

The Ministry of Railways is readying a roadmap to start export of the indigenously manufactured Vande Bharat trains by 2025-26, a senior railways official said on Friday. The Ministry is also working to increase production of these trains as well as introduce newer versions with sleeper coaches. "The ecosystem to export trains have to be created over the next two to three years. We are on track to manufacture 475 Vande Bharat trains in the next three years and once they run successfully on our tracks ... we will have proof of technology," the official said.

Indian publishers and Australian think tank circles on Friday exchanged ideas on emerging changes in big tech and digital media relationship at the inaugural edition of the DNPA Dialogues, a webinar hosted by the Digital News Publishers Association (DNPA). Elaborating on social media platforms having a dominant presence, Rod Sims, former Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), said the platforms did not produce journalistic content and "we have to find a way of getting money for journalism and media businesses" from social media.

The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill is loaded in favour of the government, says retired Supreme Court judge Justice B.N. Srikrishna, who had proposed the first draft of the Personal Data Protection Bill in 2018. The new Bill may encourage the executive to act capriciously and infringe on the fundamental right of privacy of personal data, he says.

The Central government has constituted a committee to review the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme, especially to assess the programme's efficacy as a poverty alleviation tool. The committee, headed by former Rural Development secretary Amarjeet Sinha, had its first meeting on Monday, and has been given three months to submit its suggestions. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was passed in 2005, and the scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled work per year for every rural household that wants it. Currently, 15.51 crore active workers are enrolled in the scheme.

Several States, including some governed by the ruling party on Friday urged the Centre to rein in its reliance on raising revenues through cesses and surcharges that reduce their share in the divisible pool of taxes. They also sought greater fiscal support to help revive the economy and reiterated demands for extending the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation period. These issues about the federal fiscal framework were

INDIAN TEAM IN ARGENTINA TO SCOUT FOR LITHIUM DEALS

1. Ministry of Mines is sending a team comprising geologists from Mineral Exploration Corporation Ltd (MECL), KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd) and Geological Survey of India to identify lithium. KABIL is a joint venture of NALCO, HCL and MECL identifies and acquires overseas mineral assets of strategic nature such as Lithium, Cobalt etc. Lithium is lightest solid metal.
2. It is extracted from either brines or mined rocks. It has lowest density of all metals. Lithium reserves are concentrated in lithium triangle in South America – Argentina, Bolivia & Chile, with 50% of deposits concentrated in these regions. Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni, world's largest salt flat is home to massive lithium deposits. Lithium is also available in Australia, China.
3. India has discovered first lithium reserves in igneous rocks located in Marlagalla-Allapatna region of Karnataka's Mandya district.
4. **Significance of lithium-** Key component of rechargeable batteries (used in EVs) and energy storage solutions. Critical mineral for energy transition, and net-zero emissions will require higher reliance lithium. Lithium salts reduces corrosion and responsible for slow erosion of glass.

CENTRE OPEN TO PRO-FARMER CHANGES IN PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY)

1. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is open to taking pro-farmer changes in PMFBY in response to climate crisis and rapid technological advances. Extreme weather becomes the second largest risk over next 10 years period, thus necessitate to provide a financial safety net to the farmers.
2. **Issues with PMFBY-**Some states have opted out of the scheme due to inability to pay their share of premium subsidy due to financial constraints. Low compensation, delayed pay-outs, and denial of claims by the insurance company. Lack of awareness among farmers on the correct methodology for reporting claims. Failure to forecast rainfall etc. hinders assessment of crop loss and delays payment.
3. **Steps taken to make it farmer friendly-**Giving more flexibility to States for coverage of risks under Scheme. Making Scheme Voluntary for all farmers. Digital initiatives like, Weather Information and Network Data Systems (WINDS), Yield Estimation System based on Technology (YES-Tech), Collection of Real Time Observations and Photographs of Crops (CROPIC), were brought to bring in more efficiency and transparency.
4. **PMFBY-**It was launched in 2016 with aim to provide financial support to farmers against crop loss due to natural factors from pre-sowing to postharvest stage. It is largest crop insurance scheme in the world in terms of farmer enrolments, and third largest in terms of the premium received.

