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MK Yadav Sir

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India, Sri Lanka to work for economic, tech agreement

Shashank Mattoo

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NEW DELHI

India and Sri Lanka on Friday agreed to start discussions on an Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ECTA) and unveiled plans to cooperate on power, digital payments, connectivity and green energy. The ECTA with Sri Lanka will focus on tariff and non-tariff barriers as well as investment rules.

The development came during the visit of Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe to New Delhi.

The two countries agreed to operationalize India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to ease digital payments across borders. Foreign secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra told reporters that the initiative could kick off in two to three months. Bhutan and Nepal have already adopted India's signature digital payments



Prime Minister Modi with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe. PTI

platform.

New Delhi and Colombo also unveiled plans to establish power grid connectivity, possibly boosting electricity trade in the neighbourhood. According to the India-Sri Lanka Economic Partnership Vision released by the Ministry of External Affairs, this development "has the potential to not only bring down the costs of electricity in Sri Lanka but also help create a valuable and

dependable source of foreign exchange for Sri Lanka."

The two sides will also construct a multi-product petroleum pipeline for steady supplies to Sri Lanka. Last year, the island nation saw widespread fuel shortages as it grappled with a crippling economic crisis.

According to the vision document, New Delhi and Colombo will look to "undertake mutually agreed joint exploration and production of hydrocarbons in Sri Lanka's offshore basins with an aim to develop Sri Lanka's upstream petroleum sector." Besides this, work on the Sampur Solar power project and cooperation in emerging green technologies related to green hydrogen and green ammonia will also drive the partnership on renewable energy.

Both countries agreed to resume passenger ferry services between Nagapattinam in

Context: India and Sri Lanka on Friday agreed to start discussions on an **Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ECTA)** and unveiled plans to cooperate on power, digital payments, connectivity and green energy.

Key Points

- The ECTA with Sri Lanka will **focus on tariff and non-tariff barriers** as well as investment rules.
- The agreement seeks to **boost cooperation in scientific expertise, technical areas** and research amongst institutions between India and Sri Lanka.
- It also seeks to **boost standards of goods and services** to compete on global market and improve opportunities for manpower training and human resource development.
- **Objectives of ECTA:**
 - **Strengthen and advance the economic**, trade, investment and technology cooperation.
 - **Promote further liberalization of trade** in goods, trade in services and gradually establish transparent, fair and facilitative trading, investment and investment protection mechanisms
 - **Establish a cooperation mechanism** and expand areas of economic cooperation.

Logistics Data Bank Project Meeting held to review measures taken by Port Authorities to improve port performance

Context: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) held a **Logistics Data Bank Project (LDB)** Meeting to review the measures taken by Port Authorities to improve port performance.

- Development of infrastructure on **PM GatiShakti principles** for adequate last and first mile connectivity, improvement of logistics services and enhancing port capacities to handle requisite trade volumes, etc. to be focus areas for port-level strategic planning and future development.

Logistics Data Bank Project

- **About:** On July 1, 2016, the LDB project was launched at the **Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Mumbai**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of **Commerce and Industry**.
- **Objectives:** The project launched to make India's logistics sector **more efficient through the use of Information Technology**.
- **Implementation:** The LDB is being **implemented through a Special Purpose Vehicle** called Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Logistics Data Services Ltd. (DLDSL) - that is jointly (50:50) owned by the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) Trust and Japanese IT services major NEC Corporation.
- **Key features:** The facility - where every container is attached to a **Radio Frequency Identification Tag (RFID)** tag and then tracked through RFID readers - aids importers and exporters in tracking their goods in transit.
 - This has, in turn, cut the **overall lead time of container movement** as well as reduced transaction costs that consignees and shippers incur.
 - It is billed as a major 'ease of doing business' initiative aimed at boosting India's foreign trade and ensuring greater transparency.
 - The project **covers "the entire movement (of containers) through rail or road** till the Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station," the shipping ministry had said, adding that the service integrates information available with the agencies across the supply chain to provide detailed, real-time information within a single window.

Russia's demand a roadblock to G20 energy transition discussions

SHREYA JAI & SUBHAYAN CHAKRABORTY
Goa/New Delhi, 21 July

Russia on Friday demanded that a para on Ukraine's involvement in the attack of the Nord Stream pipelines be included in the draft communique of the Energy Transition track, which has led to an impasse in the ongoing discussions at the 4th Energy Transition Working Group meeting.

