

Service tax on rail First Class, AC passengers

The Railways have decided to impose service tax on First Class, AC Classes and freight rates from July 1. With the Finance Ministry not having included the Railways in the exemption list issued, the Railway Board is preparing to levy a 12 percent service tax that was proposed in the General Budget for 2012-13, but was deferred for three months till June 30. With freight and passenger fares enjoying a 70 percent subsidy, the impact on the increase in freight charges and fares of First Class and AC I, AC II and AC III will be 3.6 percent. The Union government is likely to net about Rs. 3500 Crore from this exercise annually. The Railways had increased freight charges by about 30 percent ahead of the presentation of the budget in March and passenger fares were increased by about 30 percent in the Railway Budget.

Online land records project bags international award

A land record computerisation project titled 'Apna Khata' (our account) launched in Rajasthan has bagged an international award in recognition of its significant contribution to rural development. The project was developed by the State office of the National Informatics Centre. NIC-Rajasthan team members received the "public choice award" at the E-World Forum-2012 organised in New Delhi. United Nations Development Programme country director Caitlin Wiesen and Former Delhi Chief Secretary S. Raghunathan were present at the function.

'Bapu' bio-toilets set to be the new frontier in rural sanitation

Union Rural Development Minister Jairam Ramesh announced that his Ministry would soon sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Defence for installation of bio-toilets in 1000 gram panchayats across the country. The project will be implemented in coordination with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) at a cost of Rs. 400 crore, which will be provided by the Union Rural Development Ministry. Speaking at a function organised for launching of the bio-digester technology pilot project. Mr. Ramesh applauded the role of DRDO scientists in developing the bio-toilets, which are based upon bio-digester technology. He suggested that the bio-toilets could be named 'Bapu', as the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi had always stressed on sanitation in rural areas of the country.

G20 Challenge award for Apollo medicare initiative

The Apollo Hospitals Group initiative to provide quality tertiary healthcare in semi-urban and rural areas has won the 'G20 Challenge on Inclusive Business Innovation'. The group showcased Apollo Reach Hospital, Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh, in a competition launched by the Group of 20 and International Finance Corporation (IFC). Apollo is the only healthcare organisation to win this honour. Apollo Reach Hospitals operate in tier-II cities and offer medical care at rates up to 30 per cent lower than what is charged by other major hospitals, mainly through cross-subsidy. The award was presented at the recently-held G20 Summit at Los Cabos, Mexico. An independent panel selected 15 Challenge winners based on innovation, developments, potential for growth and financial and social sustainability.

Award for writer

Writer Satheesh Babu Payyanur has bagged the FOKANA International Award 2012 instituted by the Federation of Kerala Association in North America (FOKANA). The award comprises a cash prize of Rs 50, 000 and citation. The award will be presented to the writer at function during the FOKANA 15th International Convention to be held in Houston, Texas, from June 30 to July 3.

Rapid Metro Rail to start by March next

With trial runs due to begin this October, the Rapid Metro Rail Gurgaon Limited is all set to start operations in the Millennium City by next March. The RMGL team, which is working round-the-clock to ensure faster completion of the project, is now giving final shape to civil works. Track laying has already started and is expected to be completed soon. The trains are being manufactured in China at the CSR Zhuzhou Electric Locomotive Co. Ltd. The trains will be arranged by Siemens of Germany which has the contract for the rolling stock. The first fully privately financed metro of the country will bring in the light weight aluminium-bodied trains. Boasting state-of-the-art facilities, the light weight coaches will ensure lesser noise during movement and would require less maintenance. The RMGL trains will have a maximum speed of 80 km per hour.

Yearly fitness test of vehicles to become must in Delhi

All private car owners in the city may soon have to go for an annual fitness test of their vehicles with the Delhi Government all set to implement a two-year-old proposal aimed at reducing environment pollution. As

per the current norms, only commercial vehicles need to go for an annual fitness check while private vehicles which are more than 15 years also require to prove their road worthiness. The Government had first come out with the proposal in 2010 with an aim to discourage plying of old and polluting vehicles in the city. The Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA) had also recommended annual mandatory fitness checks of all private vehicles.

Suspense ends, Morsy wins Presidency

Mohamed Morsy is set to become Egypt's first elected President following a historic election, brought about by an uprising that first expelled the dictator, Hosni Mubarak, and then paved the way for the country's transition to democracy. As a nation gripped in suspense watched, Farouk Soltan, head of the Supreme Presidential Election Commission, announced after a lengthy preamble on Sunday that the Islamist candidate belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood, won a bitterly contested race. Mr. Morsy secured 51.7 per cent of the vote, defeating Ahmed Shafiq, who got 48.3 per cent. Cairo's Tahrir Square, ground zero of the revolution, filled by Mr. Morsy's supporters, erupted in elation as the message of their candidate's victory sank in. Mr. Morsy's supporters were particularly on edge after the recent rulings by the generals negated much of their previous electoral gains. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) earlier dissolved an elected Muslim Brotherhood-dominated Parliament, following a ruling by the country's highest court that one-third of the People's Assembly had been unconstitutionally elected. Mr. Morsy's victory is set to resonate in West Asia and North Africa, where Libya is heading for elections next month, and moderate Islamists, following the example of Turkey's Justice and Development Party, have triumphed in Tunisia.

