

Daily News Decode

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India Releases Draft Arctic Policy



- India seeks to play a constructive role in the Arctic by leveraging its vast scientific pool and expertise in Himalayan and Polar research.
- India would also like to contribute in ensuring that as the Arctic becomes more accessible, the harnessing of its resources is done sustainably and in consonance with best practices formulated by bodies such as the Arctic Council
- The country became an Observer in the Arctic Council for the first time in 2013; its membership in that body was renewed for a second five-year term in 2018.
- While British India signed the Svalbard Treaty – which, while recognizing Norway’s sovereignty over Spitsbergen, also allowed other signatories free access to the region along with maintaining a commitment to not militarizing it – in 1920, independent India’s engagement with the Arctic started in 2007 with a scientific expedition to the region.
- India now maintains a permanent presence in the region through a research base, Himadri, and two observatories, in Kongsfjorden and Ny Alesund.
- The recently released draft document outlines five pillars of India’s Arctic policy: scientific research, economics and human development; connectivity; global governance and international cooperation; and development of Indian human resource capabilities.
- The document notes, “there are several synergies between polar studies and the study of the Himalayas. Arctic research will help India’s scientific community to study melting rates of the third pole – the Himalayan glaciers, which are endowed with the largest freshwater reserves in the world outside the geographic poles.”
- Equally sound is its observation that melting ice in the Arctic due to climate change could release new pathogens that had previously remained trapped, thus increasing the possibility of future pandemics.

Iron ore policy 2021



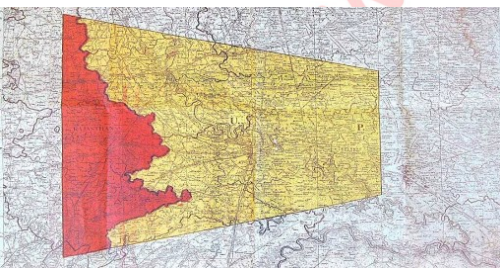
- Ministry of Railways rolls out a new iron ore policy governing allocation of rakes and transportation of iron ore
- Production of steel is critically dependent on transportation of iron and other raw materials.
- The policy sets down clear guidelines on how to fully meet the requirement of customers by leveraging infrastructure facilities available at loading and unloading ends to the fullest.
- The new policy has been named as 'Iron-ore Policy 2021' and shall come into effect from 10th February 2021.
- The aim of policy is to attune it to the present day needs of customers and assure them that Indian Railways is fully committed to meet the complete requirement of transportation of iron ore customers and provide total logistics support to the steel industry to meet the competitive challenges domestically and globally.
- Iron-ore is the second most important stream of traffic of Railways and along with steel accounts for nearly 17% (53.81 Million Tonne of Steel & 153.35 Million Tonne of Iron ore) of total 1210 Million Tonne freight loading of IR in 2019-20.
- The new Iron-ore Policy, 2021 issued by the Ministry of Railways is expected to have a positive impact on the steel industry, provide powerful impetus to the core sector of the economy and boost the country's economic growth.

Key highlights of the policy

- Removes existing categorization: Existing categorisation based on customer's profile into CBT/Non CBT customers henceforth is being done away with. Old and new plants will be treated similarly as far as allotment/loading of rakes is concerned.
- Priority movement of Iron ore: Categorization of Priority of movement of Iron Ore has now been based on the availability of Railway infrastructure developed by the customer for loading/unloading and the nature of movement between various types of sidings with a view to maximize iron-ore movement by rail.
- System generated priority to customers: The priority preferences for the customers will be self-generated by the system (Rake allotment scheme) based on customer profile (name of manufacture, consignor name, consignee name, siding/PFT name and code) fed in the system by the concerning zone.
- Priority to domestic manufacturing: Higher priority given to movement of iron-ore traffic for domestic manufacturing activity.
- Priority for domestic movement of iron-ore: Within domestic movement of iron-ore traffic, priority preference given to Steel /Pig Iron/Sponge Iron/pellet/sinter plant owning customers having their own private sidings at both loading as well as unloading ends (C+), customers with private siding at either loading or unloading end (C), customers without any private siding of their own relying totally on public goodsheds/sidings (C-) in that order.

