

NEWSPAPER HIGHLIGHT

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has come out with the framework for facilitating small value digital payments in offline mode, a move that would promote digital payments in semi-urban and rural areas. The framework incorporates feedback received from the pilot experiments on offline transactions conducted in different parts of the country between September 2020 and June 2021. An offline digital payment does not require Internet or telecom connectivity. "Under this new framework, such payments can be carried out face-to-face (proximity mode) using any channel or instrument like cards, wallets and mobile devices," the RBI said.

India has sought an emergency meeting of the General Council of the World Trade Organization (WTO) this month in Geneva to deliberate upon the world trade body's proposed response package, including patent waiver proposal, to deal with the pandemic amid rising coronavirus infections globally, an official said. The General Council is WTO's highest decision making body in Geneva.

India's manufacturing sector activities moderated in December but output remained in the growth territory, amid slower rise in sales and new orders, even as business sentiment was dampened by concerns surrounding supply chain disruptions, COVID19 and inflationary pressures, a monthly survey showed. The seasonally-adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index eased to 55.5 in December, from November's 10month high of 57.6.

China is constructing a bridge in eastern Ladakh connecting the north and south banks of Pangong Tso (lake), which will significantly bring down the time for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move troops and equipment between the two sectors, two official sources independently confirmed on Monday. "On the north bank, there is a PLA garrison at Kurnak fort and on the south bank at Moldo, and the distance between the two is around 200 km. The new bridge between the closest points on two banks, which is around 500 m, will bring down the movement time between the two sectors from around 12 hours to three or four hours," one of the

INS VIKRANT

1.The Vice President of India visited India's first indigenous aircraft carrier (IAC-1) INS Vikrant in Kochi. IAC-1 Vikrant is the largest and most complex warship built in India. [Currently, India has only one aircraft carrier - INS Vikramaditya. INS Vishal, proposed to be India's 2nd IAC has stalled since 2017 awaiting defence ministry's clearance.]

2.IAC-1 Vikrant was designed by the Navy's Directorate of Naval Design (DND) and built by India's state-run Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL). Vikrant has a top speed of around 28 knots and a cruising speed of 18 knots with an endurance of about 7,500 nautical miles.

3.It will operate MiG-29K fighter jets, Kamov-31 helicopters, MH-60R multi-role helicopters. The construction of Vikrant propelled India into a select group of countries having capabilities to build state-of-the-art aircraft carriers.

ONE NATION ONE GRID ONE FREQUENCY

1.The POWERGRID Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) celebrates the first anniversary of One Nation-One Grid-One Frequency. One Nation One Grid shall synchronously connect all the regional grids and there will be one national frequency (frequency band of 49.90-50.05 Hz). Evolution - Grid management on regional basis started in 1960s.

2.Initially, State grids were inter-connected to form 5 regional grids - Northern, Eastern, Western, North Eastern and Southern regional grids. In 1991, North Eastern and Eastern grids were connected. In 2003, WR and ER-NER were interconnected. In 2006, North and East grids were interconnected. Thereby 4 regional grids Northern, Eastern, Western and North Eastern grids are synchronously connected forming central grid operating at one frequency.

3.In 2013, Southern Region was connected to Central Grid in Synchronous mode with the commissioning of 765kV Raichur-Solapur Transmission line thereby achieving 'One Nation-One Grid-One Frequency'.

4.Benefits - Synchronisation of all regional grids will help in optimal utilization of scarce natural resources by transfer of Power from Resource centric regions to Load centric regions. Further, this shall pave way for establishing a vibrant Electricity market facilitating trading of power across regions.

SOLATIUM

1.Tamil Nadu Chief Minister announced Rs. 3 lakh in solatium to the families of each of the deceased in a blast at a fireworks unit from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund and Rs. 1 lakh to the injured. Solatium, which first appeared in English in the early 19th century, is from Latin *sōlātium* or *sōlācium*.

2.It means "solace" or "to console". Solatium is a form of compensation for emotional rather than physical or financial harm.

3.It is a payment made to a victim as compensation for injured feelings or emotional pain and suffering (such as the trauma following the wrongful death of a relative).

DARK GENOME

1.Scientists investigating the 'dark genome' have discovered recently evolved regions that code for proteins associated with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Dark genome - Human genome is conventionally divided into, Coding genome, which generates the ~20,000 annotated human protein coding genes, and Dark genome, which does not encode proteins.

2.Dark genome is a vast space, accounting for the ~98.5% of genomic space where repeat elements, enhancers, regulatory sequences, and non-coding RNAs reside. It comprises the DNA outside our genes. These are the regions, not classed as genes in the traditional sense, which create proteins.

3.Study - The scientists say that these new proteins can be used as biological indicators to distinguish between the two conditions - schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It can also be used to identify patients more prone to psychosis or suicide.

sources said.

The Centre pressed the Supreme Court to list the hearing of a case raising questions about the ₹8 lakh income criterion for identifying EWS to provide them quota in jobs.

After a rather muted 2021 in terms of satellite launches, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is gearing up for a number of missions in 2022 including the launch of the first unmanned mission of Gaganyaan, its Chairman, K. Sivan said. In his New Year's message for 2022, Mr. Sivan said ISRO had a number of missions to execute this year. These include the launch of the Earth Observation Satellites, EOS4 and EOS6 on board the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), and the EOS02 on board the maiden flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV). "[ISRO has] many test flights for Crew Escape System of Gaganyaan and launch of the first unmanned mission of Gaganyaan.

Odisha's Ganjam has declared itself as a child marriage free district — the first one in the State. The district administration has been able to stop as many as 450 child marriages and video-record 48,383 marriages in 2020 and 2021. "We decided in 2019 to prevent child marriages on mission mode and at the same time generate general awareness against it," the District Magistrate said.

Five global nuclear powers pledged on Monday to prevent atomic weapons spreading and to avoid nuclear conflict, in a rare joint statement ahead of a review of a key nuclear treaty later this year. "We believe strongly that the further spread of such weapons must be prevented," said permanent UN Security Council members China, France, Russia, the U.K. and U.S., adding: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." The statement was issued after the latest review of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — which first came into force in 1970.

India's merchandise exports in December touched \$ 37.29 billion, the highest ever monthly figure, according to Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. Mr. Goyal highlighted the pursuit of export-oriented programmes by the Uttar Pradesh and Tripura governments.

India's unemployment rate hit a fourmonth high in December, data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed on Monday. The unemployment rate rose to 7.9% in December from 7%

CHINA'S BORDER LAW AND INDIA

1.China's new law on land borders has come into effect from the new year. While some feel India should worry about its border areas, others note that China's actions have been aggressive even without it. About the law: It is called the law for the "protection and exploitation of the country's land border areas". Under the law, "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China are sacred and inviolable". The state needs to "take measures to safeguard territorial integrity and land boundaries and guard against and combat any act that undermines these".

2.The law encourages the development of villages for civilians in the border areas. The law also asks the state to follow the principles of "equality, mutual trust, and friendly consultation, handle land border related-affairs with neighbouring countries through negotiations to properly resolve disputes and longstanding border issues. The law lays down four conditions under which the state can impose emergency measures, including border shutdown.

3.Does it concern India? Although the law is not meant specifically for India, it is bound to have some impact. China and India share a disputed 3,488-km boundary, the third longest among China's 22,457-km land boundaries with 14 countries, after the borders with Mongolia and Russia. There is a growing suspicion that China may have been stalling further negotiations on the standoff in eastern Ladakh for this new law to come into force. The Corps Commanders last met in October. **The new law also prohibits construction of permanent infrastructure close to the border without China's permission.** Both, India and China have been building new roads, bridges and other facilities faster since the standoff began; in fact, China had objected to India's workers even before.

4.What impact can it have on India-China relations? **Much depends on China's actions, regardless of the new law. Some experts feel the new law will make China dig its heels in, on the ongoing standoff as well as for resolution of the larger boundary issue.** Others feel the new law is only a tool China government will use if it wants, as its actions have been aggressive even before this law. Overall, the new law is the "latest attempt by China to unilaterally delineate and demarcate territorial boundaries with India and Bhutan".

5.Concerns and challenges ahead: The border standoff in eastern Ladakh remains unresolved. China has renamed several places in Arunachal Pradesh as part of its claim on the Indian state. The Chinese Embassy in Delhi has written to Indian MPs, including a minister, who had attended a dinner reception hosted by the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile.

RYTHU BANDHU

1.The total funds disbursed under Rythu Bandhu, Telangana government's direct benefit transfer scheme for farmers, will soon touch Rs 50,000 crore in the coming days. The scheme was launched in 2018. Rythu Bandhu-Rythu Bandhu scheme or Farmer's Investment Support Scheme (FISS) is a welfare program to support farmer's investment for two crops a year by the Government of Telangana. The scheme is meant to incentivise the state's farmers for their day to day work.Under the scheme, almost 58.33 lakh farmers of Telangana state are provided Rs 5000 per acre, per season (crop-sowing) – to support the farm investment twice a year, for both – the Rabi and the Kharif seasons.

2.Objective: The purpose behind the scheme was to break the vicious cycle of rural indebtedness. **Rythu Bandhu scheme-To apply under the scheme and to make the cut, the farmer should have been a resident of Telangana state and must own farming land.** The scheme is applicable for small and marginal farmers; however, commercial farmers are excluded from the scheme. Also, farmers who till rented land are excluded from under this scheme. Currently, more than 8 lakh farmers in Telangana enjoy the benefits of the Rythu Bandhu scheme."

3.Significance of the scheme: The state government extends financial support to land-owning farmers at the beginning of the crop season through direct benefit transfer so that they can take care of the initial investment needs and do not fall into a debt trap. This in turn instills confidence in farmers, enhances productivity and income, and breaks the cycle of rural indebtedness.

4.Compare with the PM-KISAN scheme-**The state government has often said that the Centre's PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi) scheme is a "copy" of Rythu Bandhu.**

in November, its highest since 8.3% in August. Economic activity has been hit in the country after an increase in cases of the Omicron coronavirus and restrictions imposed by many States.

India is in dialogue with Israel for concluding a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said here on Monday. The announcement coincides with the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

The Telangana government further claims that its own scheme is much better than PM-KISAN. Key differences: Rythu Bandhu is based on anticipated input expenditure for each acre of land and there is no restriction on the number of acres owned by a farmer. PM-KISAN only provides support to the family and not to the farm units.

5.Criticisms: The Rythu Bandhu scheme has also come in from criticism from several quarters, with one of the major ones being that it ignores the plight of landless or tenant farmers.

