

December 13th news:

International:

Mount Hope Becomes UK's New Highest Mountain

Britain has a new highest mountain after new satellite data revealed the peak was almost 400 metres taller than previously thought. Mount Hope, in the British Atlantic Territory, was recently re-measured and found to be 377 metres taller than previous calculations.

This takes it to 3,239 metres, meaning it knocks Mount Jackson, the current title holder at 3,184 metres, off the top spot. Both Hope and Jackson still dwarf the highest mountain in the British Isles, Ben Nevis, which stands at 1,345 metres.

The discovery came as part of a mapping project led by BAS. It was prompted by calls to improve safety for planes that fly over the Antarctic, which are essential in an isolated region with few roads. Accurate elevation data from satellite imagery now allows us to produce these resources for Antarctica, where flying is difficult at the best of times."

A lack of nearby airfields makes flying over the continent dangerous. The proximity to the magnetic south pole also complicates navigation.

National:

Jallikattu issue for statute Bench

The Supreme Court on 12th December said it will have a Constitution Bench examine whether the people of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra can conserve jallikattu and bullock-cart races as their cultural right and demand their protection under Article 29 (1) of the Constitution.

A two-judge Special Bench was hearing a batch of petitions, led by People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), to quash the new jallikattu law passed by the Tamil Nadu Assembly which brought bulls back into the fold of "performing animals."

Article 29 (1) is a fundamental right guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution to protect the educational and cultural rights of citizens.

Though commonly used to protect the interests of minorities, Article 29 (1) mandates that "any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same."

TG Cabinet panel recommends BC sub-plan

The Telangana Cabinet sub-committee constituted to study the condition of backward classes and make recommendations for their uplift has recommended that the government implement an exclusive sub-plan for BCs on the lines of SCs and STs.

The Cabinet panel favoured a comprehensive survey by the BC Commission to ascertain the exact number of BC families in the State. It recommended that the government construct skill development centres for BCs in the name of Mahatma Jyothiba Phule to hone the skills of these communities enabling them to face the competition.

BC Welfare Minister Jogu Ramanna, who is a member of the sub-committee, held discussions with Assembly Speaker S. Madhusudana Chary along with other members including Finance Minister Eatala Rajender and MLAs on the recommendations of the committee.

The panel had proposed reservations to BCs in education and employment in addition to setting up two degree colleges in each of the 31 districts.

Economy:

Industrial growth slows; retail inflation at 15-month high

Worrying signs surfaced on the industrial growth and inflation fronts on 12th December, less than two weeks after the official data showed economic growth rose 6.3 per cent in the second quarter of the current financial year as against 5.7 per cent in the first.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation rate rose to a 15-month high of 4.88 per cent in November, on account of rising prices of food products, particularly vegetables, and fuels.

Growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) declined by almost half to a three-month low of 2.2 per cent in October despite it being a festival month, from 4.1 per cent in the previous month. This showed that the restocking after the goods and services tax (GST) roll-out had not given a boost to the IIP.

Inflation justified the Reserve Bank of India's stance of a status quo in its monetary policy review earlier this month. It had projected inflation to be in the range of 4.3-4.7 per cent in the second half of the year. Core inflation (after taking away food and fuel items) recorded a broad-based uptick to an eight-month high of 4.9 per cent in November from 4.6 per cent in October, said Aditi Nayar of ICRA.

The industrial production growth declined by more than half to 2.5 per cent in the first seven months of the current financial year, as against 5.5 per cent in the corresponding period of the previous year.

Even as IIP growth slowed down for the third month in October, a silver lining was that capital goods production showed a rising trend for the third straight month. Its growth declined slightly to 6.8 per cent in October from 8.2 per cent in September. However, within capital goods, electrical equipment declined 15.4 per cent. Infrastructure and construction goods rose 5.2 per cent against 0.4 per cent in the previous month.

Among broader segments, growth in manufacturing, which showed a seven per cent growth in Q2 from 1.2 per cent in Q1 in the GDP data, declined to 2.5 per cent against 3.8 per cent in September. Both mining and electricity growth was also down in October from the previous month, particularly the

former. The cut in GST rates on over 200 items might give some boost to IIP next month, while moderating inflation to an extent.

Consumer durables production declined for the second straight month, this time by 6.9 per cent. Passenger vehicle sales lost momentum in October, with several companies posting a decline in dispatches.

Within inflation, food inflation rose to 4.22 per cent in November from 1.9 per cent in October. The main culprit was vegetables, which saw inflation rising to 22.48 per cent from 7.47 per cent. Egg was another category that witnessed significant rise in inflation, from 0.7 per cent to 7.9 per cent.

Inflation in rent was up 7.4 per cent from 6.7 per cent. The rate of price rise in fuels moved up 7.9 per cent from 6.7 per cent.