- No permission is required to be obtained for choosing priorities: Customers are free to choose the priorities or combination of priorities for moving their traffic as per eligibility and necessity. No permission is required to be obtained for choosing priorities or combination of priorities.
- Export traffic shall be given priority 'D'. To differentiate rail-cum-sea traffic from export traffic, the former should be accompanied by a self-declaration that such traffic is meant for domestic consumption and railway will not be held responsible for any wrong declaration submitted by the manufacturer.
- Pellet and sinter traffic will also move under priority D.
- Any type of customer can move traffic under priority D as per his requirement.
- Dispatch of 'low grade fines or iron ore rejects' generated during the process of manufacturing has been freely allowed under priority D to any location.
- Under contractual traffic (GPWIS), customer is free to place indents as per their requirement.
- Removal of scrutiny of documentation: With the aim to facilitate 'Ease of doing business' scrutiny of documentation by Railways has been removed.
- EDRM office, Kolkata which has been sanctioning programme for movement of iron-ore traffic will have no regulatory role in the new policy.
- The office will be undertaking analysis of various iron-ore traffic for further improvement of Railway freight loading.
- Customers to give undertaking: Customers now desirous of moving their traffic under any priority will have to give undertaking that they have procured, transported and utilized materials as per rules and regulations of Central and State Governments.
- For lapses, customers will be liable to be taken up as per the law of land and railway will stand indemnified for any such lapses committed by customers.

Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)



- The Supreme court of India lifted its earlier interim order imposing a complete ban on construction, industrial activities and felling of trees in the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ).
- It is a defined area of 10,400 sq km around the Taj Mahal to protect the monument from pollution.
- The Supreme Court of India delivered a ruling on December 30, 1996, regarding industries covered under the TTZ, in response to a PIL seeking to protect the Taj Mahal from environmental pollution.
- It banned the use of coal/ coke in industries located in the TTZ with a mandate for switching over from coal/ coke to natural gas, and relocating them outside the TTZ or shutting down.
- The TTZ comprises monuments including three World Heritage Sites, the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.

- TTZ is so named since it is located around the Taj Mahal and is shaped like a trapezoid.
- It has a four-zone which is named Red, Green, Orange and White.

Geographical location

- The geographical limits of the Taj Trapezium Zone is defined in the shape of a trapezium lying in the Agra Division of the State of Uttar Pradesh and in the Bharatpur Division of the State of Rajasthan.

DRDO hands over Motor Bike Ambulance Rakshita to CRPF



- Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), Delhi-based DRDO laboratory, handed over Rakshita, a bike-based casualty transport emergency vehicle to CRPF today in a ceremony held at CRPF Head Office in New Delhi.
- The bike ambulance will help in overcoming the problems faced by Indian security forces and emergency health care providers. The bike ambulances will provide life-saving aid for evacuation of injured patients from low intensity conflict areas.
- Rakshita is fitted with a customized reclining Casualty Evacuation Seat (CES), which can be fitted in and taken out as per requirement. Other major features are the head immobilizer, safety harness jacket, hand and foot straps for safety, adjustable footrest, physiological parameter measuring equipment with wireless monitoring capability and auto warning system for the driver.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights



- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament, the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
- The Commission works under the aegis of Ministry of Women and Child Development, GoI.
- The Commission began operational on 5th March, 2007

Odisha's oldest, most popular art form 'Pattachitra' preserved in Raghurajpur



- Odisha's traditional art form 'Pattachitra', which dates back to 5 BC, continues to live on in India's first heritage village Raghurajpur.
- One of the oldest and most popular art forms of Odisha, the name 'Pattachitra' has evolved from the Sanskrit words 'patta' (canvas) and 'chitra' (picture).

- Thus, it refers to a painting done on canvas and is manifested by rich colorful applications, creative motifs, and designs, and portrayal of simple themes, mostly mythological in depiction.
- All colours used in the paintings are natural and with Pattachitra being a disciplined art form, the chitrakars maintain rigidity in their use of colors and patterns.
- The tassar cloth Pattachitra is also quite popular. The one etched on dried palm leaves is more often picked up by tourists as souvenirs. Other forms of Pattachitra include paper mache masks, paintings on coconut and betel nut.

