First detailed global Internet atlas developed

Scientists have developed the first global Internet Atlas - including a detailed map of the internet's physical structure in India - an advance that could help guard the infrastructure from terrorism or extreme weather events.

What is an internet Atlas?

- Internet Atlas is a new visualization and analysis portal for diverse Internet measurement data.
- Atlas is a geographically anchored representation of the physical Internet including (i) nodes (e.g., hosting facilities and data centers), (ii) conduits/links that connect these nodes, and (iii) relevant meta data (e.g., source provenance).
- This physical representation is built by using search to identify primary source data such as maps and other repositories of service provider network information.

About Global Internet Atlas

- Internet Atlas developed by researchers from University of Wisconsin-Madison in the US and their collaborators.
- Over 1,200 maps worldwide including India and all the data are connected using web search.
- Mapping the physical internet helps stakeholders boost performance and guard against a number of threats, from terrorism to extreme weather.
Red Beacon ban For VIP

Ending VIP culture, the Centre has decided no vehicles will have beacons except those of emergency services such as fire brigade and ambulance.

Key Facts

- The cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the decision that will be effective May 1.
- The rule will apply to vehicles with central and state governments and will also extend to the President, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers and other lawmakers.
- The red beacon system, a rule under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, is being scrapped.
- Rule 108 deals with use of red, blue and yellow beacon lights. A sub rule under this says some categories of vehicles of high dignitaries, which can be specified by the central or state government, can carry beacons.
- Blue beacons, however, will be allowed on vehicles for defined emergency services including ambulance, fire brigade and police vehicles.

Red beacons are allowed for all cabinet ministers and those with the rank of cabinet ministers at the Centre. However, the number of dignitaries using red beacon is much larger in states. Recently, the Punjab government also curbed the use of red beacons by its ministers.

Source: The Hindu
States can borrow directly from foreign agencies for infra projects

New rules to allow financially sound state government entities to borrow directly from other countries which give Official Development Assistance for major infrastructure projects

Details of the decision

- Union Cabinet has approved new rules to allow financially sound state government entities to borrow directly from other countries.
- The state government concerned will give a guarantee and the Centre will provide a counter-guarantee.
- The existing guidelines did not allow direct borrowing by state government entities from external agencies.

Need for the decision

- Several state agencies were implementing infrastructure projects of national importance.
- These projects, even if viable and sound, have huge funding requirements.
- Borrowing by state governments for such projects might exhaust their respective borrowing limits.
- The country has an estimated funding requirement of Rs 43 lakh crore ($646 billion) for infra projects over the next five years.
• About 70 per cent of this would be needed in power, roads and urban infrastructure.

**Current practice**

• Presently, external development assistance from bilateral and multilateral sources is received by the Government of India.
• A state government is allowed to borrow to the extent that its fiscal deficit does not exceed the limit of three per cent of its gross state domestic product (GSDP).
• The 14th Finance Commission provided a further flexibility of 0.5 percentage points to states, subject to stiff conditions.

**Conditions for new agreement**

• All repayment of loan and interest to the funding agencies will be directly remitted by the borrower concerned.
• The concerned State Government will furnish guarantee for the loan.
• The Government of India will provide counter guarantee for the loan.

**First of such project**

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), a State Government entity, has also been allowed to borrow directly from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan for implementation of Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL) project. The estimated project cost for Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL) is Rs.17,854 crore, out of which JICA loan portion is expected to be Rs.15,109 crore.

Source: Business Standard, PIB
The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given

(I) Ex-post facto approval for introduction of

1. Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-third Amendment) Bill 2017

and

(II) Approval for retention of posts/incumbents and office premises held by the existing National Commission for Backward Classes by the proposed new National Commission for Backward Classes.

Details of Amendment

- Constitution of a Commission under Article 338B for socially and educationally backward classes by name of National Commission for Backward Classes.
- Insertion of Clause (26C) under Article 366 with modified definition viz. “socially and educationally backward classes” means such backward classes as are so deemed under Article 342A for the purpose, this Constitution.
- Repeal of the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 along with Savings Clause for namely the National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017
- Dissolution of the National Commission for Backward Classes with effect from such date as the Central Government may appoint in this behalf and the National Commission for Backward Classes constituted under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the said Act shall stand dissolved.
- Appropriation of the sanctioned 52 posts, along with incumbents wherever filled of the existing National Commission for Backward Classes in the proposed National Commission for Backward Classes to be constituted under Article 338B.
- Retention of the office premises of the existing National Commission for Backward Classes at Trikut-1, Bhikaiji Cama Place, New Delhi-110066, by the National Commission for Backward Classes to be constituted under Article 338B.

**Why amending the constitution?**

- The above decisions will lead to overall welfare of socially and educationally backward classes.
- The proposed Act of repeal is necessary in view of setting up of the National Commission for Backward Classes by insertion of Article 338B of the Constitution.
- The decision will also enable effecting continuity in the functioning of the National Commission for Backward Classes under Article 338B.

*Source: Pib*

*GS II: Constitution of India*

---

**Cabinet approves procurement of Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail Units**
• The decision of the Government would enable the Election Commission of India to deploy VVPAT Units in all pooling booths in the General Elections, 2019,
• It will act as an additional layer of transparency for the satisfaction of voters, allaying any apprehension in the minds of the voters as to the fidelity and integrity of the EVMs.
• This would also result in compliance of the directions of the Hon’ble Supreme Court vide its Order dated 8th October, 2013.

Details of decision

• Purchase of 16,15,000 Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) Units at a tentative unit cost of Rs. 19,650, and at a total estimated cost of Rs. 3173.47 crore (excluding taxes and freight as applicable) during the years 2017-18 and 2018-19
• Directing the Price Negotiation Committee to negotiate with M/s Bharat Electronics Ltd and M/s Electronics Corporation of India Ltd

Details added on 17th April 2017

______________________________

National Action Plan to combat Antimicrobial Resistance

India develops National Action Plan to combat Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). Antimicrobial resistance is a serious threat to global public health. Signed a ‘Delhi Declaration’ for collectively strategizing to contain AMR.

Details of the decision

• The finalization of India’s comprehensive and multi-sectoral National Action Plan at the function.
The Ministers signed a Delhi Declaration’ for collectively strategizing to contain AMR.
It pledges to adopt a holistic and collaborative approach towards prevention and containment of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in India.
It calls on all stakeholders including UN, WHO, FAO and other UN agencies, civil society organizations etc., to support the development and implementation of the national and state action plans on AMR.

**Antimicrobial Resistance**

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of a microorganism like bacteria, viruses, and some parasites to stop an antimicrobial such as antibiotics, antivirals and antimalarials from working against it.
As a result, standard treatments become ineffective, infections persist and may spread to others.
Microorganisms that develop antimicrobial resistance are sometimes referred to as “superbugs”.
As a result, the medicines become ineffective and infections persist in the body, increasing the risk of spread to others.

**Antimicrobial resistance a global concern**

New resistance mechanisms are emerging and spreading globally, threatening our ability to treat common infectious diseases, resulting in prolonged illness, disability, and death.
Without effective antimicrobials for prevention and treatment of infections, medical procedures such as organ transplantation, cancer chemotherapy, diabetes management and major surgery (for example, caesarean sections or hip replacements) become very high risk.
Antimicrobial resistance increases the cost of health care with lengthier stays in hospitals and more intensive care required.
• Antimicrobial resistance is putting the gains of the Millennium Development Goals at risk and endangers achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: Pib, WHO

GS II: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources