

CURRENT AFFAIRS MARCH 2016 - NATIONAL

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News 1 - India kicks off Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.



Raisina Dialogue, a joint initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs and a leading think tank, Observer Research Foundation, kicked off in Delhi after the External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj inaugurated the event. The theme of this inaugural edition of the Dialogue is "Connecting Asia".

The conference was attended by speakers from 40 countries which included former president of Sri Lanka Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and former president of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai. Ms. Swaraj spoke of the importance of building road and rail connectivity through the "BBIN" grouping of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal.

News 2 - M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation To Establish A Research Chair in KISS.



MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) has decided to establish a research chair at Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) in Bhubaneswar. An MoU to this effect was signed between Prof M S Swaminathan, Founder of MSSRF and Achyuta Samanta, founder of KIIT & KISS.

These two institutes will work jointly for promotion of knowledge and skill empowerment for less privileged children in India.

FYI: The Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS) is the largest residential institute from KG to PG for the tribals in the world. It provides free accommodation, education, food, health care to more than 25,000 children.

News 3 - India Signs Financing Agreement with World Bank for US\$ 300 Million.



A financing agreement for IDA credit of US\$ 300 (equivalent) for the "Madhya Pradesh Higher Education Quality Improvement Project" was signed with the World Bank.

The Objective of the project is to improve student outcomes especially of disadvantaged groups in selected Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and to increase the effectiveness of the Higher Education System in Madhya Pradesh. The project has three components (1) Grants Support to Higher Education Institutions (2) State Level Initiatives and (3) Improving System Management.

The closing date of Madhya Pradesh Higher Education Quality Improvement Project is 31st August, 2021.

News 4 - NHAI ties up with Indian School of Business for skill development.



NHAI has tied up with Indian School of Business (ISB), Hyderabad to create a pool of officers who can play a critical role in ensuring the utmost professional capability to shoulder the responsibilities at senior management level and guide the NHAI towards its long term vision.

The program on “Leadership Program in Infrastructure Management” in ISB aims at developing skills and competencies relating to multiple disciplines: Strategic Planning, Finance, Economics, Law, Social and Environmental issues, Public Policy etc. in Infrastructure Management.

News 5 - Government Cancels IRB Infra’s Contract.



The government has cancelled the contract given to IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd (IRB Infra) of Zojila Pass Tunnel Building Project. It was India’s most expensive (Rs 10,050 Cr) and biggest national highway (NH) project (14.08 km tunnel).

This project was awarded by the ministry of road transport and highways on design, build, finance, operate and transfer (annuity) basis. The contract was cancelled after opposition parties raised concerns.

News 6 - Government Plans increase nuclear power generation capacity by three times.



The Government of India plans to set up nuclear power plants in Haryana, Bihar and Punjab and increase nuclear power

generation capacity by three times in 10 years. If it is 4,780 MW today, the same would go up to 13,480 MW.

The sites identified to build a nuclear plant are Razauli in Bihar's Nawada district, Patiala (Punjab), Dehradun (Uttarakhand) and Bulandshahar (Uttar Pradesh).

News 7 - Carriage by Air amendment Bill, 2015 passed by Parliament.



The 'Carriage by Air (Amendment) Bill, 2015', was passed by the Upper House. It would enhance compensation for air travelers in case of death, injury, lost baggage or even inordinate delay in flights. The bill was first passed by the Lok Sabha in December 2015 and now will go for the Presidential assent as per Article 111 of Constitution.

The legislation would allow the government to revise the liability limits of airlines in line with the Montreal Convention, which was acceded to by India in May 2009.

News 8 - Historic Old War Office in London Acquired by Hinduja Group.



The Hinduja Group has acquired the heritage Old War Office in London on a 250-year lease in excess of £350 million. The office was once inhabited by Winston Churchill.

The heritage building at 57, Whitehall, close to the British Parliament and the Prime Minister's residence, covers 580,000 square feet spread over 7 floors connected by more than three km of corridors. The Hinduja Group plans to convert it into a hotel and luxury residences.

News 9 - Prime Minister Launches Setu Bharatam Programme.



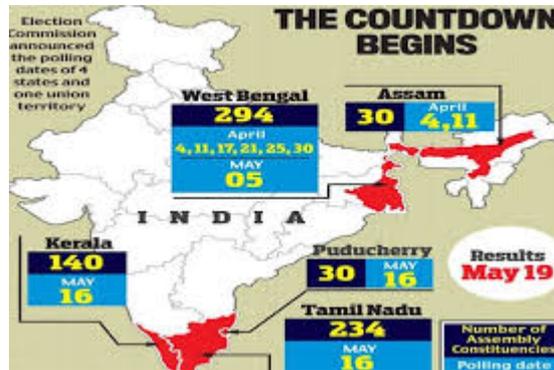
Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the Rs 50,000 Cr Setu Bharatam program for building bridges for safe and seamless travel on National Highways in New Delhi.

