

Daily News Decode

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Govt extends deadline for 100% collection of toll charges on National Highways till February 15



- The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has extended the deadline for 100 percent collection of toll charges on the National Highway (NH) network through FASTag till February 15.
- Earlier, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had announced to completely do away with cash transactions for paying toll charges from January 1.
- Currently, the share of transactions by FASTag is hovering around 75 to 80 percent.
- In a communication to NHAI, the ministry has said the highways authority can obtain the needed regulatory requirement from it for ensuring 100 percent cashless fee collection from February 15.
- In order to discourage cash transactions at toll plazas, all lanes barring one on each side have been made dedicated "FASTag lanes" and any vehicle entering these lanes without FASTag are liable to pay double the normal toll fee.

Govt extends benefit of RoDTEP scheme to all export goods to boost export from today



- Government has decided to extend the benefit of the scheme for Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) to all export goods with effect from today to boost export.
- The scheme will refund to exporters the embedded Central, State and local taxes that were so far not being given rebate or refunded.
- The refund will be credited in the exporter's ledger account with Customs and used to pay Basic Customs duty on imported goods.
- The credits can also be transferred to other importers.
- The RoDTEP rates will be notified shortly by the Department of Commerce, based on the recommendation of a Committee chaired by former Commerce and Home Secretary Dr. G.K. Pillai.
- The final Report of the Committee is expected shortly.
- An exporter desirous of availing the benefit of the RoDTEP scheme will have to declare his intention for each export item in the shipping bill or bill of export.
- The notified rates, irrespective of the date of notification, shall apply with effect from 1st January, 2021 to all eligible exports of goods.

Affordable Sustainable Housing Accelerators (ASHA)



- ASHA-India aims to promote domestic research and entrepreneurship by providing incubation and acceleration support to potential future technologies.
 - Under ASHA-India initiative, five ASHA-India Centers have been set up for providing incubation and acceleration support.
 - The potential technology winners under acceleration support will be announced by the Prime Minister.
- The technologies, processes and materials identified through this initiative will provide a major fillip to young creative minds, start-ups, innovators and entrepreneurs.
 - PMAY-U Mission has been designed to achieve the vision of Housing For All by 2022.
 - In order to recognize the outstanding contribution by States, UTs, Urban Local Bodies and beneficiaries, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has introduced annual awards for excellence in implementation of PMAY-Urban.
 - The winners of PMAY (Urban) Awards-2019 will be felicitated during the event.

Global Housing Technology Challenge - India



- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India has conceptualized a Global Housing Technology Challenge - India (GHTC- India) which aims to identify and mainstream a basket of innovative technologies from across the globe that are sustainable and disaster-resilient.
- The GHTC-India platform aspires to provide an eco-system for the adoption of innovative technologies in the housing construction sector in a holistic manner.
 - Lighthouse projects are envisaged that will be built using these innovative technologies and further support will be provided to upcoming domestic technologies to foster an environment of research and development.
 - Conceptualised through extensive consultations with various stakeholders, GHTC-India leverages the scale and successes of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and its Technology Sub-Mission
 - GHTC-India will encourage participation from across the affordable urban housing and construction sectors, such as technology providers, researchers, start-ups, developers, academia, public sector agencies, and civil society organizations.
 - Details of participation will be progressively updated on the challenge website ghtc-india.gov.in

India starts export of Moringa powder keeping in mind its rising global demand



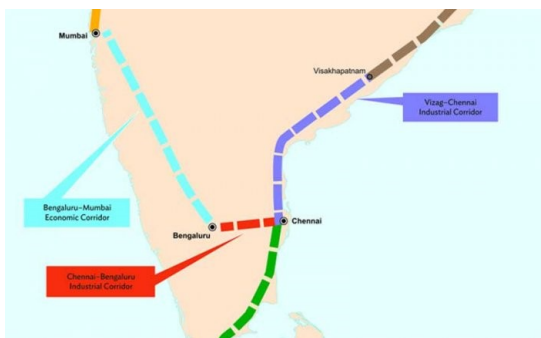
- India has started export of Moringa powder keeping in mind its rising global demand.
- Two tonnes of organic certified Moringa powder were sent to the United States through air consignment on 29th December
- Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has been supporting private entities in creating necessary infrastructure in this regard.
- One of the APEDA registered exporter from Telangana has been supported to start the export activities in a planned manner.
- The company plans to export around 40 metric tonnes of Moringa leaves powder to USA.
- Moringa has been used for centuries due to its medicinal properties and health benefits in various forms.

Yes to Medicine , Yes to caution



- means Yes to Medicine , Yes to caution
- Prime Minister gives new mantra 'Davaai bhi, kadaai bhi' to deal with Corona pandemic in New Year.
- If 2020 was the year of health challenges, 2021 is going to become the year of health solutions. He stressed, India will play a major role in the health solutions as it played in meeting the challenges of 2020.
- Given the competence of Indian medical professionals and service motivation, along with expertise like mass immunization experience India will provide smart and affordable solutions to the world.
- Health startups are integrating health solutions and technology and making health care accessible.

Chennai- Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)



- The Union cabinet approved Industrial Corridor nodes at Krishnapatnam and Tumakuru under CBIC recently
- It is one of the five industrial corridors coming up in India under the aegis of National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)

- These projects have been planned on the backbone of multi modal connectivity infrastructure.
- Krishnapatnam Industrial Area in Andhra Pradesh and Tumakuru Industrial Area in Karnataka under Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) have been approved to kick start the development in Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor Project.
- These greenfield industrial cities will be self-sustained with world-class infrastructure, road and rail connectivity for freight movement to and from ports and logistic hubs along with reliable power and quality social infrastructure.
- The strategy to develop CBIC is part of the plan to achieve accelerated development, regional industry agglomeration in the states of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and to facilitate development of a well-planned and efficient industrial base by providing smooth access to the industrial production units,
- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Study Team undertook the Preliminary Study for Comprehensive Integrated Master Plan for Chennai- Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC) and a total 25 priority projects across various sectors aimed at removing infrastructural bottlenecks were identified in their report.

Following three nodes were taken up for Master Planning under JICA assistance:

- Tumkur (Karnataka)
- Ponneri (Tamil Nadu)
- Krishnapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)

A deal between European Union & China after 7 years in making



- Recently, the European Union and China have agreed in principle on a business investment deal after seven years of discussions.
- It includes provisions for settling disputes and outlines clear rules against the forced transfer of technologies a practice in which a government requires foreign investors to share their technology in exchange for market access.
- As per EU's previous statement, the agreement should increase the transparency of Chinese state subsidies and make sustainable development a key element of the relationship between the two trading blocs.

- The proposed deal focuses on institutional opening up with market access as the key principle of the deal, which will mean more investment opportunities for businesses on both sides and “a better business environment
- Under the agreement, European firms will gain permission to operate in China in sectors including electric cars, private hospitals, real estate, advertising, the maritime industry, telecom cloud services, airline reservation systems and ground handling.
- Some requirements that companies operate as part of joint ventures with Chinese partners will be lifted.
- In turn, China will ban the forced transfer of technology from foreign companies and has pledged to be more transparent on subsidies and bar state-owned enterprises from discriminating against foreign investors.
- The deal is predicted to make the economies of the EU and China more inter dependent, with foreign investment in sectors including telecoms, private hospitals and electric vehicles likely to open up.
- Once in effect, the CAI (Comprehensive Agreement on Investment) will help rebalance the trade and investment relationship between the EU and China

The economic status of china

- After the US, China is currently already ranked as the EU’s second-biggest partner for trade with goods commerce between the two countries representing more than €1 billion per day.

EU on China’s Human Rights violation

- As per the report, the EU expressed concerns about the restrictions on freedom of expression, on access to information, and intimidation and surveillance of journalists, as well as detentions, trials and sentencing of human rights defenders, lawyers, and intellectuals in China
- The issue of human rights could prove to be a sticking point for the deal clearing the EU Parliament, with critics drawing attention to reports of forced labour in some regions of China.

Turkey’s controversial law to monitor civil society groups



- Recently, the Turkish parliament passed a bill that would increase the monitoring of civil society groups. The act is called Preventing Financing of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction
- It was proposed by president Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s ruling Justice and Development party in order to comply with UN Security Council’s recommendations to keep terror financing and money laundering in check.

- The Bill has come following the 2019 report on Turkey prepared by the inter governmental body Financial Action Task Force (FATF) meant to fight money laundering and terror financing.
- It consists of 43 articles and has made changes to seven laws on Turkey's Law of Associations and is meant to keep Turkey from being blacklisted by the Paris-based watchdog of terror financing

Skill Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE) programme



- Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) has tied up with 77 apparel manufacturing units for world bank funded STRIVE programme
- Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement (STRIVE) is a new World Bank funded project that has been approved by the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) in November 2016 for a total cost of Rs. 2200 crore (US \$ 318 million).
- The financial agreement was signed between Government of India and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) on 19th December, 2017 and the closing date of the project is November, 2022
- The project falls under the Programme for Results (P4R) based category of World Bank that ensures outcome based funding.
- The project aims at creating awareness through industry clusters/ geographical chambers that would address the challenge of involvement of micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs).
- It is aimed at institutional reforms and improving quality & market relevance of skill development training programs in long term vocational education training.
- The Project would also aim at integrating and enhancing delivery quality of ITIs.
- In order to ensure achievement of outcome these ITI would be competitively selected for upgradation under the scheme.
- It shall incentivize ITIs to improve overall performance including apprenticeship by involving SMEs, business association and industry clusters.
- The project aims to develop a robust mechanism for delivering quality skill development training by strengthening institutions such as State Directorate of training & Employment, The Central Staff Training and Research Institute (CSTARI), National Instructional Media Institute (NIMI), National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), ITIs etc.

The eight-core sectors of the Indian economy are:



- Electricity
 - Steel
 - Refinery products
 - Crude oil
 - Coal
 - Cement
 - Natural gas
 - Fertilizers
- These industries have a major impact on general economic activities and also industrial activities. They significantly impact most other industries as well.
 - The core sector represents the capital base of the economy.
 - These eight industries have a combined share of above 40% in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
 - The IIP gives the growth rates of different industry groups of the economy over a specified period.

Repeal farm laws: Kerala resolution



- The Kerala Assembly on unanimously passed a resolution, urging the Union government to accede to the demands of the agitating farmers and take immediate measures to repeal the three contentious farm laws
 - Kerala farmers are not directly impacted by the farm laws as the state does not have mandis
- Around 80per cent of agri-produces are cash crops, with each crop having commodity boards and different market dynamics.
 - Kerala depends upon other states for food grains and pulses.
 - Being a consumer state ,Kerala fears that abolition of mandi system would affect its interest and lead to hike in prices

Operation Meghdoot,



- Operation Meghdoot, was in support of the Indian Army and paramilitary forces in Northern Ladakh, to secure control of the heights predominating the Siachen glacier, also referred to as the world's third pole and potentially a dangerous flash point on the disputed Northern borders.

- IAF Il-76s, An 12s and An 32s transported stores and troops, airdropped supplies to high altitude airfields while Mi-17s, Mi-8s, Chetaks and Cheetahs ferried men and material to dizzy heights far above the limits set by the helicopter manufacturers.
- In fighting for this "roof-of-the world" since April 1984, the IAF's incredible performance at the extremes of temperature and altitude, remains a continuing saga of fortitude and skill.
- But few people know that Siachen operations actually started way back in 1978.
- Siachen Glacier is the highest battlefield in the world.
- Here a war is going on for the past fourteen years. It is a conflict where records of human endurance, flying and technical competence are being set nearly everyday
- Operation Meghdoot was launched on 13 April 1984 when the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force went into the Glacier.
- Currently, the Indian Army remains the first and only army in the world to have taken tanks and other heavy ordnance up to such an altitude (well over 5,000 m or 16,000 ft).
- Up to ten infantry battalions each of the Indian Army and Pakistan Army are actively deployed at high altitudes of up to 6,400 metres (21,000 ft) throughout the region of the glacier.

A leopard count with a missing benchmark number (Written by Sanjay Gubbi)



- The goal of species conservation is to protect and increase the population of the species of interest.
- In this direction, scientific monitoring of their current numbers, and an increase or a decrease in numbers over the years will determine whether the conservation efforts undertaken to preserve the species are bearing fruit.
- In general, habitat loss due to mining and quarrying, poaching for body parts, mortality due to vehicular collisions, retaliatory killing due to human-leopard conflict and accidental deaths due to snares set for catching wild prey all seem to be impacting the conservation

Acclimatising to climate risks (Written by Abinash Mohanty)

- Several parts of north India are in the grip of a severe cold wave. While winter may be longer and harsher in some regions due to La Niña, forecasters suggest that 2021 would still be among the Earth's hottest years recorded.
- Rising temperatures have led to a sharp increase in climate extreme events in recent years.
- Also, the intensity of floods increased eightfold and that of associated events such as landslides and heavy rainfall increased by over 20 times since 1970.
- Drought-affected districts have increased by an yearly average of 13 times over the last two decades.
- The frequency of cyclones has also doubled. Over 40% of Indian districts now show a swapping trend: flood-prone areas are becoming drought-prone, and vice-versa.
- the UN Secretary-General underscored the importance of adaptation and resilience to mainstream climate actions, and tagged 2021 as a "make it or break it" year.
- First, India should create an Environment and Health De-risking Mission to increase emergency preparedness, secure critical resources and build resilient infrastructure and governance systems to counter the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme climate events.
- The Mission should also focus on democratising local climate-related and weather-related data along with integrating risk projections in national, sub-national and district disaster and climate plans.
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- Second, India needs a comprehensive Climate Risk Atlas to present a risk-informed decision-making toolkit for policymakers at the national, State, and district level.
- Such an Atlas should identify, assess and project chronic and acute risks at a granular level to better prepare against extreme climate events, urban heat stress, water stress, crop loss, vector-borne diseases, and biodiversity collapse.
- The Atlas would also help in assessing the resilience and adaptation capabilities of communities and business.
- Third, to finance climate action at scale, risk financing instruments and risk retention and identification tools should be supplemented by contingency and adaptation funds such as the Green Climate Fund.
- This will enhance the public finance pool and gear up efficient allocation across sectors at risk by mobilising investments on critical infrastructures and resilient community actions.
- Finally, as the permanent chair of the recently formed Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, India should play a pivotal role in attracting private investments into climate-proofing of infrastructure.

The Laser Dazzler



- The Laser Dazzler is used as a non-lethal method for warning and stopping suspicious vehicles/boats/aircrafts/UAVs/pirates etc. from approaching secured areas during both day and night.
- It is capable of dazzle and thereby suppress the person's/optical sensor's action with disability glare in case of non-compliance to orders.
- It disorient/ confuse/blind a person temporarily. It also dazzles and distract aircraft/UAVs.
- It is a portable, shoulder operated and ruggedized for military use in adverse environmental conditions. Laser dazzler technology was developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- This unique product is indigenously designed and developed for first time for the Armed Forces. It will support the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative o