

**May 2<sup>nd</sup> news:**

**International:**

**Morocco cuts diplomatic ties with Iran**

Morocco will sever diplomatic ties with Iran over its alleged involvement in the delivery of weapons from its Lebanese ally Hezbollah to the Polisario Front. Morocco's foreign ministry announced that it will close its embassy in Tehran and expel the Iranian Ambassador in Rabat over Iran's support for Polisario, reported Al Jazeera.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita "The first shipment of weapons was recently" sent to the Algerian-backed Polisario Front, which is seeking independence, via an "element" at the Iranian embassy in Algiers, according to several Media Reports

Furthermore, Bourita said he presented the evidence to his Iranian counterpart earlier in the day in Tehran, which included documentation of arms deliveries made to the rebel group.

The Polisario and Morocco fought for control of Western Sahara from 1975 to 1991, with Rabat taking over the desert territory before a UN-brokered ceasefire in the former Spanish colony.

Previously, Morocco severed diplomatic links with Iran in 2009, accusing it of questioning Sunni rule of Bahrain, a Gulf Arab island that has a Shi'ite majority. The ties were restored around 2014.

**Dominican Republic establishes ties with China, breaks with Taiwan**

The Dominican Republic and China announced they were establishing diplomatic relations on 1<sup>st</sup> May as the Caribbean country becomes the latest nation to dump Taiwan in the face of Beijing's growing influence. The Dominican Republic said it believed its switch to ties with China would be "extraordinarily positive for the future of our country"

Mainland China and Taiwan have been ruled separately since 1949, but while democratic Taiwan sees itself as a sovereign nation, it has never formally declared independence.

Beijing sees the island as a renegade province that is part of its territory awaiting reunification. There now remain just 19 nations worldwide with official ties to Taiwan, as its decades of Cold War era ties with Central America and the Caribbean have dwindled. In June last year, Panama cut ties with Taipei to open relations with Beijing. Costa Rica did so in 2007

**National:**

**Ombudsman to address telecom complaints**

A telecom ombudsman will be formed, to rely on when mobile operator refuses to pay heed complaints on deficient services.

The government on 1<sup>st</sup> May paved the way for a new regulator to take care of the growing dissatisfaction among mobile consumers when it comes to services they are getting.

The ombudsman will be formed under the aegis of regulator Trai, which may even get penal powers, while taking action against erring operators.

According to the proposal cleared by the inter-ministerial commission, there will now be a three-tier mechanism to tackle consumer complaints on deficient services. While the first level of complaints will be handled by the company itself, a customer, who is still dissatisfied, can approach an appellate authority that will be within the company's set-up.

If the customer is still not satisfied, he/she can then seek redressal from the ombudsman.

The proposal for an ombudsman had been recommended by Trai, which made a strong pitch for establishment of a regulator for handling consumer complaints.

### **Economy:**

#### **GST surpasses Rs 1 trn in April**

The goods and services tax (GST) revenue collection crossed Rs 1 trillion in April, the highest in a month since the new indirect tax was rolled out in July last year.

As many as 69.5 per cent of assesseees filed summary input-output returns in April, against 64.61 per cent in the previous month.

The mop-up at Rs 1.03 trillion far exceeded the Rs 898.8 billion average monthly collections for the first eight months after the GST was introduced, prompting Finance Minister Arun Jaitley to say that it mirrored enhanced economic activity.

However, the finance ministry clarified that the April collection could not be taken as a trend.

The figure released by the finance ministry is for payment received for the entire month of April. Earlier, it used to provide figures for payments made till 20th of the month. The highest monthly figure in 2017-18 was for September (paid till October 20) at Rs 951 billion.

If the governments at the Centre and in states indeed collect Rs 1 trillion, they will be able to garner Rs 12 trillion in 2018-19, slightly higher than the Union Budget projections and incorporating 14 per cent year-on-year growth in state revenue collections. The finance minister had last year also taken 14 per cent growth for states revenues to fix a target, based on the formula for compensating states.

The Union Budget has projected GST revenues to be Rs 7.4 trillion for 2018-19. If compensation cess, projected at Rs 900 billion is taken away, it would amount to Rs 6.5 trillion. The state GST (SGST) stood at Rs 2.91 trillion in the first eight months of 2017-18. On a pro rata basis, this amounts to Rs 4.4 trillion for 12 months. Incorporating 14 per cent growth, the states' GST revenue should be Rs 5 trillion and the total revenue should be Rs 11.5 trillion.

The central GST (CGST) collected in April stood at Rs 186.52 billion; SGST Rs 257.04 billion; IGST Rs 505.48 billion, including 212.46 billion collected on imports; and cess of Rs 85.54 billion.

The total revenue earned by the Centre and the state governments after settlement in the month of April stood at Rs 324.93 billion for the CGST and Rs 402.57 billion for the SGST.

## **Environment:**

### **14 of world's 15 most polluted cities in India**

Delhi is not the most polluted city in the world. The WHO global air pollution database released in Geneva reveals that India has 14 out of the 15 most polluted cities in the world in terms of PM 2.5 concentrations, with the worst being Kanpur.

Despite public outcry over severe air pollution, and both Centre and Delhi government taking up the issue, WHO's database of more than 4,000 cities in 100 countries shows that Delhi's pollution levels improved only marginally between 2010 and 2014 but started deteriorating again in 2015.

In 2016, the latest year in WHO's database, Delhi was in sixth spot, having recorded its highest pollution levels in six years.

The city's PM 2.5 annual average was 143 micrograms per cubic metre, more than three times the national safe standard, while the PM 10 average was 292 micrograms per cubic metre, more than 4.5 times the national standard

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) had recently claimed that air pollution levels improved in 2017 as compared to 2016. The board, however, hasn't released the annual average PM 2.5 concentration for 2017 yet.

A number of policies came into effect towards the end of 2016 - the graded response action plan (GRAP) in October, doubling of the environment compensation charge (ECC) on trucks in December 2015 and better coordination among NCR states on pollution control.

The WHO report, however, doesn't reflect this because it considers annual PM 10 and PM 2.5 averages between 2010 and 2016

## **Sports:**

### **Shahzar Rizvi claims No.1 spot in 10m air pistol rankings**

Indian shooter Shahzar Rizvi on 1<sup>st</sup> May grabbed the number one spot in ISSF world rankings, riding on his silver medal-winning performance in the just-concluded World Cup in Changwon, Korea.

With 1654 rating points, Rizvi shot to the numero uno spot ahead of Russia's Artem Chernousov (1046) and Japan's Tomoyuki Matsuda (803).

The other Indians in the top-10 are Jitu Rai, who is placed sixth on the chart, and Om Prakash Mitharval, at the 12th spot. Besides the silver in Changwon, Rizvi had previously won a gold medal with a world record score at the World Cup in Guadalajara, Mexico in March.

Among the women, Manu Bhaker, who won a historic gold medal at the Commonwealth Games, was the only Indian in the top-10 of the women's 10m air pistol rankings at the fourth spot. In the men's 10m air rifle rankings, shooters Ravi Kumar is placed fourth, while Deepak Kumar is at the ninth spot.

Akhil Sheoran (fourth) and Sanjeev Rajput (eighth) were the two Indians to find themselves in the top-10 of the men's 50m rifle 3 positions list.

Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Mehuli Ghosh (seventh), Apurvi Chandela (11th) and Anjum Moudgil (12th) were the three Indians in the top-15 of the 10m women's air rifle rankings. Anjum was also ranked eighth in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions.