

“If you believe you can, you might. If you know you can, you will.” Steve Maraboli

INTERNATIONAL&BILATERAL**INDO-MONGOLIA JOINT EXERCISE NOMADIC ELEPHANT-2018**

Indo-Mongolia joint exercise Nomadic Elephant-2018 has commenced at Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) Five Hills Training Area, Ullanbaatar.

The 12 days long joint exercise is an annual, bilateral exercise since 2006 which is designed to strengthen the partnership between Indian Army and Mongolian Armed Forces.

The exercise will see them improve their tactical and technical skills in joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in rural and urban scenario under United Nations mandate.

During the exercise both sides will jointly train, plan and execute a series of well developed tactical drills for neutralization of likely threats that may be encountered in urban warfare scenario.

Experts from both sides will also hold detailed discussions to share their experience on varied topics for mutual benefits.

The exercise will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding & respect for each other's military and also facilitate in tackling the world wide phenomenon of terrorism.

NATIONAL**OCEAN CLEANUP TEAM HEADS TO THE PACIFIC**

A supply ship towing a long floating boom designed to clean ocean plastic has set sail from San Francisco for a test run ahead of a trip to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch.

The ambitious project by The Ocean Cleanup, a Dutch non-profit group, hopes to clean up half of the garbage patch within five years once all systems are deployed.

The supply vessel was towing a 600 meter-long boom device dubbed System 001,

designed to contain floating ocean plastic so it can be scooped up and recycled.

The system includes a tapered three-meter skirt to catch plastic floating just below the surface.

The main mission is to show that it works, and hopefully then in a few months from now, the first plastics will arrive back into port, which means that it becomes proven technology.

Great Pacific Garbage Patch:

The patch, also described as the Pacific trash vortex, is a gyre of marine debris particles in the central North Pacific Ocean discovered between 1985 and 1988.

The patch is characterized by exceptionally high relative pelagic concentrations of plastic, chemical sludge, and other debris that have been trapped by the currents of the North Pacific Gyre.

It consists primarily of an increase in suspended, often microscopic, particles in the upper water column.

The patch has one of the highest levels known of plastic particulates suspended in the upper water column.

As a result, it is one of several oceanic regions where researchers have studied the effects and impact of plastic photo degradation in the neustonic layer of water.

The photo degraded plastic disintegrates into ever smaller pieces while remaining a polymer. This process continues down to the molecular level.

Some plastics decompose within a year of entering the water, leaching potentially toxic chemicals such as bisphenol A, PCBs, and derivatives of polystyrene.

As it disintegrates, the plastic ultimately becomes small enough to be ingested by aquatic organisms that reside near the ocean's surface.

BENGALURU AIRPORT SET TO USE FACE RECOGNITION AS 'BOARDING PASS'

Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru is set to become the first airport in Asia next year to use face recognition as the boarding procedure for passengers to board flights and move across different sections of the airport.

Vision Box, a Portuguese software firm, signed an agreement to this effect to introduce face recognition technology at the airport from 2019.

Voice Box, according to its website, showcased the face recognition-based passage system for the first time for Lufthansa which used a biometric boarding procedure instead of boarding passes.

The first implementation will be completed in the first quarter of 2019, with Jet Airways, Air Asia and SpiceJet passengers as first users.

The goal of the programme is to simplify the journey by making it paperless from registration to boarding.

Biometric technology will identify passengers by their face as they move across the airport, avoiding stops and the repeated presentation of boarding passes, passports or other physical identity documents.

This is the first end-to-end face recognition-based walk through experience in Asia and the largest in the world.

It is also one of the most significant steps towards the Digital India campaign endorsed by the Government.

SNOW LEOPARD SPOTTED IN HIMACHAL WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

A snow leopard was spotted at a height of about 4,000 metres in Lippa-Asra wildlife sanctuary in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh.

It was only last year that the snow leopard improved from 'endangered' to 'vulnerable' in terms of conservation status.

The recent findings have ascertained that snow leopards inhabit new areas.

During the survey, two brown bears were snapped through another camera-trap placed inside the sanctuary at an altitude of about 3200m.

Project Snow Leopard was launched in 2009 for strengthening wildlife conservation in the Himalayan high altitudes.

It aims at promoting a knowledge-based and adaptive conservation framework that fully involves the local communities, who share the snow leopard's range, in conservation efforts.

Snow leopards are given the same protection as the tiger, listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 – the highest protection afforded to a species.

WCD MINISTER CONCERNED ABOUT AWBI FOR BEING LAX IN ENFORCEMENT OF RULES

Union WCD Minister has concerned the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) for being lax in enforcement of rules that specify how wild animals can be depicted in films and television programmes.

The Minister listed "blatant errors" by the AWBI subcommittee that screens applications from film-makers.

It was alleged that the committee did not seek details of the species being used, which were required to determine whether they were protected.

It had even allowed their depiction in scenes that could promote cruelty to animals.

The letter cites an instance of approval given for a scene showing animal sacrifice, which is against the Supreme Court's orders.

While tigers, monkeys, lions, bears, panthers (including leopards) are banned from being exhibited under Section 22 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the government body has allowed their use on several occasions.

