

A bust of Mahatma Gandhi will be inaugurated as a gift from India to the United Nations during India's presidency of the Security Council next month. It will be installed at the headquarters in New York. The bust, made by renowned Indian sculptor and Padma Shri awardee Ram Sutar, who also designed the Statue of Unity in Gujarat, will be inaugurated on December 14 during External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit to the UN. Another gift from India which is on display at the UN Headquarters is an 11th century Blackstone statue of 'Surya', the Sun God, dating from the late Pala period, was donated on July 26, 1982, by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The restoration of the 100 year old Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai has won the 'Award of Excellence' in this year's UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The museum is a part of the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai's world heritage property. It was established as the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in 1922.

Protests in China against the government's harsh COVID-19 lockdown measures continued to intensify over the weekend, spreading to dozens of university campuses around the country in an unprecedented challenge to the Communist Party, on a scale unseen in decades. These protests were triggered by widespread anger at the death of at least 10 people in a fire in an apartment in the western city of Urumqi, with delays in extinguishing the blaze widely seen by the public as a result of lockdown policies.

NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery on Sunday expressed concern over the revival of the old pension scheme (OPS) by some States, saying it would burden future taxpayers at a time when India needed to focus on fiscal prudence and promote sustained growth. In an interview to PTI, Mr. Bery also underlined the need for enhancing the capital expenditure and creating a space for the private sector through fiscal consolidation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said that assuming the G-20 presidency was a huge opportunity for India and that the country must utilise it by focusing on the global good. He said this during his monthly radio broadcast, Mann Ki Baat. "India will assume presidency of the powerful grouping G-20 on December 1. For India, it is a huge opportunity. India must utilise the opportunity of G20 leadership by focusing on global good and welfare," he said.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi will be the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations in January 2023, the

ZOOS CAN NOW BE SET UP IN FORESTS SANS GREEN NOD

1. The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change approved consideration of Central Zoo Authority approved Zoos on forest land as forestry activity under the Forest Conservation Act (FCA), 1980. FCA considers zoos, rescue centres etc as a non-forestry activity and makes forest clearance from Centre mandatory. Now, zoos will be exempted from taking multiple permissions under FCA.
2. **About FCA-** It was introduced after the 42nd Constitutional Amendment- moving Forests from the State List to Concurrent List. It came into force to address deforestation and made it necessary for states to get Centre's permission for using forest land for "non forestry purposes" and also created a Forest Advisory Committee to recommend such re-classification.
3. Non-forestry purpose means clearing of any forest land or portion for any purpose other than reforestation. Cultivation of tea, coffee, spices, rubber, palms, oil-bearing plants, horticultural crops or medicinal plants are also non-forestry purpose. However, any work relating to conservation, development and management of forests and wildlife is not considered as non-forest purpose.
4. **About Central Zoo Authority (CZA)-** Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 provides for establishment of CZA (1992) to complement and strengthen the national effort in conservation of the rich biodiversity of the country. CZA consists of a chairman, ten members and a Member Secretary. Every Zoo in India needs CZA recognition for its operation.

SIPRI (STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE) YEARBOOK 2022

1. **SIPRI (established in 1966)** is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament. Since 1969 it has been releasing the SIPRI Yearbook for an overview of developments in international security, weapons and technology, military expenditure etc.
2. **Major Observations of SIPRI Yearbook 2022 (53rd edition):** Signs of post-cold war decline in nuclear arsenal ending as all nine nuclear-armed states continue to modernize them. Mixed signals from nuclear diplomacy with Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW) entering into force in 2021.

LESSONS FROM JAPANESE FANS-FIFA 2022

1. **Context:** social media is flooded with images because of which Japan's football fans are earning respect for their tradition of staying behind to help clean stadiums after World Cup games. As soon as the stadium started to empty, Japanese supporters could be seen taking out light blue disposable rubbish bags and getting to work.
2. **Lessons to be learnt:** Cleanliness and tidiness are like religion in Japan and they treasure them. It is a part of their education system, everyday learning. It is part of their custom: When they use the toilet, they clean it themselves.
3. When they leave a room, they make sure it is tidy. The Japanese fans showed a similar gesture after Japan's match against Colombia in 2018. People around the globe were impressed by their readiness to clean up the stadium after the match.

ONLINE RTI PORTAL: MAKING JUDICIARY MORE TRANSPARENT

1. **Context:** The Supreme Court launched an online portal that will help citizens file and access applications under the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005 in matters related to the court.
2. **Background:** So far, RTI applications at the SC had to be filed only via post. When can one expect a reply? By law, RTIs must be replied to within 30 days. In fact, RTIs must be answered within 48 hours in life-and-death situations.
3. **Significance:** Various public interest litigation (PILs) had been filed before the SC seeking an online portal for the Court, the new portal will provide the same when it comes to the filing of RTI applications, thus making the higher judiciary more approachable.

