

India, France join hands for Indian Ocean security

India and France joined hands in ensuring freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region. Both sides also announced a new phase of cooperation in space security focussed on the maritime domain and a fresh logistics agreement that will allow their defence forces to closely cooperate on mutually agreed operations.

- The Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region' stated that India and France share common concerns on freedom of navigation in the region and will tackle challenges to over-flight and threat of weapons of mass destruction.
- The agreement has a vast scope stretching from "countering maritime terrorism and piracy" to "building maritime domain awareness"

This is the second major maritime agreement India has signed in the last six months following the Quadrilateral agreement with Australia, Japan and the U.S. in October 2017.

Presenting the French perspective on maritime and military cooperation, President Emmanuel Macron said, "The Pacific and the Indian Oceans cannot become zones for hegemonic power and we are, therefore, building a strategic partnership. The same is true for our defence cooperation signed a while ago."

- The logistics support agreement is likely to "extend" both Indian and French ability to respond to common challenges.
- The agreement "seeks to extend logistical support on reciprocal access to respective facilities for Indian and French armed forces".

E-waybill to be rolled out on April 1

The Goods and Services Tax Council, at its 26th meeting, decided to go forward with the April 1 rollout of the e-waybill system for inter-State transport of goods.

- The States have been categorised into four segments. The intra-State transport of goods will be brought under the e-waybill system in a phased manner, with each segment being added each week.

- The recent simplification measures on the e-waybill together with the announcement of its introduction from April 1 for inter-State transactions would enable adequate preparation by pan-India businesses.

The e-waybills will have to be generated for the transport of goods of a value of more than Rs. 50,000.

WHO steps up fight against tobacco

The World Health Organization has launched new guidelines on the role that tobacco product regulations can play in reducing tobacco demand, saving lives and raising revenues for health services to treat tobacco-related diseases.

- The new guide, titled 'Tobacco product regulation: Building laboratory testing capacity', and a collection of country approaches to regulation of menthol in tobacco products, presented in the publication, titled 'Case studies for regulatory approaches to tobacco products — Menthol in tobacco products', were launched at the 2018 World Conference on Tobacco or Health recently.
- These new tools provide useful resource to countries to either introduce or improve existing tobacco product regulation provisions and end the tobacco industry's 'reign'.

Most countries hesitate to implement policies, due in part to the highly technical nature of such policy interventions and the difficulties in translating science into regulation.

- Failure to regulate represents a missed opportunity as tobacco product regulation, in the context of comprehensive control, is a valuable tool that complements other tried and tested tobacco control interventions, such as raising taxes, and ensuring smoke-free environments.

The new guidelines provide practical, stepwise approaches to implementing tobacco testing. Such guidance is relevant to a wide range of countries in various settings, including those with inadequate resources to establish a testing facility.

- The laboratory guide has comprehensible information on how to test tobacco products, what products to test, and how to use testing data in a meaningful way to support regulation.