

# Daily News Decode

13.01.21

## The revival of BSNL and MTNL



- The Union Minister of Steel has emphasized the role of SAIL steel plants in Mission Purvodaya to drive development of eastern India.
- It was launched in 2020 for the accelerated development of eastern India through the establishment of an integrated steel hub in Kolkata, West Bengal.

- The focus will be on eastern states of India (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal) and northern part of Andhra Pradesh which collectively hold ~80% of the country's iron ore, ~100% of coking coal and significant portion of chromite, bauxite and dolomite reserves.

The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements:

- I. Capacity addition through easing the setup of Greenfield steel plants.
- II. Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand centres.
- III. Transformation of logistics and utilities infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East.

The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality.

## Accessible India Campaign

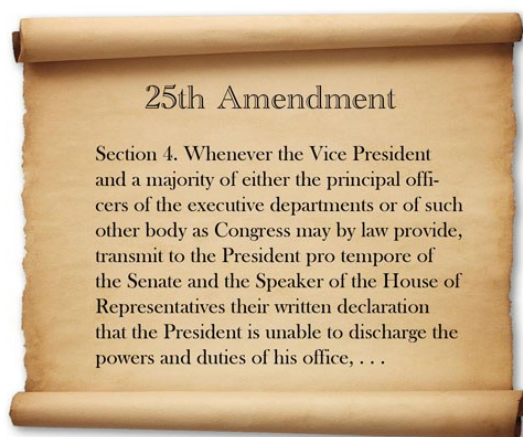


- Accessible India Campaign or Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan is a program which is set to be launched to serve the differently-able community of the country
- The program comes with an index to measure the design of disabled-friendly buildings and human resource policies.
- The flagship program has been launched by the Prime Minister on 3 December 2015, the International Day of people with Disabilities.
- The initiative also in line with the Article 9 of the (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) to which India is a signatory since 2007
- The scheme also comes under Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 under section 44, 45, 46 for equal Opportunities and protection of rights which provides non - discrimination in Transport to Persons with Disabilities

Targets originally entailed under following components:

- I. Making 50% of all the government buildings of National Capital and all the State capitals fully accessible by December 2018.
- II. Completing accessibility audit of 50% of government buildings and making them fully accessible in 10 most important cities/towns of States by December 2019.
- III. Ensuring that 50% of railway stations in the country are converted into fully accessible railway stations by March 2018.
- IV. Ensuring that 25% of Government owned public transport carriers in the country are converted into fully accessible carriers by March 2018.
- V. Conducting accessibility audit of 50% of all government (both Central and State Governments) websites and converting them into fully accessible websites by March 2017.

## 25th Amendment of US constitution



- In the immediate aftermath of Donald Trump supporters stroking over the US Capitol building, there is a demand by US congress to either impeach President Trump or invoke the 25th Amendment.
  - The Twenty-fifth Amendment (1967) to the United States Constitution deals with presidential succession and disability.
- It was introduced after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the 25th Amendment was proposed by Congress on July 6, 1965, and ratified by the states on February 10, 1967.
  - It clarifies that the vice president becomes president if the president dies, resigns, or is removed from office, and establishes how a vacancy in the office of the vice president can be filled.
  - It also provides for the temporary transfer of the president's powers and duties to the vice president, either on the initiative of the president alone or on the initiative of the vice president together with a majority of the president's cabinet.
  - In either case, the vice president becomes acting president until the presidential powers and duties are returned to the president

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica amendment has 4 important parts:

- I. The traditionally observed process of succession in the event of the death of the president, like the vice president would succeed to the office and it even also introduced a change regarding the ascent of the vice president to president should the latter resign from office.
- II. The amendment addresses vacancies in the office of the vice president.

- iii. The amendment set forth the formal process for determining the capacity of the president to discharge the powers and duties of office.
- iv. The amendment requires the vice president and the cabinet to jointly ascertain if the president is unable to declare his/her incompetence

## All Micro enterprises set up under PMEGP to be geo-tagged



- All micro-enterprises set up under PMEGP will be geo-tagged facilitating easy location and monitoring of units, said the Union Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).
- According to a year-end review, the Ministry also informed that a geo-tagging portal -- "<http://geotag.kvic.gov.in/>" has been prepared and is being put into operation.
- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a major credit-linked subsidy programme aimed at generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector by assisting traditional artisans and unemployed youth in rural as well as urban areas.
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal agency for its implementation at the national level
- At the state/district level, state offices of KVIC, Coir Board, KVIBs and District Industry Centres are the implementing agencies.