About 208 Railway Over Bridges (ROB)/Railway Under Bridges (RUB) will be built at the level crossings at a cost of Rs. 20,800 crores as part of the program. The government aims to make all national highways free from railway crossings by

2019.

In addition to this, about 1500 old and worn down bridges will also be improved by replacement/widening/strengthening in a phased manner at a cost of about Rs. 30,000 crores. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has also established an Indian Bridge Management System (IBMS) at the Indian Academy for Highway Engineer in Noida, U.P.

News 10 - Election Commission declares Assembly Election in 4 States & 1 Union Territory.



The Chief Election Commissioner Nasim Zaidi declared the schedule for Assembly polls in four states — West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Assam and for Union Territory Puducherry to be held between April 4, 2016 and May 16, 2016, spread over 43 days. In Assam, elections will be held in two phases while in West Bengal, it will be held in six phases. In Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala, the elections will be held on May 16. Counting of votes for all five states will be done on May 19.

For the first time, a symbol, created by the National School of Design, allotted to NOTA (None of the above) will be placed at the bottom of the list of candidates. There will also be all-women polling booths.

News 11 - India files a complaint against US in the WTO on temporary working visa issue.



India has filed a complaint in the WTO against the decision of United States to impose high fees on temporary working visas. The US has introduced a hefty US \$4,000 fee for certain categories of H-1B visa and US \$4,500 for L1 visa.

WTO said that India has complained on the sides of the current measures appearing to be "inconsistent" with the terms, limitations and conditions agreed to and specified by the US in its commitments under the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services).

News 12 - President of India inaugurated the first National Conference of Women Legislators.



The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the first two-day Conference of Women Legislators on the theme 'The Role of Women Legislators in Nation Building (Mahila Janpratinidhi – Sashakt Bharat Ki Nirmata) in New

Delhi.

The organization of the 'National Conference of Women Legislators' is a step in the right direction to carry forward the agenda of United Nations of sustainable development through gender equality. He wished the Conference all success.

News 13 - Foundation Stone of the First High Octane Fuel Unit, Octomax, laid at Mathura (UP).



Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gases, Dharmendra Pradhan, laid the foundation stone of Octomax unit at Mathura refinery. First of its kind unit, Octomax is a novel technology developed in-house by the research and development centre of Indian Oil for production of high-octane gasoline blending stock from the C4 stream to give very high-octane number of the product.

The refinery will setup a plant of 55 KTA capacity at an estimated cost of Rs 43 Cr. It is expected to be completed by October 2017.

News 14 - "Mahila e-Haat", an online marketing platform for women launched.



Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt Manika Sanjay Gandhi launched "Mahila e-Haat", an online marketing platform for women in New Delhi. Mahila e-Haat portal, <http://mahilaehaat-rmk.gov.in>, is a unique online platform where participants can display their products. It is an initiative for women across the country as a part of 'Digital India' and 'Stand Up India' initiatives.

It is a Joint initiative of Union Women and Child Development Ministry and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK).

News 15 - PM adopts Nagepur village in Varanasi for development under SAGY.



PM Narendra Modi adopted Nagepur village in his Lok Sabha Constituency of Varanasi under the 2nd phase of Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY). In the first phase of SAGY, the PM had adopted Jayapur village in Sevapuri Assembly segment of Varanasi.

"Villagers are glad that the PM has adopted our village. Now, we hope to see development like Jayapur," said Nagepur

Pradhan Parasnath Rajbhar.

News 16 - Centre to import 8,500 tonnes of pulses.



The Union Government has contracted import of 8,500 tonnes of pulses and the shipments are on the way. Pulse procurement is carried out by Food Corporation of India (FCI), agri-cooperative NAFED and the Small Farmers' Agriculture-Business Consortium (SFAC).

For creating pulse buffer stock, the government has set a procurement target of 50,000 tonnes from kharif season and 1,00,000 tonnes from rabi season of the 2015-16 crop year. The government's pulse procurement for buffer stock has touched 51,000 tonnes, surpassing the target of 50,000 tonnes from kharif season.

News 17 - India to host BRICS Friendship Cities Conclave in Mumbai in April.



India will host BRICS Friendship Cities Conclave in April in Mumbai which will involve top Urban Policy makers and Planners from BRICS Nations. It is being organized jointly by the Maharashtra government and the External Affairs Ministry between April 14 and 16.

