

- ❖ The original ODF protocol, issued in March 2016, said, “A city/ward is notified as ODF city/ward if, at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating in the open.” So far, 2,741 cities have been certified as ODF, based mostly on third-party verification of toilet construction.
- ❖ The new ODF+ protocol, issued last week, says that a city, ward or work circle could be declared ODF+ if, “at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well-maintained.”
- ❖ The ODF++ protocol adds the condition that “faecal sludge/septage and sewage is safely managed and treated, with no discharging and/or dumping of untreated faecal sludge/septage and sewage in drains, water bodies or open areas.” “Urination has always been implied as part of the ODF agenda,” said Mr. Jindal. “That’s why there is a subsidy for urinals, not just toilets.”

- ❖ India has sought re-negotiation of the natural gas price it is to source through a proposed \$10 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline due to slump in global energy markets, a top source said.
- ❖ The four nations had in 2013 signed a gas sale purchase agreement (GSPA) that bench-marked the price of natural gas that Turkmenistan is to export at 55% of the prevailing crude oil price. This translates into a price of about \$7.5 per million British thermal unit (mmBtu) at current oil prices at the Turkmen border.

- ❖ Principal Economic Adviser to the Finance Ministry Sanjeev Sanyal on Wednesday sought to allay concerns over the falling rupee against the U.S. dollar, saying India should not get too swayed by a single bilateral exchange rate.
- ❖ “If you take any broad based basket, you will see that the rupee is not especially weak. We cannot get too swayed by a single bilateral exchange rate,” Mr. Sanyal said.

‘Stable over long term’

- ❖ The falling rupee value should be seen as strengthening of the dollar rather than weakness of the rupee because the rupee has been stable over the last five years against most global currencies, Mr. Sanyal said.
- ❖ “The rupee has been very stable over the last five years against most global currencies, except the dollar. Hence, we should see this as US dollar strengthening rather than rupee weakness,” he said.
- ❖ Mr. Sanyal said the RBI had more than adequate forex reserves to manage sharp movements.

- ❖ In a stern warning to bankers, the finance ministry has asked chief executives of public sector banks (PSBs) to check all NPA accounts exceeding ₹50 crore for fraud, else face criminal conspiracy charges, according to official sources.
- ❖ This missive comes in the light of arrest of Bhushan Steel's erstwhile promoter Neeraj Singal by the **Serious Fraud Investigation Office** (SFIO) for allegedly siphoning of funds.
- ❖ The sources said that bankers could be held accountable under Section 120B of Indian Penal Code if they fail to report fraud in an account which is later unearthed by investigating agencies, sources said.
- ❖ If the investigating agencies find diversion of funds in those defaulting accounts, bankers may be liable to face criminal proceedings, the sources said, adding that this advisory is like an extra precaution to keep bankers from getting into legal tangles.
- ❖ More than a dozen companies undergoing bankruptcy resolution are being reviewed by banks and investigating agencies for fraudulent activities, including diversion of funds.

- ❖ Indian banks are facing mounting non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans, especially at PSBs, which have reached more than ₹8 lakh crore. In addition, several banking frauds have been unearthed, including the ₹14,000-crore scam at PNB, carried out allegedly by diamond jeweller Nirav Modi and his associates.
- ❖ A senior government official confirmed the development and said that some discrepancies had been pointed out in the case of a steel-maker and a real estate firm among 10-12 companies.
- ❖ “There were some inputs and lenders who have been asked to provide transaction details of last five years. If required, banks will also undertake forensic audit,” he said. Earlier this month, the SFIO arrested Mr. Singal for alleged diversion of ₹2,000 crore, raised through loans from state-owned banks.