## New Foreign Trade Policy to come into effect from April 1



- The meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry was held on the subject "New Foreign Trade Policy 2021-26".
- The meeting was chaired by the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Hardeep Singh Puri, and attended by Members of Parliament and senior officers of the Ministry.
- The policy will strive to make India a leader in the area of international trade and channelize the synergies gained through merchandise and services exports for growth and employment with a goal to make India a 5 trillion dollar economy
- The FTP 2015-20 came into effect on 1st April 2015 and the same was extended by one year till 31 March this year due to Covid-19 pandemic.

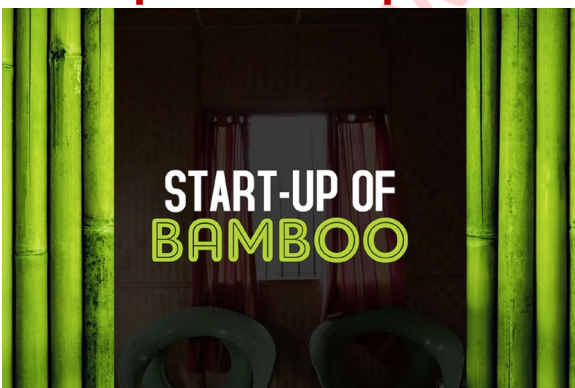
## CBDT launches e-portal for filing complaints regarding tax evasion, benami properties



- The Central Board of Direct Taxes, CBDT has launched an automated dedicated e-portal on the e-filing website of the Department to receive and process complaints of tax evasion, foreign undisclosed assets as well as complaints regarding benami properties.

- The public can now file a Tax Evasion Petition through a link on the e-filing website of the Department.
- The facility allows for filing of complaints by persons who are existing PAN and Aadhaar holders as well as for persons having no PAN and Aadhaar.
- After an OTP based validation process, the complainant can file complaints in respect of violations of the Income- tax , Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Assets and Income) Imposition of Tax Act and Prevention of Benami Transactions Act in three separate forms designed for the purpose.
- Upon successful filing of the complaint, the Department will allot a unique number to each complaint and the complainant would be able to view the status of the complaint on the Department's website.
- This e-portal is yet another initiative of the Income Tax Department to bring about enhanced ease of interaction with the Department, while strengthening its resolve towards e-governance.

## NECBDC sign MoU with J&K govt on Bamboo Entrepreneurship and Bamboo Infrastructure Development



- In order to boost the unexplored potential of bamboo sector, the Ministry of DoNER, through North East Cane & Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC) under North Eastern Council (NEC) signed a MoU with J&K Government for Bamboo Entrepreneurship and Bamboo Infrastructure Development.

- Signing of the MoU will give impetus to bamboo production, its processing and associated business, and to develop bamboo industry into a strong industry of J&K.
- For planned cultivation of commercial species of Bamboo, the LG said that the UT Administration will explore the possibility of setting up a State Bamboo Mission (SBM) in J&K that will benefit a large number of farmers in the UT.

## Gujarat CM announces new tourism policy



- The New Tourism Policy 2021-25 will remain effective from 1st January 2021 to 31st March 2025.
- The focus of the new policy will be on 'Vocal for Local' to boost the employment at local level.
- The government will give subsidy of 20 per cent on capital investment for setting up a hotel in the designated high priority centres.
- Minimum investment requirement is Rs.1 crore, while there is no cap on maximum investment.
- 15 percent subsidy will be given on setting up theme parks or amusement parks in these priority centers with the investment of Rs.50 crore to Rs.500 crore.
- The state government will provide land on lease in addition to the 15 per cent subsidy for projects of more than Rs.500 crore.
- According to the new policy, the convention centers with a seating capacity of over 2500, NABH-accredited wellness centers, tourism hospitality

