

Russian President Vladimir Putin virtually presided over the launch and flag raising ceremony of two nuclear-powered icebreakers at St. Petersburg on November 22. The icebreakers were laid down as part of their largescale, systematic work to reequip and replenish the domestic icebreaker fleet, to strengthen Russia's status as a "great Arctic power". Since 2007, India has an Arctic research programme with as many as 13 expeditions undertaken till date.

In one of the prelaunch celebration programmes of the International Year of Millets, 2023 in New Delhi on Thursday, the Agriculture Ministry reached out to representatives of various countries in India to promote millets internationally. Both External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar (in photo) addressed the event and urged for global focus on millets for its nutritional and health benefits.

The Union Rural Development Ministry will on Friday begin a monthlong nationwide, community led campaign against "gender based discrimination". The campaign will target rural women and be undertaken through the self-help groups registered with the government. "Over the years, violence against women has been normalised, especially within the home. The campaign is aimed at changing this perspective.

The University Grants Commission has asked universities and colleges to host sessions on "meditation and mental health" developed by the founder of the Art of Living Foundation, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The meditation programme has been developed by the Art of Living Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture as part of the Har Ghar Dhyam (or meditation in every house) campaign, which is a "part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav to mark 75 years of Independence", says the circular by UGC Secretary Rajnish Jain.

The Supreme Court, after inspecting official files on Thursday, said that the appointment of Arun Goel as Election Commissioner was done with "lightning speed", the procedure taking less than 24 hours from start to finish on November 18. A Constitution Bench, led by Justice K.M. Joseph, had asked Attorney General R. Venkataramani on Wednesday to produce the files concerning Mr. Goel's appointment after petitioners alleged that it was "hurriedly" done. In fact, the appointment was made the very next day after the court started examining the need to insulate the Election Commission from political influence by setting up a "neutral and independent mechanism" for appointment of Election Commissioners.

The outlook for India's exports may be dented by the global slowdown driven by the confluence of stubbornly high

SOUTH CHINA SEA (SCS) CODE OF CONDUCT (COC) SHOULD ALIGN WITH INTERNATIONAL LAW

1. Addressing ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus meeting, Indian Defence Minister stated that negotiations on CoC for SCS adhere to international law, in particular UNCLOS. CoC, between ASEAN and China, is intended to reduce conflict in SCS where China's expansive maritime and territorial claims clash with other ASEAN member states (refer image).
2. Evolution of CoC dates to 1992, when ASEAN issued its first statement on territorial disputes in SCS. Later, they signed Declaration on Conduct of Parties in SCS in 2002, with draft guidelines adopted in 2011.
3. **Importance of SCS Global Trade:** About a third of all world's maritime trade (Nearly 55% of India's trade with Indo-Pacific region) goes through SCS. Economic potential, with rich in fisheries, oil, gas & rare earth metals reserves. Geo-strategic location connecting Pacific Ocean with Indian Ocean.
4. **India's Stand-** Historically, India has tried to balance competing interests in SCS and not offend China. However, recent statements illustrate that India is moving towards a more proactive role, guided by its Act East policy, and its overall Indo-Pacific vision.

STATES SEEK TO BUILD NATIONAL INSTITUTION FOR TRANSFORMING INDIA (NITI) AAYOG CLONES TO DRIVE INCLUSIVE GROWTH

1. Several states sought NITI Aayog to constitute state institutions for transformation (SITs), along the lines of NITI Aayog, to boost development and drive inclusive growth. It will also give effect to the commitment of cooperative federalism. Recently, Maharashtra Institution for Transformation (Mitra) was set up on these lines.
2. **Need for SITs-** State Capacity & Governance Bottlenecks are higher order challenges than availability of Finances in delivery of Basic services. Weaknesses in service delivery disproportionately hurts the poor. Building "state capacity" is rewarding as it is 10-20 times more cost effective.
3. **Significance of SITs-** Locus of democratic accountability can be shifted to states. Leverage greater fiscal space of States, post 14th Finance Commission. Could become valuable laboratories for experimentation.
4. **NITI Aayog initiatives to build state's capacities-** 'Development Support Services for States for Infrastructure Projects' to achieve sustained delivery of infrastructure projects. State Finances and Coordination Vertical was formed for maintaining a State-wise database on macroeconomic, financial, and social indicators. State Support Mission will act as a multidisciplinary ecosystem to initiate cutting edge projects to catalyse development strategies of states, etc.

UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME (UNODC) RELEASES PAPER ON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

1. **Paper highlights cascading impacts of Illegal wildlife trade (IWT),** on ecosystem functions and processes that affect the climate. It documents five types of relationships between IWT and climate change:
2. **Large-** bodied species storing carbon - removal of hardwood species like timber from the wild stops long-term sequestration, affects soil carbon, and limits forest regeneration.
3. **Ecosystem engineers-** Many animal species targeted by IWT are also ecosystem engineers, species that modify their environment in a significant manner.
4. **Species with unique functional traits-** such species lead to more rapid collapse of ecosystem service supply. E.g., Pangolins regulate insects' population.
5. **Co-location of biodiversity and ecosystem services-** Habitats heavily affected by IWT can geographically overlap with sites that offer important ecosystem services, including carbon stocks.
6. **Governance overlaps-** IWT reflects weak environmental governance associated with weak monitoring and enforcement, organized crime etc. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is a global leader in addressing problem of illicit drug use and transnational crime. It is mandated to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime and terrorism.

inflation, rising borrowing costs and geopolitical tensions, but “resilient” domestic demand and a “reinvigorated” investment cycle will push the economy’s growth and spark a rebound in jobs in the coming months, the Finance Ministry said on Thursday. The recent inflation pressures had been driven more by local factors, including higher food prices, than imported reasons, the Ministry said in its monthly review of the economy. Those pressures were also set to dampen, thanks to easing international commodity prices and the arrival of the Kharif crop, the Ministry said.

7.2%, the unemployment rate for persons aged 15 years during July September 2022 in urban areas from 9.8% a year ago, the National Statistical Office (NSO) informed. Unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of unemployed persons in the labour force. Joblessness was high in July September 2021 due to the impact of COVID related restrictions in India.

40 million, the number of children missing a measles vaccine dose last year, since the coronavirus pandemic began, the World Health Organisation and the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention informed. In 2021, officials said there were 9 million measles infections, and 1,28,000 deaths worldwide. Measles is among the world’s most contagious diseases.

2000 number of anganwadi centres to be constructed in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma informed. The Assam Cabinet approved ₹500 crore to build new anganwadi centres in rural areas. The cabinet approved ₹22.41 crore to set up the College of Sericulture in Jorhat to boost the handloom sector.

The Civil Aviation Ministry has notified the draft Aircraft Security Rules, 2022, which enable the aviation security regulator, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), to impose penalties up to ₹1 crore on airports and airlines for violation of security measures.

INDIA LOOKS TO BOOST TRADE WITH SOUTH-EAST ASIA USING RIVER NETWORK

1. **Ministry of Ports, shipping & waterways plans to develop Eastern Waterways Connectivity Transport Grid (EWCTG)** to boost regional integration and trade with South Asia and Eastern South Asia. EWCTG, part of India’s Act East policy, builds on the existing network of India-Bangladesh protocol route. This will be linked further to Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.
2. **Significance of the project-** Better connectivity with north-eastern states and will also help landlocked Nepal and Bhutan. New commercial corridors with Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand are likely to spur trade in eastern subcontinent. Far quicker and cheaper (one fifth of that by road) than land route. Will lead to establishment of terminals, jetties, storage facilities etc, creating new jobs, spurring development of ancillary industries.
3. **Challenges to project:** Shallow water and narrow width during dry weather, siltation, high investment cost, reluctance of private sector etc. Other Initiatives taken to improve regional connectivity India—Myanmar—Thailand Trilateral Highway connecting Moreh in India to Mae Sot in Thailand. Kaladan Multimodal project connecting Kolkata seaport with Sittwe in Myanmar. Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicles Agreement.

CENTRE ASKS MINISTRIES TO IDENTIFY NEW ASSETS FOR MONETISATION

1. Objective is to bring back on track the monetisation process, which currently stands way short of budget target for this fiscal year. Government’s proceeds from asset sales were only ₹33,000 crore in the first seven months against the target of ₹1.6 lakh crore for the year. Thus, ministries have been asked to achieve targets by identifying additional asset classes.
2. **About Asset Monetisation -** In a monetisation transaction, government basically transfers the revenue rights to private parties for a specified transaction period in return for upfront money, a revenue share etc. Here, Ownership remains with the government.
3. It serves two critical objectives Unlocks value from public investment in Infrastructure and Taps private sector efficiencies in operations and management of infrastructure.
4. **Key challenges identified:** Lack of identifiable revenues streams in various assets, dispute resolution mechanism, Regulated tariffs in power sector assets, and Low interest among investors in national highways below four lane. National Monetisation Pipeline envisages monetisation of core assets held by Central government, with an estimated value of 6 lakh crore over the period FY 2022-2025.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMAL ACT(PCA) 1960

1. Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has proposed amendments to the Act including: Provision of three-year jail for committing “gruesome cruelty” and five-year imprisonment for killing an animal.
2. Making local government responsible for care of community animal. PCA, 1960 establishes Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) as a statutory advisory body on animal welfare laws and promotes animal welfare.
3. It was started under the stewardship of Rukmini Devi Arundale, well known humanitarian. It consists of 28 members.



*“If you are flying towards your goal,
you are least worried about
the fences on the ground.”*

DR. KHAN
(KSG)