

August 28th and 29th news:

International:

G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting held in Salta, Argentina

With the theme of 'Building consensus for fair and sustainable development', the G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting was held in Salta, Argentina. It took place as part of Sherpa Track for 2018 G20 Leaders' Summit, which is to be hosted by Argentina by end of 2018. Its three key issues for the agenda were future of work, infrastructure for development, and sustainable food future.

The meeting was attended by 33 heads of delegation- ministers, senior officials and representatives from invited countries and international organizations like EU, UNCTAD, ITU etc

Group of Twenty (G20) is premier forum for international economic cooperation and decision-making. It is a forum for governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies to focus on economic issues and other important development challenges

National:

Centre Signs MoU With 6 States For Lakhwar Yamuna Basin Project

Union Water Resources Minister Nitin Gadkari on 28th August signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with six states for the construction of the Lakhwar multi-purpose project in the upper Yamuna basin to deal with water crisis. Under the agreement, the 204-metres high project will be constructed near Uttarakhand's Lohari village with live storage capacity of 330.66 million cubic metres (MCM).

The agreement is an effort to conserve and utilize the monsoon flows of the Yamuna, said the Minister, adding that 90 % of the project will be funded by the Centre while the remaining amount will be paid by the six states. The total project is worth Rs 3,966.51 crore. The project will also generate 300 MW of power and will be executed by Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (UJVL)

India's foodgrain production likely to touch record 284.83 million tonnes

India's foodgrain production during the crop year that ended in June is expected to be a record 284.83 million tonnes (MT), almost 2% more than the last estimate (in June) and 9.72 MT more than 2016-17, fuelling hope that overall farm growth in 2017-18 could be higher than the current estimates of 3.4 %.

The rise, however, hasn't been beneficial for growers because the price of several commodities, particularly pulses, slumped due to the bumper harvest.

The previous record grain output was 275.11 MT in the 2016-17 crop year. The foodgrain basket comprises rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses. Wheat output has been pegged at a record 99.7 MT, rice at 112.91 MT, and pulses at 25.23 MT for the 2017-18 crop year.

Data released by the Department of Agriculture showed that the major gains have been in pulses, where production in 2017-18 is now estimated at an all-time high of 25.23 MT, around 2.1 MT more than the final production of 2016-17.

For the second straight year, India's pulses production has been over the estimated consumption of 22 MT, raising hopes that if the trend continues, the country could become self-sufficient.

Wheat production has been revised upward by 1.06 MT to a record 99.70 MT for the 2017-18 crop year from its previous projection. In 2016-17, wheat output stood at 98.51 MT. Similarly, rice output for 2017-18 has been revised by 1.39 MT to a record 112.91 MT from its previous estimate, higher than 109.70 MT achieved in 2016-17. Production of coarse cereals has been revised upward by 2.12 MT to record 46.99 MT from its previous projection made for 2017-18 and is higher than the 43.77 MT during 2016-17.

Oilseeds production in 2017-18 has also been revised upward to 31.31 MT for 2017-18 crop year, marginally higher than 31.28 MT in the previous year. In case of cash crops, sugarcane output has been revised upward by 21.9 MT to a record 376.9 MT from its previous projection made for 2017-18. The output stood at 306 MT during 2016-17.

Cotton output has been pegged at 34.89 million bales (of 170 kg each) for 2017-18 as against 32.58 million bales during 2016-17. The ministry releases total five estimates of foodgrain production at different stages of crop growth.

The final estimate for 2017-18 will be released along with first estimate for the new 2018-19 crop year. The kharif sowing is underway at present.

Govt. scraps scientific panels, forms council

The government has scrapped two Scientific Advisory Committees (SAC) for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and replaced them with a nine member, Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC).

Unlike in the earlier SACs, secretaries of various scientific ministries such as education, environment and health would be 'special invitees' to the council meetings. The PM-STIAC will be chaired by the government's Principal Scientific Advisor, Dr K. Vijay Raghavan.

While industry representatives were present in greater numbers in the earlier SACs, a single, industry member, particularly given the government's call to industry to increase jobs via entrepreneurship, is not an anomaly

The newly constituted body is expected to act as a high level advisory body to several ministries and execute mission-oriented programmes. The office of the PSA was earlier led by R. Chidambaram, who played a key role in shaping India's nuclear programme.

Economy:

MoU Signed For Skill Development Of Arogyamitras Under PMJAY

An MoU was signed between the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and National Health Agency (NHA), to provide capacity building for Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) to ensure effective rollout and continued quality implementation. As per the MoU, NSDC will ensure quality training of Arogyamitra through its network of Skill Development Centres functioning under PMKVY and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKK)

DBS Named World's Best Bank In Nod To Its Digital Innovation

DBS Bank has been named the world's best bank by Global Finance magazine, in a reflection of its ability to invest in digital innovation while still maintaining stable operations for its customers. DBS is the first Asian bank to receive the accolade from the New York-based publication, which last year gave the title to ING Bank.

FDI in Country Rises 23% To About 13 billion dollars In 1st Quarter

According to the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion data, Foreign Direct Investment, FDI in India rose 23% to 12.8 billion dollars during the April to June quarter of this fiscal. The foreign fund inflows in April-June 2017-18 stood at 10.4 billion dollars. Key sectors that received maximum foreign investment during the first quarter of the current fiscal include services 2.4 billion dollars, trading 1.62 billion dollars and telecommunications 1.59 billion dollars

Science and Technology:

ISRO to send first Indian into Space by 2022

According to the Union Minister of State Atomic Energy and Space, Jitendra Singh India's first Indian human mission will be launched by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) by 2022. The programme will make India the fourth nation in the world to launch a Human Spaceflight Mission. So far, only the USA, Russia and China have launched human spaceflight missions.

Environment:

India's most polluted: 30% have no clean up plan

A good number of India's most polluted cities are not too keen to clean up their act, according to a list maintained by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Of the 102 cities singled out by the Centre for their alarming pollution levels, only 73 have submitted a plan of remedial action to the CPCB. Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Nagpur and Jaipur are among the prominent cities that are yet to submit their plans.

These so called 'non-attainment cities' were among those marked out by the CPCB and asked – as part of the National Clean Air Campaign (NCAP) – to implement 42 measures aimed at mitigating air pollution.

These included steps such as implementing control and mitigation measures related to vehicular emissions, re-suspension of road dust and other fugitive emissions, bio-mass, municipal solid waste burning, industrial pollution, and construction and demolition activities.

The directives to take remedial measures were initially issued to Delhi NCR, and subsequently to the State pollution control boards for implementation in other 'non-attainment' cities.

The non-attainment cities are those that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for over five years.

Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan had said in April that the aim of pollution mitigation measures was to cut overall pollution in these cities by 35% in the next three years.

Among other plans, the NCAP also envisions setting up 1,000 manual air-quality-monitoring stations (a 45% increase from the present number) and 268 automatic stations (triple the current 84).

In May, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that Delhi and Varanasi were among 14 Indian cities that figured in a global list of the 20 most polluted cities in terms of PM2.5 levels. Other Indian cities with very high levels of PM2.5 particulates were Kanpur, Faridabad, Gaya, Patna, Lucknow, Agra, Muzaffarpur, Srinagar, Gurgaon, Jaipur, Patiala and Jodhpur, followed by Ali Subah Al-Salem in Kuwait and some cities in China and Mongolia.

Sports:

North Korea to host Asian youth weightlifting championships

The 2019 Asian Youth and Junior Weightlifting Championships will be held in the North Korean capital Pyongyang

At the Asian Games weightlifting in Jakarta, which North Korea have dominated winning seven golds, the Asian Weightlifting Federation and North Korea's Sports Minister Kim Il Guk signed an agreement for North Korea to hold the championships from October 27 next year.

North Korea was left isolated and subject to UN Security Council sanctions over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, meaning it lost the right to hold the 2018 Junior World Weightlifting Championships.

Asian Games

Asian Games 2018: Neeraj Chopra Wins India 1st Javelin Gold

Neeraj Chopra became the first-ever Indian javelin thrower to win a gold medal at the Asian Games. The 20-year-old junior world record holder hurled the javelin to a distance of 88.06m to bag the Asiad gold. Notably, Neeraj had also become the first Indian to bag gold in the javelin throw at the Commonwealth Games earlier this year

PV Sindhu Wins: PV Sindhu lost to world number one Tai Tzu-ying (Taiwan) in the women's singles final to bag India's first-ever silver medal in badminton at Asian Games.

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