

May 11th news:

National:

THE rankings, IISC @ 13

Indian universities improved their positions in the latest Times Higher Education Emerging Economies University Rankings 2018.

While four Indian intuitions have been ranked among the top 50 in the rankings, top 100 list has eight from India. Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore is ranked on 13th position while Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay is ranked on 26th position and IIT Kharagpur is ranked at 45th position.

The Times Higher Education Emerging Economies University Rankings 2018 includes only institutions in countries classified by the FTSE as "advanced emerging" (countries including Brazil, Greece, South Africa, Turkey), "secondary emerging" (countries including Chile, India, Pakistan, Qatar, Russian Federation) or "frontier" (countries including Argentina, Bangladesh, Croatia, Cyprus, Morocco, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Vietnam).

According to Human Resource Development minister Prakash Javadekar, as against only 27 in 2017, 42 Indian Institutions figure in this year's ranking and which reflects growing competitive zeal and the cultural change infused by the Government among Indian higher education institutions.

Top 10 Indian Educational Institutes (World Ranking)

13. Indian Institute of Science Bangalore
26. Indian Institute of Technology Bombay
45. Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur
49. Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur
56. Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee
63. Indian Institute of Technology Delhi
70. Indian Institute of Technology Madras
99. Tezpur University
114. Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati
117. Jadavpur University

Economy:

Central Government issues orders for extending assistance to clear the dues of sugarcane farmers

In order to help sugar mills to clear cane dues of farmers, the Government has decided to provide financial assistance at the rate of Rs. 5.50 per quintal of cane crushed in sugar season 2017-18 to sugar mills to offset the cost of cane.

The said assistance shall be paid directly to the farmers on behalf of the mills and be adjusted against the cane price payable due to the farmers against Fair and Remunerative Price including arrears relating to previous years.

The total assistance would be about Rs 1540 crore which will directly benefit a large number of farmers and will help the sugar mills in a long way in discharging their liabilities on account of cane price dues of farmers.

Environment:

Only 20% of Clean Ganga Mission funds spent till March 2018

Only about a fifth of ₹20,000 crore allotted for the National Clean Ganga Mission (NCGM) have been utilised till March 2018.

That is roughly the same proportion of the sanctioned money utilised the same time last year. Amid complaints that the government's marquee Ganga-cleaning exercise was dawdling, Union Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari had promised, in October 2017, a "visible change" in the Ganga water quality by 2019. At that time, only ₹2,901 crore — or 17% of the sanctioned ₹16,000 crore — had been spent.

A financial account from the NCGM says that as of March 2018, ₹20,601 crore had been sanctioned for 193 projects. So far, only ₹4,254 crore had actually been spent on their implementation. Figures for April are not immediately available.

About half the money, or ₹2,814 crore, had been spent on establishing sewage infrastructure. Only 24 of the 65 'entry-level' projects — meant for cleaning the ghats and establishing new ones and cleaning the river front and the river surface — had been completed. They had been allotted ₹492 crore.

Ministry officials said that while delays characterised several major projects, there had been an uptick in the tenders being awarded in the last few months. Because of this, several of these projects would be rapidly completed in the year ahead.

About 12,000 MLD of sewage is emptied into the Ganga across 11 States, from Uttarakhand to West Bengal. At present, the capacity for sewage treatment is just 4,000 MLD; of this, 1,000 MLD is functional.

Coursing 2,500 km, the Ganga is the longest river within India's borders. Its basin constitutes 26% of the country's land mass (8,61,404 sq. km.) and supports 43% of its population.

Even as the basin spreads across 11 States, five States are located along the river's main stem: Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal. Much of the river's pollution load — chemical effluents, sewage, dead bodies, and excreta — comes from these States. Though the industrial

pollution, volume-wise, accounts for about 20%, its toxic and non-biodegradable nature has a disproportionate impact. The industrial pollutants largely emanate from tanneries in Kanpur and distilleries, paper mills and sugar mills in the Kosi, Ramganga and Kali river catchments. The municipal sewage, at a billion litres a day, accounts for 80% of the pollution load.

Govt approves green licence plates for e-vehicles

To promote electric vehicles in India, the government has approved green licence plates bearing numbers in white fonts for private e-vehicles and yellow for taxis, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said

The government also plans to allow youth in the age bracket of 16-18 years to drive electric scooters, besides mandating taxi aggregators to have a certain percentage of e-vehicle fleet.

The purpose behind distinctive number plates is their easy identification for preferential treatment in parking, free entry in congested zones besides other proposed benefits like concessional toll, the road transport and highways minister told .

The measure is aimed at promoting e-vehicle's use and the government is considering exemption from permits for such vehicles.

Similarly, e-bikes also should see a considerable impact since it is a new area. Besides, the government is contemplating permitting youth in the age group of 16-18 years to drive e-scooters, which are gearless and this will lead to a big demand for e-scooters

Under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, those in the age group of 16-18 years are granted licence for below 50 CC gearless scooters. Incidentally there is no scooter in this category made in the country.

Similarly, all public transport operators may also be mandated to provide 1 per cent incremental fleet from 2020 onwards

The proposals include bringing down the GST on batteries to 12 per cent at par with the GST on EVs. As per an estimate, India at present has 1 to 1.5 lakh electric vehicles and it is projected to grow to about 5 per cent of the total vehicles in the next five years

Of the about 24 million vehicles sold in India in 2017-18, electric vehicles accounted for barely about 1 per cent

India, currently, has four kinds of number plates - white licence plates with numbers on black font for private cars, yellow plates with fonts in black for commercial vehicles, black plates with yellow font letters for self-driven rental vehicles and blue plates with white font letters for Embassies and High Commissions.

Army vehicles on the other hand follow a different registration system given by the defence ministry, while vehicles of the President and governors have red licence plates with the national emblem.

Persons in news:

Mahathir Mohamad: In Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad was sworn in as Prime Minister of the country on 10th May. Mahathir's coalition, Pakatan Harapan, won 113 of the total 222 seats, after the final results were announced.

His coalition defeated the governing Barisan Nasional coalition, led by Prime Minister Najib Razak, which has been in power for more than 60 years.

The victory capped a dramatic comeback for Mahathir, who ruled the country for 22 years. He came out of retirement to take on Prime Minister Razak after the leader became embroiled in a massive corruption scandal. Ninety-two-year old, Mahathir becomes the oldest Prime Minister in the world.