

NATIONAL

Union Cabinet approves inclusion of 15 new castes in Central OBC list

- The NCBC had recommended a total of 28 changes in the existing list of OBCs in respect of 8 states.
- Out of these 28 changes, 15 were new entries, 9 were synonyms or sub-castes of castes which were already in the list and 4 were corrections.
- Changes will enable the persons belonging to these communities/castes to avail the benefits of reservation in Government posts and services
- They will also become eligible to avail benefits under the various welfare schemes, scholarships etc. administered by Union Government, which are available to persons belonging to OBCs.

India's negotiating position adopted at Kigali conference to Montreal Protocol approved

- In the Kigali meet, India had successfully negotiated the baseline years within a range of 2024 to 2030 and freeze year in subsequent years for phasing down the use of HFCs.
- The negotiations at Kigali meet held in October 2016 were aimed at including HFCs in the list of chemicals under the Montreal Protocol.
- It had two set of baselines years agreed for developing countries. India along with nine other countries will have baseline years of 2024, 2025, 2026.
- India will completely phase down of HFCs in 4 steps from 2032 onwards with cumulative reduction of 10% in 2032, 20% in 2037, 30% in 2042 and 85% in 2047
- Other developing countries including China (largest producer of HFCs in the world), South Africa and Brazil opted for 2020-22 baseline.
- The Montreal Protocol of the Vienna Convention for Protection of Ozone Layer which entered force in January 1989 aimed to phase out the ozone depleting substances (ODS).
- At Kigali, it was decided to include HFCs in the list of chemicals under the Montreal Protocol in order to regulate their production, consumption and phasing them out with time

Rehabilitation Package for displaced families from PoJK, Chhamb approved

- 5 lakh rupees cash benefit per family will be disbursed to the displaced families. This financial aid will enable them to earn an income and subsist their livelihood.
- In the aftermath of partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, thousands of families from Pakistan occupied areas of Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) migrated to the Indian state
- During Indo-Pak Wars of 1965 and 1971, a large number of families were displaced from Chhamb Niabat area of J&K.
- Central Assistance of 2000 crore rupees for 36,384 displaced families from Pakistan occupied areas of Jammu & Kashmir (PoJK) and Chhamb.

Simplification of Visa regime approved

- Approval will stimulate economic growth and ease travel for foreigners. It will facilitate entry of foreigners for tourism, business and medical purposes.
- Expected to increase earnings from export of services like tourism, travel on account of business, medical value travel.
- Will also help to make 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Digital India' and other such flagship initiatives of the Government successful.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

India inks Rs 5,000 crore defence deal with US to buy 145 M777 howitzers

- India has signed government-to-government (G2G) deal with the United States (US) to buy 145 M-777 Ultra-Light Howitzers worth \$750 million under the Foreign Military Sales program.
- This is the first defense deal signed by India for purchasing artillery guns since the Bofors scandal in 1980s.
- M777 howitzers manufacturer BAE Systems will conclude an offset agreement estimated at about \$200 million. 25 guns will come to India in a fly-away condition
- Remaining 120 guns will be assembled at the proposed Assembly Integration and Test facility for the weapon system in India.
- BAE Systems already has selected the Mahindra group as the local offset partner.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Three-parent babies mitochondrial gene therapy proposed in UK

- An independent panel of British scientists and experts has formally given nod to introduce so-called three-parent baby fertility treatments or mitochondrial gene therapy (MGT) procedures.
- this practice should be cautiously adopted to prevent certain genetic diseases from being passed on to future generations.
- MGT or Mitochondrial donation is a medical technique in which defective mitochondria carried by a woman is replaced with the healthy mitochondria of a donor.
- MGT proposes to give parents chance of having a child that is over 99% genetically matched to them and most importantly free of the mitochondrial disease.

ISRO drones help to map disasters in north-east

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is using drones to map disasters in north-eastern States by collecting land details and add it to data from remote sensing satellites.
- NE-SAC has taken the initiative for design and assembling of UAVs for various applications to assess several regional problems in the northeast region.

- UAVs can perform efficient surveys for disaster-prone or physically inaccessible areas. It can undertake quick damage assessment of floods, landslides and earthquakes and enable timely relief measures.
- NE-SAC is a joint initiative of Department of Space (DoS) and North Eastern Council. It was started in the year 2000. It is located at Umiam (near Shillong), Meghalaya.
- It aims to provide developmental support to the North Eastern region using Space technology-based communication and technology.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Industries should use recycled groundwater

- Imposition of restrictions on how industries, farmers and various groups can use groundwater by amending to a Bill on groundwater management has been proposed.
- The bill seeks to sharply regulate extracting pristine water from aquifers which is currently the norm in much of the country. Failing to adhere it will invite stringent punishment.
- It seeks to guarantee every individual a certain amount of water “for life” and protecting groundwater from undue exploitation and pollution.
- Industries can only use recycled water, and activities such as gardening must use treated sewage water. It also mandates the use of rainwater harvesting in residential projects.
- Groundwater depletion is among the grave ecological threats that the country faces. It has become serious concern to use groundwater judiciously.
- Groundwater is source to around 85 % of drinking water and 65% of water for irrigation.
- Existing laws give the owners of a piece of land complete right over its groundwater.