China's tourism plan quells Brahmaputra dam fears

Chinese plans to build a major tourism project and national park in a Tibetan county have dealt a blow to hydropower lobby groups who have proposed the construction of massive dam on the Brahmaputra's 'Great Bend', where the river begins its course towards India. The Chinese government announced it had earmarked 400 million yuan (\$63.5 million) to develop tourism in Nyingchi prefecture in south-eastern Tibet. The plans include an ambitious proposal to raise two billion yuan (\$317.5 million) to build an "international tourism town" in the border prefecture. The "golden tourism" project in Nyingchi follows the opening of Tibet's first national park in the same county in December in the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo river, as the Brahmaputra is known in Tibet. The plans appear to signal the government's moves to develop the region as a tourism hub, amid rising pressure from hydropower groups to tap the enormous potential of the canyon and the 'Great Bend', where the river spectacularly falls over 1,000 metres.

Russia completes India's submarine modernisation programme

The INS Sindhurakshak submarine came off the slips at the Zvezdochka shipyard in Severodvinsk, marking the completion of a mid-life refit programme for the Indian Navy's Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines in Russia. During a two-year in-depth modernisation the torpedo-firing INS Sindhurakshak, built in 1997, has been equipped with the tube-launched Club-S cruise missiles effective against surface vessels and submarines at a range of about 200 km. It has also been provided with some Indian-made systems, including a hydro-acoustic "USHUS" complex, a CCS-MK radio-communication system and Porpoise Electronic Support Measures. The INS Sindhurakshak is the seventh and the last of the 10 Kilo-class submarines that India bought from Russia between 1986 and 2000 to have undergone mid-term repairs and modernisation in Russia. Of the remaining three submarines one was repaired in India and the two others are currently under repair in India. Russia is expected to take part in the tender with its new Amur-1650 submarines, along with France's Scorpio, Germany's Type-214 and Spain's S-80 submarines.

INS Teg strengthens Navy's combat power

The Indian Navy Western Fleet, which forms a Sword Arm, received a fillip to its combat power with the arrival of the latest acquisition — INS Teg. The ship built by M/s Yantar Shipyard, Russia, is the first of three Talwar class follow-on ships ordered by the Indian Navy. The frigate was commissioned on April 27 at Kaliningrad in Russia and has a crew of 24 officers and 229 sailors. Captain Manohar Nambiar (Chief PRO-Indian Defence) said that INS Teg is an advanced version of Talwar class frigates that are in service in the Western Fleet since 2002-04, outfitted with an upgraded-suite of weapons and sensors. "Armed with the supersonic Brahmos cruise missiles, Teg is the first ship to have this unique capability on the Western seaboard," said Nambiar.

Trials of Arjun mark II start in Pokhran

Developmental trials of the main battle tank (MBT) Arjun mark II has begun at the [Pokhran](#) field firing range

here and will continue through the next month. A successful trial would give the green signal for building of 124 Arjun mark II at the DRDO's heavy vehicles factory in Avadi. The new version will supplement the 124 Arjun mark I already in service. The Army has pressed 124 Arjun mark I into service but has said follow-on order will be conditional on 93 improvements, including 19 major modifications, defence spokesperson Col S D Goswami said.

Microsoft buys internet startup Yammer for \$1.2 billion

Microsoft Corp agreed to buy online social network firm Yammer Inc for \$1.2 billion in cash, which will allow the software company to offer a service like Facebook Inc's to corporate customers. Talk of a deal had circulated earlier this month, but the two companies only confirmed the deal. Four-year-old Yammer, which has 5 million users of its private, in-company social networks, will become part of Microsoft's Office unit under Kurt DelBene but will still be led by current chief executive David Sacks.

US bank Wells Fargo to move jobs to India soon

Wells Fargo, the fourth largest US bank by assets, has decided to move an unspecified number of jobs to India as part of its plan to increase efficiency. Already, the bank employs 3,000 people in India at its Hyderabad and Bangalore offices, while it has 240 in the Philippines, according to the bank.

Micromax to sponsor India-Lanka series

Micromax has bagged the title sponsorship for the ODI cricket series between India and Sri Lanka starting on July 22, which will now be called the Micromax Cup 2012. The series will feature five ODIs and a Twenty20 International to be played on August 7.