All Indian snakes and birds except the crow are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act and any certification for performance or exhibition is only possible after permission from the Chief Wildlife Warden of the relevant State.

Animal Welfare Board of India:

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), headquartered at Ballabgarh in Haryana state, is a statutory advisory body advising the Government of India’s Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

It was previously based at Chennai

It was established in 1962 under Section 4 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act,1960.

Well-known humanitarian Rukmini Devi Arundale was instrumental in setting up the board and was its first chair.

GOVT PLANS GEO-TAGGING TO CRACKDOWN ON SHELL COMPANIES

Government is planning mandatory Geo-Tagging for companies to prevent fraud. Geo-tagging will help the government to prevent fraud committed by Shell companies.

A shell company is a non-profit company. It does not have an active business or assets. It is mostly a company on papers which is used in business transactions.

It is not necessarily illegal but is often used for tax evasion.

They neither manufacture anything nor render any service. They are generally used to make financial transactions.

Due to lack of clear definition of Shell companies, Government is in the process of defining them.

Government has asked companies to geo-tag their registered offices in the statutory filings with the Registrar of Companies (RoC).

Geo-Tagging:

The process of Tagging something (e.g. Infrastructure, Objects etc.) with geographical information like latitude, longitude, distance, place name in form of metadata (may be QR code, RSS feeds SMS message).

Application and Advantages of Geo-Tagging:

- Geotagging helps to find a wide variety of location-specific information from a device.

- It helps government to track companies with a common address, common contact numbers, common directors and sudden and unexpected changes in revenue, etc.
- Implementation of schemes
- Informing beneficiary about the facility available through various scheme.
- Monitoring of Assets.

Geo-Tagging enabled projects of GOI:

- Rajiv Gruhakalpa scheme helped Andhra government to trace irregularities in construction of houses.
- In Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana Geo-Tagging helping Government to understand flow of funds, inventorying the assets, bringing in transparency.
- Geo MGNREGA and monitoring of watershed activities.
- Postal department has also geotagged the post offices using NRSC Bhuvan Platform.

Benefits of Geo-tagging:

Geo-tagging will help in identifying clusters of companies with the same address.

The ministry seeks to prevent abuse of the corporate structure by companies that inflate costs by issuing fake invoices and laundering unaccounted wealth in the form of loans or equity through bogus transactions.

The coordinates of the registered premises will act as a key input for mining data in the ministry’s IT infrastructure, called MCA21.

This will zero-in the companies with a common address, common contact numbers, common directors and sudden and unexpected changes in revenue, etc. that may warrant a closer look into their affairs.

The idea is to seek the coordinates of the registered office at the time of incorporation in the case of new companies and at the time of filing annual returns in the case of existing ones.

Way Forward:

Having a common address alone does not point to wrongdoing. Because having a common address is not illegal.

It is a practice among professional services companies such as law firms and audit firms to work from a large, common infrastructure.

Geo-tagging will certainly help in identifying such clusters, but one has to keep in mind that some start-ups, too, opt to work in clusters.

TRANSFORMING URBAN MOBILITY IN INDIA — II

Electric vehicles (EV) are emerging as an attractive alternative to conventional vehicles.

Reasons behind the need for electric vehicles:

- Auto-makers are left with very few options to further improve the conventional engines.
- Further investments and innovation in conventional vehicles are not yielding significant returns.
- Deteriorated urban air quality due to less fuel efficiency and exhaust emissions.
- High cost of conventional vehicles drive masses toward low cost e-vehicles.

Benefits of electric vehicles:

- Efficient energy-density, power-density and cost of batteries.
- Low price range in a passenger car has wide acceptability among users.
- Zero exhaust emissions and lower carbon emissions than conventional cars.
- Environmentalists favour e-vehicles as they limit deterioration in air quality.
- Lower manufacturing cost and extended useful life as compared to conventional engine.

Challenges of e-vehicles:

- E-vehicles need at least 10 sq.m of urban road space exclusively.
- High population densities and high economic activity in urban areas discourage the exclusive space for e-vehicles.

Need for urban mobility space rather than e-vehicles:

- E-vehicles alone can't enhance urban mobility. Cities must improve mass and shared transit capacity.
- Traffic congestion and expensive parking has led to increased popularity of Uber and Ola among urban commuters.
- Digitized economy has multiplier effect on shared-mobility solutions like car-pooling option in cabs.
- Urbanization has led to displacement of lower income groups to suburbs, so more routes need to be explored for commuting.

International Best Practices:

- Mexico has defined mobility as a basic human right and this helps steer policies that are inclusive.
- San Francisco and New York have car-pooling option in vans, aggregating 10-12 passengers at a time, further improving footprint and carbon efficiency.
- Such demand-based, dynamically-routed services, mass and shared transit capacity can be enhanced while leveraging private capital.
- Pedestrian zones in Seoul, Barcelona, New York and Bike-lanes and bike-sharing solutions in Amsterdam and Paris need to be learnt from.

Hong Kong has high density transit corridors like India, so modern metro-rails exist there. India also needs to accelerate investment in all these modes India do not need more highways and flyovers, but rather quality sidewalks and cycle way. Each city has unique set of constraints. So a combination of investment, policy and regulations are needed for multiple modal transport options.
