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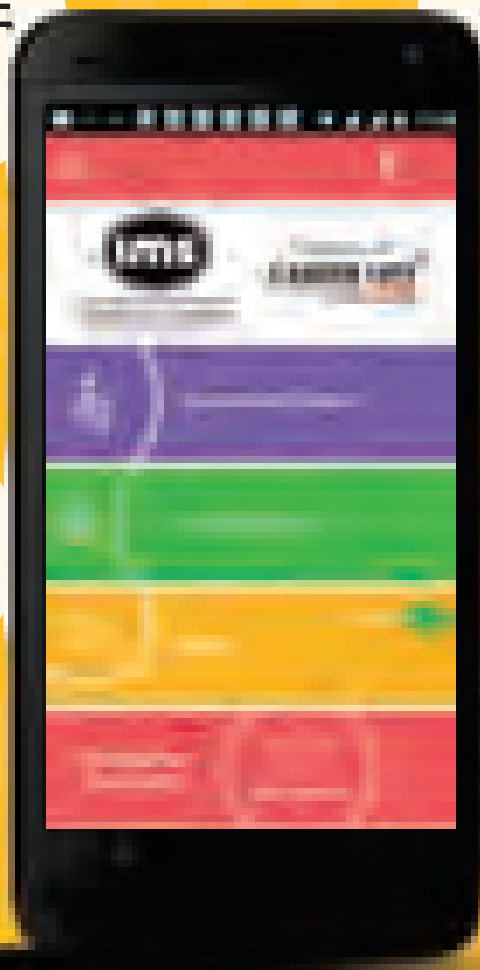
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Rio 2016 Summer Paralympics

The 2016 Summer Paralympics, the fifteenth Summer Paralympic Games, were a major international multi-sport event for athletes with disabilities governed by the International Paralympic Committee, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 7 September to 18 September 2016. The Games marked the first time a Latin American and South American city hosted the event, the second Southern Hemisphere city and nation, the first one being the 2000 Summer Paralympics in Sydney, and also the first time a Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) country hosted the event. These Games saw the introduction of two new sports to the Paralympic program: canoeing and the paratriathlon.

Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony of the 2016 Summer Paralympics took place on the evening of 7 September 2016 at the Maracanã Stadium. With the theme “Todo Mundo tem um Coração” (“Everybody Has a Heart”), the artistic portions of the ceremony featured sequences themed around the culture of Brazil and inclusivity. In an opening speech, IPC president Phillip Craven invited viewers to “see the true meaning of sport and the true definition of ability”, explaining that “in a country which has faced major challenges of late, Paralympians will switch your focus from perceived limitations, to a world full of possibility and endless opportunity. They will surprise you, inspire and excite you, but most of all they will change you.” The Paralympic cauldron was lit by Brazilian para-swimmer Clodoaldo Silva.

Mascot

The official mascots of the 2016 Summer Paralympics and Olympics were unveiled on 24 November 2014, with their respective names, Tom and Vinicius, chosen via a public vote whose results were announced on 14 December 2015. Named after Brazilian musician Tom Jobim, the Paralympic mascot represents Brazilian flora and “is always growing and overcoming obstacles.” The mascots’ fictional backstories state that they were both born from the joy of Brazilians after it was announced that Rio would host the Games. Brand director Beth Lula stated that the mascots are intended to reflect the diversity of Brazil’s culture and people.



Tom (right), the mascot of the 2016 Summer Paralympics, and Vinicius (left), the mascot of the 2016 Summer Olympics.

Participating Nations

In total, 159 National Paralympic Committees participated in the 2016 Games, with a total of 4,342 athletes.

Medal Table

2016 Summer Paralympics medal table					
Rank	NPC	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
1	China (CHN)	107	81	51	239
2	Great Britain (GBR)	64	39	44	147
3	Ukraine (UKR)	41	37	39	117
4	United States (USA)	40	44	31	115
5	Australia (AUS)	22	30	29	81
6	Germany (GER)	18	25	14	57
7	Netherlands (NED)	17	19	26	62
8	Brazil (BRA)*	14	29	29	72
9	Italy (ITA)	10	14	15	39
10	Poland (POL)	9	18	12	39
11–83	Remaining NPCs	187	193	249	629
Total (83 NPCs)		529	529	539	1597

India at the 2016 Summer Paralympics

India sent its largest ever delegation in the history of summer paralympic games, i.e., 19 competitors in 5 sports. Also, as far as the games progressed, it had been India's best ever performance in the history of the summer Paralympic games with a total of 4 medals won till now (2 Gold, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze) with Devendra Jhajharia breaking the World Record to win a gold medal at the Paralympics.

At the 2016 Summer Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro				
Competitors	19 in 5 sports			
Medals	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Rank: 43	2	1	1	4

Indian Medallists

Medal	Name	Sport	Event	Date
1	<u>Mariyappan Thangavelu</u>	Athletics	Men's High Jump T42	9 September
1	<u>Devendra Jhajharia</u>	Athletics	Men's Javelin Throw F46	14 September
2	<u>Deepa Malik</u>	Athletics	Women's Shot Put- F53	12 September
3	<u>Varun Singh Bhati</u>	Athletics	Men's High Jump T42	9 September



Devendra Jhajharia, Gold in Men's Javelin Throw



Mariyappan Thangavelu, Gold in Men's High Jump



Deepa Malik, Silver in Women's Shot Put



Varun Singh Bhati, Bronze in Men's High Jump

Closing ceremony

The closing ceremony of the 2016 Summer Paralympics took place on the evening of 18 September 2016 at the Maracanã Stadium. It featured concert performances by an array of prominent Brazilian musicians, as well as the formal handover to Tokyo, host of the 2020 Summer Paralympics, and closing remarks. IPC president Phillip Craven led a moment of silence for Iranian cyclist Bahman Golbarnezhad (who was killed the day before in a road cycling accident), stating that his death had “affected us all and left the whole Paralympic Movement united in grief.” Craven went on to praise Brazil’s reception to the Games and the overall performances of athletes, stating that people “were in awe at what you could do and forgot about what they believed you could not. You showed to the world that with a positive attitude the human body, and above all the human heart and mind, knows no limits and absolutely anything is possible.” Craven also announced that he would bestow the Paralympic Order—the IPC’s highest honour, on the people of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro for their “outstanding support” of the Paralympics.

Personality of the month

**Dr. Urjit Patel – RBI Governor – w.e.f.
4th Sep, 2016**



Urjit R. Patel (born 28 October 1963) is an Indian economist, consultant and banker, currently serving as Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). As the Deputy Governor of RBI, he looked after monetary policy, economic policy research, statistics and information management, deposit insurance, communication and Right to Information. On 20 August 2016, he was named as the governor of RBI to succeed Raghuram Rajan when the latter's term expired on 4 September 2016. On 5 September 2016 he took charge as the Governor of Reserve Bank of India.

Early life and education

Patel obtained his Bachelor's in Economics from the London School of Economics, M. Phil. degree from Oxford University in 1986. He received his doctorate in Economics from Yale University in 1990. He was at IMF India desk during the 1991–94 transition period. He was posted to IMF country

mission in India 1992–95. He has also been a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution since 2009.

Professional career

After obtaining his PhD, Dr. Patel joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1990 worked on the USA, India, Bahamas and Myanmar desks at IMF till 1995. Thereafter he went on deputation the IMF to the Reserve Bank of India, where he played an advisory role in the development of the debt market, banking sector reforms, pension fund reforms, targeting of real exchange rate. After the two-year deputation with RBI, Patel became a Consultant to the Government of India in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Economic Affairs - a position he held from 1998 to 2001.

Between 2000 and 2004, Dr. Patel worked with several High Level Committees at both Central and State Government level, including Competition Commission, Task Force on Direct Taxes, Prime Minister's Task Force on Infrastructure, Group of Ministers on Telecom Matters, Advisory Committee on Research Projects and Market Studies, Committee on Civil Aviation Reforms, Expert Group on State Electricity Boards and High Level Expert Group on Civil & Defence Services Pension System.

On 11 January 2013, Urjit Patel was appointed as Deputy Governor of RBI for a period of three years. [5] He took over charge of the vital Monetary Policy Department, succeeding Subir Gokarn to the post.

On 20 August 2016, he was appointed as the governor of Reserve Bank Of India (RBI) succeeding Raghuram Rajan

Important positions

- Advisor, Boston Consulting Group
- President (Business Development), Reliance Industries
- Executive Director, Infrastructure Development Finance Company (1997-2006)
- Member, Integrated Energy Policy Committee, Government of India (2004-2006)
- Non-Executive Director, Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation
- Non-Executive Director, Multi Commodity Exchange of India Limited
- Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India.
- Governor, Reserve Bank of India (from 4th September, 2016)

Other contributions

When the UPA Government in India came into power for a second term in 2009, it announced a '100-day' action plan, which became a hot topic for media discussion. Surprisingly, Urjit Patel was the expert commentator on UPA's first 100 days on Hindi News Channel, although he had no prior media exposure in India.



Persons in News

Devendra Jhajharia wins gold medal in javelin throw at 2016 Rio Paralympics - September 14, 2016



India's Devendra Jhajharia (36) has won gold medal in the men's javelin throw, F46 event held at the 2016 Rio Paralympics. With this, he becomes only the second gold medallist at the Paralympics for the country. He won the gold medal with world-record throw of 63.97 metres. Devendra victory took India's medal tally at this edition of the Paralympics to four medals — two golds, one silver and a bronze. He had also secured the gold medal in the javelin event at the 2004 Athens Paralympics with record throw of 62.15 metres. With this, he also became first Indian Paralympian to win two gold medals at the Paralympics.

About Devendra Jhajharia

Devendra Jhajharia's left hand amputated after he had met with accident in his childhood. He was awarded the Arjuna award in 2004 and the Padma Shri in 2012, becoming the first Paralympian to receive the honour.

He last participated in the Paralympics 12 years ago i.e. in 2004, however the F46 event did not feature in the 2008 and the 2012 editions of Paralympics.

Deepa Malik first Indian woman to win Paralympics medal - September 12, 2016



Deepa Malik has created history by winning silver medal in Women's shotput at the 2016 Rio Paralympics. With this she becomes first Indian woman to win a medal at the Paralympics. It is India's 3rd medal in the ongoing Paralympics games at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Malik had won the silver medal in the shotput F-53 event with her best throw of 4.61m in her six attempts. In the shotput F-53 event, Bahrain's Fatema Nedham had won the gold medal with the best throw of 4.76m. Greece's Dimitra Korokida had won the bronze medal with a throw of 4.28m.

About Deepa Malik

Deepa Malik was born in Sonipat, Haryana. She is associated with Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) and Himalayan Motorsports Association (HMA). She has completed 8 day, 1700-km drive in

sub-zero temperatures which included a climb to 18000 feet covering many difficult paths including remote Himalayas, Leh, Shimla and Jammu. She is a member of the working group in the formulation 12th five- year plan (2012-2017) on Sports and Physical Education. She was nominated on behalf of the Union Sports Ministry by the Planning Commission HRD Division.

Mariyappan Thangavelu wins India's first Gold medal at 2016 Rio Paralympic Games - September 10, 2016



Mariyappan Thangavelu has won India's first gold medal at the 2016 Rio Paralympics. He won the gold medal in the Men's High Jump T-42 event with jump of 1.89 metres. With this, Thangavelu became the first Indian high-jumper to win gold at the Paralympics. This was India's overall third gold at the Paralympics and the first after 12 years. In addition, India's Varun Singh Bhati won the bronze medal in same event with the jump of 1.86 metres to finish third. Sam Grewe of United States won the silver medal. India had won its first ever Paralympics Gold medal in the 1972 Heidelberg Games. It was won by Swimmer Murlikant Petkar. Besides, India had claimed Gold and Bronze medals at 2004 Athens Paralympics. The Gold medal was won by Javelin thrower Devendra Jhajharia and the Bronze medal was won by Rajinder Singh in powerlifting event. In the last edition of Paralympics held in London in 2012, India had won just a silver medal.

CK Asnani appointed as CMD of Uranium Corporation of India Limited - September 8, 2016



CK Asnani has taken charge as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of state owned Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL). Prior to this

appointment he was serving as the Director (Technical) of Indian Rare Earths Limited, Mumbai. Earlier he was associated with Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad.

About Uranium Corporation of India (UCIL)

UCIL is a centrally owned Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) for uranium mining and uranium processing under the Department of Atomic Energy. It was founded in 1967. It is responsible for the mining and milling of uranium ore in India. It operates mines at Jadugora, Narwapahar, Bhatin, Turamdih and Banduhurang.

Mother Teresa canonised as Saint - September 5, 2016



Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic religious sister and missionary was proclaimed a Saint by Pope Francis in a ceremony at the Vatican. She was canonised at the ceremony held in St Peter's Square in Vatican. Indian delegation was represented by Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj. With this, Mother Teresa became the fourth Indian to be canonised as Saint. Others are Father Kuriakose Elias Chavara, Sister Alphonsa and Sister Euphrasia. The list also includes Saint Gonsalo Garcia of Portuguese parentage who was born in India and is considered an India born saint.

About Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa was born as Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu on 26 August 1910 in Skopje (Now in Macedonia) then part of the Kosovo Vilayet in the Ottoman Empire. She was the founder of Kolkata based Missionaries of Charity that helps poor on the streets of Kolkata. Through the charity organisation, she had spent around 45-years serving the poor, sick, orphaned and dying on the streets of Kolkata. She had died at the age of 87 in 1997 in Kolkata.

Awards and Honours: Padma Shri (1962), Ramon Magsaysay Award (1962), Nobel Peace Prize (1979), Bharat Ratna (1980) etc.

C Vidyasagar Rao sworn in as acting Governor of Tamil Nadu - September 3, 2016



Governor of Maharashtra Chennamaneni Vidyasagar Rao, was sworn in as the acting Governor of Tamil Nadu. He was administered oath of office by the Madras High Court's Chief Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul as per provisions of Article 159 of Constitution at the Raj Bhavan, Chennai. President Pranab Mukherjee had given additional charge of Tamil Nadu to C Vidyasagar Rao as per Article 153 of Constitution as the tenure of K. Rosaiah ended on 31 August 2016.

About C Vidyasagar Rao Chennamaneni Vidyasagar Rao is incumbent Governor of Maharashtra. He had entered into the office in August 2014. Previously, he served as the Union Minister of State (MoS) for Home affairs and Commerce and Industry from 1999 to 2004 in then AB Vajpayee-led BJP Government. He was elected to 12th and 13th Lok Sabha as a Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Karimnagar in Telangana.

Ashok Chawla appointed as Chancellor of TERI University - September 1, 2016



Former Finance Secretary Ashok Chawla has been appointed as the new Chancellor of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) University. The decision of his appointment was taken in the governing council meeting of TERI. He is currently serving as the Chairman of TERI since February 2016. With this appointment, TERI has ended its last association with former Chancellor and Head R.K. Pachauri, who was accused

of sexually harassing a female colleague in 2015. Ashok Chawla is former Union Finance Secretary. He is former Chairman of the Competition Commission of India (CCI). He was IAS officer of 1973 batch of Gujarat cadre.

About The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)

TERI is a non-profit research institution that conducts research work in the fields of energy, environment and sustainable development. Established in 1974 as Tata Energy Research Institute and was renamed The Energy and Resources Institute in 2003. It aims to focus on formulating local and national level strategies for shaping global solutions to critical issues. Presently, it has over 1200 employees especially research professionals from different disciplines pertaining to issues of environment and energy. In 2013, it was ranked as the topmost global think-tank by the International Centre for Climate Governance (ICCG).

Aishwaryaa Dhanush appointed as UN Women's Advocate for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India - August 31, 2016



Noted filmmaker Aishwaryaa Dhanush was appointed United Nations Women's Advocate for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India. In her new role she will help raise awareness of UN Women's core message of gender equality and women's empowerment across India. Besides she will play important role in boosting the organisation's efforts to close the gender gap and achieve a more equal world, a Planet 50-50 by the year 2030. With this, Aishwaryaa joins other celebrities who have joined hands with U.N. Women to work for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Some of them star Sania Mirza, actor-director Farhan Akhtar, British actor Emma Watson, Hollywood stars Nicole Kidman and Anne Hathaway and Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand. Aishwaryaa Dhanush is superstar Rajinikanth's elder daughter and actor Dhanush's wife. She had started her career by working as an assistant to director and Dhanush's brother Selvaraghavan in her debut film 3.

PV Sindhu to be appointed as brand ambassador of CRPF - August 31, 2016



The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has decided to appoint Olympic silver medallist P. V. Sindhu as its honorary commandant and brand ambassador. It was announced by CRPF's Director General K.Durga Prasad after she had agreed to become the India's largest paramilitary force's brand ambassador. In this regard, CRPF also has moved the proposal before the Home Ministry. She will be given honorary Commandant rank in the CRPF which is equivalent to the position of a Superintendent of Police (SP) and such an officer who commands a battalion of about 1,000 personnel.

About Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)

CRPF is the largest central armed police force or paramilitary force in India. It functions under the aegis of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Its primary role is to assist States/Union Territories in police operations to maintain law and order and contain insurgency. It was established in 1939, under Crown Representative's Police but after independence it was made statutory CRPF after enactment of the CRPF Act, 1949. At present, CRPF is the world's largest paramilitary force with 228 battalions and over three lakh personnel.

Sakshi Malik made brand ambassador for Beti Bachao, Beti Pado campaign in Haryana - August 25, 2016

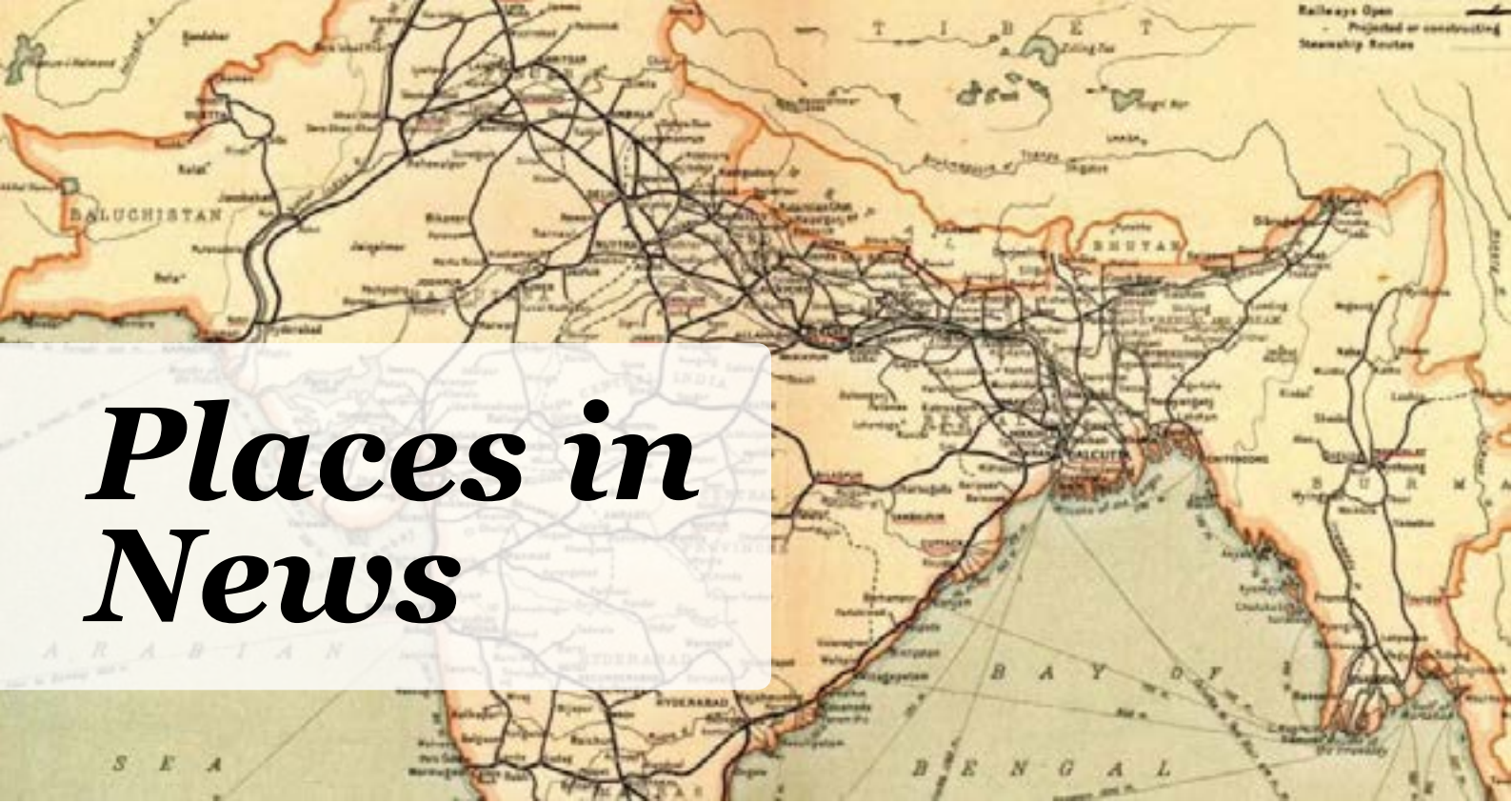


Wrestler Sakshi Malik was named as Haryana's brand ambassador for Beti Bachao, Beti Pado (save daughter, educate daughter) campaign in Haryana. Sakshi Malik had won bronze medal in wrestling at 2016 Rio Olympics in the 58 kg category. She had created history by becoming first women from India to win Olympics medal in wrestling. Announcement in this regard was made by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar after awarding Malik with 2.5 crore rupees and Commendation Certificate.

About Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) campaign

BBBP campaign aims to spread awareness about the declining trend of Child Sex Ratio in the country. It aims to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services meant for women. Its main objective is to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination by strict enforcement of laws with stringent punishment to violators. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD), is the nodal agency for the implementation of the scheme.





Places in News

India's first LIGO laboratory to come up in Hingoli, Maharashtra - September 9, 2016



India's first LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory) laboratory will be set up in Aundh in Hingoli district of Maharashtra. It will be third such laboratory in the world and first outside the United States. The existing two laboratories are located in Hanford, Washington and in Livingston, Louisiana.

Key Facts

The site at Aundh in Hingoli district has been chosen for carrying out experiments on the ambitious LIGO project that proved existence of gravitational waves. It was selected based on site researches conducted by scientists from Department of Science and Technology (DST). The setup of LIGO-India laboratory will involve construction of 8 km-long beam tube at ultra- high vacuum on a levelled terrain. The Aundh site is suitable flat site for carrying out the experiments as the four kms strips require an unhindered straight and flat site for studying the lasers. The LIGO-India laboratory will help to bring

considerable opportunities in cutting edge technology for Indian industries.

Background

A MoU to set up the LIGO-India project was signed between the scientists from the US' National Science Foundation (NSF) and India's Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the DST in April 2016. Earlier in February 2016, the Union Cabinet had given its in-principle approval to the LIGO-India mega science proposal for research on gravitational waves.

Gumthala Garhu becomes first Wifi hotspot village in Haryana - September 3, 2016



Gumthala Garhu Village near Pehowa in Kurukshetra district in Haryana became the first Wifi hotspot village in Haryana circle. The service was inaugurated by Chief Minister Manohar Lal from Chandigarh under the bulk plan of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) to provide internet services to rural areas.

Key Facts

The Wifi hotspot facility at the village uses bandwidth of 10 mbps through BSNL's state-of-the-art network. In this hotspot, data can be accessed by multiple users simultaneously. Ten outdoor and one indoor access points have been installed to cover the village. The coverage from each access point is about 100 meters. BSNL Haryana circle has planned to have 238 WIFI hotspot locations with 1072 access points in the state. The project would be implemented during the current financial year.

Majuli declared largest river island in world by Guinness World Records - September 2, 2016



The Guinness World Records has officially designation Assam's Majuli as the largest river island in the world. It is situated in the Brahmaputra River. The river island covering an area of around 880 sqkm has toppled previous record held by Brazil's Marajo island in the Amazon river.

About Majuli Island

The fluvial riverine island is formed by the Brahmaputra river system. It is surrounded by Subanisri River in the North, main Brahmaputra River on the South and Kherkatia Suli, split channel of Brahmaputra River in northeast. The island has total 144 villages with a population of over 160,000 and a density of 300 individuals per square km. Majuli island is mostly inhabited by Mishing tribal people. Apart from them, there are inhabitants from the Deori and Sonowal Kacharis tribes. On the island languages spoken are Mising, Assamese, and Deori Majuli island has a rich and diverse agricultural tradition. As many as 100 varieties of rice grown organically, i.e., without pesticides or artificial fertilisers. It is the nerve centre of Assamese neo-Vaishnavite culture initiated by saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardeva in 15th century. The island had some 65 satras (monasteries adhering) to Vaishnavism. But large numbers of them were relocated to the mainland after

being washed away. The main surviving satras include Garamurh, Dakhinpat, Kamalabari, Auniati and Bengenaati. Majuli island is a rich environmental hotspot harbouring. It is home of many rare and endangered avifauna species including migratory birds. Due to erosion of river-bank, the island has lost around one-third of its area in the last 30-40 years caused mainly due to frequent flooding of the river. In June 2016, Assam Government had officially declared the island as the district making it India's first island district. The island has been nominated for the World Heritage Site status. It has been included in the tentative list by UNESCO.

Defence Ministry sanctioned construction of National War Memorial, War Museum in New Delhi - August 31, 2016



The Union Defence Ministry has sanctioned the construction of a National War Memorial and National War Museum in New Delhi. The National War Memorial will honour the memory of all soldiers of the Indian Armed Forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation.

Key Facts

The National War Museum will combine architectural aesthetics and public sentiment. It will serve as a place for people to show their respect for soldiers, for their extraordinary efforts. The selected site of the memorial is located in the heart of New Delhi, within the C-Hexagon that lies in the close vicinity of India Gate and Chattri. It will be an institution to collect, preserve, interpret and display military artifacts. Besides, it will portray significant events of our nation's wars and related objects of historical importance for education and promoting patriotism.

Union Government inaugurates IIT in Dharwad - August 29, 2016



The Union Human Resource Ministry has formally launched Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Dharwad in Karnataka. It was launched by Union Human Resource Development Minister Prakash.

Key Facts

IIT-Dharwad is located at Walmi centre on the Dharwad's outskirts till its permanent campus is built. The prestigious higher education institute has already started functioning from this academic year from a temporary structure. Around 2000 students with Science and Maths background have been invited to the inaugural function to sensitise them about the higher learning institute. It is spread over the sprawling 470 acres allocated by the state government at nearby Kelgeri town.

South India's First Children's Court inaugurated in Hyderabad - August 26, 2016



The first Children Court of South India was launched at the Nampally Criminal Courts Complex in Hyderabad, Telangana to fast disposal of cases related to children. With this, Telangana has become the third state to have a child friendly court after Goa and Delhi. This court is the 6th child-friendly court in the country.

Key Facts

The Nampally children court project was facilitated by NGO Justice and Care in collaboration with the state government and the judiciary. It has features like separate waiting rooms for children and a video camera trial for accused, mandated under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act, 2012. It has waiting area, which provides a child-friendly environment, complete with toys, bean bags and colourful furniture.



International Current Affairs

15 September: International Democracy Day - September 15, 2016

INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF DEMOCRACY
SEPTEMBER 15

The International Democracy Day is being observed every year on 15 September to raise public awareness about the democratic system. The observance of the day provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. It focuses on essential elements of democracy i.e. values of freedom, respect for human rights and principle of holding periodic and genuine elections by universal suffrage.

2016 Theme: "Democracy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". To mark this day various government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) across the world are holding various activities and events to promote democracy.

Background

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in November 2007 had decided to observe 'International Democracy Day' every year on September 15. It was observed for first time in 2008. In this regard a resolution was passed

by UNGA in 2007 to strengthen national programmes devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

US sign 38 billion dollars defence deal with Israel - September 15, 2016



United States has signed a 38 billion dollars Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Israel to provide the country with military assistance over a 10-year period. The MoU will be valid from 2019 through 2028. This defence deal is the largest such agreement the US has ever had with any country.

Under the terms of MoU

Israel will receive 3.8 billion dollars annually from US, up from the 3.1 billion dollars US currently gives Israel annually under a 10-year deal that ends in 2018. US will also provide 500 million dollars for developing missile defence systems. Provided, Israel will not approach US Congress

for additional budgets for missile defence systems. In the event of an emergency, Israel can request additional budgets for missile defence systems, but only if the US agrees to it. Once the agreement comes into effect, there will be a gradual phasing out of Israel's right to use 26% of US's aid to buy equipment from Israel defence industries. Besides, Israel will immediately stop using 14% of the US's aid to buy fuel for the Israel Defence Forces.

World's first daily driverless bus service launched in Lyon, France - September 10, 2016



The world's first daily driverless bus service has started in Lyon, France which will run in the city's Confluence area. The driverless bus service includes two electric shuttles that will transport passengers on a ten-minute route hosting five stops.

Key Facts

The driverless buses can hold up to 15 passengers and are electric buses. It has features like LIDAR radar technology and motion sensors will help to avoid accidents. The LIDAR radar technology allows these buses to know exactly where they are and to detect everything happening around them. Using this technology these buses manage their movement intelligently to avoid collisions.

What is LIDAR?

LIDAR is an acronym of Light Detection And Ranging. Originally it was created as a portmanteau of "light" and "radar". It is a surveying technology that measures distance by illuminating a target with a laser light. It is sometimes simply referred to as 3D scanning or laser scanning with terrestrial, airborne and mobile applications. It is popularly used to make high-resolution maps, with applications in geodesy, geomatics, archaeology, geography, geology, geomorphology, forestry, atmospheric physics etc.

NASA launches OSIRIS-REx spacecraft to collect samples from Bennu asteroid - September 9, 2016



The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), a US space agency has launched OSIRIS-REx spacecraft to collect samples from an asteroid 101955 Bennu and return to Earth. The spacecraft was launched onboard a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

Key Facts

OSIRIS-Rex stands for Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer. It is an unmanned spacecraft and NASA's first mission to collect samples from an asteroid and return to Earth. OSIRIS-Rex will travel for two years on a journey to Bennu, a near-Earth asteroid about the size of a small mountain.

