

U.S. aircraft carrier makes a historic visit to Vietnam

News

A U.S. aircraft carrier, USS Carl Vinson, arrived in Vietnam for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War.

It underscores the growing strategic ties between the former foes at a time when China's regional influence is rising.

According to the US officials, the visit marks an enormously significant milestone in bilateral relations and demonstrates U.S. support for a strong, prosperous and independent Vietnam.

Another side -

The arrival of the vessel also illustrates Hanoi's complex and evolving relationship with Beijing.

Vietnamese envoys had been working for months to ease the concerns of China over the visit and the prospect of broader security cooperation between Hanoi and Washington.

While some Chinese commentators have used the Vinson's presence to demand an even greater Chinese military build-up in the South China Sea, official reaction from Beijing has been muted since the stop was announced in January.

WTO sets up panel for India-U.S. dispute

NEWS

The World Trade Organization agreed to set up a panel to determine whether India has complied with its ruling in a case about domestic content requirements for solar modules.

Background

In 2016, India lost a case after the WTO stated that power purchase agreements signed with solar firms for its National Solar Mission did not meet international norms.

RBI to inject extra liquidity of ₹1 lakh cr.

News

The Reserve Bank would inject additional liquidity of ₹1 lakh crore in banks through longer tenor instruments.

Aim - To enable flexibility towards meeting Banks' fund needs.

Need - In order to address additional demand for liquidity and with a view to providing flexibility to the banking system in its liquidity management towards March-end, the Central Bank was "prepared to inject adequate additional liquidity using a combination of appropriate instruments."

This will be in addition to normal Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) operations. The RBI will conduct four variable rate term repo auctions of ₹25,000 crore each in March 2018.

Committee to regulate fintech sector set up

News

The Centre has set up a steering committee under the chairmanship of the Economic Affairs Secretary to look into the development and regulation of the fintech sector in India.

The move follows an announcement by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in the Budget.

Objective

The objective of the panel is 1. To consider various issues relating to development of fintech space in India with a view to make fintech-related regulations more flexible.

2. To generate enhanced entrepreneurship in an area where India has distinctive comparative strengths vis-à-vis other emerging economies”.

MSME focus

The panel will also focus on how fintech can be leveraged to enhance financial inclusion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Members

The panel will also include among its members the Electronics and Information Technology Secretary, the Financial Services Secretary, the MSME Secretary, the Chairperson of the Central Board of Excise and Customs, Chief Executive Officer of the Unique Identification Authority of India, a Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, and a Joint Secretary Department of Economic Affairs.

Facility soon to check Aadhaar-mobile ‘link’

News

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has asked all telecom operators to work on a system that allows subscribers to know the mobile numbers linked to their Aadhaar.

The system, which can either be SMS-based or IVR-based, needs to be put in place by March 15, according to UIDAI CEO.

Need –

The move to “inspire confidence” among mobile phone users follows a series of reports about multiple mobile numbers linked to the same Aadhaar without the knowledge of the Aadhaar number-holder.

The UIDAI requested the telecom operators to provide a service for users to check which all mobile numbers are linked to their Aadhaar.

For this, the customer will need to contact the service provider with their Aadhaar-linked number.

Almost 85.7 crore mobile phone subscribers have linked their numbers to Aadhaar.

Wells, rail tracks turn death traps for Gir lions

News –

As many as 32 lions died due to “unnatural causes”, like falling into wells or being run over by trains in 2016 and 2017 in Gir Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat, according to the State Forest Minister Ganpat Vasava.

A total of 184 lions died in the State in two years: 104 in 2016 and 80 in 2017.

Primary causes –

Wells without parapet walls often became death traps for the lions, which fell into them and drowned.

There are 27 open wells in Amreli district near the sanctuary.

Preventive measures

Several open wells near the sanctuary have been now secured by constructing parapet walls, and walls would also be built around the remaining wells.

Other preventive measures include construction of fences along the railway tracks passing through Amreli district and building speed breakers on roads passing through the sanctuary area.

Incidents of lions getting mowed down by trains or vehicles on the road were often reported from the area.

As per the 2015 census, there were 523 lions in and around the Gir sanctuary.

STATE-AP

State govt. to launch 1 lakh electric vehicles

News –

The State government is planning to take the lead in the country by launching one lakh Electric Vehicles (EVs).

The initiative is expected to create over 1.05 lakh jobs.

The Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) has agreed to invest ₹2,000 crore per year for one lakh e-cars.

Aim –

EV project is aimed at transforming the State into the country's electric mobility hub.

The Energy Department was directed to prepare a comprehensive action plan to lease and use the one lakh EVs in a phased manner. The idea was to make all government departments to use EVs and expand it to the private sector later.