In September last year, a series of explosions destroyed the undersea Nord Stream gas pipelines, which were built to transport Russian natural gas to Germany, through the Baltic Sea.

Russia's proposal was met with opposition from most of the countries, sources said.

India, meanwhile, has not revealed its position on this contentious issue.

"India is reliant on Russia for support on the issues related to fossil fuel. While the stated position on Ukraine by the Centre remains the same, the mention of the Ukraine war in the draft communique is a contentious matter for the country," said a source.

Green sectors face identity crisis

There are divergent views on two upcoming green sectors



IMPASSE OVER UKRAINE

■ Russia wants a para on destruction of its gas pipelines by Ukraine included in the draft communique

■ But several countries oppose Russia's proposal

■ India, which is reliant on Russia for support on the issues related to fossil fuel, yet to reveal its position on the issue

for which India has ambitious plans.

There was no consensus on the definition of hydrogen, at the time of going to press.

India has been mulling at 'low-carbon' and 'clean hydrogen' given the country has launched a scheme for green hydrogen (produced from using

green energy).

The European nations are keen on blue hydrogen (produced from using natural gas).

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Renew Energy to receive ₹64K cr loan from PFC, REC

Green energy major Renew Energy Global on Friday signed loan agreements worth ₹64,000 crore with Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC). The public sector energy funders will lend ₹32,000 crore each to the Nasdaq-listed energy firm. The deals were signed at the clean energy ministerial meet, a part of the G20 meeting, in Goa. "We will receive ₹32,000 crore (\$3.9 billion) each from PFC and REC for financing

its current and upcoming energy transition projects, totalling \$7.8 billion or ₹64,000 crore," the firm said in a statement issued from Goa without sharing project details or a timeline for disbursements. The company will utilise the funds for new projects, including solar, wind, hybrid, energy storage, solar modules and cell manufacturing, and green hydrogen, the statement added. Renew has a portfolio of 13.4 gw on a gross basis as of September 2022.

P4 ▶

Context: Russia demanded that a para on Ukraine's involvement in the attack of the Nord Stream pipelines be included in the draft communique of the Energy Transition track, which has led to an impasse in the ongoing discussions at the 4th Energy Transition Working Group meeting.

Nord Stream pipelines

- **Nord Stream 1 subsea pipeline:** Nord Stream 1 was completed in 2011 and runs from Vyborg in Leningrad (Russia) to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany.
 - **Majority ownership:** The Russian state-owned gas company Gazprom has a majority ownership in the pipeline
 - According to Bloomberg: 40% of Europe's pipeline gas came from Russia before the war (now 9%).
- **Nord Stream 2:** This is a **1,200-km pipeline** that runs from Ust-Luga in Russia to Greifswald in Germany through the Baltic Sea.
 - It will carry 55 billion cubic meters of gas per year.
 - The Nord Stream crosses the **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs)** of several countries including: Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany.
 - Territorial waters of: Russia, Denmark and Germany.



Over 17,000 PACS Start Working as Common Service Centres: Shah

Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: Union cooperation minister Amit Shah said on Friday that 17,176 primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) have been registered to function as common service centres (CSC) for helping the rural population with services including banking, insurance and Aadhaar enrolment.

Addressing the public at Vigyan Bhawan in Delhi, Shah said the PACS will

MAXIMUM POTENTIAL



More than 300 schemes have been combined with CSCs give new energy to the rural economy

provide services offered by CSCs across the country. He said there are around 95,000 PACS across the country and soon all will be on-boarded to start CSC operations. The PACS will offer more than 300 services such as health services, legal services and Pradhan Mantri Welfare Schemes to the rural citizens, including 130 million farmers in India, said Shah. He also emphasised that out of 100,000 existing PACS, 17,000 have already registered themselves as CSCs.

Context: Union cooperation minister said that 17,176 **primary agricultural credit societies (PACS)** have been registered to function as common service centres (CSC) for helping the rural population with services including banking, insurance and Aadhaar enrolment.

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Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)

- PACS is a basic unit and smallest **co-operative credit institutions** in India.
- It provide **short-term, and medium-term agricultural loans** to the farmers for the various agricultural and farming activities.
- It works at the grassroots gram Panchayat and village level.
- The first Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) was **formed in the year 1904**.
- The PACS functioning at the base of the **co-operative banking system** constitute the major retail outlets of short term and medium term credit to the rural sector.
- PACS are registered under the **Co-operative Societies Act** and also regulated by the RBI.
- They are governed by the **"Banking regulation Act-1949"** and Banking Laws (Co-operative societies) Act 1965.
- PACS is the **final link between the ultimate borrowers**, i.e., rural people, on the one hand, and the higher agencies, i.e., Central cooperative bank, state cooperative bank, and Reserve Bank of India, on the other.

Centre launches Technological Advancements in Crop Insurance to Empowering Farmers and Streamlining Operations in PMFBY

Context: The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare launched several new **technological initiatives under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana** to empower farmers and streamlining the operations.

- The Ministry launched several new initiatives under PMFBY and Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS), such as **Yield Estimation System, based on Technology (YES-TECH) Manual, Weather Information Network Data Systems (WINDS) portal** and door to door enrollment app AIDE/Sahayak, marking a turning point in India's crop insurance landscape.

Key Points

- **YES-TECH Manual**: It is a comprehensive guide developed after extensive testing and piloting in 100 districts of India.
 - It **facilitates the implementation of YES-TECH**, a technology-driven yield estimation system, offering methodologies, best practices, and integration insights for accurate yield assessments at the Gram Panchayat level.
- **WINDS Portal**: It is a **centralized platform that hosts, manages, and processes hyper-local weather data** collected by Automatic Weather Stations and Rain Gauges at Taluk/Block and Gram Panchayat levels.
 - The portal **enhances risk assessment and decision-making** in crop insurance, agriculture advisories, and disaster mitigation, supporting the agricultural sector and rural economy.
- **AIDE/Sahayak app**: The AIDE app's introduction on Android platform aims to revolutionize the enrolment process, bringing it directly to the doorstep of farmers.
 - This door-to-door enrolment **ensures a seamless and transparent process**, making crop insurance more accessible and convenient for farmers.

Can't ask govt. to recognise a language as official one: SC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said it cannot direct the Centre to include Rajasthani as an official language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud said the subject of the petition concerns a policy matter.

"Today you have come to include the Rajasthani language in the Eighth Schedule, tomorrow somebody else may come for some other language. This is a policy matter and not for the courts to give a mandamus," the Bench informed the petitioner, Ripudaman Singh. The court referred to a 1997 reported decision of the Supreme Court in the *Kanhaiya Lal Sethia* case to note that "to include or not to include a particular language in the VIIIth Schedule is a policy matter of the Union".

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN 8TH SCHEDULE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Polity)

Context: The Supreme Court said it **cannot direct the Centre to include Rajasthani as an official language** in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

- The court referred to a **1997 reported decision of the Supreme Court** in the *Kanhaiya Lal Sethia* case to note that "to include or not to include a particular language in the VIIIth Schedule is a policy matter of the Union.
- The Bench noted that the **court need not oblige a petitioner** merely because the latter thinks the cause he or she represents is a genuine one.

Criteria to include Eighth Schedule

- There is **no fixed criteria** for any language to be considered for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule.
- The problem is that as the **evolution of dialects and languages** is dynamic, influenced by **socio-eco-political developments**, it is difficult to fix any criterion for languages, whether to distinguish them from dialects.
- Both attempts through the **Pahwa (1996) and Sitakant Mohapatra (2003)** Committees to decide the criteria yielded no result.

Official languages

- The **Eighth Schedule to the Constitution** of India lists the official languages of the Republic of India.
- **Part XVII of the Indian Constitution** deals with the official languages in Articles 343 to 351.
- The Constitutional provisions relating to the Eighth Schedule occur in **articles 344(1) and 351 of the Constitution**.
- The eighth schedule includes the recognition of the **22 languages**.

PRI UTILISATION CERTIFICATES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Governance)

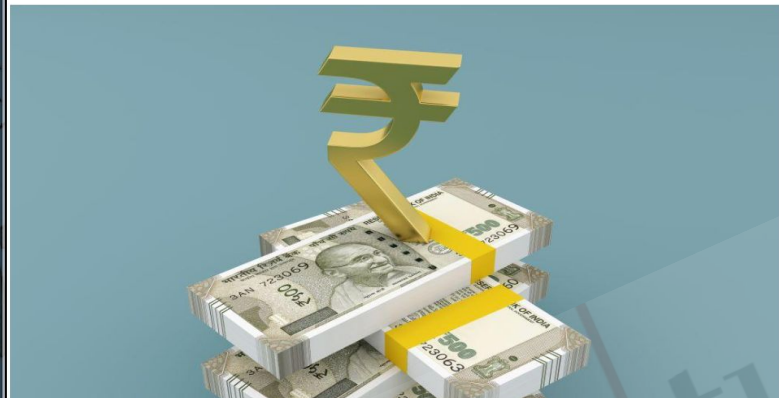
Panchayati Raj institutions in Bihar submitted utilisation certificates for only 42% of grants received: CAG