Primary aim of the mission:

- To study asteroid 101955 Bennu, a carbonaceous asteroid.
- Also to return a sample at least 60 grams dirt and debris from its surface and return to Earth in 2023 for detailed analysis.
- NASA scientists feel that the Bennu asteroid hold clues to the origin of the solar system and the source of water and organic molecules found on Earth.
- Significance: Material returned from asteroid 101955 Bennu is expected to enable scientists to learn more about the formation and evolution of the Solar System.
- Besides it will give insights of initial stages of planet formation and the source of organic compounds which led to the formation of life on Earth.

Note: OSIRIS-Rex is NASA's third planetary science mission selected in the New Frontiers Program, after Juno and New Horizons. 101955 Bennu is a carbonaceous asteroid in the Apollo group. It was discovered in September 1999 by the LINEAR Project.

2016 ASEAN Summit held in Vientiane, Laos – September 9, 2016



The 28th and 29th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit was held in Vientiane, Laos from 6th to 8th September 2016. Prime Minister of the Lao PDR H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith was Chairperson of the summit. The theme of the summit was “Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community”. The summit was attended by the leaders of all 10-member nations of ASEAN viz. Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR (host), , Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia.

India-ASEAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had represented India at the ASEAN summit at the 14th ASEAN-India summit. ASEAN-India adopted a document aiming at politically cohesive, economically integrated, socially responsible and people oriented people centered ASEAN-India Community. The document recognizes the vital importance of the planned review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods (AITIG) Agreement. It seeks to ensure that the agreement is trade-facilitative and remains relevant to the current global trading practices. The document also emphasizes the importance of maintaining peace, security and stability, unimpeded commerce, freedom of navigation in and overflight above the South China Sea. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed deep concern over the rising export of terror in an apparent reference to Pakistan. He also mentioned that export of terror is common security threat to the region and there was need for a coordinated response from the ASEAN member nations to combat it.

About Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)

ASEAN is a group of 10 South Asian nations which came into existence on August 8, 1967 after ASEAN declaration (also known as Bangkok declaration). It is a regional organisation comprising that aims to promote intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic

integration amongst its members. Principal aims: (i) Accelerating economic growth, social progress, and socio-cultural evolution among its members, (ii) Protection of regional stability and the provision of a mechanism for member countries to resolve differences peacefully. Motto: “One Vision, One Identity, One Community” 10 Members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Founder countries of ASEAN: Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Philippines and Thailand Enlargement: The group was expanded by adding 5 more nations which are Brunei Darussalam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam. Cambodia was the last entrant added in the group in 1999.

US to create world's largest protected marine area off Hawaii - August 27, 2016



United States is going to create world's largest protected marine reserve area named as Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument off the Hawaiian coast. It will be created by expansion of present national monument off Hawaii. US President Barck Obama will use his power to expand this national monument.

Key Facts

With this expansion, the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument will now span to 582,578 square miles. Thus, it quadruples in the size from present size. The expansion will further help to protect more than 7,000 species and improves an ecosystem dealing with ocean acidification and warming. It will permanently protect coral reefs and underwater marine habitats which are home to marine species, including rare whales and sea turtles. The monument was first designated by the US President George W. Bush in 2006 as the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument. It was renamed later in honour of Papahānaumoku and Wakea, the husband-and-wife Hawaiian gods of earth and sky. In 2010, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had designated the area a world heritage site.

PM Narendra Modi, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani jointly inaugurate the restored Stor Palace in Kabul - August 22, 2016



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani jointly tele-inaugurated the restored Stor Palace in Kabul. The Stor Palace is located in the Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Campus in Kabul. The newly renovated and restored building will house the Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Besides, it will also serve as the venue for hosting official domestic and international events by the Afghan government.

Background

A tripartite agreement for restoring Stor Palace was signed in 2011 during the visit of then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Afghanistan. The agreement was signed between Aga Khan Development Network, Government of Afghanistan and Government of India.

India's Contribution in Afghanistan's development

India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan in the past few years. Earlier in June 2016, both countries had inaugurated the \$300 million India and Afghanistan Friendship Dam in Herat Province. Besides, India also had gifted Afghanistan its new parliament building in December 2015. So far India has poured more than \$2 billion dollars into Afghanistan reconstruction projects and humanitarian aid as part of its goodwill diplomacy making it one of the largest donors to the war-torn country.



National Current Affairs

India, Afghanistan sign agreements to boost bilateral cooperation - September 15, 2016



India and Afghanistan have signed an Extradition Treaty to facilitate exchange of wanted terrorists and criminals. Moreover, both countries also signed agreements on peaceful uses of outer space technology and also on cooperation on commercial and civil matters. These agreements were signed during Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani's official state visit to India. He was on a visit to India from 14 to 15 September 2016.

Key Facts

Besides, during the meeting of President Ghani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi they sought faster implementation of the trilateral agreement among Iran, Afghanistan and India. This trilateral agreement was signed between three countries in May 2016 with an aim to create a network of regional connectivity to landlocked Afghanistan through Chahbahar port. Besides, India also extended a one-billion dollar to Afghanistan for capacity and capability

building in areas like education, health, empowerment of women, skill development, energy and others.

14 September: National Hindi Divas - September 14, 2016



The National Hindi Divas, an annual literary-day is observed on 14 September in Hindi speaking regions of India and other countries with Hindi speaking population. Observance of the day seeks to propagate Hindi language and its cultural heritage and values. It also seeks to promote the Matra Bhasha i.e. mother tongue of India and show its importance as a language in the country and the world at large. On this occasion President Pranab Mukherjee will present the Rajbhasha awards at Rashtrapati Bhawan. The Rajbhasha awards were instituted by the Department of Official Language of Union Home Ministry to recognize the excellent contribution of Ministries, Departments and Nationalized Banks in the field of Hindi. The day is also celebrated in the schools, colleges, offices, organizations and other enterprises as a Hindi Diwas with the unique programs and competitions organized related to Hindi poems, story recitations and vocabulary quizzes.

About National Hindi Divas

Hindi Divas is celebrated on 14th September every year to mark adaptation of Hindi language as the official language of India by the Constituent Assembly of India on 14 September 1949. The decision of using Hindi as the official language was ratified by the Constitution of India which came into effect on 26 January 1950. Under the Article 343 of the Indian Constitution, Hindi written in Devanagari script was adopted as the official language. But presently, there are 2 official languages: Hindi and English.

Union Government issues fresh guidelines for flexi-fund for CSS - September 12, 2016



The Union Finance Ministry has issued fresh flexi-fund guidelines for the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). These flexi-fund guidelines will give states more freedom in spending money under the CSS to meet local developmental requirements. These guidelines were based on the instructions issued by NITI Aayog for rationalisation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes. These recommendations were based on instructions of the sub-group of Chief Ministers of states and consultations with stakeholders.

Key Facts

Under the new norms, flexi-funds in each CSS has been increased from the current 10% to 25% for states and 30% for Union Territories. This means that states if they so desire can set aside 25% of any CSS as flexi-fund to be spent on any sub-scheme or innovation or component that is in line with the overall aim and objective of the approved Centrally Sponsored Scheme. States can use the fund to satisfy local requirements in areas affected by internal security disturbances or to undertake mitigation or restoration activities in case of natural calamities. State governments will have to constitute a state-level sanctioning committee (SLSC) to avail of the flexi-fund facility. This facility is not for CSS which emanate from a legislation, like MNREGA.

CBDT launches e-nivaran to resolve I-T grievances - September 12, 2016



The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has launched 'e-nivaran' (electronic resolution) facility for online redressal of taxpayers' grievances. Its link of this facility has been activated on the e-filing portal of the department -<https://incometaxindiaefiling.gov.in>.

Key Facts

The facility will be used for online redressal of taxpayers' grievances related to refunds, filing of e-returns, Tax Deducted at Source (TDS), PAN issues, and those pertaining to their Assessing Officer (AO). It was launched as part of CBDT's initiative to reduce instances of harassment of the public when it comes to complaints related to the I-T department. Using this facility, taxpayers can register their complaints through their personal computer systems. After registration they will receive a special PIN number on their registered mobile and email, as their unique number to keep track of the issue. The 'e-nivaran' form will be also provided at the Aaykar Sampark Kendras (ASK) (tax facilitation centre) in a physical form which will later be fed into the system by tax officials. Besides, there are provisions for 'grievance description' along with furnishing of details like mention of the Assessment Year (in case of individual) or the Financial Year (in case of deductor).

Talgo Train completes New Delhi-Mumbai Central trial run in less than 12 hours - September 10, 2016



Hi-speed train Talgo from Spain completed the trial run between New Delhi and Mumbai Central in 11 hours and 48 minutes. The trial was carried out at maximum speed of 150 kmph, covering a distance of 1384 km.

A Indian Railway official said, "The train departed from New Delhi at 2:45 pm on Saturday and arrived in Mumbai Central at 2.33 am on Sunday." The same distance between these two destinations by Rajdhani Express at 130 kmph takes 15 hour and 50 minutes. Hi-speed trains Talgo from Spain is able to achieve faster acceleration and deceleration, besides running at fast speeds on curves. Its' coaches are lighter in weight and can hence reach destinations faster than conventional coaches run on Indian Railways. Talgo can negotiate curves and climb any hills at much faster speed compared to conventional Indian trains."

Nine state-of-the-art train coaches manufactured by Spanish firm Talgo which are capable of running at a maximum speed of 200 kmph reached Mumbai by Ship from Spain in April.

Union Government launches Urja Mitra Helpline for power outages - September 10, 2016



The Union Government has launched Urja Mitra Helpline through which customers can get information on power outages from distribution companies by dialing 14401. The helpline was launched by the Department of Telecom (DoT) of the Union Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

Key Facts

Urja Mitra Helpline is for pan-India usage to send information through voice calls and SMSes. The information will apprise customers about power situation in their area so that they can plan accordingly. It is a mandatory service, which will be provided by all the telecom operators. Besides, Power Finance Corporation (PFC) on behalf of the Union Power Ministry has developed Urja mobile app. It will enhance consumer connect with power distribution companies. Using it consumers can get information on outages, complaint redressal, timely release of connections, and power reliability, among others.

Mandi, Sindhudurg emerge cleanest Districts in India: Gramin Swachh Survekshan - September 10, 2016



Mandi in Himachal Pradesh and Sindhudurg in Maharashtra have emerged the cleanest districts in India according to Gramin Swachh Survekshan. Sindhudurg was judged as the cleanest in the 'Plains' category and Mandi in the cleanest district in 'Hills' category. The Gramin Swachh Survekshan report was released by the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.