India's first heritage village Raghurajpur.



- Raghurajpur is a heritage crafts village out of Puri district, India, known for its master Pattachitra painters, an art form which dates back to 5 BC in the region and Gotipua dance troupes, the precursor to the Indian classical dance form of Odissi.
- It is also known as the birthplace of one of the finest Odissi exponents and Guru, Kelucharan Mohapatra.
- Apart from that, the village is also home to crafts like Tussar paintings, palm leaf engravings, stone and wood carvings, wooden, cowdung and papier mache toys, and masks
- In 2000, after a two-year research and documentation project by INTACH, starting 1998, the village was chosen to be developed as state's first heritage village and developed as a Crafts village, soon the village had an interpretation centre, commissioned artwork on the walls of the artists' homes and a rest house.
- It also has the distinction of the only place where the traditional decoration called Patas, used under the throne of Lord Jagannath and on the three chariots during the annual Rath Yatra festival, that takes place at pilgrimage town of Puri, some 14 km away, known for the Jagannath Temple

'Kangri'



- Kangri is an earthen bowl encased in an exquisitely woven wicker basket.
- It is filled with small pieces of glowing coal or wood in dying fire (embers) covered with ash.
- It is held against the body under a Pheran or a blanket. It is also used to warm hands if wearing a jacket as a hand warmer.
- It is about 6 to 8 inches (10 to 12 cms) in diameter. It has a temperature which is warm enough and feels very comfortable around 50 to 60 degrees C.
- The special sized clay bowl is baked by the potter and the artisan completes the delicate wicker work by erecting arms to handle the pot.
- It is normally kept inside the Phiran, the Kashmiri cloak, or inside a blanket. It is mostly used in the cold nights of Chillai Kalan
- Charari Sharief town is the most famous for a peculiar kind of kangri called "charar kangir". Anantnag is also another major producer. The sector is not organized but is covered under different government schemes.

India, Japan sign Memorandum of Cooperation to help promote movement of skilled workers



- India and Japan signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on Monday on "Basic Framework for Partnership" to help promote the movement of skilled workers from New Delhi to Tokyo.
- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that the MoC covers 14 categories of specified skills under which skilled workers from India who meet the skills requirement and Japanese language tests would be eligible for employment in Japan on a contractual basis.
- According to the statement, India and Japan have, in the last few years, strengthened their cooperation in the area of skills development.
- "In 2016, both countries signed the 'Manufacturing Skill Transfer Promotion Programme' agreement for the training 30,000 persons over 10 years with Japanese style manufacturing skills and practices through the establishment of the Japan-India Institutes for Manufacturing (JIM) and Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC) in colleges across India. As of date, 13 JIMs and 5 JECs are already operational.
- In 2017, both countries signed the 'Technical Intern Training Programme' agreement to enable Indian youth to avail of internships in Japan across diverse industry sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare, construction, textiles and agriculture.

How co-morbidities make COVID severe (Written by T. Jacob John & M.S. Seshadri)