IN A FIRST, UNGA ADOPTS RESOLUTION FOR DEVELOPING AN INTERNATIONAL TAX CO-OPERATION FRAMEWORK

1. The resolution was submitted by Nigeria on behalf of a consortium of 54 African countries. The aim is to end global tax abuse by multinational enterprises and the super-rich. The dialogues between countries will cover tax issues in a digital economy and the menace of illicit money flows.
2. The decision is likely to mark the beginning of the end of the OECD's (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development's) 60-year reign as the world's leading rule maker on global tax. As compared to OECD, UN provides globally inclusive and transparent forum for negotiations. In 2021, 136 countries reached an agreement on 'Two-Pillar Solution' spearheaded by OECD.
3. **Pillar One:** Covered taxation in digital economy giving taxing rights & allocation of profits of global giants to countries where customer base is important. In all, taxing rights over \$125 bn were to be reallocated annually for 100 of world's most profitable MNEs to consumer-centric countries.
4. **Pillar two:** Sought for a global effective minimum tax rate of 15%, with a mechanism for tax back by another country if the minimum rate was not adhered to.

flagged, along with States' local project wish lists, at a consultation meeting for the Union Budget of 2023-24, steered by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here and attended by Chief Ministers, Deputy CMs as well as Finance Ministers of States.

The State Commission for the Extremely Backward Classes is rushing to submit "as soon as possible" its report to the Bihar government on whether it is possible to reserve seats under the EBC category in the civic polls in the State.

The Supreme Court on Friday sought the government's response to pleas to allow solemnisation of same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 provides a civil form of marriage for couples who cannot marry under their personal law.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday asked the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to ensure action against those who killed six persons on his State's border with Assam on November 22. While a high level team met NHRC chairperson Arun Kumar Mishra in New Delhi, State capital Shillong was shut down by pressure groups to protest against the killings and demand the handing over of the Assam shooters to Meghalaya for trial.

Indian nationals received the largest number — 39% — of the total work-related visas granted by the United Kingdom for the year ending September 2022, an announcement from the British government has said. Of the total 1,45,258 work-related visas issued by the U.K., Indians received 56,042, a jump of 90% in comparison to the pre-pandemic figure of 29,552 in 2019.

SUPREME COURT (SC) LAUNCHES ITS ONLINE PORTAL FOR RTI APPLICATIONS

1. Online portal for filing Right to Information (RTI) applications about SC has been operationalised. Earlier, RTI applications with respect to top court were being filed through post or physical submission. RTI Act 2005 provides for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities in order to promote transparency and accountability.
2. Portal can be used only by Indian citizens to file RTI applications, first appeals and to make payment for fees, etc. Portal will streamline responses of SC under RTI Act. It also introduced a facility for visually impaired to access court's judgments.
3. Earlier, in 2019, SC had ruled that office of Chief Justice of India comes under definition of 'public authority' in RTI Act. Public authority under section 2(h) of RTI act means any authority or body or institution of self- government established by or under Constitution; by any other law made by Parliament and State Legislature.
4. **Limitations of SC under RTI**-Adds to the administrative burden of courts. Brings into question right to privacy of judges.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLET(IYM) 2023

1. Representatives from over 60 countries attended the pre-launch celebration of the IYM 2023. Objective was to spread awareness about millets and engage with other nations for IYM 2023. In 2018, India proposed to United Nation to declare 2023 as IYM.
2. **About Millets**-They are collective group of small seeded annual grasses that are grown as grain crops. Grown on marginal land in dry areas of temperate, sub-tropical and tropical regions. India accounts for 80% of Asia's production and 20% of global production. Major Millets in India: Pearl Millet (Bajra) (highest share), Jowar (Sorghum), and Finger Millet (Mandua/Ragi). Major producers: Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka.
3. **Significance of millets**-Millets are considered as superfood (foods that have a very high nutritional density). Do not require high-quality soil and can withstand drought. Short growing period. Ability to sequester carbon and assist in climate adaptation.
4. **Initiatives for promotion of Millet**-National Year of Millets celebrated in 2018. Millets notified as nutri-cereals and included under POSHAN Mission Abhiyan.

BUREAU OF CIVIL AVIATION SECURITY(BCAS)

1. Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has notified draft Aircraft Security Rules, 2022. It enables BCAS to impose penalties up to ₹1 crore on airports and airlines for violation of security measures.
2. BCAS: It was set up as a Cell in Directorate General of Civil Aviation in 1978 on recommendation of Pande Committee.
3. In 1987, it was reorganized into an independent department under MoCA. It lays down standards and measures with respect to security of civil flights at international and domestic airports in India. Headquarter: New Delhi.



*"If you can not drive fast enough,
you do not deserve to be on the track.
It is not the lane on the track
but rather your speed that saves
you from being crushed by others."*

DR. Khan
(KSG)