

## **January 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> News:**

### **National:**

#### **Government to launch e-Sansad and e-Vidhan in Parliament and State Legislature**

The Government has proposed rolling out of e-Sansad in Parliament and e-Vidhan in State Legislatures to digitize and make their functioning paperless. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananth Kumar will inaugurate the 18th All India Whips' Conference on 7<sup>th</sup> January in Udaipur, Rajasthan and will consider rolling out of e-Sansad and e-Vidhan in Parliament and State Legislatures.

A whip is a member of a political party's parliamentary body responsible for discipline within the party. Their main job is ensuring that their members in Parliament and legislature vote in line with the party's official policy on important issues. Here is a report from our correspondent.

The two-day conference will focus on the efficient functioning of legislatures and the Delegates will make suggestions and recommendations for making the rolling out of e-Vidhan a success. This environment-friendly initiative is in line with the Go Green initiative of the government.

The Ministry has said, some states have made good progress in the field of automation of their Legislatures but in some states consumption of huge volume of papers is still going.

The conference will also make other recommendations for smooth and efficient working of Parliament and the state legislatures in the light of the experience gained by the whips.

### **Bilateral:**

#### **Saudi Arabia gives nod for Haj pilgrimage by sea route**

Saudi Arabia has agreed to India's proposal to revive the option of Haj pilgrimage through sea route, Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on 8<sup>th</sup> January adding that the service will begin soon. The minister made the announcement shortly after signing the bilateral annual Haj 2018 agreement with Saudi Arabia's Haj and Umrah Minister, Mohammad Benten at Makkah.

As per reports, the journey via sea from cities like Mumbai, Kolkata and Cochi will cut down travel expenses by almost half as compared to air travel.

An economy class ticket for the around five-hour flight between Mumbai and Jeddah costs between Rs.25,000 and Rs.52,000 (without subsidy) while from Delhi, the ticket price varies from Rs.18,000 to Rs.61,000 per head.

The minister further informed that the practice of ferrying Haj pilgrims between Mumbai and Jeddah by waterways was stopped in 1995.

Talking about Muslim women who would perform the Haj without a male companion, Naqvi said separate accommodation and transport will be arranged for such pilgrims along with female Haj assistants.

The option to send pilgrims by sea route is being weighed in the wake of a 2012 Supreme Court verdict asking the Union government to abolish by 2022 the subsidy offered to Haj pilgrims who travel by air.

## **Economy:**

### **National logistics index: Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra best performing states**

Gujarat, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh are the best performing states in terms of mobility of goods and efficiency of logistics chain, according to a new ranking of states brought out by the government.

Launched on 8<sup>th</sup> January, the new Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS) index developed by the Commerce and Industry Ministry and Deloitte ranked states in terms of the logistical support they provided to promote goods trade.

The ranking is based on parameters such as the competitiveness of pricing, timeliness and availability of infrastructure and that of services, among others. It aims to encourage states to provide the policy push towards improving their logistics-related infrastructure.

Karnataka, Maharashtra, Haryana, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Chhattisgarh made up the remaining top 10. Assam, Bihar and Jammu & Kashmir featured on the bottom of the list, owing to the lack of good transport facilities, scarcity of logistics services and bad track record in timeliness.

The report was made after inputs of hundreds of respondents in the logistics segment, including shippers, logistics service providers, terminal operators and transporters from, across the country.

The report referred to various industry estimates putting the size of the Indian logistics market at \$100-125 billion and growing at about 5 per cent annually. It also noted that logistics services and infrastructure was highly concentrated in 15 states and Union Territories, which account for 90 per cent of total exports by value.

On the global front, India's position in the annual World Bank's Logistics Performance Index had improved to 35 in 2016, the last time the report was published. This was a jump from the 54th spot India had occupied in the previous report.

## **Science and Technology:**

### **Defence Innovation Centre to be set up in Coimbatore**

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced the release of ₹20 crore to the Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (Codissia) for setting up a defence innovation centre. The proposed centre will help the micro, small and medium enterprises and start-ups engaged in the manufacture of components for the defence sector conduct tests and trials of the components. She said India is the third biggest armaments procurement country in the world. The Ministry is trying to assess the number of micro units engaged in supply of components to the defence sector.

### **India's Fastest Supercomputer, Pratyush**

Union Minister for Science and Technology Harsh Vardhan 8<sup>th</sup> January dedicated India's fastest and first "multi-petaflops" supercomputer to the nation in Pune. Petaflops is a measure of a computer's processing speed.

Christened "Pratyush", meaning the sun, the High Performance Computing (HPC) facility has been established at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, and will be a national facility for improving weather and climate forecasts

While inaugurating the facility, the minister said that it would be India's number one HPC facility in terms of peak capacity and performance.

The IITM release added that the facility would help the country with better forecasts in terms of monsoon, extreme events, tsunamis, cyclones, earthquakes, air quality, lightning, fishing, hot and cold waves, flood and drought among others.

### **Sports:**

#### **Gilles Simon victory**

Gilles Simon won his first major ATP Tour title since 2015 when the Frenchman defeated second-seeded Kevin Anderson in the final of the Maharashtra Open on 6<sup>th</sup> January.

### **Persons in news:**

**Saksham Yadav:**Powerlifting world champion Saksham Yadav died of his injuries after road accident near Delhi on 7<sup>th</sup> January.