The event becomes significant for Mumbai to become a global financial centre and is inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's plan to promote cooperation among BRICS Nations.

News 18 - Germany extends support to Develop Kochi, Coimbatore, Bhubaneswar as Smart Cities.



Germany has extended its support to the government's 'Smart Cities' program by taking up projects in Bhubaneswar, Kochi and Coimbatore. German companies will help in construction of residential housing, efficient water supply, waste water management and renewable energy in these three cities.

India is the biggest partner of Germany's development cooperation program worldwide. In 2015 alone, this collaboration reached a new record level of 1.5 billion euros (Rs. 11,000 crores).

News 19 - Central Government notified Maximum Sale Price of Bt Cotton Seed.



The Central Government notified the maximum sale price of Bt cotton seed for 2016-17. As per the notification, the price of BG-I version of Bt cotton hybrid (9450 grams of Bt Cotton plus 120 grams refugia) was fixed at 635 rupees, while the price of BG-II version was fixed at 800 rupees.

The notification was released as per the Cotton Seed Price (Control) Order, 2015 that was issued under the Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

News 20 - 108-feet Jain Teerthankar idol enters 'Guinness Book of Records'.



The impressive 108 feet tall idol of Lord Rishabhdeva, which is located atop Mangi Tungi Mountain near Teharabad village of Baglan tehsil in this North Maharashtra district, has entered the "Guinness World Records" as the world's tallest Jain statue. Till now, the 57 feet tall idol of Lord Bahubali in Karnataka was considered the world's tallest Jain statue.

The idol has been carved from the single stone and more than 300 sculptors have worked on carving of the idol since 2012. Panchkalyanak Pratishtha & Mahamastakabhishek Mahotsav of the idol was performed last month for several days.

News 21 - Cabinet Approves Rs 8,000 Crore Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana.



The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved Rs 8000 Cr Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana – Scheme for Providing 5 crore free LPG connections to Women from BPL Households. The Scheme provides a financial support of Rs 1600 for each LPG connection to the BPL households.

The identification of eligible BPL families will be made in consultation with the State Governments and the Union Territories. This Scheme would be implemented over three years, namely, the FY 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19. Providing LPG connections to BPL households will ensure universal coverage of cooking gas in the country and further empower women and protect their health.

News 22 - Cabinet Clears Amendment to MMDR Act, 1957.





The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the amendment to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act, 1957).

The amendment will allow transfer of captive mining leases not granted through auction. Transfer of captive mining leases, granted otherwise than through auction, would allow mergers and acquisitions of companies. It will facilitate ease of doing business for companies to improve profitability and decrease costs of the companies' dependency on supply of mineral ore from captive leases.

News 23 - Union Government to sign agreements worth over Rs. 72,000 Cr at Shipping summit.



The Union Government is expected to sign agreements worth over Rs. 72,000 crores for 109 identified projects with private players on port-related projects at the Indian Maritime Summit to be held in Mumbai from April 14-16.

Under the Sagarmala Project, the major development programs identified by the government include port modernization (Rs. 90,000 crores), port connectivity (Rs.1.20 lakh crore) and port-led industrialization (Rs. 90,000 crores) besides coastal community development.

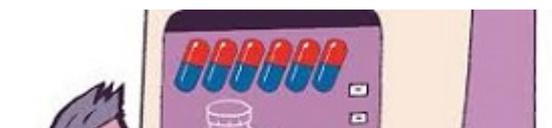
News 24 - 116 PSUs Spent Over Rs 2400 Crores in CSR in 2014-15.

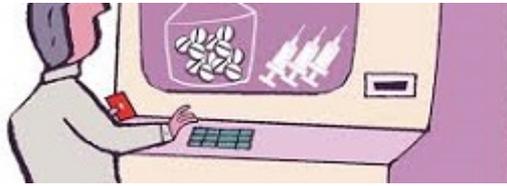


The Government of India has declared that 116 Public Sector Enterprises (PSUs) have spent an amount of Rs. 2447.59 Crores on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in 2014-15 and no complaint has been received on misuse of these funds.

Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises Minister Anant Geete said this in Rajya Sabha during the question hour after several members expressed concern over media reports suggesting that there have been misuse of CSR funds, especially by private companies.

News 25 - 5 Healthcare ATMs Launched in 4 States that dispense medicines.





The Health Ministry has come up with 5 healthcare ATMs in four states — MP, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

Each ATM will be manned by a multipurpose public health worker (MPHW) or an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM). For starters, basic health parameters such as temperature, blood pressure, blood glucose and blood hemoglobin will be checked and the data instantly transmitted to a medical call centre through a GSM-based monitor.

News 26 - Government plans of policy to promote wind energy projects.



With an aim to boost the wind energy potential in India, the government is planning to give incentives including an interest discount of 0.25 % for increasing the capacity of Wind mills of up to 1MW.

The objective of the policy is to promote optimum utilization of wind energy resources by creating facilitative framework for repowering, as per the draft. The present installed capacity of wind power in India is over 25 GW which is fourth largest in the world after China, USA and Germany.

News 27 - Railways forms SPV to implement Bullet Train Project.



Railways have formed a new Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to implement the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Bullet Train project. The entity has been named the National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited.

In order to complete the project on time, a Joint Committee has been formed under the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog with the secretaries of the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Departments of Economic Affairs and Foreign Ministry as its members along with the Chairman of Railway Board.

News 28 - 'Women Transforming India' Campaign launched by NITI Aayog.

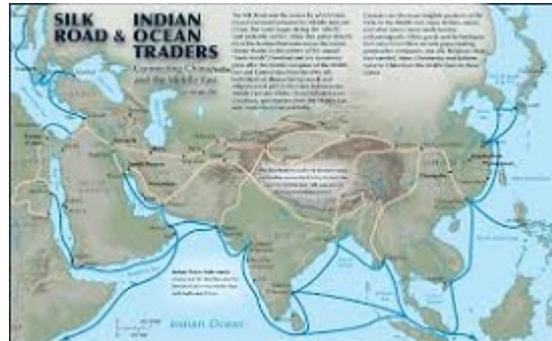


The NITI Aayog, in partnership with the UN in India and MyGov, launched the Women Transforming India initiative on

8th March. Under the campaign, participants need to make entries in the form of written essays or stories. The stories should reflect women empowerment or encourage and recognize women who have made a difference particularly by demonstrating leadership in the economic, socio-cultural and environmental front.

Entries must be filled online (<https://mygov.in/task/women-transforming-india-womentransform/>) on or before March 31st, 2016. 8-10 best shortlisted entries would be put to poll on MyGov.in to determine the top three entries.

News 29 - Project 'Mausam' of Ministry of Culture aims to explore Multi-Faceted Indian Ocean 'World'.



Ministry of Culture initiated Project Mausam with the research support of Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and to be implemented by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as the nodal agency.

This project aims to explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean 'world' – collating archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean.

News 30 - Rajya Sabha Passed National Waterways Bill, 2015.



The Rajya Sabha passed The National Waterways Bill, 2015. The Bill will be useful for development of inland water transport as it is considered to be most cost effective and economical mode of transport from the point of view of fuel efficiency. Total number of National Waterways in the bill is 111.

However, environmentalists have been opposing the bill, claiming that because of the numerous large and small dams, the water flow in the rivers is severely restricted.

News 31 - India signed agreement to save Birds of Prey.

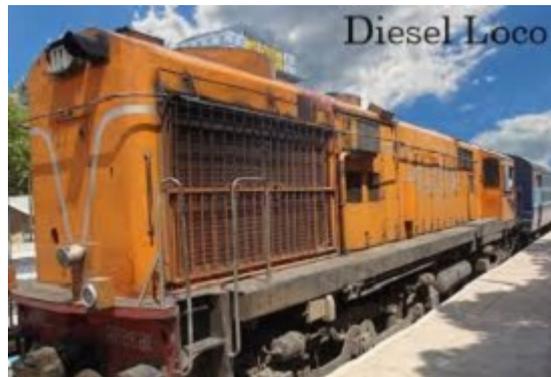


India became the 56th country to sign the 'Raptor MoU' - a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on conservation of

birds of prey in Africa and Eurasia. The MoU covers 76 species, out of which 46 includes vultures, falcons, eagles, owls, hawks, kites, harriers and others found in India.

This agreement was signed on March 7 at the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) in Abu Dhabi by Ambassador of India to the UAE T P Seetharam. The agreement, under Article IV paragraph 4 of the CMS, is not “legally binding”.

News 32 - India to Supply Diesel Locomotive to Myanmar Railways.



India will supply 18 Meter Gauge 1350 HP Diesel Electric Locomotives to Myanmar to augment the locomotive fleet of Myanmar Railways to meet increasing demand for passenger and freight traffic. These locomotives will be manufactured by Diesel Locomotive Works, Varanasi. These engines will have with modern features like microprocessor controls, fuel-efficient engine and ergonomic cab design, the statement added.

The supply contract of locomotives is a vital project being funded under an existing line of credit extended to Myanmar by the Indian government.

News 33 - Railways launches "Clean My Coach" Service.



The Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhhu announced the launch of 'Clean My Coach' service. Customers can make request to clean up dirty coaches by sending an SMS on 58888 or by using an android app 'Cleanmycoach Indian Railways' or webpage 'cleanmycoach.com' for logging the request which will be immediately acknowledged via SMS on mobile phone along with a code.

The railways are running the 'cleanliness drive' Swachh Rail Swachh Bharat'.

News 34 - Aadhar Scheme Collects Biometric Data of 99 Crore Indians.



The AADHAR Bill intends to reduce corruption and enhance transparency by assigning beneficiaries unique identity numbers, called Aadhaar. The government has become successful in doing so by getting registered 99 crore Indians on

Aadhaar.

IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad also set aside fears of members on the data collected under Aadhaar and said it is sorted within the country at data centers in Bangalore and Manesar and no foreign agency is involved in data collection.

News 35 - PM Modi unveils a railway project in Bihar.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the newly constructed Digha-Sonepur rail-cum-road bridge and a new rail bridge in Munger. He also unveiled foundation of additional rail bridge near existing Rajendra Bridge in Mokama.

The newly constructed rail portion of Munger Rail-Cum Road Bridge from Sahebpur Kamal end in Begusarai district will also be in operation from now onwards. The Prime Minister will also kick-start the operation of the goods trains on the newly constructed rail portion of Munger Rail-Cum Road Bridge from Sahebpur Kamal end in Begusarai district.

News 36 - Cabinet approved ratification of BIMSTEC Convention.



The Union Cabinet has accorded approval for signing and ratification of the Bay of Bengal Initiative on Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters.

The BIMSTEC includes seven countries viz., Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The mutual assistance in criminal matters will enhance cooperation in the control of criminal activities. The Convention aims at extending widest measures of assistance to each other through mutual cooperation and effectiveness of the Member States in investigation and prosecution of crimes, including crimes related to terrorism, drug trafficking, money laundering and cyber-crimes.

News 37 - National Led Bulbs Scheme Gets a New Face in 'UJALA'.



The LED based Domestic Efficient Lighting Programme (DELP) was named as UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All) by the government and is being implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).

The program is currently running successfully in over 120 cities across India. UJALA is successfully running across 12 states in India namely Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Puducherry, Jharkhand, Bihar and Uttarakhand.

News 38 - IMF and India to Set-Up a South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) in Delhi.



India and International Monetary Fund (IMF) signed a MoU to set up South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Centre (SARTTAC) in New Delhi. The aim of this center is to enhance the capacity development and training of officials in dealing with macro-economic and financial issues.

SARTTAC will offer courses and seminars for policymakers and other government agencies from India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Funding will come from contributions by Regional Member countries and Development Partners.

News 39 - Union and State Ministers Are Public Authorities under Right to Information Act, 2005: CIC.



The Central Information Commission (CIC) has ruled that all Union and state ministers are public authorities under the provisions of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005. They have a statutory obligation to answer queries seeking information.

The ruling was given by the Central Information Commissioner Sridhar Acharyulu while adjudicating the case filed by Hemant Dhage of Ahmednagar.

News 40 - Maritime India Summit to be held in Mumbai.



The flagship event of Union Ministry of Shipping, Maritime India Summit 2016 (MIS 2016), will be held in Mumbai from 14 to 16 April 2016 at Bombay Convention and Exhibition Centre. The partner country of the event is Republic of Korea.

The objective of this conference is to explore potential business opportunities in the country's maritime sector. The three-day event will hold B2B and G2B meetings besides conferences, exhibitions and demo sessions. This summit is expected to attract investments worth 10 billion.

News 41 - Health Minister Shri J P Nadda launches project 'Clean Street Food'.



Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Shri J P Nadda launched Project 'Clean Street Food'. The project of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) aims at to raise the safety standards of foods sold on streets across the capital city of New Delhi by training 20,000 roadside vendors to be skilled under PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana) on aspects of health and hygiene, in the first phase.

FSSAI will partner with the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship to train street food vendors at more than 40 centers across Delhi.

News 42 - Paryatak Mitra Programme to enable Students to act/work as Tourist Facilitators.



The Ministry of Tourism has launched a programme open to college going students to inculcate in them appropriate tourism traits and knowledge, to enable them to act/work as Tourist Facilitators (Paryatak Mitra).

The Paryatak Mitra Programme targets college-going students including those enrolled with the NCC & NSS, in the age group of 18-28 years. Each course will be of 10 days duration. The programme will be implemented by the Indian Institute of Tourism & Travel Management.

News 43 - 253 Indian Villages Lit Up Under the Scheme Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojna.



