

Headlines at a Glance - 22nd August 2020

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NHAI launches 'Harit Path' mobile app to monitor plantation along national highways

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), a public sector undertaking under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, has developed a mobile App called 'Harit Path' to monitor location, growth, species details, maintenance activities, targets and achievements of each of its field units for each and every plant under all plantation projects. The app was inaugurated by the Union Minister for RTH Shri Nitin Gadkari. According to an NHAI release, to commemorate 25 years of its service to the nation, it has also recently undertaken 'Harit Bharat Sankalp', a nation-wide plantation drive which is in line with its commitment to promote environment protection and sustainability. Under this initiative, NHAI planted over 25 lakh plants in 25 days along the stretches of the National Highways between 21st July to 15th August 2020. The drive takes the total cumulative number of plantations done during the current year to 35.22 lakh. The nation-wide plantation drive has been actively taken up by NHAI's regional offices to achieve the collective target of making greener national highways. Maximum number of over 5.0 lakh plants have been planted in Uttar Pradesh, followed by over 3.0 lakh in Rajasthan and 2.67 Lakh in Madhya Pradesh along the national highways. In order to ensure 100% survival of the plants, avenue plantation of minimum height of 1.5-meter have been emphasized along the national highway.

SOURCE: *PIB*

Centre eases norms to offer 50% of salary for three months as unemployment allowance to workers

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) has relaxed norms to pay 50 per cent of average wages of three months as unemployment benefit between the March 24 and December 31 this year in view of the COVID-19 pandemic. The ESIC took the decision in its 182nd meeting held yesterday under the Chairmanship of Union Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar. ESIC is implementing the Atal Bimit Vyakti Kalyan Yojna under which unemployment benefit is paid to the workers covered under Employees' State Insurance (ESI) Scheme. The ESIC has decided to extend the scheme for one more year upto 30th of June next year. It has been decided to relax the existing conditions and the amount of relief for workers who have lost employment during the Covid-19 pandemic period. The enhanced relief under the relaxed conditions will be payable during the period of 24th of March to 31st of December this year. Thereafter the scheme will be available with original eligibility conditions during the period between 1st of January next year to 30th of June, next year. Review of these conditions will be done after 31st of December this year, depending upon the need and demand for such relaxed conditions. The eligibility criteria for availing the relief has also been relaxed. The payment of relief has been enhanced to 50 per cent of average wages from earlier 25 percent of average wages payable upto maximum 90 days of unemployment. Instead of the relief becoming payable 90 days after unemployment, it shall become due for payment after 30 days.

SOURCE: *The Hindu*

Forex reserves down by \$2.94 billion to \$535.25 billion

After rising for the past few weeks, the country's foreign exchange reserves declined by USD 2.939 billion to USD 535.252 billion for the week ended August 14, [RBI](#) data showed on Friday. In the previous week ended August 7, the reserves had increased by USD 3.623 billion to reach a record high of USD 538.191 billion.

The foreign exchange kitty had crossed the half-a-trillion mark for the first time in the week ended June 5, 2020, after it had swelled by USD 8.223 billion to stand at USD 501.703 billion. In the week ended August 14, the reserves declined due to a fall in foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves.

FCA dropped by USD 743 million to USD 491.550 billion in the reporting week, the central bank data showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. The gold reserves slumped USD 2.19 billion in the reporting week to USD 37.595 billion, as per the RBI data.

SOURCE: *Financial Express*

MEA in partnership with Foreign Ministry of Thailand organize 6th Round Table of AINTT

The Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with the Foreign Ministry of Thailand has organized the 6th Round Table of ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT) which culminated today. The theme of the two day Round Table which was conducted through video conferencing was 'ASEAN-India: Strengthening Partnership in the Post COVID Era'. It was jointly inaugurated by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand

Mr. Don Pramudwinai yesterday. ASEAN Secretary General Mr. Lim Jock Hoi also addressed the inaugural session. More than 400 people from academia, industry, government and diplomatic community attended the Round Table. The ASEAN-India Round Table comprising think tanks, policy makers, scholars, media and business representatives was established at the 7th ASEAN-India Summit in Thailand in 2009 to provide policy inputs to Governments on future direction of cooperation.

SOURCE: *Business Standard*

Myanmar govt, armed groups sign framework accord for ceasefire implementation

The government of Myanmar and ten armed ethnic groups signed a framework agreement for the implementation of the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) at Nay Pyi Taw on Friday at the end of the 4th session of the Union Peace Conference – 21st Century Panglong. The agreement also includes the framework for implementation of various processes beyond 2020, and basic principles to establish a democratic federal union. State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi said that the accord opens a door to solving misunderstanding regarding the NCA and difficulties faced in its implementation. The spokesperson of the President Office termed the agreement as a great success as it contains a step by step peace process for implementation beyond 2020 in working for peace, democratic reform, federalism and national reconciliation. The peace accord called Union Peace Accord III contains 15 provisions to implement the NCA. These include troop deployment, protocol to deal with skirmishes between government troops and the armed groups among others. Currently, the 4th round of the peace process is being held between the government and armed ethnic groups that signed the NCA.

SOURCE: *The New Indian Express*