

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

Over 1.75 million Indian accounts were banned by WhatsApp, while 602 grievance reports were received by the messaging platform in November 2021, according to its compliance report. In its latest report, the messaging platform said 17,59,000 Indian accounts were banned on WhatsApp during the period. An Indian account is identified via a +91 phone number, it added. "In accordance with the IT Rules 2021, we have published our sixth monthly report for the month of November. This user safety report contains details of the user complaints received and the corresponding action taken by WhatsApp, as well as WhatsApp's own preventive actions to combat abuse on our platform," a WhatsApp spokesperson said.

The hands that grew a brew are now raising fungus for survival in northern West Bengal. 700 plantation workers who lost their jobs when the Madhu Tea Estate in Alipurduar district of West Bengal closed down seven years ago. The tea estate is one of 26 in the district's Kalchini block. Many of the estates are in a bad shape due to low yield, quality and labour issues. Formed a cluster of women from 50 families, some of them from the closed tea estate, and trained them in organic mushroom farming more than a fortnight ago.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration of nearly 6,000 NGOs has ceased to operate from January 1 as the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) refused to renew their application or the NGOs did not apply for one. The registration is a mandatory requirement to receive foreign funds. The prominent names whose registration was not renewed include Oxfam India and Missionaries of Charity, a Catholic religious congregation set up by Nobel laureate Mother Teresa, due to "adverse inputs". Oxfam India, which works for economic and gender justice among Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims and women.

The gut microbiome can influence the therapeutic response of cancer patients by tuning the immune system, however, the way this happens is unclear. New research published in Science shows that melanoma patients with high fibre consumption showed better response to checkpoint inhibitor immunotherapy than those on a low

TIANGONG SPACE STATION

1.China, which is growing its presence in space, has complained to the UN detailing two alleged space incidents involving its Tiangong Space Station and two Starlink satellites from Elon Musk-founded aerospace firm, SpaceX.

2.China approach the UN- Both the U.S. and China are parties to the Outer Space Treaty, which is formally known as the 'Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies'. The multilateral treaty, adopted by the UN General Assembly, provides the basic framework on international space law.

3.Key provisions and their relevance in this case: **According to article VI of the treaty, nations will be responsible for national space activities whether carried out by governmental or non-governmental entities.** That means the U.S. can be held responsible for the activities of the U.S.-based aerospace firm SpaceX founded by Elon Musk. Article VII states that nations will be liable for damage caused by their space objects, such as satellites. Article V of the treaty requires parties to immediately inform other parties or the UN Secretary-General of any phenomenon they discover in outer space, "which could constitute a danger to the life or health of astronauts".

4.UN help with space issues- The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs was created to service the ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. The committee was established in 1958 shortly after the launch of the first artificial satellite, Sputnik-1. It has been serving as a focal point for international cooperation in the peaceful exploration and use of outer space. The Outer Space Treaty: It came into force on October 10, 1967. The principles embodied in the treaty has facilitated the orderly conduct of activities in outer space.

5.Concern now- **Space-related conflicts have occurred in the past and will most likely continue to happen in the future as well, considering the growing number of activities in the space, involving different parties.** The International Space Station and China's space station, Tiangong, which is under construction, operate in the LEO, where much of the space debris can be found. Besides, there are about 30,000 satellites and other pieces of debris in Earth's orbit that can reach speeds of nearly 29,000 km/h, raising the possibility of international incidents in the outer space."

RANI LAKSHMIBAI

1.The Jhansi Railway Station in Uttar Pradesh will be known as Veerangana Lakshmibai Railway Station.

2.Procedure to change the name of a railway station: The Uttar Pradesh government had earlier sent a proposal about renaming the station to the Union Home Ministry. **The ministry consents to a name change of any station or place after obtaining no-objections from the Union Ministry of Railways, Survey of India, and the Department of Posts.**

3.These organisations confirm that there is no town or village in their records with a name that is similar to the proposed name. Once the name change is approved following an executive order, the Ministry of Railways will change the station code accordingly.

PESA ACT

1.Hundreds of kendu leaf pluckers, binders and workers recently staged a demonstration in Sambalpur, Odisha demanding the abolition of GST on kendu leaves. Issue-A GST of 18 per cent is imposed on kendu leaves which is against the Forest Rights Act-2006 and the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) to celebrate 25th year of PESA Act. Besides, the government has imposed a GST of 28 per cent on bidi which is a finished product made of kendu leaf. This double taxation has hit the profits of kendu leaf organisation and affected the livelihood of around 12 lakh workers. While the profits have reduced drastically, they are now deprived of many social security benefits too.

2.About Kendu Leaves: **Kendu leaf is called the green gold of**

fibres diet.

Algal blooms that result from anthropogenic pollution can have harmful effects on the ecosystem. A recent study in PNAS (U.S.) finds that this is not only a problem of the industrial era. In the sediment cores from Lake Amatitlan in Guatemala, they find hints of former presence of cyanobacteria which are typical of algal blooms in the pre-Columbian Mayan period.

Researchers from Osaka City University have shown in mice models of Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia and dementia with Lewy bodies that administering rifampicin intranasally in combination with resveratrol is safer and more effective in improving cognitive function than giving rifampicin alone. Resveratrol is a naturally occurring antioxidant in plants.

