving its production.

1. In order to provide a level playing field between co-operative societies and companies, the Government proposed to reduce the Alternate Minimum Tax rate for co-operative societies from the current 18.5% to 15%. Initially, the concept of Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) was introduced for companies and progressively it has been made applicable to all other taxpayers in the form of Alternate Minimum Tax (AMT). Due to increase in the number of zero taxpaying companies, MAT was introduced by the Finance Act, 1987.

2. Later on, it was withdrawn by the Finance Act, 1990 and then reintroduced by Finance Act, 1996. The objective of introducing MAT is to bring into the tax net "zero tax companies". These companies in spite of having earned substantial book profits and having paid handsome dividends, do not pay any tax due to various tax concessions and incentives provided under the Income-tax Law.

3. MAT is levied at the rate of 9% (plus surcharge and cess as applicable) in case of a company, being a unit of an International Financial Services Centre and deriving its income solely in convertible foreign exchange.

4. Applicability - As per section 115JB of the I-T Act, every taxpayer being a company is liable to pay MAT, if the Income-tax (including surcharge and cess) payable on the total income, computed as per the Income-tax Act in respect of any year is less than 15% of its book-profit + surcharge (SC) + health & education cess. However, the provisions of MAT are not applicable on: The domestic companies which have opted for tax regimes under Section 115BAA or Section 115BAB; Any income accruing or arising to a company from the life insurance business referred to in Section 115B; Shipping company, the income of which is subject to tonnage taxation.

NANOANTENNA

1. Researchers have developed a nanoantenna made of DNA and polyethylene glycol (PEG) to study changes in the structure of protein molecules. Working - The DNA-based nanoantenna works like a two-way radio that can both receive and transmit radio waves. It receives light in one wavelength.

2. **It transmits light in another colour depending upon the protein changes it senses, and this can be detected and studied. Characteristics - These fluorescent nanoantennae remained stable at higher temperatures.** These nanoantenna offer a distinct advantage over the fluorescent dyes that are ubiquitously used in biotechnology.

3. The latter 'display a low affinity for proteins', while these nanoantennae have an affinity to a specific region of a protein, which is contingent on the structure and chemistry of the protein. So, they are able to detect even the most minute of changes. The nanoantenna was able to pass muster even with respect to protein-protein interactions.

4. This nanoantenna can be synthesised with different lengths and flexibilities to optimize their function. Significance - The antenna will help us understand how natural nanomachines function or malfunction, consequently leading to disease.

5. Labs equipped with a conventional spectrofluorometer, could readily employ these nanoantenna[e] to study proteins. This

neighbour Belarus in recent days and was expected to have 30,000 troops there for joint exercises this month. The Russia-Belarus exercises, running until February 20, have provided Moscow with cover to further increase forces near Ukraine at a time when the United States and Britain have warned that Moscow may be gearing up for war.

study will in turn help us identify new drugs or to develop new nanotechnologies or nano-machines. The antenna performed well when used for examining enzyme kinetics i.e. the speed at which a reaction progresses in the presence of an enzyme.