## Three-day Makara Sankranti festivities begin in Telangana



- In Telangana, Makara Sankranti festivities commenced with people celebrating Bhogi today with traditional fervour and gaiety
- The three-day post-harvest festival is being celebrated across the state but predominant in rural areas as all segments of society celebrate the festival with much pomp.
- The First day of Sankranti festivities began with Bhogi Mantalu, that is bonfire lit early this morning.
- People along with children came out in large numbers to light the bonfire at the street corners and cross roads. They burnt their old and unused belongings in the fire as a symbol to get rid of the bad and evil.
- People are inviting the Sankranti Lakshmi, a symbol of prosperity by decorating their houses traditionally with colourful Rangoli and Mango leaves and flowers.
- The three-day festivities are predominant in rural areas across the state as farmers reap their harvest before the festival

## Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana completes 5 years



- The Centre has urged the farming community to take advantage of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), which has completed 5 years yesterday, in order to become "self-reliant farmers".
- In a statement, the Union agriculture ministry said claims worth 90,000 crore rupees have so far been disbursed to farmers since the launch of the scheme on 13th January 2016.
- The Central Government's flagship crop insurance scheme - the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has successfully completed 5 years of its operation.
- The government took a historic step towards strengthening risk coverage of crops for farmers and approved the scheme on 13th January, 2016.
- The scheme was conceived as a milestone initiative to provide a comprehensive risk solution at the lowest uniform premium across the country for farmers.
- In the scheme, premium cost over and above the farmer share is equally subsidized by the Centre and States.
- Ministry of Agriculture has said that the average sum insured per hectare has increased from 15 thousand 100 during the pre-PMFBY Schemes to 40 thousand 700 under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
- With an aim to constantly bring about improvements, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was made voluntary for all farmers, post its revamp in February 2020.
- Besides, the States have also been provided flexibility to rationalize the sum insured so that adequate benefit can be availed by the farmers.
- The Scheme covers over 5.5 crore farmers' applications year on year and till date, claims worth 90 thousand crore rupees have already been paid out under the Scheme.
- Aadhar seeding has helped in speedy claim settlement directly into the farmer accounts.
- Even during COVID-19 lock down period nearly 70 lakh farmers benefitted and claims worth over 8 thousand 741 crore rupees were transferred to the beneficiaries.
- The government has urged the farmers to take advantage of the scheme by associating themselves to become self-sufficient in times of crisis and support the creation of an **Aatmanirbhar Kisan**.

## More wildlife in Aravallis at Faridabad, Gurgaon than at Asola, need better protection: Study



- The study—a “systematic assessment” of mammals in the wildlife corridor formed by the Aravalli hills in Gurgaon and Faridabad with the Asola Wildlife Sanctuary in Delhi.
  - “The study indicated that the hot spot of wild life in this corridor is actually between Damdama and Mangar Bani, and wildlife moves from there to Asola through the Aravalli in Faridabad.
  - This indicates that Asola will survive as long as the Aravalli region of Gurgaon and Faridabad survives. If this finishes, Asola will automatically finish as well.
  - It is, hence, critical to protect this region
- The study reveals that 15 species of mammals were recorded in the 200 sq km area that was covered, including Gurgaon Aravallis, Mangar Bani, Faridabad Aravallis, and Asola Wild life Sanctuary.
  - Although the largest number of species was recorded in Faridabad Aravallis (14), followed by Gurgaon Aravallis (11), Mangar Bani (10) and Asola(9), the encounter rates in Mangar Bani and Gurgaon Aravallis were 30% higher.

## Update won't affect privacy: WhatsApp



- In the wake of a backlash over its updated privacy policy, Facebook-owned WhatsApp on Tuesday clarified that the update would not affect users’ messages to friends or family. The changes only relate to messaging a business using the platform, the messaging service provider said.
- Interestingly, in a new survey by community social network LocalCircles comprising almost 9,000 participants, 15% respondents said they would stop using WhatsApp, while 26% said they would “drastically reduce” their usage of the platform and start using other platforms such as Signal and Telegram.
  - The provider added that it neither keeps record of a user’s contacts nor can it see a user’s shared location.