Scientists, for the first time, recovered DNA from cement on hairs taken from mummified remains that date back 1,500–2,000 years. This is possible because skin cells from the scalp become encased in the cement produced by female lice as they attach eggs, known as nits, to the hair.

Rockets fired from the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip on Saturday landed in the Mediterranean Sea off central Israel, the Israeli military said. It was not immediately clear whether the rockets were meant to hit Israel, but Gaza-based militant groups often test-fire missiles toward the sea. There were no reports of casualties.

The European Union is planning to label energy from nuclear power and natural gas as "green" sources for investment despite internal disagreement over whether they truly qualify as sustainable options. The proposal, aimed to support the 27-nation bloc's shift towards a carbon neutral future and gild its credentials as a global standard-setter for fighting climate change.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) will probe the suspected involvement of Jaswinder Singh Multani, an operative of the Germany-based Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), in the use of drones for smuggling of arms, ammunition, explosives and drugs into India by Pakistan-based syndicates. Based on inputs related to his alleged role in attempts to revive terrorism in Punjab, the agency has registered a case against him and his associates.

China will end subsidies for electric and hybrid cars at the end of the

Odisha. It is a nationalised product like bamboo and sal seed. It is one of the most important non-wood forest products in Odisha. The leaves are used to wrap bidis, a popular smoke among the locals. The uniqueness of Odisha's Tendu (kendu) leaf is in processed form whereas the rest of the states in India produce in Phal Form. Traditional medical practitioners use these tiny fruits of Kendu to treat malaria, diarrhoea and dysentery. Kendu leaves are the major source for tribal villages, since it is the most prominent Minor Forest Produce of the state. Odisha is the third-largest producer of kendu leaf, after Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

3. About the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) to celebrate 25th year of PESA Act: The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 or PESA Act is a law enacted by the Government of India for ensuring self-governance through traditional Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas of India. It was enacted by Parliament in 1996 and came into force on 24th December 1996. The PESA is considered to be the backbone of tribal legislation in India. PESA recognises the traditional system of the decision-making process and stands for the peoples' self-governance.

4. Background: To promote local self-governance in rural India, the 73rd constitutional amendment was made in 1992. Through this amendment, a three-tier Panchayati Raj Institution was made into a law. However, its application to the scheduled and tribal areas under Article 243(M) was restricted. After the Bhuria Committee recommendations in 1995, Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996 came into existence for ensuring tribal self-rule for people living in scheduled areas of India. The PESA conferred the absolute powers to Gram Sabha, whereas state legislature has given an advisory role to ensure the proper functioning of Panchayats and Gram Sabhas. The power delegated to Gram Sabha cannot be curtailed by a higher level, and there shall be independence throughout.

5. Issues Related to PESA: The state governments are supposed to enact state laws for their Scheduled Areas in consonance with this national law. **This has resulted in the partially implemented PESA. The partial implementation has worsened self-governance in Adivasi areas, like in Jharkhand.**

Many experts have asserted that PESA did not deliver due to the lack of clarity, legal infirmity, bureaucratic apathy, absence of a political will, resistance to change in the hierarchy of power, and so on. As per Social audits conducted across the state, in reality different developmental schemes were being approved on paper by Gram Sabha, without actually having any meeting for discussion and decision making.

SIGNIFICANCE OF KEN-BETWA LINK PROJECT

1. The project is slated to irrigate 10.62 lakh hectares annually, provide drinking water supply to 62 lakh people and generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW of solar power. The project will be of immense benefit to the water-starved Bundelkhand region, spread across Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. The project is expected to boost socio-economic prosperity in the backward Bundelkhand region on account of increased agricultural activities and employment generation. It would also help in arresting distress migration from this region.

2. Benefits of interlinking: Enhances water and food security. Proper utilisation of water. Boost to agriculture. Disaster mitigation. Boost to transportation.

3. Key facts: **Ken and Betwa rivers originate in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna. Ken meets with Yamuna in Banda district of UP and with Betwa in Hamirpur district of UP.** Rajghat, Paricha and Matatila dams are over Betwa river. Ken River passes through Panna tiger reserve.

FSSAI DRAFT REGULATIONS FOR GM FOODS

1. Social activists working among farmers have come out against the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) draft regulations on genetically modified (GM) food, terming it "unacceptable".

2. Demand-They want FSSAI to explicitly say that GM foods will not be allowed into India by way of production or imports. Because, according to them, any kind of GM food in India is a threat to the health of our people, to our environment, and to the diverse food cultures of India.

3. GMO regulation in India: **The task of regulating GMO levels in imported consumables was initially with the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under the Union**

year, authorities have announced, saying the strength of sales in the sector meant state support was no longer needed. In a statement published on Friday, the Ministry of Finance said purchase subsidies would be reduced by 30% from the beginning of 2022 before being scrapped completely by the end of the year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi released over ₹20,900 crore to more than 10.09 crore farmers across India as the 10th installment of financial aid under the PMKISAN scheme.

environment ministry. Its role in this was diluted with the enactment of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and FSSAI was asked to take over approvals of imported goods.

4. Genetically Modified Organism (Transgenic Organism)-In GMO, genetic material (DNA) is altered or artificially introduced using genetic engineering techniques. Genetic modification involves the mutation, insertion, or deletion of genes. Inserted genes usually come from a different organism (e.g. In Bt cotton, Bt genes from bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* are induced). Genetic modification is done to induce a desirable new trait which does not occur naturally in the species.

