

## **November 1<sup>st</sup> news:**

### **International:**

#### **US court blocks Trump's military transgender ban**

A federal judge temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's ban on transgender personnel from serving in the US military on 31<sup>st</sup> October. US District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly ordered the government to "revert to the status quo" that was in effect before Trump ordered the contentious ban.

At the same time, however, she allowed to let stand a block on military funding for sex reassignment surgery for members of the armed forces.

Trump's predecessor Barack Obama took the historic decision to allow openly transgender troops to serve in the military, a move that was due to go into full effect in July this year.

The new administration announced in June a six-month delay on implementing that ruling. In July, Trump surprised Pentagon leaders by announcing on Twitter a ban on transgender people serving in the armed forces.

### **National:**

#### **National talent search exam to have OBC quota**

Students from Other Backward Classes (OBCs) will get 27 per cent reservation in the prestigious national talent search examination (NTSE), which gives 1,000 students monthly scholarships from Class XI.

The Aurangabad Bench of the Bombay High Court had asked the Central government to consider OBC quota in NTSE a few years ago.

The NTSE is conducted in two stages. Stage-1 is conducted by the state governments. Qualifying students attend the Stage-2 exam, conducted by the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) under the guidance of the MHRD.

The students are supposed to clear a mental ability test and a scholastic ability test in Stage-2. According to the NCERT website, those who clear the exam "get Rs 500 per month for all the students studying in Class XI onwards (irrespective of class /course) except for PhD, wherein it is paid according to the University Grants Commission norms."

The Union government had first launched this exam in 1963. It was then called the national science talent search scheme. The scheme was restricted to 10 students studying in the national capital. The next year, the scheme was extended to 350 Class XI students across states. In 1976, the scheme was extended to 500 students.

### **Bilateral:**

#### **India and World Bank Signed \$200 Million Loan Agreement for Assam**

The Government of India and the World Bank signed a \$200 million Loan Agreement for the Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project. The Project will support Assam to facilitate agri-business investments, increase agricultural productivity and market access.

The Project will be implemented in over 16 Districts of Assam. Over 500,000 farming households will directly benefit from the Project.

### **Economy:**

#### **India makes it to Top 100 in 'ease of doing business'**

India jumped up 30 notches into the top 100 rankings on the World Bank's 'ease of doing business' index, thanks to major improvements in indicators such as resolving insolvency, paying taxes, protecting minority investors and getting credit.

"There is significant improvement in many criteria such as protecting minority investors, availability of credit and getting an electricity connection

An improvement in the rankings will help not only foreign investments but also domestic investors. The Centre said, would talk to States to expedite construction permits. These initiatives would help India improve its position by at least 30 points

India is among the top ten improvers this year, with improved ranking in six of the ten indicators, while its performance in absolute terms improved in nine. The six areas of improved ranking include dealing with construction permits and enforcing contracts.

#### **Where India slipped up**

In the category of starting a business, though, the need for local entrepreneurs to go through 12 procedures to start a business, as opposed to five in high-income countries, worsened India's ranking in the category to 156 from 155 last year.

There was also a major slip in ranking in the category of registering property — from 138 last year to 154 this year — due to increase in time taken, cost and number of procedures for registration.

Bhutan, in 75th place, is South Asia's highest-ranked economy, followed by India (at 100) and Nepal (at 105).

This year, the report recognised eight areas in which reforms were implemented in Delhi and Mumbai, as opposed to just four last year.

India's corporate law and securities regulations were recognised as highly advanced, placing it in fourth place in the global ranking on protecting minority investors.

The time taken to obtain an electricity connection in Delhi reduced from 138 days four years back to 45 days now, against a 78-day average in OECD high-income economies, the report observed. This put India in 29th place in the category.

India still lags in areas such as starting a business, enforcing contracts and dealing with construction permits. It takes longer to enforce a contract, at 1,445 days, than 15 years ago (1,420 days).

### **Rs. 22,000-cr Navy copter project gets the nod**

The Ministry of Defence approved acquisition of 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH) in a Rs. 21,738-crore deal for the Indian Navy under the Strategic Partnership (SP) policy.

The deal, which has been pending for almost seven years, was approved by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Minister of Defence Nirmala Sitharaman, on 31<sup>st</sup> October

### **Fiscal deficit rises to 91.3% of full-year target in April-September**

The Centre's financial situation improved marginally, but remained precarious in the first six months of the fiscal as its spending outpaced its receipts by a wide margin. The Centre's fiscal deficit rose to Rs. 4,98,938 crore or 91.3 per cent of the Budget target between April and September 2017.

This is a marginal improvement from the August data when fiscal deficit touched 96.1 per cent of the full-year target, but it remains high compared to April-September 2016 when it was at 83.9 per cent of the Budget Estimate.

The revenue deficit was also contained, but remained in higher than the Budget target at 118 per cent or Rs. 3,79,591 crore between April and September this fiscal.

It was at 133.9 per cent of the target between April and August this fiscal, although it was much lower at 91.9 per cent in the first six months of 2016-17.

With focus on spending from the start of the fiscal, the Centre's total expenditure amounted to Rs. 11,49,187 crore or 53.5 per cent of the Budget target in the first six months of this fiscal. Of this, revenue expenditure was Rs. 10,02,798 crore or 54.6 per cent of the Budget Estimate while capital expenditure was Rs. 1,46,389 crore or 47.3 per cent of the full-year target.

Meanwhile, total receipts were just Rs. 6,50,249 crore or 40.6 per cent of the Budget Estimate between April and September 2017. Tax revenue was robust and better than last fiscal, amounting to 44.2 per cent of the Budget Estimate or Rs. 5,42,358 crore.

Definition of 'Fiscal Deficit':

Definition: The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed as fiscal deficit. It is an indication of the total borrowings needed by the government. While calculating the total revenue, borrowings are not included.

Description: The gross fiscal deficit (GFD) is the excess of total expenditure including loans net of recovery over revenue receipts (including external grants) and non-debt capital receipts. The net fiscal deficit is the gross fiscal deficit less net lending of the Central government.

Generally fiscal deficit takes place either due to revenue deficit or a major hike in capital expenditure. Capital expenditure is incurred to create long-term assets such as factories, buildings and other development.

A deficit is usually financed through borrowing from either the central bank of the country or raising money from capital markets by issuing different instruments like treasury bills and bonds.

## **Science and Technology**

### **ISRO to launch 28 commercial satellites along with CartoSat-2**

The Indian Space Research Organisation will launch 28 commercial satellites along with CartoSat-2 satellite in the second half of December.

Addressing reporters to announce 'International Seminar on Indian Space Programme: Trends and Opportunities for Industry', supported by Ficci and ISRO's commercial arm Antrix Corporation, ISRO Chairman AS Kiran Kumar said that out of the 28 commercial satellites, 25 are nano and three are micro.

CartoSat 2 Series:

Cartosat-2 Series Satellite is the primary satellite carried by PSLV-C38. This remote sensing satellite is similar in configuration to earlier satellites in the series with the objective of providing high-resolution scene specific spot imagery.

The imagery sent by satellite will be useful for cartographic applications, urban and rural applications, coastal land use and regulation, utility management like road network monitoring, water distribution, creation of land use maps, change detection to bring out geographical and manmade features and various other Land Information System (LIS) as well as Geographical Information System (GIS) applications.

### **Persons in news:**

T V Narendran has become the first global managing director and chief executive officer (MD and CEO) of Tata Steel Limited, the company

### **Awards:**

Anupam Kher: Anupam Kher received Parmod Mahajan Smriti Award in Pune. He is the current Chairman of Film and Television Institute of India. Saira Banu, who moved Supreme Court seeking a ban on instantaneous 'Triple Talaq' among Muslims is the second recipient of Pramod Mahjan Smriti Award. The awards were presented by Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar. The award was instituted by

Pune-based organization 'Muktachhand' in memory of Late Pramod Mahajan who was the leader from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a former Union Cabinet Minister.