## EV major Tesla gets an India address



- Electric vehicle company Tesla has officially entered India by registering with the Registrar of Companies as Tesla India Motors and Energy Private Ltd., incorporated in Bengaluru,
- Tesla has been exploring its India entry with a bunch of states in the last 3 years.

## 42% of firms will continue to invest in cybersecurity



- Security is no more a choice, but a necessity for CTOs and CIOs, and therefore enterprises in 2021 will aggressively embrace digital transformation to protect and manage critical data, Dell Technologies said in its 'Data Protection Trends for 2021' report.
  - Data protection has transformed itself into a top priority and organisations are investing heavily to safeguard their IT architecture against any kind of cyber threat or malware attack.
- According to the report, to stay competitive and continue with their growth trajectory amid the current situation, organisations need to digitally transform their IT infrastructure.
  - They need to accelerate their data mining and extract maximum insights available from the collected data sets.

## India's LPG consumption in 2020 surpasses petrol for the 1st time



- Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) surpassed gasoline or petrol as India's second most consumed oil product for the first time in 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown and government's distribution program.
- Indian LPG consumption was at 27.41 million tonnes in 2020, 4.3% higher than 2019, while the demand for gasoline over the same period fell 9.3% to 27.27 million tonnes.



## I-T Dept launches e-facility to get information on tax evaders



- The Income Tax Department has started a new online facility that allows people to file complaints with regards to undisclosed foreign assets, benami properties, or any instance of tax evasion, the Central Board of Direct Taxes said on Tuesday.
- The facility also provides an option to be an "informer" and claim a reward of up to ₹5 crore.

## Army to induct women as pilots in aviation wing: Gen Naravane



- The Army has decided to induct women as pilots in its aviation wing and the first batch is likely to begin training in July.
- Chief of Army Staff General MM Naravane said he had issued instructions regarding the same a month ago. "After one year's training they will be able to join frontline operations units for flying duties," he added.

## In ancient Al-Ula, forging a new future (Written by Talmiz Ahmad)

- On January 5, the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) met at the ancient town of Al-Ula in Saudi Arabia to end the bitter discord that three of its members — Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, along with Egypt — have had with their partner, Qatar.
- On June 5, 2017, the Arab Quartet, as they styled themselves, subjected Qatar to an onerous diplomatic boycott and a total land, sea and air embargo.
- They then presented Qatar with 13 demands including severing ties with the Muslim Brotherhood, diluting relations with Turkey and Iran, and shutting down the Al Jazeera network, in order to normalise ties. Viewing these demands as an encroachment on its sovereignty, Qatar rejected them.
- Ten years ago, the Arab Spring uprisings across West Asia had thrown up popular demands for reform — an end to authoritarian rule and the restoration of Arab "dignity" through freedom and democracy.
- Four leaders fell under these pressures, which also gave rise to two new developmentsone, Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated parties came to power in Egypt and Tunisia; and, two, Saudi Arabia decided to divert demands for domestic reform by highlighting a threat from Iran.
- The Brotherhood, with its grassroots mobilisation and a political platform that marries Islamic principles with Western-style democracy, poses a serious challenge to the existing monarchical order

- Saudi Arabia and the UAE watched with horror the Brotherhood's electoral successes, culminating in Mohammed Morsi being elected President in Egypt in 2012.
- Fearing that a successful Brotherhood administration would become a model for their countries as well, the two GCC allies supported the Egyptian army's coup against Morsi in July 2013.
- Qatar, a GCC member, has over several years been a maverick in GCC counsels. Besides supporting its independent television channel, Al Jazeera, that often criticises regional leaders, it is a major supporter of the Brotherhood.
- Though explained as an expression of its independent foreign policy
- U.S. President Donald Trump's visceral hostility towards Iran and total support for Saudi Arabia gave the quartet the opportunity to change Qatar's ways: through the boycott of June 2017, they sought to pressurise their partner into submission.
- This approach failed: with its huge resources, Qatar could weather the financial assault, while the backing of Turkey, Iran and two GCC partners, Kuwait and Oman, ensured that the movement of goods and people was maintained.
- Recently, when the UAE and Bahrain "normalised" ties with Israel, both Qatar and Turkey affirmed their support for Hamas, the Islamist party in power in Gaza.
- The most likely reason for the reconciliation at Al-Ula is the incoming Biden presidency in the U.S.: it is expected that, besides reviving the nuclear agreement with Iran and easing sanctions, Joe Biden could focus on Saudi Arabia's dismal human rights record and the war in Yemen.
- The Al-Ula conclave could herald some major shifts in regional alignments.
- There could be a nascent Saudi-UAE competition, with the UAE ingratiating itself with the U.S. and supporting its interests in diverse theatres – Yemen, the Horn of Africa and the western Indian Ocean.
- Turkey and Qatar, possibly with Iran, could then seize the opportunity to re-engage with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, thus shaping an alternative regional coalition that would perhaps be closer to Russia and China than to the U.S.