WTO talks set to collapse as US rejects solution to food security issue

Talks at the 11th ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) is on the brink of collapse, with the US refusing to engage in the effort to find a permanent solution to the public stock-holding issue. On the third-day of the conference, Assistant US Trade Representative Sharon Bomer Lauritsen said during a small group meeting that a permanent solution to the food stock-holding issue was not acceptable to America

With the US not participating in the negotiation on the crucial issue, which the 11th ministerial is mandated to deliver, talks would collapse

India has all through been maintaining that a permanent solution to food stockpile issue was a “must have” at the ongoing ministerial and failure to do so would impact the credibility of the strong multilateral trade institution.

The Indian team, led by Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu, in cooperation with the G33 grouping, is pitching hard for a permanent solution to food security issue as it is crucial for livelihood of 800 million people across the globe.

The four-day ministerial conference, which began on 10th December, ends on 13th December with very little time for any substantial retrieval of positions by the WTO members.

With talks on crucial food stockpile issue reaching a deadlock, other issues like services, fisheries and e-commerce too will not make any headway.

In his plenary address, Prabhu had emphasised that WTO members must find a permanent solution to the public food stockpile issue.

Under the global trade norms, a WTO member-country’s food subsidy bill should not breach the limit of 10 per cent of the value of production based on the reference price of 1986-88.

Apprehending that full implementation of food security programme might result in a breach of the WTO cap, India has been seeking amendments in the formula to calculate the food subsidy cap.

As an interim measure, the WTO members at the Bali ministerial meeting in December 2013 had agreed to put in place a mechanism, popularly called the Peace Clause, and committed to negotiate an agreement for permanent solution at the 11th ministerial meeting at Buenos Aires. Under the Peace Clause, WTO members agreed to refrain from challenging any breach in prescribed ceiling by a developing nation at the dispute settlement forum of the WTO. This clause will be there till a permanent solution is found to the food stockpiling issue.

WTO:

The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** is an intergovernmental organization that regulates international trade. The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which commenced in 1948. It is the largest international economic organization in the world. The WTO deals with regulation of trade in goods, services and intellectual property between participating countries by providing a framework for negotiating trade agreements and a dispute resolution process aimed at enforcing participants' adherence to WTO agreements, which are signed by representatives of member governments and ratified by their parliaments. Most of the issues that the WTO focuses on derive from previous trade negotiations, especially from the Uruguay Round (1986–1994).

The WTO is attempting to complete negotiations on the Doha Development Round, which was launched in 2001 with an explicit focus on developing countries. As of June 2012, the future of the Doha Round remained uncertain: the work programme lists 21 subjects in which the original deadline of 1 January 2005 was missed, and the round is still incomplete. The conflict between free trade on industrial goods and services but retention of protectionism on farm subsidies to domestic agricultural sector (requested by developed countries) and the substantiation of fair trade on agricultural products (requested by developing countries) remain the major obstacles. This impasse has made it impossible to launch new WTO negotiations beyond the Doha Development Round. As a result, there have been an increasing number of bilateral free trade agreements between governments. As of July 2012, there were various negotiation groups in the WTO system for the current agricultural trade negotiation which is in the condition of stalemate.

The WTO's current Director-General is Roberto Azevêdo

A trade facilitation agreement, part of the Bali Package of decisions, was agreed by all members on 7 December 2013, the first comprehensive agreement in the organization's history. On 23 January 2017, the amendment to the WTO Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement marks the first time since the organization opened its doors in 1995 that WTO accords have been amended, and this change should secure for developing countries a legal pathway to access affordable remedies under WTO rules.

Sports:

India bags 21 medals at Asian Airgun Shooting Championships

India bagged a rich haul of 21 medals including six gold, eight silver and seven bronze medals at the 10th Asian Airgun Shooting Championships which was concluded on 11th December in Wako City, Japan. On the last of a championship, Saurabh Chaudhary and Manu Baker booked quota places for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) by winning a gold and a silver each. Saurabh Chaudhary won both the individual as well as the Team gold in the men's 10m Air Pistol Youth event, while Baker clinched a silver in the women's 10m Air Pistol Youth. India claimed another silver in junior women's 10m Air Pistol.

India added four medals to their kitty on the final day of the competition to finish with a total haul of 21 medals over four days, including six gold, eight silver and seven bronze, besides four Youth Olympic Games quotas.

India to Host 2021 Champions Trophy, 2023 World Cup

India is all set to host the 2023 World Cup, the global cricketing event's 13th edition after the BCCI confirmed the host nation. India will also host the upcoming Champions Trophy in 2021.

The ICC World Cup 2019 will be held in England and Wales. This will be the first time that the event will be held entirely in India: the nation on three occasions previously, hosted the World Cup partially (1987, 1996 and 2011).

Awards:

M.S. Swaminathan: The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu conferred 'Yeraringan' Award to Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, in Chennai. Prof. M.S. Swaminathan was a transformative leader who has inspired many scientists to focus on the problem of Indian agriculture.