Overall Rankings in Swachh Survekshan Gramin

Hills category

- Rank 1: Mandi (Himachal Pradesh) with 98.4 score.
- Rank 2: West Sikkim (Sikkim) with 96.4 score.
- Rank 3: Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) with 94.1 score.

Plains category

- Rank 1: Sindhudurg (Maharashtra) with 96.8 score.
- Rank 2: Nadia (West Bengal) with 95.0 score.
- Rank 3: Satara (Maharashtra) with 92.9 score.

Key Facts

In the survey total of 22 hill districts and 53 plain areas were assessed by the Quality Council of India (QCI). QCI was given task to carry out the assessment by the Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. A total of 22 hill districts and 53 plain areas were assessed by QCI under the Gramin Swachh Survekshan launched in May 2016. Each district was judged on four distinct parameters of Gramin Swachh Survekshan. Maximum weightage was placed on accessibility to safe toilets and water. The parameters to judge sanitation status included: (i) Households having access to safe toilets and using them. It was given 40% weightage and included survey of toilet usage, water accessibility, safe disposal of waste. (ii) Households having no litter around. It was given weightage of 30%. (iii) Public places with no litter in the surrounding. It was given weightage of 10%. (iv) Households having no stagnant wastewater around. It was given weightage of 20%.

ISRO's GSLV-F05 launches advanced weather satellite INSAT-3DR - September 9, 2016



The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has successfully launched advanced weather satellite INSAT-3DR. The satellite was launched on board of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F05), from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. So far this year, it was the seventh successful mission of ISRO including the IRNSS series and the scramjet propulsion mission.

About INSAT-3DR

- INSAT-3DR weighing 2,211-kg will supplement the services of INSAT-3D launched from French Guiana in July 2013. It has designed mission life of ten years.
- Orbit: INSAT-3DR was successfully placed Geostationary Transfer Orbit (GTO). To reach final GTO at 74 degree East longitude, INSAT-3DR had used its own propulsion system.
- Payloads in INSAT-3DR: (i) Multi-Spectral Imager: It would generate images of earth every 26 minutes

to provide information on various parameters, sea surface temperature, snow cover, cloud motion winds. (ii) Sounder: It will provide information on temperature and humidity. (iii) Data-Relay Transponder: It will be used for receiving meteorological, hydrological and oceanographic data. (iv) Satellite Aided Search and Rescue Transponder: It will be used to pick up and relay alert signals originating from distress beacons of aviation, maritime, among others.

- Applications: It will provide service continuity to earlier meteorological missions and further augment the capability to provide various meteorological, search and rescue services.

GSLV-F05

- GSLV-F05 was the tenth flight of India's GSLV. Besides, it was GSLV's fourth flight with the indigenous cryogenic engine CE-7.5, with the first three being developmental flights. Thus, it was the first operational flight of the rocket fitted with the indigenous cryogenic upper stage. It had indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS) on-board.
- GSLV is a three stage rocket designed to inject 2 to 2.5 ton class of satellites into GTO. The first stage of rocket is fired by solid fuel and its four strap-on motors by liquid fuel. The second stage is powered by liquid fuel and the third stage by the cryogenic engine which is more efficient as it provides more thrust for every kilogram of propellant burnt.
- Significance: ISRO is perfecting the crucial cryogenic engine technology in order to save precious foreign exchange by launching heavier satellites on its own. Currently, ISRO relies on the European Space Agency (ESA's) Ariane rocket to launch its heavy communication satellites.

Integration of DigiLocker with Driving Licenses & Vehicle Registration Certificates launched - September 8, 2016



The Union Government has launched a new service - integration of DigiLocker with Driving Licenses

(DL) & Vehicle Registration Certificates (RC). It was jointly launched by Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways and Shipping Nitin Gadkari and Union Minister of Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad in New Delhi.

Key Facts

With this integration people will no longer need to carry around physical copies of their Driving Licences and RCs. Using DigiLocker mobile app, they can instead access digital copies of the same on their mobile phones. Besides, DLs and VRC documents will be now issued directly to the DigiLockers of individuals in digital formats. These digital copies also can be shared with other government departments as identity and address proof. They can also be used for on the spot verification through the citizen's mobile, by various law enforcement authorities like the Traffic Police. Besides, it will also result in assured authenticity of such documents and reduction of administrative overhead.

Comment

DigiLocker is a key initiative under Digital India programme and serves as a platform for issuance of documents and certificates in a digital way. The integration of VRCs and DLs with DigiLocker will bring a major shift in the vision of paperless governance. It will also bring efficiency to the entire process of issuance of driving licenses and vehicle registration certificates through IT enablement.

Madhukar Gupta Committee: Recommendations on border protection - August 30, 2016



The Madhukar Gupta Committee on border protection has submitted its report to the Union Ministry Home Affairs (MHA). The Committee was constituted to suggest recommendations for strengthening border protection and addressing the issue of gaps and vulnerability in border fencing along India-Pakistan Border. It was headed by former Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta.

Key Facts

The committee has examined security mechanisms of all four Indian states sharing border with Pakistan keeping in mind challenges of different climate and topography. It has given separate recommendations for four states as each of them has different topography and problems. It has flagged gaps and vulnerabilities in border fencing and suggested use of technology and heightened vigil on riverine frontiers. It has expressed displeasure over not installing laser walls in many infiltration-prone areas due to treacherous and marshy terrain.

Note: 4 Indian states share 3,323-km-long border with Pakistan. Of this 1,225 km falls in Jammu and Kashmir (including Line of Control), 1,037 km in Rajasthan, 553 km in Punjab and 508 km in Gujarat.

Background

The MHA had constituted this committee in April 2016 to suggest ways to address the issue of gaps and vulnerability in border fencing. It was constituted three months after the terror attack on Pathankot IAF base in January 2016 by Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists from Pakistan. These terrorists had infiltrated into India by beaching the India-Pakistan border (through porous border) in Punjab especially from the riverine stretch.

India, US sign LEMOA - August 30, 2016



India and the United States have signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) that will enable both countries to use each other's bases for repair and replenishment of defence supplies. The agreement was signed after Indian Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar met his US counterpart, Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter in Washington, D.C. The logistics agreement signed was based on the memorandum in principle reached between two leaders in April 2016.

What is LEMOA?

LEMOA is another name for Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), an agreement that US has signed with many of its allies. It allows defence forces countries to avail defence logistics support facilities such as fuel, spare parts, mechanics, etc. during joint training, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and port calls. Besides, it also lays out the procedure for billing for these facilities as part of a larger accounting transaction and details are contained in clarifying protocols annexed to LEMOA.

Under LEMOA

LEMOA is facilitating agreement that establishes basic terms, conditions, and procedures for reciprocal provision of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services (LSSS). LSSS include food, billeting, water, medical services, transportation, petroleum, oils, lubricants, clothing, communication services, storage services, training services, spare parts and components, repair and maintenance services and port services. Reciprocal logistic support would be used exclusively during authorized port visits, joint training, joint exercises, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. Provision of LSSS from one Party to the other would be in return for either cash payment or the reciprocal provision of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services. Logistics support for any other cooperative efforts will only be provided on a case-by-case basis through prior mutual consent of both countries.

ISRO conducts successful test launch of scramjet engine - August 29, 2016



The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) for the first time has successfully conducted the Scramjet (or Supersonic Combusting ramjet) engine test. The test was conducted from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh and has successfully met all the intended parameters.

Key facts

The scramjet engine was test launched on board of RH 560 sounding rocket. RH 560 sounding rocket is two stage Advanced Technology Vehicle (ATV). The ATV along with the scramjet engines weighed 3,277 kg at lift-off. During the test, ATV was able to fly at Mach 6 (six times the speed of sound) speeds. The scramjet uses hydrogen as fuel and oxygen from the atmospheric air as the oxidiser. During the test, Air Breathing Propulsion System (ABPS) using hydrogen as fuel and oxygen from the atmosphere air as the oxidiser was successfully tested. With this, India became only the fourth nation in the world to successfully flight-test a scramjet engine after United States, Russia and China.

What is scramjet engine?

The scramjet engine works on the Air-breathing Propulsion System. The system uses natural oxygen present in the atmosphere to burn the fuel stored in the rocket. It reduces the amount of oxidiser to be carried along with the fuel, bringing down launch costs.

Benefits

This system would help in reducing the lift-off mass of the vehicle as there will be no need of carrying liquefied oxygen on board the vehicle. In turn help in increasing the energy efficiency of the rocket and also make it cost-effective. Scramjet does not have rotating parts so the chances of failure are also measurably reduced. Currently, ISRO uses rocket launch vehicles like the PSLV to deliver satellites into orbit. But PSLVs are expendable i.e. it can only be used once.



Awards & Honours

Indian-American Abraham Verghese selected for National Humanities Medal 2015 - September 15, 2016



Indian-American physician-author, Abraham Verghese (61) has been selected for the prestigious 2015 National Humanities Medal. President Barack Obama will bestow the honour upon Verghese along with 11 others recipient's at a ceremony to be held in Washington on 21st September 2016. He has been selected for the prestigious award for reminding us that the patient is the centre of the medical enterprise.

About Abraham Verghese

He was born in Ethiopia to parents from Kerala who had worked as teachers. Currently, Abraham Verghese is a professor of medicine at the Stanford School of Medicine.

His work has emphasised empathy in medicine. He has authored several acclaimed books, including "My Own Country" and "Cutting for Stone".

About National Humanities Medal

National Humanities Medal bestowed upon individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation's understanding of human experience, broadened citizens' engagement with history, languages, philosophy, literature and other humanities subjects. It was inaugurated in 1997.

Subramanian Swamy awarded Tamil Ratna award - September 15, 2016



Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy has been honoured with Tamil Ratna award

by America Tamil Sangam (ATS) in New York. He was bestowed with this award for fighting corruption and working for more transparency in the functioning of the government.