- Acquired diseases are infectious or inflammatory, nutritional or metabolic, vascular or neoplastic (tumours, benign or malignant). COVID-19 is acquired, infectious/inflammatory.
- Chronic nutritional/metabolic diseases start as diabetes, hypertension, metabolic syndrome or obesity. They in turn lead to chronic heart, brain and kidney diseases because of damage to the lining cells of the blood vessels, the 'endothelium'.
- The immune system is highly conserved even in undernourished people; the impact of co-morbidities on the immune system is mild.
- Three coronaviruses — SARS-CoV-1, MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 — have recently jumped the host species, presumably bats or dromedary camels, and caused severe disease in humans, primarily pneumonia.
- SARS-CoV-1 and SARS-CoV-2 latch on to a human cell surface protein called 'angiotensin converting enzyme 2' (ACE2), mediated through the viral surface spike protein, a key that opens the lock to gain entry.
- Once inside, the virus hijacks cell functions for its own multiplication.
- ACE1 and ACE2 are widely distributed on the lining 'endothelial' cells of all arterial, venous and capillary blood vessels and on smooth muscles that surround them.
- They also abound on the lining epithelial cells of the respiratory tract, kidneys and gut.
- COVID-19 may invade and infect any tissue or organ from the head to the toes and cause damage through reduced blood supply.
- Physiologically ACE1 and ACE2 play critical roles in regulating blood pressure, and blood flow to organs.
- If someone has, say, diabetes, SARS-CoV-2 can further severely reduce oxygen supply to tissues. This synergy could be fatal
- Within 2-3 weeks of infection, when immunity is at its peak, the immune system may clear the virus from the organs, but the damages to the organs take time to repair.
- In the absence of co-morbidities, the body physiology can bounce back to normalcy quickly, but in those with co-morbidities, the ailing organs may not recover in time to avert death due to damage to the lungs, heart, kidney or brain.
- Vaccination will confer some protection to those at high risk of death through the sinister synergy of COVID-19 and co-morbidities.
- There is another sinister association: the insulin-secreting Beta cells in the pancreas are studded with ACE2 and are easy targets for COVID-19. In COVID-19, insulin secretion is decreased.
- The damage to the lungs in COVID-19 starts as infection, but quickly becomes massive inflammation with outpouring of plasma into the air sacs, sludging of blood flow in capillaries and clotting.

- The reason for these is what is called a 'cytokine storm': a reaction of blood vessels to substances called cytokines that are excessively secreted by immune cells.
- This cascade leads to further decreased oxygen in blood.

Don't doubt Indian vaccines (Written by G. Padmanaban)

- Questions have been raised about the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines too, which have reported more than 90% efficacy.
- Efficacy would actually mean testing, say, 10,000 individuals who have been given the vaccine versus an equivalent number not given the vaccine in terms of the number who get the infection.
- At this stage, no one can predict whether the COVID-19 vaccine candidates can protect against the circulating mutants.
- The SARS-CoV-2 virus is both intellectually and medically challenging. But there has been no prevention strategy in history other than vaccination to save lives.
- It is also not appropriate to doubt the integrity of the expert committee advising the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).
- The DCGI is not just an individual to be pressured; it follows due process for making an informed decision regarding emergency use, or, as is called in India, approval for restricted use.

Mining in India equals selling the family gold (Written by Rahul Basu)

- Climate change and high levels of consumption already threaten to rob future generations of a planet that is liveable.
- The principle of Intergenerational Equity would make it imperative for us to ensure future generations inherit at least as much as we did.
- If we are successful in abiding by intergenerational equity, our children will be at least as well off as we are.
- To consume what we have inherited without a thought for generations to come will leave the whole world poorer; like an addict selling the family gold.
- India's National Mineral Policy 2019 states: "natural resources, including minerals, are a shared inheritance where the state is the trustee on behalf of the people to ensure that future generations receive the benefit of inheritance."
- The extraction of oil, gas and minerals is effectively the sale of this inheritance, with royalties and other proceeds being the consideration paid in exchange for the mineral wealth extracted.
- Unfortunately, governments everywhere treat the mineral sale proceeds as revenue or income, a crucial error which hides the real transaction — a sale of inherited wealth.

- Worse still, the trifles received by the government are treated as “revenue” and happily spent, leaving neither the minerals nor their value for future generations to inherit. This is just not sustainable.
- There is also growing evidence from the International Monetary Fund that many governments of resource-rich nations, including the United Kingdom and Norway, face declining public sector net worth, i.e., their governments are becoming poorer .
- Both indicate unsustainable mining.
- In effect, the people and future generations of Goa have sold mineral wealth worth ₹100 for ₹5, a loss of ₹95. Naturally the extractors are keen to extract as quickly as possible and move on.
- Trees, tigers and tribals are labelled as anti-development or anti-national.
- It is important to understand that as long as the Government Accounting Standards Advisory Board does not correct this error in the standards for public sector accounting and reporting for mineral wealth, politicians and voters will advocate increasing extraction.
- Our foremost duty is to maintain the value of our children’s inheritance by avoiding theft, loss, waste or consumption. Leaving the minerals undisturbed fulfils our duty.
- The state as trustee must capture the full economic rent (sale price minus cost of extraction, cost including reasonable profit for extractor).
- Like Norway, the entire mineral sale proceeds must be saved in a Future Generations Fund.
- The Future Generations Fund could be passively invested through the National Pension Scheme framework.
- Setting a global judicial precedent, in 2014 the Supreme Court ordered the creation of a Goa Iron Ore Permanent Fund
- These principles of fair mining are fully constitutional, promoting justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. They are moral, ethical, fair, right and sustainable. The reduction in losses would limit corruption, crony capitalism and growing inequality.