## **Policing a turbulent democracy (Written by R.K. Raghavan)**

- The intricacies of policing Washington D.C. are somewhat analogous to those administering Delhi. Although Delhi is for all purposes a 'State' as defined by the Constitution, operational control over the Delhi Police rests with the Union Home Ministry.
- This is an arrangement laid down by the Constitution (Sixty-ninth Amendment) Act. Under this law, the Delhi Legislative Assembly can make laws in all subjects except in matters pertaining to public order, police and land.
- The mode of policing the American capital is a shade different from what prevails in India

- The U.S. Capitol Police is an independent police department which reports to the House Speaker and Senate President. It can and frequently does ask other Washington D.C. law enforcement agencies for extra resources.
- It can also ask the National Guard and federal law enforcement agencies for assistance.
- The National Guard is drawn from the U.S. Army and Air Force and is somewhat weighed down by the dual control of the States and the federal government.

## **Reclaiming SAARC from the ashes of 2020**

**(Written by Suhasini Haidar)**

- The year 2020 marked the sixth year since the leaders of the eight nations that make up SAARC were able to meet.
- Over the past year, India-Pakistan issues have impacted other meetings of SAARC as well, making it easier for member countries, as well as international agencies to deal with South Asia as a fragmented group rather than a collective, working with each country in separate silos or in smaller configurations.
- India's problems with Pakistan on terrorism, territorial claims and on its role in blocking SAARC initiatives on connectivity and trade are well known
- The insistence is particularly puzzling given that Mr. Modi and his cabinet ministers continued to attend Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meetings along with their Pakistani counterparts, including the SCO Heads of Government meeting in November where New Delhi even invited Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan
- While China's incursions in Ladakh and the Galwan killings constituted the larger concern in the year, India did not decline to attend meetings with the Chinese leadership at the SCO, the Russia-India-China trilateral, the G-20 and others.
- In a year when the pandemic has forced most multilateral summits to go online, it is inexplicable that India cannot attend a virtual SAARC summit hosted by Pakistan
- Second, reviving SAARC is crucial to countering the common challenges brought about by the pandemic.
- The pandemic's impact on South Asian economies is another area that calls for coordination.
- World Bank reports that have estimated the losses have all suggested that South Asian countries work as a collective to set standards for labour from the region ,
- And also to promoting a more intra-regional, transnational approach towards tourism, citing successful examples including the 'East Africa Single Joint Visa' system, or similar joint tourism initiatives like in the Mekong region or the Caribbean islands.
- While it will be impossible for countries to cut themselves off from the global market entirely, regional initiatives will become the "Goldilocks option" (not too hot and not too cold), or the happy medium between globalisation and hyper-nationalism.

- It would be important to note therefore, that as the world is divided between regional trade arrangements such as new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, or USMCA (North America), the Southern Common Market, or MERCOSUR for its Spanish initials (South America), the European Union (Europe), the African Continental Free Trade Area, or AfCFTA (Africa), the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC (Gulf) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, or RCEP (South East Asia and Australasia including China), India's only regional trading agreement at present is the South Asian Free Trade Area, or SAFTA (with SAARC countries).
- At the border, it is clear that tensions with Pakistan and Nepal amplify the threat perception from China, while other SAARC members (minus Bhutan), all of whom are Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partners of China will be hard placed to help individually.

UPSC\_HACKS  
www.upschacks.com