GST Council votes to tax lotteries at uniform rate of 28%

NATIONAL NEWS

GST Council votes to tax lotteries at uniform rate of 28%

- The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council resorted to voting to decide an issue. The controversial issue of the GST rate for lotteries was decided on the basis of voting, with the Council fixing a uniform tax rate of **28 per cent on both state and private lotteries with effect from March 1, 2020.**
- All the earlier decisions by the Council had been taken through consensus.
- Currently, there are dual rates for lotteries — **12 per cent tax on state-run lotteries and 28 per cent on state-authorised, or private, lotteries.**

Govt announces Rs 436 crore outlay for skilling 4 lakh persons

- The Government has announced 436 crore rupees outlay for skilling four lakh professionals in artificial intelligence, blockchain, and cybersecurity areas over the next three years.
- The **'Future Skills PRIME'** programme will seek to position the initiative as India stack for digital talent.
- That the programme will increase employability and will add digital value to the talent pool.

Phase-III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana launched

- Rural Development Minister Narendra Singh Tomar launched Phase-III of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in New Delhi to further enhance connectivity of villages with hospitals, schools and agricultural markets.
- The Phase-III of PMGSY aims at consolidation of 1 lakh 25 thousand Kilometers through Routes and Major Rural Links that connect habitations to Gramin Agricultural Markets, Higher Secondary Schools and Hospitals with an estimated cost of 80 thousand 250 crore rupees for the period 2019-20 to 2024-25.
- The Central Share will be 53 thousand 800 crore rupees. **The funding pattern for the scheme will be 60:40 between Centre and the States. For North-East and the Himalayan States, the ratio will be 90:10.**

Thaawarchand Gehlot launches Braille version of 'Exam Warriors' written by PM Modi

- Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawarchand Gehlot launched Braille version of the book Exam Warriors written by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.
- **The braille version in English and Hindi** has been printed by Rajasthan Netraheen Kalyan Sangh in Jaipur.

STATE NEWS

National conference on ‘Uniformed Women in Prison Administration’ begins

- In Madhya Pradesh, a two-day National Conference on **‘Uniformed Women in Prisons Administration’** begins a Central Academy for Police Training in Bhopal.
- Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai will inaugurate the conference.
- In this Conference, uniformed women officers and staff of all the states from Jail Wardens up to Director Inspector General’s level, members of non-governmental organizations, representatives of academic institutions and officers of other government departments are taking part in the conference.

Odisha CM launches 'Jalsathi' programme

- Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has launched the **'Jalsathi'** programme to ensure supply of safe drinking water to all households in the state.
- That the inclusion of woman volunteers from Mission Shakti for piped water supply will boost their economic empowerment.

AGREEMENT

India, US sign industrial security agreement for transfer of defence technology

- India and the United States have agreed to deepen the bilateral cooperation and increase defence trade.
- They also agreed to intensify their coordination with like-minded countries like Japan for a peaceful Indo-Pacific region and put up a decisive fight against terrorism.
- The second 2 plus 2 India US ministerial dialogue in Washington chalked out a pathway to take the bilateral relationship between the two countries in 2020 to a new level.
- A number of agreements ranging from greater interaction between elected representatives, Industrial Security Annex (ISA), for collaboration in space, science and water and people-to-people contact were signed.
- The two sides also inked an industrial security agreement that will allow the transfer of defence technology.
- After the conclusion of the dialogue, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters that the US values India's perspective on security in the Indo-Pacific region.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Portuguese PM to be on two-day visit to India

- Prime Minister of Portugal, Antonio Costa will be on a two-day visit to India from today.
- He will attend the second meeting of the Organising Committee on the celebrations for the 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- The Organising Committee meeting will be presided over by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- The Portuguese Prime Minister is also scheduled to hold official talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi tomorrow afternoon.
- That the high-level political exchanges between India and Portugal have imparted a robust momentum to bilateral relations, including in several new areas such as science and technology, defence, startups, shipping, youth exchanges and culture.
- This visit will provide another opportunity for the leaders to review the whole gamut of bilateral relations and forge closer cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

AWARD

Shashi Tharoor wins Sahitya Akademi Award 2019 for An Era of Darkness

- Indian politician, writer and Congress party member Shashi Tharoor won the Sahitya Akademi Award 2019.
- The Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha from Thiruvananthapuram won the prestigious award for his book An **Era of Darkness the British Empire in India**. The book was published in 2016.
- On December 18, 2019, Sahitya Akademi shared a press release announcing its annual Sahitya Akademi Awards in 23 languages. Shashi Tharoor was one of the winners in the list. He won for his work in creative non-fiction in English language.

SPORTS

Jacques Kallis joins South Africa's star-studded coaching set up

- Legendary all-rounder Jacques Kallis was appointed as South Africa's batting consultant for the entire duration of their home summer.
- Former Standard Bank Proteas all-rounder, Jacques Allis has been named as the team's batting consultant for the duration of the summer. He will join the squad for their camp starting in Pretoria
- Kallis played a combined 519 international matches for South Africa with 25,534 runs and 577 wickets across formats. He featured in 166 Tests, 328 ODIs and 25 T20 Internationals.

Smriti Mandhana in ICC's ODI and T20 team of the year

- India opener Smriti Mandhana was today named in both the International Cricket Council's ODI and T20 teams of the year, capping off a memorable season.
- Mandhana has Jhulan Goswami, Poonam Yadav and Shikha Pandey for company in the ODI team of the year and all-rounder Deepti Sharma in the T20 side.
- Mandhana has played 51 ODIs and 66 T20Is for India, besides a couple of Test matches. She has a combined tally of 3476 runs in T20Is and ODIs.

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