Prelim Bits 29-12-2018

Biennial Update Report (BUR)

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- Union Cabinet has approved Submission of India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
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- The biennial update report aims to provide an update to India's first biennial report to the United Nation’s body on climate change.
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- The report contains five major components including
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1. National circumstances.
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2. National greenhouse gas inventory.
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3. Mitigation actions,
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4. Finance.
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5. Technology and capacity building needs.
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- The report has been prepared based on a range of studies conducted at the national level.
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UNFCC

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- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.
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- The UNFCCC objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".
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- The framework sets non-binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms.
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- Instead, the framework outlines how specific international treaties (called "protocols" or "Agreements") may be negotiated to specify further action towards the objective of the UNFCCC.
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Coastal Regulation Zone

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- Cabinet approved easing of norms for development in CRZs.
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- The notification aims at enhancing activities in the coastal regions and promoting economic growth while keeping in mind conservation principles of coastal regions.
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- There are four different categories under CRZ, they are as follows
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1. CRZ I - Ecologically Sensitive Areas.
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2. CRZ II - The areas that have been developed up to or close to the shoreline.
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3. CRZ III - Areas that are relatively undisturbed.
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4. CRZ IV - Area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 Nautical Miles seaward.
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- According to the new notification only such projects, which are located in CRZ I & IV will require the necessary clearance from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
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- The powers for clearances with respect to CRZ-II & III have been delegated at the State level.
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- The new notification also relaxed the No Development Zone (NDZ) criteria.
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- The notification also permits temporary tourism facilities such as toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities etc. in beaches.
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eBuzz K9

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- The Delhi Government has initiated the trials of zero emission and noise free 12 Meter electric bus called eBuzz K9.
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- The trials will be conducted for 3 months, which enable the authorities to evaluate the efficiency and competency of the buses in the standard road conditions of Delhi.
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- The bus can run up to 300 km on a single recharge, the electric bus has a seating capacity of 36, including the driver.
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- The special feature of the bus is its integrated regenerative braking recovers 30 per cent of lost braking energy and comes with high power AC charging in 3-4 hours.
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NASA’s New Horizons

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- NASA's New Horizons spacecraft was launched in 2006, this was the first spacecraft to provide the close-up views of the Pluto.
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- Recently it is reported that the spacecraft will reach icy object nicknamed Ultima Thule (TOO-lee).
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- Ultima Thule will be the farthest world ever explored by humankind, no spacecraft has visited anything so primitive.
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- Pluto is barely in the Kuiper Belt, the so-called Twilight Zone stretching beyond Neptune, Ultima Thule is in the Twilight Zone's heart.
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- The color of Ultima Thule is expected to be darker than coal, burned by eons of cosmic rays, with a reddish hue.
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Kuiper Belt

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- The Kuiper Belt is a region of the Solar System that exists beyond the eight major planets.
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- It is similar to the asteroid belt, in that it contains many small bodies, all remnants from the Solar System's formation.
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- But unlike the Asteroid Belt, it is much larger – 20 times as wide and 20 to 200 times as massive.
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Measuring Earthquakes

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- 4.8 magnitude earthquake hit the area around Europe's most active volcano Mount Etna, Italy.
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- Magnitude of an earthquake is measured on the Richter scale, which scales how powerful an earthquake is.
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- It is measured using a machine called a seismometer which produces a seismograph.
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- A Richter scale is normally numbered 1-10, though there is no upper limit.

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- It is logarithmic which means, for example, that an earthquake measuring magnitude 5 is ten times more powerful than an earthquake measuring 4.
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- Earthquakes measuring 1-2 on the scale happen regularly, and they are so small that people cannot feel them.
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- Earthquakes measuring upwards of 7 are less frequent but very powerful, and can cause a lot of destruction.
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- The Richter scale is not very accurate in measuring these larger earthquakes and today scientists use the Moment Magnitude Scale which uses the same logarithmic scale but which more accurately measures the strength of larger earthquakes.
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Source: Indian Express, the Hindu

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