About Subramanian Swamy

Subramanian Swamy is politician and economist who is presently serving as a member of the Rajya Sabha. As an economist, he had served as a member of the erstwhile Planning Commission. He was a Cabinet Minister in the Chandra Shekhar government from 1990 to 1991. In 1978, he had served member of the Group of Eminent persons which had prepared a report of UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on Economic Co-operation between Developing countries (ECDC). In 1994, former Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao had appointed him as Chairman of the Commission on Labour Standards and International Trade. He was the President and founder of the Janata Party until it was merged on with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Some of the previous recipients of Tamil Ratna Award include, music composer AR Rahman, Bharatha Natyam exponent Kamala Lakshman, Tamil movie director Bharathi Raja and mathematician Srinivasa Varadhan.

India-born innovator Ramesh Raskar wins 2016 Lemelson-MIT Prize - September 15, 2016



India-born innovator and scientist Ramesh Raskar has won the prestigious 2016 Lemelson-MIT Prize. He is an associate professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT's) Media Lab. He is known for his co-invention of an ultra-fast imaging camera that can see around corners, low-cost eye-care solutions. It also enables users to read the first few pages of a book without opening the cover. About Ramesh Raskar He was born in Nashik, Maharashtra. He is associate professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US. He is head of the MIT Media Lab's Camera Culture research group. He had finished his engineering education from College of Engineering, Pune (COEP) and had completed

his PhD at UNC Chapel Hill. He holds over 75 patents and has written more than 120 reviewed publications.

About Lemelson-MIT Prize

The annual Lemelson-MIT prize is administered by the School of Engineering at the MIT. It was endowed in 1994 by Jerome H. Lemelson The award honours US inventors who are mid-career and trying to improve the world through science and technology. The winner receives US\$ 500000 US, making it the largest cash prize for invention in the US.

Haryana wins Best Horticulture State award - September 10, 2016



Haryana has won 'Best Horticulture State' award of the Indian Council of Food and Agriculture (ICFA). The award was bestowed upon the state for its concerted efforts made to increase the income of the farmers in horticulture. The award was received by Haryana Agriculture Minister O.P. Dhankar at two-day 9th Agricultural Leadership Summit 2016 that organized by ICFA in New Delhi. Besides, the 2016 Best Agriculture State award was bestowed upon Odisha in recognition of state's efforts towards development of agriculture and bringing rural prosperity.

Horticulture in Haryana

At present, about 2.5 lakh hectares of land is under horticulture in Haryana. The state government has ambitious target to increase it up to 9 lakh hectares. For this purpose, state government has decided to set a Horticulture University in the state. Besides, it will also create 340 horticulture villages in the state and centres of excellence in horticulture in every district. In addition, state government will also set up biggest Horticulture Mandi of the country at Ganaur on the pattern of Shenzhen Mandi of China and Rungis Mandi of France. State Government will also develop Peri Urban Culture to cater to the needs of the people related to fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products and flowers.

Novel on Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh wins MM Bennetts Award - September 9, 2016



Novel based on Apatani tribe of Arunachal Pradesh titled *Into the Hidden Valley* has won 2016 MM Bennetts Award for Historical Fiction in the United Kingdom. The novel is authored by Stuart Blackburn. He was presented with this award at the HNS Conference in Oxford. Novel: *Into the Hidden Valley* The novel looks into a little-known episode in the colonial history of British India. It brings alive the world of the Apatanis and portrays the impact of British colonialism. It dramatises the encounter by telling two stories, one of a British official and the other of a tribesman.

About Stuart Blackburn

He is an author. He was born in Providence, Rhode Island. He has authored or edited 16 books on Indian culture and folklore, mainly in south India and northeast India. His first novel *Murder in Melur* was set in south India. One of his book based on study of shadow puppet theatre in Kerala had won the runner-up prize for the UK Folklore Book of the Year. He had completed his doctorate (PhD) in Tamil language and international folklore from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1980.

About MM Bennetts Award for Historical Fiction

The prestigious literary award has been named in memory of writer-historian MM Bennetts. MM Bennetts was a specialist in early 19th century British history and Napoleonic wars. Prior to writing novels Bennetts was a French translator. He was also longstanding book critic for the Pulitzer-prize winning newspaper, 'The Christian Science Monitor'.

Ecologist Bibhuti Lahkar wins IUCN's Heritage Heroes Award 2016 - September 6, 2016



Assam-based ecologist and conservation activist Bibhuti Lahkar has won prestigious 'Heritage Heroes Award' of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). With this, he became the first Asian to win this prestigious environmental award. He was presented this award at the IUCN's ongoing World Conservation Congress in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Background

Lahkar was among five conservationists across the globe to be nominated for 2016 Heritage Heroes Award. Others were Bantu Lukambo and Josue Kambasu Mukura (Congo), Yulia Naberezhnaya and Andrey Rudomahka (Russia)

About Bibhuti Lahkar

For the past two decades Lahkar, has been working to save the grasslands, flora and fauna of Manas National Park area. Currently, he is engaged as Manas Landscape Administrator for Aaranyak, an NGO working for biodiversity conservation in northeast India. He has intensively studied grasslands of Manas and is globally recognised as an expert in threatened flora and fauna of the Terai region along southern foothills of the Himalayas. He was also instrumental in connecting Manas Wildlife Sanctuary with the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan. Connecting them had led to a system of trans-boundary wildlife monitoring which now supports management in entire Manas natural area that spreads across India and Bhutan. He also had conducted the first GIS survey of the Manas and his research findings and recommendations were critical component in the Manas Tiger Conservation Plan.

Kiran M Shaw appointed Knight of Legion of Honor by France - September 3, 2016



Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairperson and Managing Director of Biocon Limited was appointed Knight of the National Order of the French Legion of Honour (Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur). Shaw was bestowed with this prestigious award for her contribution to biosciences and research. She will be presented with this award on behalf of the French President later in 2016.

About Kiran Mazumdar Shaw

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw is Indian entrepreneur and current chairperson of IIM-Bangalore. She is Chairman and MD of Biocon Limited, a biotechnology company based in Bengaluru.

Awards and Honours: She was bestowed with Othmer Gold Medal (2014) for outstanding contributions to the progress of science and chemistry. Forbes magazine had listed her 85th most powerful woman in the world. She was also listed on the Financial Times' top 50 women in business list.

Chevalier l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur: It is the highest civilian award of the French Government for outstanding contribution in diverse fields.

Padma Sachdev awarded 2015 Saraswati Samman - August 30, 2016



Eminent Dogri language Poetess and novelist Padma Sachdev was awarded the prestigious Saraswati Samman

for the year 2015. She was bestowed with this prestigious award for her autobiography 'Chitt-Chete' (published in 2007) written in Dogri language. She was felicitated by Delhi's Lt Governor Najeeb Jung in New Delhi.

About Padma Sachdev

Padma Sachdev is the first modern woman poet of Dogri language. She also writes in Hindi. She has published her several poetry collection and has 60 books to her credit. Her poetry collection Meri Kavita Mere Geet (My Poems, My Songs) has won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1971. Some of her famous books are Tavi Te Chanhhan (1976), Nheriyan Galiyan (1982), Pota Pota Nimbhal (1987), Uttar Vahini (1992) and Tainthian (1992).

Awards and Honours: Sahitya Akademi Award (1971), Padma Shri (2001), and the Kabir Samman for poetry (2007-08) by Government of Madhya Pradesh.

About Saraswati Samman

Saraswati Samman is an annual literary award bestowed upon Indian citizen for his/ her outstanding literary work written in any Indian language. These literary works should be in Indian languages that are mentioned in Schedule VIII of Constitution and published during last 10 years. The award has been named after Hindu goddess of learning and is considered to be among the highest literary awards in India.

Established: 1991 by the K. K. Birla Foundation.

Award Carries: Monetary award of 15 lakh rupees, a citation and a plaque.

Eminent Hindi author Harivansh Rai Bachchan was the first recipient of this award for his autobiography in four volumes.

Cristiano Ronaldo crowned UEFA Best Player in Europe award - August 26, 2016



Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo (31) has won the UEFA Best Player in Europe award for the year 2015-16. This is second time he has won this award after he was

crowned for first time in 2013–14. To bag this award, Ronaldo defeated Antoine Griezmann and Gareth Bale. In 2015, he had scored 35 goals for Real Madrid and 16 goals in Champions League competition. He scored 3 goals for Portugal national team at Euro 2016.

Other Category winners

Ada Hegerberg: She was crowned with UEFA Best Women's Player in Europe Award for the year 2015-16. Lionel Messi: He was crowned UEFA Goal of the Season award for the 2015-16. He had won the award for his strike against Roma. His famous goal had received 73331 votes.

About UEFA Best Player in Europe Award

The award is an association football award given to the footballer playing for a football club in Europe that is considered the best in the previous season. The award was created in 2011 by UEFA and had replaced the UEFA Club Footballer of the Year award. It aimed at reviving European Footballer of the Year Award (Ballon d'Or) which was merged with the FIFA World Player of the Year Award in 2010 to become the FIFA Ballon d'Or.

Hindi author Sunita Jain conferred with Vyas Samman award 2015 - August 23, 2016



Hindi scholar and writer Sunita Jain was conferred with the prestigious 25th Vyas Samman 2015. She was presented with the award by West Bengal Governor K N Tripathi. She was bestowed with this prestigious literary award for her poetry collection Kshama (published in 2008). Through her poetry collection, she portrays the fine emotions between poet Tulsidas and his wife Ratnavalli. Using very fine language in the poetry, she has managed to aptly convey the sentiment of forgiveness between Tulsidas and his wife.

About Sunita Jain

She is a scholar, novelist, short-story writer and a poet of English and Hindi literature. She had started her writing career at the age of 22. So far she has over 100 books to her credit apart from short-stories, novels and poems in Hindi and English. She also has translated many Jain writings into English. She had worked as the professor and the Head of the department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi.

Awards and Honours: The Vreeland Award (1969) and Marie Sandoz Prairie Schooner Fiction Award (1970 and 1971) and Padma Shri (2004).

About Vyas Samman award

The Vyas Samman award was instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation in 1991. It is awarded annually to outstanding literary work in Hindi authored and published in past 10 years by an Indian citizen. The award carries monetary award of 2.5 lakh rupees, a citation and a plaque.

National Sports Awards 2016 - August 22, 2016



The Union Government bestows National Sports Awards every year to recognize and reward excellence in sports in India. These awards include Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award, Dronacharya Award, Arjuna Award, Dhyan Chand Award, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy and Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puruskar.

2016 Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award

It is India's highest sporting award given for the spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports by a sportsperson over a period of four years. Recipients are: PV Sindhu (Badminton), Sakshi Malik (Wrestling), Dipa Karmakar (Gymnastics) and Jitu Rai (Shooting).

2016 Dronacharya Award

It is bestowed upon coaches for producing medal winners at prestigious international sports events. Recipients are: Nagapuri Ramesh (Athletics), Sagar Mal Dhayal (Boxing), Raj Kumar Sharma (Cricket), Bishweshwar Nandi (Gymnastics), S. Pradeep Kumar (Swimming) and Mahabir Singh (Wrestling).

2016 Arjuna Award

It is India's second highest sporting award bestowed upon sportsperson for consistently outstanding performance for four years.

Recipients are: Rajat Chauhan (Archery), Lalita Babar (Athletics), Sourav Kothari (Billiards & Snooker), Shiva Thapa (Boxing), Ajinkya Rahane (Cricket), Subrata Paul (Football), Rani Rampal (Hockey), Raghunath V.R. (Hockey), Gurpreet Singh (Shooting), Apurvi Chandel (Shooting), Soumyajit Ghosh (Table Tennis), Vinesh (Wrestling), Amit Kumar (Wrestling), Sandeep Singh Mann (Para-Athletics) and Virender Singh (Wrestling).

2016 Dhyan Chand

Award It is bestowed upon sportspersons for life time contribution to sports development. Recipients are: Satti Geetha (Athletics), Sylvanus Dung Dung (Hockey) and Rajendra Pralhad Shelke (Rowing).

2015-16 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (MAKA) Trophy

It is bestowed upon overall top performing university in inter-university tournaments. Recipient: Punjabi University, Patiala.

Actor Kamal Haasan selected for France's Chevalier de L'Ordre Arts et Lettres - August 22, 2016



Prominent film actor Kamal Haasan (61) has been selected by France for its prestigious Chevalier de L'Ordre Arts et Lettres. It is also known as Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters. He has been chosen for this prestigious award recognition of his high level artistic excellence and distinguished career achievements. He will be the second Tamil actor to be chosen for this award after the legendary actor Sivaji Ganesan.

About Kamal Haasan

Born on 7 November 1954 in Paramakudi in then Madras State. His birth name is Parthasarathy. He is a film actor, director, screenwriter, producer, playback singer,

choreographer, lyricist, philanthropist and a dancer. He had made his film debut at age of four as a child artist in the film 'Kalathur Kannamma' (1959). His breakthrough as a lead actor was in the film Apoorva Raagangal (1975), in which he played a rebellious youth in love with an older woman.

Awards and Honours: Till date, he has won four national awards, 19 Filmfare awards. He has been also honoured with Padmashree (1990) and Padmabhushan (2014).

About Chevalier de L'Ordre Arts et Lettres

The award is part of French Government's premier award "the Legion of Honour." It is aimed at honouring artists and writers of world repute. The other recipients of the Chevalier Order from India include actors Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aishwarya Rai and Nandita Das.

IOA President N Ramachandran bestowed with Olympic Order award - August 22, 2016



President Indian Olympic Association (IOA) N. Ramachandran was awarded the Olympic Order for his outstanding services to the Olympic movement. The award was formally bestowed upon him by the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach.

About Narayana Ramachandran

He is an Indian squash administrator. Currently he serves as current President of WSF (World Squash Federation) since 2008. Since February 2014 he is serving the president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

About Olympic Order Award

Olympic Order Award is the highest award of the Olympic Movement. It is awarded in recognition of efforts worthy of merit in the cause of sport. It was established in May 1975 as a successor to the Olympic Certificate by the International Olympic Committee. The award is bestowed upon the recipient at the closing ceremony of each respective Olympic Games as per the tradition.

Sports News

India Blue wins Duleep Trophy tournament - September 15, 2016



Gautam Gambhir-led India Blue has won the inaugural day/night 2016-17 Duleep Trophy Cricket tournament played with a pink ball. The 2016-17 was 55th season of Duleep Trophy. In the final match held in Greater Noida, India Blue defeated India Red, captained by Yuvraj Singh, by a massive 355 runs. Ravinder Jadeja, who bagged 5 wickets in the second innings, finished the game with a 10-wicket haul. Cheteshwar Pujara was named player of the match.

About Duleep Trophy

The Duleep Trophy is a domestic first-class cricket tournament played between teams representing geographical zones of India. The Tournament was instituted in 1961-62 by BCCI. The tournament is named after Kumar Shri Duleepsinhji of Nawanagar. It was contested by three teams, namely India Red, India Blue and India Green. In June 2016, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had changed the feature of tournament featuring day/night matches and to be played with pink ball.

Army Green wins 2016 Durand Cup Football Title - September 14, 2016



Army Green has won the 2016 Durand Cup Football Title by defeating Neroca FC. It was the 128th edition of the Durand Cup. In the regular period of the final match played at Ambedkar Stadium in New Delhi, both teams failed to score goal. But in penalty shootout Army Green defeated Neroca FC by 6-5 penalties score. Neroca FC is the first team from Manipur to compete in this prestigious tournament.

About Durand Cup Football Title

The Durand Cup is a prestigious football tournament of India. It the oldest football tournament in Asia and third oldest in the world after Football Association Cup of England and Scotland Football Association Cup.

Stan Wawrinka wins 2016 US Open Men's Singles title - September 12, 2016



Stan Wawrinka (World no 3) from Switzerland has won the 2016 US Open men's singles title. This is Wawrinka's maiden US Open title and his third major title. In the final match, he defeated Novak Djokovic (World number One) from Serbia by 6-7, 6-4, 7-5 and 6-3 score. He has won three Grand Slam singles titles viz. 2014 Australian Open, 2015 French Open and 2016 US Open.

Women's singles title



Angelique Kerber from Germany has won the 2016 US Open women's singles title. In the final match she defeated Karolína Plíšková of Czech Republic Karolína Plíšková by 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 score.

Men's Doubles title

Jamie Murray (United Kingdom) and Bruno Soares (Brazil) won the 2016 US Open men's doubles title. In the final match, they defeated Spanish pair of Pablo Carreño Busta and Guillermo García-López by 6-2, 6-3 score.

About US Open

The US Open was a tennis tournament played on outdoor hard courts. The 2016 season was the 136th edition of the US Open. Besides it was the fourth and final Grand Slam event of the year.

N Sikki Reddy, Pranaav Chopra wins Brazil Open Grand Prix mixed doubles title - September 6, 2016



Indian pair of Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy have won the 2016 Brazil Open Grand Prix title of Badminton in the mixed doubles category. It was their maiden Grand Prix title. In the final match, Indian pair (World no. 65) defeated Canadian pair of Toby Ng and Rachel Honderich by 21-15, 21-16 score held at Costa Cavalcante. In 2015, N Sikki Reddy had won as many as five international challenger titles, which includes two mixed doubles and three women's doubles crowns. Besides, she was also a part of the bronze medal winning Indian team at the 2014 and 2016 Uber Cup. So far, she played mixed doubles with six different partners, including Alwin Francis, V Diju, Manu Attri, Tarun Kona, and K Nandagopal. Pranaav Jerry Chopra was part of the Indian team that had won a bronze medal in the Asia Badminton Team Championships.

Nico Rosberg wins 2016 Italian Grand Prix - September 5, 2016



Mercedes driver Nico Rosberg from Germany has won the 2016 Italian Grand Prix of Formula one. It was Rosberg's overall eleventh championship title of F1 in his career and the seventh win in the 2016 season.

Earlier, he had won 2016 Belgian Grand Prix, Australian Grand Prix, Bahrain Grand Prix, Chinese Grand Prix and Russian Grand Prix. The Italian Grand Prix was held at the Autodromo Nazionale Monza in Monza, Italy. It was the fourteenth round of the 2016 Formula One season.

Result of 2016 Italian Grand Prix

- First Position: Nico Rosberg (Germany) of Mercedes team.
- Second Position: Lewis Hamilton (United Kingdom) of Mercedes Team.
- Third Position: Sebastian Vettel (Germany) of Ferrari Team.
- Fourth Position: Kimi Räikkönen (Finland) of Ferrari Team.
- Fifth Position: Daniel Ricciardo (Australia) of Red Bull. Top 3 teams are: Mercedes, Ferrari and Red Bull.

Wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt's London Olympics bronze medal upgraded to silver medal - August 31, 2016



Indian wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt's bronze medal from the 2012 London Summer Olympics has been upgraded to silver. This up gradation comes after second-place finisher and silver medalist late Besik Kudukhov from Russia was stripped off his medal for failing a dope test. Kudukhov was found to have used a banned substance in a test conducted by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). He had died in a car crash in 2013 in southern Russia. As a result, Yogeshwar, who had bagged a bronze medal in men's 60kg freestyle category in the London Games, has now joined Sushil Kumar as the other silver medalist wrestler from the 2012 Olympics. With this upgradation, India's silver medal tally in Olympics has gone to five. Silver medallists are wrestler Sushil Kumar (2012 London Olympics) and shooters Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore

(2004 Athens Olympics) and Vijay Kumar (2012 London Olympics) and Shuttle PV Sindu (2016 Rio Olympics).

29 August: National Sports Day - August 29, 2016



The National Sports Day is observed every year across India on 29 August to mark the birth anniversary of the legendary hockey player Dhyan Chand who was born on 29 August 1905. On this occasion, President Pranab Mukherjee conferred National Sports Awards on sports person at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi.

About Major Dhyan Chand

The legendary hockey player was born on 29 August 1905 in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. He is widely considered as the greatest field hockey player of all time. He had started playing hockey only after joining the Army at the age of 16. He was famously known as 'The Wizard' for his superb ball control and had scored more than 1000 goals during his international career. He is mostly remembered for his extraordinary goal-scoring feats, in addition to earning 3 Olympic gold medals in field hockey in 1928 (Amsterdam), 1932 (Los Angeles) and 1936 (Berlin).

Gujarat to host 2016 Kabaddi World Cup - August 23, 2016

About Kabaddi

Kabaddi is a contact sport that had originated in ancient India. It is the national game of Bangladesh and is known as hadudu. Kabaddi is an umbrella term which encompasses various forms of the game including International rules Kabaddi. In India, it is the state game of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab. It also encompasses similar sports known by their regional names in Indian states such as sadugudu in Tamil Nadu, chedugudu in Andhra Pradesh and hututu in Maharashtra.