MYCOBACTERIUM LEPRAE

1. **Context:** A group of researchers have found that armadillo livers grew substantially when infected with Mycobacterium leprae.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on Sunday.

30.18 percent, the declining cumulative recovery rate under the insolvency resolution processes of debt-ridden companies at the end of the September quarter, indicating that lenders took more haircuts on their exposure, according to a Care Ratings study. The recovery rate has fallen from a peak of 43% in Q1 FY20.

\$ 100 million, the amount China pledged to Cuba to help it survive a crippling economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, the island nation's Deputy Prime Minister Alejandro Gil said on Saturday. The donation came as Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel concluded a visit to China, part of a rare foreign trip.

A Supreme Court Bench on November 25, issued notices to the Centre and the Attorney General of India, seeking their response to two petitions filed to allow solemnisation of same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act. One of the petitions argues that the recognition of same-sex marriage was only a "sequel" or a continuation of the Navtej Singh Johar judgment of 2018 (decriminalising homosexuality) and the Puttaswamy judgment of 2017 (affirming the Right to Privacy as a fundamental right). Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for the Centre had said that as per the law, marriage was permissible between a "biological man" and "biological woman".

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said his country aimed to have the world's most powerful nuclear force as he celebrated the launch of its newest intercontinental ballistic missile at a ceremony with his young daughter, state media reported on Sunday. The Hwasong-17 is believed to be capable of reaching the U.S. mainland

Bacteria of the chronic infectious disease reprogrammed certain cells into 'stem-like cells'.

2. **Significance:** Leprosy has long been associated with a life of ostracism. However, the bacteria causing this debilitating disease may offer some hope on the regenerative medicine horizon. Leprosy: Also known as Hansen's disease (HD), it is a long-term infection by the bacteria Mycobacterium leprae or Mycobacterium lepromatosis.
3. Infection can lead to damage to the nerves, respiratory tract, skin and eyes. Though not very contagious, leprosy is spread by extensive contact between people and is cured with multidrug therapy. Armadillos are mammals with their back, head, legs and tail covered in bony plates. They got the name from their unique look, which translated from Spanish means 'little armoured one'.

STATES ASK THE CENTRE TO REIN IN RELIANCE ON SURCHARGES, AND CESS WHILE RAISING REVENUE

1. **Context-** Several states have recently urged the central government to reduce its reliance on revenue-raising cesses and surcharges, which lower their portion of the divisible pool of taxes. They also want more financial support to help the economy recover, as well as an extension of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) compensation period.
2. **Background:** Recently, the Union Finance Minister presided over a consultation meeting for the Union Budget of 2023-24, which was attended by Chief Ministers, Deputy Chief Ministers, and State Finance Ministers. The issues of the federal fiscal framework were flagged by the states in the meeting. For example, Tamil Nadu Finance noted that the share of cesses and surcharges had grown from 10.4% of gross tax revenue in 2011-12 to 26.7% in 2021-22. This has deprived the States of their legitimate share of revenue collected by the Union Government. The states also raised concerns about pending dues from the five-year GST compensation window for states that expired on June 30 this year.
3. **Revenue sharing between centre-states:** The Indian Constitution grants the Union government more revenue-raising powers while the States are tasked to undertake most of the development and welfare-related responsibilities. According to the 15th Finance Commission's (FC) report (in FY19), the Union government raised 62.7% of the total resources raised by the Union government and States, while States had borne 62.4% of the aggregate expenditure.
4. This allocation of taxation powers and expenditure responsibilities results in an Therefore, the Constitution provides for sharing of the Union government's revenue with the States. Although the 14th and 15th FC raised the share of States in gross taxes to over 40%, the actual share never reached this mandated level. For example, during the pandemic, as the gross tax revenues took a hit, the States' share of the Union government's taxes recorded a steep fall of 15% and 9% in FY20 and FY21, respectively. However, the Union government's share increased due to the Centre increasing its revenue by imposing cesses and levies that are not shared with the states.
5. **Why is levying cesses a cause of worry?** The Union government has the authority to collect revenue through a variety of levies, such as taxes direct and indirect, surcharges, fees, and cess. Unlike traditional taxes and duties, a Cess is a tax on tax, that is levied as an additional tax on top of the existing tax, to raise revenue for a specified purpose. For example, the Swachh Bharat cess. It is normally paid by the general people and is added to their basic tax liability.



*"Just by being yourself,
you become special."*

DR. KHAN
(KSG)