About 253 villages were electrified last week under the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojna (DDUGJY). Out of the 253 villages, 111 are in Odisha, 81 in Assam, 40 in Jharkhand, 13 in Rajasthan, 4 in Bihar, 3 in Madhya Pradesh and 1 in Uttar Pradesh.

In view of the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's address to nation, on Independence Day, Government of India has decided to electrify remaining 18,452 un-electrified villages within 1000 days i.e. by 01st May, 2018.

News 44 - Lok Sabha passed Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2016.





The Lok Sabha passed the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2016. It looks out to amend the Constitution Scheduled Castes Order 1950. The bill was passed after receiving proposals from Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Kerala, Odisha and West Bengal, for modification of Scheduled Castes list in their states.

Social Justice Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot said the Registrar General of India and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes have conveyed their concurrence to the proposed modifications.

News 45 - Lok Sabha passed Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2015.



The Lok Sabha has passed the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill, 2015. The Bill looks up to set up a Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA). The Bill was earlier passed by Rajya Sabha on 10th March, 2016.

The Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Bill is a pioneering initiative to protect the interest of consumers, promote fair play in real estate transactions and to ensure timely execution of projects.

News 46 - MoU Signed Between M/O Tourism and Ecotourism Society of India for Responsible and Sustainable Tourism



The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ecotourism Society of India (ESOI) to take its commitments to Responsible and Sustainable tourism to the next level. Through this MOU, it is expected that sustainable tourism and Responsible Tourism will take the forefront and achieve the commitments of the Ministry's action plan.

The ESOI will prepare a 10-year road map for advocacy and certification under the sustainable tourism criteria after consultations.

News 47 - Rajya Sabha passes Sikh Gurdwaras (Amendment) Bill, 2016.





Rajya Sabha has passed the Sikh Gurdwaras (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The Bill proposes to remove the exception given to Sehajdhari Sikhs in 1944 to vote in the elections to select the members of the Board and the Committees constituted under the Act.

“There is unanimity to pass the Bill without discussion. I am passing it,” said Deputy Chairman PJ Kurein while passing the bill. Sehajdhari Sikhs were given the right to vote in SGPC elections in 1944.

News 48 - Union Minister Ram Vilas Paswan launched FCI's Online Depot System.



Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan launched the FCI Online Depot System in New Delhi. The online system will automate all the operations of Food Corporation of India (FCI) depots. The estimated cost of the project is 63 crore rupees.

It will help align the FCI with Digital India vision for transformation of food distribution supply chain in India. The online depot system will eliminate usage of manual registers. Operations of all the FCI Depot will be online by July 2016. Similarly, remaining depots which include CWC, SWC and hired ones by March 2017.

News 49 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Krishi Unnati Mela in New Delhi.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated three-day (19-21 March) National Agriculture Fair - 'Krishi Unnati Mela' being held at Pusa campus. The fair will provide useful information on new farm schemes and technologies that will help farmers double their incomes within the next few years.

The fair will have separate workshops on key schemes like e-agriculture marketing, integrated farming system, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sichai Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Beema Yojana, soil health and livestock issues.

News 50 - India and Australia ink pact to avoid Double Social Security contribution.



India and Australia have signed agreement to avoid double social security contribution under which employees of India deputed to Australia and vice versa will not have to make double social security contribution.

Australia is now the 14th country to have signed a social security agreement with India. Others include Korea, Finland, Sweden, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, France, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland.

News 51 - Centre unveils Model Building Bye-Laws, 2016; Sets 30-days approval period.



The Union Government released the Model Building Bye-Laws, 2016 which aims to boost ease of doing business in the construction sector. It was released by the Union Urban Development Minister Venkaiah Naidu in New Delhi. The new bye-laws provide a single window integrated building plan approval process and set the maximum time limit for all kind of building approvals at 30 days, after which the approval can be considered 'deemed'.

News 52 - Union Government introduced new Plastic Waste Management Rules.



Union Environment Ministry has notified new Plastic Waste Management Rule. The new rules will help curb over 6000 tonnes of uncollected plastic waste generated daily by industries.

The government has increased the minimum thickness of plastic bags, expanded the area of applicability of these rules to rural areas and introduced polluter pays principle.

Under the new extended producer responsibility concept, producers are responsible for collecting waste generated from their products.

News 53 - Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Kisan Suvidha mobile app.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a mobile application called as Kisan Suvidha for farmers. It will provide useful

information on subjects such as weather, market prices, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and agriculture machinery.

To begin with, a farmer has to register the mobile number, choose a language—at present limited to Hindi and English—and enter details of the state, district and block or sub-district.

News 54 - Finance Minister launched Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.



The Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley launched the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and the Unified Package Insurance Scheme in Mumbai. The Finance Minister said that the revamped insurance scheme being launched by the Government have the potential to reduce distress in the farm sector.

Finance Minister also launched the NABARD Agri-Credit Monitoring portal, which will help financial institutions to monitor the status of agricultural loans given to farmers. He also unveiled Roadmap of E-Shakti Expansion Program of digitization of Self-Help Groups (SHGs).

News 55 - 8th BRICS Summit to be hosted by India in Goa.



India will host the 8th BRICS Summit in its capacity as chair of the influential bloc on 15-16 October, 2016 in Goa. India assumed chairmanship of BRICS from Russia on 15th February and it will last till 31st December 2016.

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj unveiled a logo and a website of the Summit in New Delhi. The logo for the Summit is a lotus having colors from all the five member countries and a traditional Namaste in the centre. The theme of India's BRICS Chairmanship is Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions. During India's BRICS Chairmanship, five-pronged approach - Institution building, Implementation, Integrating, Innovation and Continuity will be adopted.

News 56 - Union Government launched new initiatives to combat Tuberculosis.



Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare JP Nadda on the eve of World Tuberculosis Day launched Bedaquiline – new anti-TB drug for Drug Resistant TB.

Shri Nadda also inducted over 500 Cartridge Based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (CBNAAT) machines in the program. The CBNAAT is a revolutionary rapid molecular test which is fully automated and provides results within two hours.

The Minister also launched the ‘Third line ART program for People Living with HIV’. The life-saving third line ART costs nearly Rs. 1.18 lakh per patient per year. Providing these free would not only save lives but improve socioeconomic conditions of the patients.

News 57 - India to accede to the Ashgabat Agreement.



The Union Cabinet has given its approval for India to accede to the Ashgabat Agreement, an international transport and transit corridor facilitating transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

The Ashgabat Agreement has Oman, Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as founding members. Kazakhstan has also joined this arrangement subsequently. Accession to the Agreement would enable India to utilize this existing transport and transit corridor to facilitate trade and commercial interaction with the Eurasian region. Further, this would synchronize with our efforts to implement the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) for enhanced connectivity.

News 58 - Cabinet approves National Capital Goods Policy.



The Union Cabinet has approved the National Capital Goods Policy. The policy aims to increase the share of capital goods contribution from present 12% to 20% of total manufacturing activity by 2025. This is a first time ever policy of this sector, with a clear objective of increasing production of capital goods from Rs. 230,000 Cr in 2014-15 to Rs. 750,000 Cr in 2025.

The Cabinet has also approved the doubling of two rail lines in Bihar and Jharkhand and approved incentives for rural housing.

News 59 - Cabinet approves “Special Industry Initiative for J&K” Udaan scheme.





The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, approved the extension of time period of the Scheme “Special Industry Initiative for J&K” (SII J&K) Udaan till 2019-20 from 2015-16.

Udaan provides exposure to the youth of J&K to the best of corporate India. So far, 67 leading corporates have partnered with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under UDAAN to train youth from the State covering Organized Retail, Banking, Financial Services, IT, ITES, Infrastructure, Hospitality etc. It is expected that the target of the Scheme, to train and enhance employability of 40,000 graduates, post graduates and three-year engineering diploma holders, will be achieved by 2019-20.

News 60 - World Bank support to Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).



The Union Cabinet gave its approval to the US \$ 1,500 (approx. 9000 Cr) million project of World Bank Support to Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin).

The Project basically provides for incentivizing States through World Bank Credit on the basis of their performance in the existing SBM-G. The three Disbursement-Linked Indicators (DLIs) to gauge the performance of the states are –

- Reduction in the prevalence of open defecation
- Sustaining Open Defecation Free (ODF) status in Villages
- Increase in percentage of rural population served by improved Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM)

News 61 - Revised Cost Estimate of the Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project in Bhutan.



The Union Cabinet gave its approval to Revised Cost Estimate (RCE) of Rs. 4020.63 crore for the ongoing 720 MW Mangdechhu Hydroelectric Project (HEP) in Bhutan.

The bilateral agreement to execute the Mangdechhu HEP was signed between India and Bhutan in April, 2010 at the approved cost of Rs. 2896.3 crore (March 2008 price level) with funding by Government of India as 30% grant and 70% loan at 10% annual interest to be paid back in thirty equated semi-annual instalments. The total cost escalation for the project, at this stage, is Rs.1124.359 crore.

News 62 - India and France sign MoU for construction of six nuclear reactors at Jaitapur.





India and France have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for construction of six nuclear reactors at Jaitapur in Maharashtra. MoU was formally signed by Electricite de France (EDF - French public utility) and National Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL).