Staff crunch in PRIs in the state impacted the devolution of functions, the audit highlighted

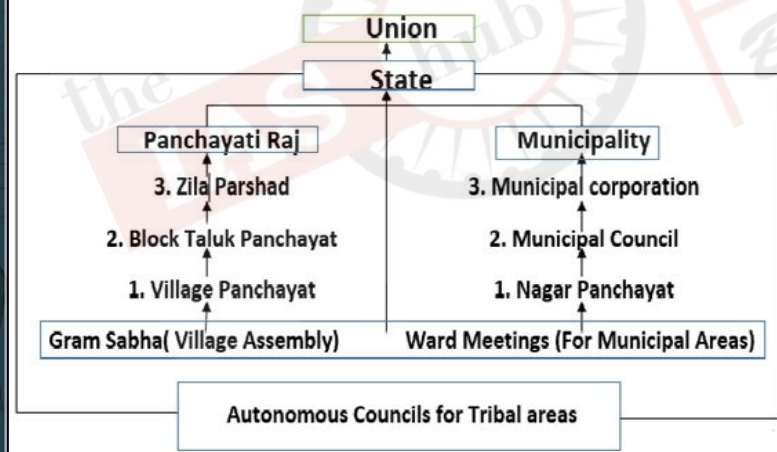


NEXT NEWS >

By Zumbish
Published: Friday 21 July 2023



Implication of Panchayati Raj/ Municipalities as the Third Tier of Governance on India's Federal structure



Context: During the financial years 2007-08 to 2020-21, **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)** in Bihar submitted **utilisation certificates (UC)** for only 42 per cent of the funds received from the State Panchayati Raj Department (PRD), an audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found.

- **Social audit of schemes** in PRIs, other than the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), had not been conducted till March 2022.
- Under Section 17 of the **MGNREGA**, all works executed under the program must undergo a social audit.
- Every **Social Audit Unit** is entitled to funds equivalent to 0.5% of the MNREGA expenditure incurred by the State in the previous year.

Panchayati Raj Institutions utilisation certificates

- A certificate of the utilization of funds at the **Gram Panchayat level** is to be issued by Janpad Panchayat.
- **Panchayat Samiti** is the other name of Janpad Panchayat.
- **Panchayat Samiti** has many Gram Sabha under it.
- **Gram Sabha** approves the work of the Gram Panchayat.
- The **Zila Panchayat or District Council or Zila Parishad or District Panchayat** is the third tier of the Panchayati Raj system.
- **Zila Parishad** is an elected body.
- **Block Pramukh of Block Panchayat** is also represented in Zila Parishad.
- The members of the State Legislature and the members of the Parliament of India are members of the Zila Parishad.
- **Zila Parishad** has a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 75 members.

Conduct survey of Gyanvapi complex: Local court to ASI

Portion Sealed After SC Order To Be Left Out

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Varanasi: A local court directed the ASI Friday to conduct a scientific investigation of the Gyanvapi complex, adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple, to determine whether it was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple. But the survey will not cover the “wuzukhana (ablution pond)” area of the complex, which has been sealed following a Supreme Court order in May 2022.

Overruling the objection of Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, the Gyanvapi mosque management committee, distri-

SC: Let Allahabad HC decide Mathura case

The SC said it would be better if the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah Mosque dispute of Mathura was adjudicated by Allahabad High Court, which would also decide the preliminary objection on maintainability of the suit. It observed that multiplicity and prolongation of litigation in such cases could create disquiet. **PAGE OPP**

ct judge Ajay Krishna Vishvesha asked ASI to conduct the probe using ground penetrating radar, dating methods, and excavate if needed, while ensuring no damage is caused to the structure. ASI has to submit a report by August 4, the next date of hearing.

► To contest in HC, P 24

GYANVAPI MOSQUE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Indian Art & Heritage)

Context: A local court directed the ASI to conduct a **scientific investigation of the Gyanvapi complex**, adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple, to determine whether it was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple.

- But the survey will not cover the “**wuzukhana (ablution pond)**” area of the complex, which has been sealed following a Supreme Court order in May 2022.
- The **Supreme Court has refused to put a stay on the videographic survey** of the Maa Shringar Gauri Sthal at the Kashi Vishwanath temple-Gyanvapi mosque complex, ordered by a Varanasi civil court.

Gyanvapi Mosque

- The Gyanvapi Mosque is **located in Banaras, Uttar Pradesh, India.**
- It is a popular belief that the Gyanvapi Mosque was built in 1669 by the **Mughal ruler Aurangzeb** by demolishing the ancient Vishweshwar temple.
- In Saqib Khan’s book ‘**Yasir Alamgiri**’, it is also mentioned that Aurangzeb had demolished the temple in 1669 by ordering Governor Abul Hassan.
- Then about a century later, **Ahilya Holkar**, the queen of Indore built a new Kashi Vishwanath temple next to the mosque in 1780.
- It is considered the **most significant shrine of Lord Shiva** by many.
- It is one of the **more prominent of the 12 Jyotirlingas of Shiva, Vishveshvara or Vishvanath**, that is also mentioned in the Skanda Purana.

Union Minister for Science and Technology Dr Jitendra Singh urges the Indian diaspora Scientists abroad to engage with India says, VAIBHAV Fellowship programme introduced recently by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a step in this direction

Context: Addressing the International Ministerial meet of **Joint 8th Mission Innovation Ministerial (MI-8) and 14th Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM-14)**, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology; MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances, Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space urged the Indian diaspora abroad to engage with India.

Key Points

- The **8th Mission Innovation Ministerial and 14th Clean Energy Ministerial**, hosted by the Government of India, took place alongside the G20 in Goa, India.
- The **Vaishvik Bhartiya Vaigyanik (VAIBHAV) Fellowship programme**, introduced recently by Prime Minister is a step in this direction.
- The Fellowship would be **awarded to outstanding scientists/technologists** of Indian origin (NRI/OCI/PIO) who are engaged in research activities in their respective countries.
- The 75 selected fellows would be invited to work in 18 identified knowledge verticals including quantum technology, energy and material sciences amongst others.

VAIBHAV Fellowship scheme

- **About:** The fellowship **offers NRI researchers an opportunity to work** for a minimum of one month to a maximum of two months a year with a research institution or an academic institution in India.
- **Duration:** **Three years with the government** offering the researchers an amount of up to Rs 37 lakh for the entire period.
- **Objectives:** **Improving the research ecosystem of India's Higher Educational Institutions** by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world.
 - This is done **through the mobility of faculty/researchers** from overseas institutions to India.
- **Eligibility:** Researchers from institutions **featuring in the top 500 QS World University Rankings** will be eligible for the fellowship.
 - The applicant **should be a Non-Resident Indian (NRI), Person of Indian Origin (PIO) or Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)** and she or he must have obtained Ph.D/M.D/M.S degree from a recognized University.
- **Significance:** The best of Diaspora minds will **collaborate with domestic Minds** to deliver world-class projects and products.

Fruit flies develop specific defences against common bacteria; may explain human susceptibility to infections

Bacteria in their food and environment mould the immune systems of fruit flies, notes study

By Arya Rohini
Published: Friday 21 July 2023



Peptides

- Peptides are **short chains of amino acids** linked by bonds.
- A polypeptide is a **longer, continuous, unbranched peptide chain**.
- **Polypeptides** which have a molecular mass of 10,000 Da or more are called proteins.
- Chains of fewer than twenty **amino acids** are called **oligopeptides**, and include **dipeptides, tripeptides, and tetrapeptides**.
- Peptides can **perform interactions** with proteins and other **macromolecules**.
- They are **responsible for several important functions** in human cells, such as cell signaling and act as immune modulators

Context: The immune systems of **fruit flies** develop **certain genes** that can combat common bacteria found in food, a new study has found.

Key Points

- Bacteria such as **acetobacter** found in fruits can harm flies once they exit the gut and reach the bloodstream.
- However, various fly species have developed a specific **peptide** (strings of compounds that combine to form proteins) that can fight acetobacter.
- The findings are **critical as fruit flies' evolutionary process** might help explain human susceptibility to certain diseases.
- The bacteria in their food and environment mould the **immune systems of fruit flies**.
- These flies have **developed two peptides** to defend a single bacterial species that affects them.
- Some of these peptides are common in certain species.
- Various fly species have developed a particular **peptide (dipteracin B)** to control acetobacter.
- **Glial cells and neurons** in the fly brain communicate, dampening olfaction and shielding the animals from consuming the pathogen again after an intestinal bacterial infection.

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