

DAILY PT POINTERS

24th June, 2024



The Hindu :_GS 3-Economy –Page 1

Tribal Affairs Minister promises to look into forest clearances for ₹72,000-cr. Great Nicobar project

Abhinay Lakshman
NEW DELHI

The Union Tribal Affairs Ministry will be looking into the forest clearance paperwork for the ₹72,000-crore infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island that the NDA government has been pushing for, and accordingly determine next steps, Tribal Affairs Minister Jual Oram has said.

In an exclusive interaction with *The Hindu*, Mr. Oram outlined his intent to give special attention to forest and land rights of tribal communities.

The Opposition Con-



Jual Oram

gress has been demanding the withdrawal of clearances granted for the Great Nicobar project and a ground-up review of it over the environmental concerns flagged by experts and constitutional bodies

and amid reports of alleged violations of land rights of the tribal people residing in the region.

'A specific case'

Asked about the concerns raised by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the NCST over the environmental and forest clearances, Mr. Oram said, "This is a specific case. It will take time to go through the files. But we will be looking into the issues that have been raised by calling for the relevant files and documents."

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- This Great Nicobar Project involves developing a trans-shipment port, an international airport, township development, and a 450 MVA gas and solar-based power plant on the island. The project area is expected to cover over 130 sq. km. of pristine forest, and has been accorded environmental clearance – one of the mandatory prerequisites – by an expert committee.
- Several concerns have been raised on the project on environmental grounds, as well as the alleged violation of the rights of tribals resident in the region.

The Hindu :GS2-Governance(Page 8)

What are the duties of a Speaker?

What does the office of the Speaker *pro tem* mean? What does the Constitution state? Who elects the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha? How can the impartiality of the Speaker's office be preserved? What are the main roles of the Speaker?

EXPLAINER

Ramgarajm, R

The story so far:

The President has appointed seven-time MP Bhartruhari Mahtab as the 'Speaker *pro tem*' of the 18th Lok Sabha. The election of the full-time Speaker is scheduled for June 26. There are also reports of the Deputy Speaker being offered to one of the allies of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a post that has been held by the Opposition since the 10th Lok Sabha (1990).

Who is Speaker *pro tem*?

Article 94 of the Constitution states that the Speaker of the Lok Sabha shall not vacate his/her office until immediately before the first meeting of the Lok Sabha after its dissolution. This is to ensure that the office of the Speaker is never left vacant. Hence, Om Bihari who was the Speaker of the 17th Lok Sabha continues in that post till June 24 when the first meeting of the 18th Lok Sabha is scheduled. Article 95(1) of the Constitution provides that when the post of Speaker and Deputy Speaker is vacant, the President shall appoint a member of the Lok Sabha to perform the duties of the Speaker. This would be the situation when the first meeting of a new Lok Sabha commences.

Hence, the President appoints 'Speaker *pro tem*' under this provision till the full-time Speaker is elected. The term '*pro tem*' means 'for the time being' or 'temporary'.

This term is not found in the Constitution or rules of Lok Sabha but is a conventional term which finds mention in the 'Handbook on the working of Ministry of Parliamentary affairs'. As per tradition, one of the senior-most members of the Lok Sabha is selected by the government, who is then administered oath by the President. The Speaker *pro tem* administers oath of office to other MPs



Important role: Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan with MP Bhartruhari Mahtab on March 20, 2021.

and presides over the election of full-time Speaker. In the 18th Lok Sabha, Bhartruhari Mahtab of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been appointed as Speaker *pro tem*.

How are the Speaker and Deputy Speaker elected?

Article 93 of the Constitution states that the Lok Sabha shall choose two members to be its Speaker and Deputy Speaker. The election of the Speaker is held on a date fixed by the President. All the Speakers in independent India have been elected unopposed. The election of Deputy Speaker is held on a date fixed by the Speaker.

What is the role of the Speaker?

Apart from the conduct of business, the Speakers perform two important constitutional functions of certifying a Bill to be a Money Bill (over which the Rajya Sabha has limited role), and deciding on disqualification under the Tenth Schedule for defection. In discharging these roles in the past, the Speakers have invariably favoured the ruling dispensation, something that should be avoided.

The Lok Sabha rules provide the Speaker with the powers of referral of Bills introduced to Standing Committees and suspension of members for grave disorder up to a maximum of five days. Referral of bills to committees have

declined from 71% during 2009-14 to 16% during 2019-24. With the return of a coalition government, it is expected that the Speaker would refer important bills to Standing committees for scrutiny. There were also large-scale suspensions of Opposition MPs during the winter session of 2023. Such suspensions affect the robust functioning of Parliament and should be carried out with restraint.

What are the conventions?

In Britain, the Speaker once elected to his/her office, resigns from the political party to which he/she belonged. In subsequent elections to House of Commons, he/she seeks election not as a member of any political party but as 'The Speaker seeking re-election'. This is to reflect his/her impartiality while presiding over the House. Somnath Chatterjee, who was the Speaker of the 16th Lok Sabha acted independently by not resigning from the post despite his party's (CPI(M) direction) after it had withdrawn support from the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government during a confidence vote in 2008. While the Tenth Schedule allows a Speaker to resign from their political party on being elected to their office, it has never been done by any Speaker till date. Resignation from their political parties on being elected as Speaker could be a first step towards demonstrating independence.

The Deputy Speaker is an important constitutional officer who steps in during the vacancy or absence of the Speaker. The convention of offering the post of Deputy Speaker to the Opposition started in the year 1991. Thereafter, till the 16th Lok Sabha this has been followed without a break. It was a travesty of the Constitution that no Deputy Speaker was elected in the 17th Lok Sabha.

The healthy convention of the post being held by Opposition should return in the current Lok Sabha.

Ramgarajm, R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil service aspirants at Officers IAS Academy. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

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Hence, the President appoints 'Speaker *pro tem*' under this provision till the full-time Speaker is elected. The term '*pro tem*' means 'for the time being' or 'temporary'.

The Speaker *pro tem* administers oath of office to other MPs and presides over the election of full-time Speaker.

Indian Express- GS 2/Health -8

How is methanol procured and used as liquor?

Was the Kallakurichi incident the first time that methanol poisoning has come to light?

M. Kalyanaraman

The story so far:

The Kallakurichi illicit liquor tragedy that has so far claimed more than 50 lives is entirely familiar in its cause, sequence of events, and aftermath. Such tragedies happen periodically across India in various States. Almost all the postmortem reports of the victims attribute the cause to methanol consumption.

How are ethanol, methanol made?

Ethanol is legal liquor for consumption. It is produced biologically whereas methanol is produced from fuels such as coal in India. Molasses, which are a by-product of the sugar making process, form the starting material of distilleries that are often located close to sugar factories. They produce rectified spirit which is distilled further to produce edible extra neutral alcohol that in turn goes into making Indian Made Foreign Liquor, a lucrative cash cow for State

governments. During ethanol production in responsible distilleries, methanol is also produced but is carefully removed since the processes are highly controlled.

Methanol is produced from coal and other fossil fuels. While ethanol can be made edible, methanol is poison. Even very low concentrations of methanol can be toxic, often fatal. However, it is needed to produce a range of products that are highly useful. Paints, for instance, can't be produced without methanol.

Is methanol easy to procure?

Just like ethanol, methanol is a highly controlled substance. Rules in Tamil Nadu ensure the manufacturing, transportation and storage are all licenced, monitored and the quantity and quality audited.

In northern Tamil Nadu, much of the methanol used in industries is sourced from Andhra Pradesh. Ground reportage suggests the existence of a lucrative methanol pilferage racket operating enroute and at the end-user side as well.

It is possible that methanol formed

during the crude distillation process, adopted by the bootleggers at Kallakurichi, wasn't removed, leading to methanol poisoning. However, the widespread nature of contamination and scale of the Kallakurichi tragedy suggests that methanol was procured and supplied separately, either as part of a brew or alone in a diluted form. Given that illicit liquor has been produced and distributed widely here over many months, possibly years, methanol use was not a one-off event that happened only this fateful week at Kallakurichi.

Why is methanol used?

Most of the hooch tragedies in India occur due to methanol contamination in liquor. Street wisdom, or belief rather, may well be that the relatively inexpensive but potent poison that is methanol, if diluted enough, could provide the same effect as ordinary liquor – a state of intoxication or 'kick' for consumers.

Prosecutors in the 2015 Malvani, Mumbai hooch tragedy case in which

more than 100 people died and some 75 were injured argued that all the accused had entered into a criminal conspiracy, and deliberately procured and supplied poisonous methanol. Lawyers defending the accused argued that their defendants would not knowingly add methanol. It made no business sense. And bootleggers, just like in Kallakurichi, live amidst the community. They provide a service that is much in demand and wouldn't want to kill their own folk. The additional sessions judge S. D. Tawshikar, in the Malvani case, acquitted 10 of the 14 accused but convicted four. The judge did not find anyone guilty of violating the Poisons Act of 1919. The four were convicted of criminal conspiracy, and culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

What needs to be done?

The periodic occurrence of methanol poisoning suggests the need for strong central legislation that can work with State legislation. Various laws such as the Poisons Act that involves State governments can tighten the methanol supply chain. The implementation of laws holds the key, especially when there are plans to ramp up the production of both ethanol and methanol for use as cheaper, eco-friendly alternatives to petrol and diesel for transportation.

The NITI Aayog has talked of ramping up methanol production from two metric tonnes to 20. Keeping methanol and ethanol separate and not allowing any pilferage should be a national priority.

THE GIST

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The Hindu-IR (GSII) –Page 10

After years, Russia approves draft logistics agreement to be signed with India

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

After being held up for several years, the India-Russia mutual logistics agreement is ready for conclusion, with Russia approving the draft agreement over the past week.

The agreement will simplify military-to-military exchanges for exercises, training, port calls and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts. It is similar to a series of such agreements that India has signed with a number of countries, beginning with the U.S. in 2016.

An official order dated June 20 was published on Russia's official legal information website, authorising the signing of the logistics agreement with India. The draft of the agreement was also published. "It's a Russian governmental decree that approves signing the agreement and makes relevant instruction to the MoD [Ministry of Defence]," a diplomatic source said, commenting

The agreement involves interaction between troops, and supply of weapons and military gear

on the order. Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin has instructed the MoD to hold negotiations with the Indian side on the draft document, sources said.

Delayed agreement

The conclusion of the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Agreement (RELOS) has been delayed for several years. Official sources said that this was the same agreement which has now been approved by the Russian side, and has to be signed by both sides before it can become effective. The agreement, as and when concluded, will be valid for five years and will be renewed automatically unless either party notifies the other of its desire to terminate it, sources said.

Defence cooperation is

a major pillar of the India-Russia strategic partnership and is guided by the agreement on military technical cooperation. The agreement for the decade from 2021 to 2031 was signed during the inaugural meeting of India-Russia 2+2 dialogue held in December 2021.

The cooperation agreement involves interaction between troops, and also addresses issues of the supply and development of weapons and military equipment, the Russian Ministry of Defence explained.

A Navy-to-Navy cooperation agreement along the same lines has also been in the works for some time.

Among the three services, the Indian Navy has been the biggest beneficiary of these administrative arrangements signed with several countries, improving its operational turnaround and increasing interoperability on the high seas. The agreements have been a win-win for both the parties involved.

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The Hindu –Science and Technology(GSIII)-Page 12

Pushpak, ISRO's reusable launch vehicle, clears test

This was the third and final test of a series; the mission demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the vehicle under more challenging release conditions, says the space agency

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation successfully completed the third reusable launch vehicle landing experiment (RLV LEX) at the Aeronautical Test Range in Chitradurga, Karnataka on Sunday.

The third and final test in a series was conducted at 7.10 a.m.

"Following the success of RLV LEX-01 and LEX-02 missions, RLV LEX-03 re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions and more severe wind conditions," the ISRO said.

On Sunday morning, Pushpak, the space agency's winged vehicle, was released from an Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter at an altitude of 4.5 km.

The ISRO said that from the release point 4.5 km away, Pushpak autonomously executed cross-range correction manoeuvres, approached the



Textbook touchdown: Pushpak performed a 'precise horizontal landing at runway centre line', the ISRO says. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

runway, and performed a precise horizontal landing at the runway centre line.

"Due to this vehicle's low lift-to-drag ratio aerodynamic configuration, the landing velocity exceeded 320 kmph, compared with 260 kmph for a commercial aircraft and 280 kmph for a typical fighter aircraft. After touchdown, the vehicle velocity was reduced to nearly 100 kmph using its brake parachute, after which the landing gear brakes were em-

ployed for deceleration. During this ground roll phase, Pushpak utilises its rudder and nose-wheel steering system to autonomously maintain a stable and precise ground roll along the runway," it said.

The space agency said this mission simulated the approach and landing interface and high-speed landing conditions for a vehicle returning from space, reaffirming its expertise in acquiring the most critical technologies

required for the development of an RLV.

"Through this mission, the advanced guidance algorithm catering to longitudinal and lateral plane error corrections, which is essential for the future Orbital Re-entry Mission has been validated," it said.

The ISRO said that the LEX used sensors such as an inertial sensor, radar altimeter, flush air data system and NavIC. Notably, the LEX-03 mission reused the winged body and flight systems from the LEX-02 mission without any modification, demonstrating the robustness of the ISRO's capability of design to reuse flight systems.

ISRO Chairman S. Somnath congratulated the team for its efforts in maintaining the success streak in such missions. S. Unnikrishnan Nair, Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre, emphasised that this "consistent success boosts ISRO's confidence in the critical technologies essential for future orbital re-entry missions".

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The RLV was made to undertake more difficult manoeuvres with dispersions, correct both cross-range and downrange and land on the runway in a fully autonomous mode RLV LEX-03 re-demonstrated the autonomous landing capability of the RLV under more challenging release conditions (cross range of 500 m against 150 m for LEX-02) and more severe wind conditions. The winged vehicle, named 'Pushpak', was released from an Indian Air Force Chinook Helicopter at an altitude of 4.5 km. From a release point 4.5 km away from the runway, Pushpak autonomously executed cross-range correction manoeuvres, approached the runway and performed a precise horizontal landing at the runway centreline

The Hindu –Health(GSII)-Page 18

Complex PTSD: When trauma persists...

Karthik Vinod

Around 4% of the world's population has suffered post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at some point, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

PTSD is often associated with war veterans, survivors of sexual violence and typically anybody who has lived through a life-threatening situation. They often experience anxiety, flashbacks, and nightmares. But health workers have also recorded PTSD symptoms among people who have suffered repeated bullying, emotional abuse, and/or neglect. These individuals include children bullied or gaslighted since a young age and someone who has suffered domestic abuse for many years. They are said to have complex PTSD, or cPTSD.

For these individuals, flashbacks and nightmares are only the tip of the iceberg of symptoms. As a result of the lack of a nourishing living environment, they have been known to develop a crippled sense of self. Apart from anxiety issues rooted in a negative self-image and/or issues with self-confidence, they also display a difficulty trusting other people and trouble maintaining friendships or romantic relationships.

cPTSD was listed as a standalone



cPTSD was listed as a standalone diagnosis in the 11th edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems in 2018. ADRIAN SWANCAR/UNSPASH

diagnosis in the 11th edition of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, or ICD-11, in 2018. In 2019, the WHO also recognised cPTSD as a separate mental health disorder.

We don't yet know how prevalent cPTSD is in the general population. Researchers have estimated it is 1-8%.

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Indian Express –IR(GSII)-Page 11

CYBERATTACKS A GROWING CONCERN FOR ESTONIA AND INDIA

Estonia looks at Indian partnership to beef up cybersecurity infrastructure

SOURMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

ESTONIA, ONE of the world's most advanced digital countries, is looking to partner with India to collaborate on strengthening the two countries' cybersecurity infrastructure, multiple officials from the Baltic country's government said.

Estonia, courtesy its vicinity to Russia, faces a barrage of cyberattacks from the country, more so because of the former's stance on the war between Russia and Ukraine. India, meanwhile, faces a similar threat from its neighbour China.

"We are keen to work with India and to conduct cyber exercises here. Globally, there is a rise in cyber attacks and Estonia is also facing attacks from hackers," Jonatan Vseiovi, secretary general, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told a delegation of Indian journalists. He also highlighted areas like digital services and education systems as potential areas for collaboration between the countries.

Estonia, with a population of about 1.3 million, was a former



A server farm of CR14 (Cyber Range 14), which is a foundation established by the Estonian Ministry of Defence, whose responsibility is to offer and develop cybersecurity training.

in the backdrop of riots by ethnic Russian Estonians, prompted by the removal of a Soviet war memorial from the centre of the country's capital, Tallinn.

Since the war between Russia and Ukraine, the country has experienced similar threats from Russian actors, government officials said. Government officials in India have previously said that New Delhi faces much of a similar challenge from Beijing, where a group of independent, and state-

primarily hold it as ransomware, said Mart Noorma, director of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, told reporters. Ransomware attacks are where a cyber-actor gains access to sensitive information of an entity and encrypts, with the condition of decrypting the data only after receiving a payment.

The NATO (CCDCOE) is a NATO-accredited knowledge

ment, academia and industry from 39 countries.

Noorma said: "We wholeheartedly welcome like-minded democratic nations like India to join us. This will help in cyber knowledge and exchanging methods to address cyber-attacks. The cooperation will help a large-scale coalition through research, training, and exercises."

The ties between Estonia and India are increasingly growing. An Indian contingent was, for the first time, observers in an NATO-run cyber security exercise in Estonia last month. The exercise was the largest of its kind in Europe, Tiit Riisalo, Estonian economic affairs and information technology minister, said. It involved 32 NATO countries and a handful of invitees.

Although, it is worth noting that the Estonian security establishment does not view favourably the fact that India has become one of the largest purchasers of Russian oil since the war began. The Indian Express had earlier reported that India's Russian oil imports climbed to a 10-month high in May as low Russian refinery capacity use due to Ukrainian drone strikes made

cybersecurity issues previously and could further that collaboration not just from government engagements, but by involving the two nations' private sector as well.

The Estonian Secretary General Vseiovi said that European countries are keen to diversify their bases in various industries over concerns emanating from over-reliance on specific countries, especially those with authoritarian regimes. In this context, Estonian officials highlighted, India could emerge as a potential partner for Europe and Estonia, despite the significant population and size differences between the countries. Courtesy of its NATO membership, Estonia has also become a crucial market for a number of Indian start-ups in the defence space as well.

There's another key similarity between Estonia and India – both the countries possess a ubiquitous national identity system, e-ID in the former, and Aadhaar in the latter, which are tied to a number of government services. In fact, in the early days of Aadhaar, when the system was being worked upon, Indian officials had closely studied Estonia's

Estonia, one of the world's most advanced digital countries, is looking to partner with India to collaborate on strengthening the two countries' cybersecurity infrastructure, multiple officials from the Baltic country's government said.

Estonia, with a population of about 1.3 million, was a former member of the Soviet Union, and faced one of the largest cyberattacks on its digital infrastructure in 2007 by means of a distributed denial of service (DDoS) attack.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB –Economy(GSIII)

Ministry of Communications

The Telecommunications Act, 2023: Ushering in new era of connectivity

Historic shift: Replacing century old colonial laws

Pillars of progress: Samavesh, Suraksha, Vriddhi and Tvarit

Posted On: 22 JUN 2024 5:52PM by PIB Delhi

- Union Government on 21.06.2024, issued Gazette Notification for enforcing sections 1, 2, 10 to 30, 42 to 44, 46, 47, 50 to 58, 61 and 62 of the Telecommunications Act, 2023.
- The Telecommunications Act, 2023 aims to amend and consolidate the law relating to development, expansion and operation of telecommunication services and telecommunication networks; assignment of spectrum and for matters connected therewith. The Telecommunications Act, 2023 also seeks to repeal existing legislative framework like Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Indian Wireless Telegraph Act, 1933 owing to huge technical advancements in the telecom sector and technologies.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY



PIB –Environment(GSIII)

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

Government enhances allocation for Fertilizer Sector under SIGHT Programme of the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM)

Allocation for fertilizer sector increased from 5.5 lakh tonnes per annum to 7.5 lakh tonnes per annum of Green Ammonia.

- Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) is implementing the National Green Hydrogen Mission (NGHM) with a target to achieve production capacity of 5 million tonnes per annum of Green Hydrogen in the country by the year 2030.
- The National Green Hydrogen Mission was launched on 04th January 2023 with an outlay of Rs. 19,744 crores up to FY 2029-30. It will contribute to India's goal to become Aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) through clean energy and serve as an inspiration for the global Clean Energy Transition. The Mission will lead to significant decarbonization of the economy, reduced dependence on fossil fuel imports, and enable India to assume technology and market leadership in Green Hydrogen.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air –Economy(GSIII)

GST Council At 53rd Meeting Decides To Roll Out Pan-India Biometric Authentication To Check Fake Invoicing



- The GST Council has recommended a uniform rate of 12 percent GST on all steel, iron, and aluminium milk cans. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, speaking to the media after the 53rd GST Council meeting held today in New Delhi, also announced that services provided by the Indian Railways to the common man, including the sale of platform tickets, facility of retiring rooms and waiting rooms, and battery-operated car services, will not attract any GST. She said, in a move that will benefit the apple growers of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, the council has recommended a uniform GST rate of 12 percent on all carton boxes and cases of both corrugated and non-corrugated paper or paperboard
- there is going to be a rollout of biometric-based Aadhaar authentication on an all-India basis. This will help the government combat fraudulent input tax credit claims made through fake invoices. The Minister said that to help small taxpayers, the Council has recommended extending the time limit to furnish details and returns in the form GSTR-4 from 30th April to 30th June.