

May 19th news:

National:

Supreme Court orders floor test in Karnataka

The Supreme Court ordered a floor test in the Karnataka Assembly at 4 pm on 19th May, reducing the 15-day window given by the Governor to BJP Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa to prove his majority. The top court said the Protem speaker will take decisions in accordance with the law on the issue of floor test. The apex court also directed the Karnataka Government and the Governor not to nominate any MLA from the Anglo-Indian community to participate in the floor test

The Bench also asked the newly elected government not to take any major policy decision till it proves majority in the House. It also ordered authorities, including the DGP, to ensure law and order outside the Karnataka Assembly.

The apex court made it clear that it would deal with the constitutionality of the Governor's letter inviting Yeddyurappa to form the government later. The Bench said ultimately the question is about majority which has to be proved in the floor test.

Bilateral:

Indonesia gives India access to strategic port of Sabang

Indonesia has agreed to give India economic and military access to the strategic island of Sabang at the northern tip of Sumatra and close to the Malacca Strait

Luhut Pandjaitan, Indonesia's coordinating minister for maritime affairs and a former military officer, said India will invest in the port and economic zone of Sabang and build a hospital.

He noted the port's 40-metre depth is good for all types of vessels, "including submarines". In time, he said, the coast guards of the two countries could also work together.

Sabang, also known as Weh island, is located 710 km southeast of the Andaman Islands and less than 500 km from the entrance of the Malacca Strait, through which almost 40% of India's trade passes.

India and Indonesia began exploring the idea of developing Sabang in 2014-15, said India's former envoy to Indonesia, Gurjit Singh. However, the economic viability of the port was questioned.

Common concerns about Chinese assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region have led both governments to again take up the island-port's development.

Economy:

Trade deficit widens marginally to \$13.7 b in April

India's trade deficit widened to \$13.72 billion in April. This is \$47 million higher than the \$13.25- billion trade deficit reported in April 2017, according to data put out by the Ministry of Commerce.

The higher deficit is on account of the near doubling of crude oil prices. However, the deficit was mitigated by lower gold and jewellery imports.

In rupee terms, the trade balance widened by ₹4,564.98 crore in April to ₹90,031.71 crore, from ₹85,466.73 crore in April last year.

The import of petroleum, crude and products played a dampener and rose by 43.97 per cent to ₹68,344.24 crore. There was also a 35.51 per cent increase in the import of transport equipment that grew from ₹7,654.18 crore in April 2017 to ₹10,372.46 crore in April 2018.

Non-oil imports during April were estimated at \$29.21 billion, which was 4.30 per cent lower than non-oil imports of \$30.53 billion in April 2017, the statement added.

There was a substantial dip in the import of jewellery during April. The import of pearls, precious and semi-precious stones was down by 35.32 per cent to ₹15,376.84 crore from ₹23,773.44 crore. Gold imports too fell by 31.88 per cent to ₹16,930.91 crore from ₹24,855.20 crore.

On the export front, there has been a 40.91 per cent increase in the export of organic and inorganic chemicals to ₹11,772.70 crore during April 2018 from ₹8,354.90 crore in April 2017. There was a substantial increase in the export of engineering goods that grew by 19.68 per cent to ₹47,186.80 crore from ₹39,425.90 crore in April 2017.

Overall in April, in rupee terms, exports rose 7 per cent to ₹1,70,052 crore compared to ₹1,58,913 crore in April 2017 while imports showed a 6.43 per cent rise at ₹2,60,084 crore (₹2,44,380 crore).

Persons in news:

Himanta Biswa Sarma: The President of Badminton Association of India (BAI), Himanta Biswa Sarma was on 18th May elected as the Vice-President of Badminton Asia Confederation (BAC). The election took place during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the continental body in Bangkok, Thailand.

Amit Khare: Amit Khare, 1985 batch IAS officer of Jharkhand cadre will be the new Information and Broadcasting Secretary. The Appointments Committee of Cabinet has approved his appointment. Mr Khare will replace NK Sinha who will superannuate on 31st of this month.

Shivangi Pathak: India's Shivangi Pathak has become youngest women of the country to scale Mt Everest from Nepal side. Managing Director of Seven Summit Treks, Mingma Sherpa told that 16-year-old Shivangi successfully stood atop world's highest mountain

Born in Hisar of Haryana Shivangi climbed Mt Everest to spread the message that women could overcome any obstacle to achieve their goals.