The Jaitapur nuclear power project, proposing a nuclear power plant of 9900 MW, consists of 6 European Pressurized Reactors (EPR) of 1650 MW each.

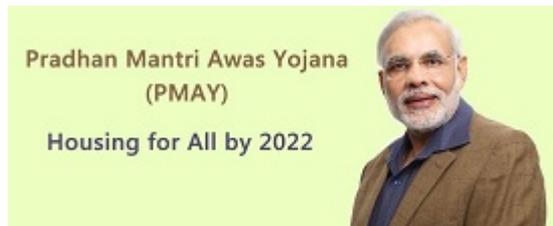
News 63 - President Pranab Mukherjee greets Greece on Independence Day.



President Pranab Mukherjee greeted and felicitated the government and people of Greece on March 24th on the eve of their Independence Day.

In a message to President Prokopis Pavlopoulos he said, "On behalf of the government, the people of India and on my own behalf, it is with great pleasure that I extend warm greetings and felicitations to Your Excellency and to the people of the Hellenic Republic (Greece) on the occasion of your Independence Day".

News 64 - Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana — Gramin.



The Union Cabinet approved the implementation of the rural housing scheme of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin. It is proposed that one crore households would be provided assistance for construction of pucca house under the project during the period from 2016-17 to 2018-19 at an expense of Rs 81975 Cr.

The scheme would be implemented in rural areas throughout India except Delhi and Chandigarh. The cost of houses would be shared between Centre and States in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90:10 for North Eastern and hilly states. The unit assistance has been enhanced to 120000 rupees in plain areas and to 130000 rupees in hilly states/difficult areas /IAP districts.

News 65 - Government launched Rotavirus vaccine as part of Universal Immunization Program.



Union Health and Family Welfare Minister J P Nadda launched the indigenously developed rotavirus vaccine as part of the

Universal Immunization Program (UIP). Rotavirus vaccine will enable to directly address the problem of diarrheal deaths. It is being introduced initially in four states of Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Odisha.

FYI – Mission Indradhanush: in December 2014 to fully immunize more than 89 lakh children who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

News 66 - Union Government disclosed Defence Procurement Procedure 2016.



Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar unveiled the Defence Procurement Procedure 2016 (DPP 2016) on the sidelines of the DefExpo-2016 in Goa. The DPP 2016 will replace the DPP 2013 and will come into force on 1 April 2016.

The recommendations of the DPP 2016 are based on the Dhirendra Singh committee report. As per the new DPP, IDDM (indigenously designed, developed and manufactured), will be the first preferred category of preference.

News 67 - India to have new emergency number to dial: 112.



The inter-ministerial panel of Telecom Commission approved a single emergency number, 112, similar to 911 and 999 of United States and United Kingdom respectively.

Indian citizens can now just dial the single-number 112 for all emergency services such as police, ambulance and the fire department.

All existing emergency numbers will be phased out within a year of rolling out 112, depending upon the awareness about this new facility.

News 68 - "Stand Up India" Scheme to be launched on 5th Of April.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch the 'Stand Up India' initiative on 5th April at a function in Noida (UP). The initiative is aimed at creating jobs and promoting entrepreneurs among SC, ST and women by extending loans at cheaper rates.

Every bank branch of both public and private sector banks, will give loans between Rs 10 lakh and 1 crore to at least one SC/ST and one-woman entrepreneur under the scheme.

News 69 - Government to launch Gram Uday to Bharat Uday Abhiyan from 14th to 24th April, 2016.



Starting from 14th April to 24th April 2016, the Central Government, in collaboration with States and Panchayats, will organize a 'Gram Uday Se Bharat Uday Abhiyan' (Village Self Governance Campaign).

The campaign aims to generate nation-wide efforts to increase social harmony across villages, strengthen Panchayati Raj, promote rural development, and foster farmers' progress.

News 70 - BHEL commissions 40 MW hydropower unit in West Bengal.



Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has commissioned the second 40 MW hydropower generating unit at the Teesta low dam hydroelectric project (HEP) stage IV in West Bengal.

Teesta HEP is being set up by National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), on the River Teesta. BHEL is also executing the 3x40MW Rammam Stage-III hydro-electric project of NTPC in West Bengal.

News 71 - Prime Minister Modi Reached Brussels for India-EU Summit.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Brussels. He will hold a bilateral summit with Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel and then attend the 13th India-European Union (EU) Summit.

Then on March 31, the Prime Minister will attend the two-day Fourth Nuclear Security Summit to be hosted by US President Barack Obama in Washington. Further, he will be visiting Saudi Arabia at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud for a two-day visit.