NITI Aayog to Launch Second Edition of India Innovation Index 2020



- The release of the second edition of the index—the first was launched in October 2019—demonstrates the Government’s continued commitment towards transforming the country into an innovation-driven economy.
- The India Innovation Index 2020 seeks to rank the states and union territories based on their relative performance of supporting innovation, and to empower them to improve their innovation policies by highlighting their strengths and weaknesses.

- The ranking methodology is designed in a way that states can draw lessons from the national leaders in innovation.
- Hopefully, this will lead to a healthy competition among the states and union territories, thereby fostering competitive federalism.
- The index captures the trends and provides detailed analyses of the various factors that drive innovation at the country, state, and district levels.
- It is believed that these analyses would enable policymakers in identifying catalysts and inhibitors of innovation at the national and sub-national levels.

Solar-powered Cochin airport installs 'floating' solar power plants



- Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) has commissioned 'floating' solar power plants which will have a capacity of 452 Kilowatt-hour (KWh) on Sunday
- With this, the airport's total installed capacity has risen to 40 MWp helping it to produce around 1.60 lakh units of power a day, the CIAL said. The airport's per day consumption is around 1.30 lakh units.

School dropout rate lowest in Kerala at 0.11%: State Education Min



- Kerala recorded the lowest school dropout rate in the country at 0.11% in 2019-20, according to state Education Minister
- In Ministry of Education's (erstwhile MHRD) performance index, for the last two years Kerala was able to come to the top. As per Education Ministry, the national average dropout rate is 17.06%.

Kevadia



- Kevadia is a census town in Narmada district in the Indian state of Gujarat
- This town is famous tourist Location, as Statue of Unity is located here
- The town also has a Railway Station, which is located at a distance of just 5 kilometres from Statue of Unity.

The 'difficult four' countries

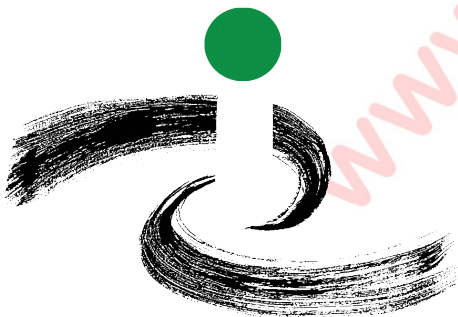


- Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and India.
 - These are the Countries where citizens do not have the capacity to fight for their rights.
 - The classification has been made by Chatham House, the century-old UK-based policy institute also known as the Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Chatham House has published a report proposing a blueprint for Britain's future foreign policy after Brexit. Titled "Global Britain, Global Broker", the report sketches a bold path ahead for the UK.

Why the report chose to characterise India as such?

- Because of a critique of India's domestic political developments.
- The report notes how "the overt Hindu nationalism of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party is weakening the rights of Muslims and other minority religious groups, leading to a chorus of concern that intolerant majoritarianism is replacing the vision of a secular, democratic India bequeathed by Nehru".
- India is a reluctant supporter of liberal democracy.
- It is "ambivalent" about human rights abuses within other states, and possesses "a long and consistent record of resisting being corralled into a 'Western camp'".

National Innovation Foundation (NIF) – India



- Science & Technology minister dedicates an Innovation Portal developed by National Innovation Foundation (NIF) – India to the nation.
 - It is an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India.
- The National Innovation Foundation (NIF) - India was set up in March 2000 with the assistance of Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.
- It is India's national initiative to strengthen the grassroots technological innovations and outstanding traditional knowledge.
 - Its mission is to help India become a creative and knowledge-based society by expanding policy and institutional space for grassroots technological innovators.