The International Kabaddi Federation (IKF) has announced that 2016 Kabaddi World Cup will be hosted in Ahmedabad, Gujarat between October 7 and 22, 2016. The event will see participation of 12 Kabaddi teams from around the world representing all the five geographies of the Olympic Games. These 12 teams are India, Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Iran, Australia, Poland, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Korea, Japan and Kenya. Star Sports will be the official broadcaster of the 2016 Kabaddi World Cup. The matches will be aired exclusively on the Star Sports network and HotStar.





Banking Awareness

Reserve Bank of India - Policy Rates, Reserve Ratios, Lending and Deposit Rates as of 17 June 2016

Reserves	US\$363.00 billion
Interest on reserves	4.00%(market determined)
Bank Rate	7.00%
Repo Rate	6.50%
Reverse Repo Rate	6.00%
Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)	4%
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	21.00%
Base Rate	9.30%–9.70%
Savings Deposit Rate	4%
Term Deposit Rate for > 1 year	7.00%–7.50%

ICICI Bank: First bank to introduce Software Robotics for power banking operations - September 9, 2016



India's largest private sector bank ICICI Bank has successfully deployed 'Software Robotics' for power

banking operations. With this, it becomes first bank in the country and among few globally to deploy 'Software Robotics'. ICICI Bank has deployed Software Robotics to over 200 business processes across various functions. The 200 business processes include retail banking operations, agri-business, trade & foreign exchange, treasury and human resources management, among others.

Key Facts

In banking, software robotics emulates human actions to automate and perform repetitive, high volume and time consuming business tasks cutting across multiple applications. It leverages recent advancements in artificial intelligence such as facial and voice recognition, machine learning, natural language processing, and bots among others. The software robots can perform over 10 lakh (1 million) banking transactions every working day. The software robots at ICICI Bank are configured to capture and interpret information from systems, recognize patterns and run business processes across multiple applications. Besides, it can execute activities including data entry and validation, automated formatting, workflow acceleration, multi-format message creation, text mining, reconciliations and currency exchange rate processing among others. Significance: The software robots help to bring operational efficiency, higher accuracy and a massive reduction in processing time for customer services. It will help ICICI Bank to cut response time to customers by 60 per cent and increase accuracy to 100 per cent.

Unified Payments Interface becomes operational - August 29, 2016



The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has announced that Unified Payments Interface (UPI) application has become operational. The application will allow customers to make easier real-time payments via digital means using smartphones.

Key Facts

The payment gateway became operational after it received the Reserve Bank of India's clearance that allowed banks' UPI applications to go live on Google Play Store. Initially, the UPI will be available only on the Android mobile operating system. It will be going live with 21 banks in the first phase.

About Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

UPI is a flagship product of NPCI that will help India to move towards a cashless economy. It is a set of standard Application Programming Interface (APIs). It will provide uniform mobile payment system by leveraging digital trends such as increasing smart phone adoption and deeper penetration of mobile data. It will allow customers to send and receive money from their smartphones using virtual payments address without entering bank account details. It facilitates 'virtual address' as a single payment identifier for sending and collecting money and works on single click 2 factor authentication. It works as a single identifier that will eliminate the need to exchange sensitive information such as bank account numbers during a financial transaction. It merges several banking features, seamless fund routing and merchant payments into one hood. Thus, it will be a single app for accessing different bank accounts. It also provides an option for scheduling push and pull transactions for various purposes like sharing bills among peers.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)

NPCI is the umbrella organisation for all retail payments system in India. It is being promoted by the Reserve Bank of India. It was founded in 2008 as a not-for-profit organisation

registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 2013. It has successfully played pioneering role in the development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

RBI asks banks to extend loans to women SHGs at 7% rate - August 26, 2016



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks to provide loans up to Rs 3 lakh at 7 per cent interest rate to Women Self-Help Group (SHG). This loan scheme must be provided under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)-Aajeevika scheme during 2015-16.

Key Facts

The revised guidelines on interest subvention scheme under NRLM have been issued after approval from the Union Ministry of Rural Development. Under this loan scheme, an interest subvention on credit up to Rs 3 lakhs at 7% per annum will be provided. All women SHGs will be eligible for it. However, SHG availing capital subsidy under Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) in their existing credit outstanding will not be eligible for benefit under this scheme. All banks will be subsidised to the extent of difference between the weighted average interest charged and 7% subject to the maximum limit of 5.5% for the year 2015-16. Further, SHGs will be provided with an additional 3% subvention on the prompt repayment of loans. The funding for this subvention will be provided to the State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs) from the allocation for NRLM.

About National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)-Aajeevika

NRLM-Aajeevika was launched by the Union Ministry of Rural Development in June 2011. In November 2015, it was renamed Deen Dayal Antayodaya Yojana (DAY-NRLM). The Mission aided by World Bank aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms of the rural poor. It seeks to enable rural poor (below BPL) to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services. It is the largest poverty reduction initiative and the largest programme for women in the world with its goal to reach out to nearly 70 million rural households.



Latest in General Knowledge

Anniversaries & Days

Important Days in September

Sept 5	Teacher's Day (Dr. Radhakrishnan's Birth Day)
Sept 7	Forgiveness Day
Sept 8	International Literacy Day
Sept 14	Hindi day, World First Aid Day
Sept 16	World Ozone Day
Sept 21	International Day of Peace, World Alzheimer's day
Sept 25	Social Justice Day
Sept 27	World Tourism Day

Article : Kashmir problem - Islamic Republic of Pakistan v/s Secular Republic of India – By Subodh Sinha

Kashmir problem is with the world since 1947, the year of the partition of India. Indian part of the Kashmir is about 45 percent of the original Kingdom of the Jammu and Kashmir, about 35 percent is now in Pakistan, and China has occupied the other 20 percent in 1962. The UN and the U.S want both sides to keep on the discussions, but the important question is on what basis the discussion can take place. The unresolved status of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute has pushed India and Pakistan to three wars in addition to three minor ones.

The Background of the Problem

Problems started in 1947 when British were leaving India after the partition and the Muslims had demanded a separate homeland for themselves, to be called as Pakistan. When Pakistan became independent, they attacked the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in the guise of tribal Pathans on 20th October 1947. Since the Maharaja by that time had not decided to join the Indian Republic, the Indian Army did not intervene. In one of its greatest mistake in the history, the Indian Government under so-called Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, did not think of protecting the Kashmir borders, till The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir asked India for help and finally joined India on 26th October 1947.

However, by that time Pakistan had already occupied almost half of the Kashmir. The UN Security Council resolution of April 1948 had suggested a plebiscite for the people of Kashmir, but only after it would be vacated by Pakistan; India would be allowed to maintain some forces to maintain the law and order. Pakistan never vacated the area and as a result, the referendum never went through. During the last 56 years, a lot of demographic changes took place. The most notable one is the expulsions of the non-Muslim communities both from the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and also from the Srinagar valley of the Indian held Kashmir. Non-Muslims were driven out from the Pakistan occupied areas of Baltistan, Skardhu, Hunza and Gilgit, the four semi-independent kingdoms associated with the state of the Jammu and Kashmir; there are large-scale infiltrations of Muslims into traditional Buddhist area Ladakh and the Hindu areas of Jammu.

In the current demographic characteristics, there are nine million people in the Indian Kashmir, about six millions are Muslims, the rest three millions are Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs. While Kashmir valley is now almost all Muslim, in Ladakh Buddhists are still in majority. Muslims are still a minority in Jammu.

The dispute is mainly on the Indian part of Kashmir, as Pakistan wants it on the ground that Muslims are the majority of the population in that part, which is accordance with the "Two-nation" theory put forward by the founding fathers of Pakistan. But India's position is illogical. It declared itself as the secular country, yet it had accepted the partition of India and recognized Islamic Republic of Pakistan and yet again Bangladesh in 1971. That logically means, India also believes in the 'Two-Nation' theory, which is exactly reverse to the ideal of secularism of India.

Demographic changes in Kashmir

There are significant demographic changes in Kashmir. The minorities of Kashmir, Hindu, Sikhs and Buddhists were either killed or driven-out from Kashmir since 1947. A large number of them, about 200000, are now living in various refugee camps in Jammu. At the same time, a large number of Muslims infiltrated from other parts of Pakistan and even other parts of the world, to Kashmir.

Kashmir region now has a very less Hindu Population than was before 1947.

The Right of Self Determination:

The UN Resolutions on Kashmir have nothing to do with the 'right of self determination' for the Kashmiris, because there are only two obvious options: Join India or join Pakistan. There is no third option for 'the independence' or what few people call as the 'right of self-determination'. Assuming that we go for 'right of self-determination' then why should not the right be extended to other parts of India. Why not North-East India ? So ideally, it should be applicable for all religions, tribes, sub-tribes, linguistic groups, etc. In that case, there will be hardly anything left as a Country like India or even Pakistan.

Is there a Solution to the Problem ?

The problem between India and Pakistan remains because what was natural after a partition of a country, the exchange of population, never took place. Pakistan and Bangladesh has driven out most of their non-Muslim population, but Muslims are still in India, even after their homeland was created. In fact India now has the second most largest population of Muslims. This has happened because India has not driven-out the Muslims. In other cases of partition elsewhere in the world, there were always exchange of populations. The cases of Greece-Turkey, Germany-Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria-Turkey, Poland-Germany, Bosnia-Serbia, Croatia-Serbia, are the recent examples where full-scale exchanges of population were organized along with the partition. In fact, it is unnecessary to partition a country if the populations are not to be exchanged.

The problem of Kashmir remains because none of the countries is arguing logically. If Pakistan insists that it has the right to absorb the rest of the Kashmir because of religion and if India insists on its secularism, there is no common ground where these two sides will ever meet. Thus, any discussions just like those before will be futile.

If the exchange of population would have taken place in 1947, Kashmir problem could not have emerged. Just like Bengal and Punjab in 1947, Kashmir would have been partitioned long time ago and Indians would have stayed in peace with Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists.

The current "rounds" and future "rounds" of talks will be a waste of time. The solution will not come-out till Muslims in India and Pakistan believe in the "Two-nation" theory and India goes on with its "Secular" policy.



Descriptive Writing

Farmer suicides in India

We are often bombarded with reports of farmer suicides in India when we open newspapers. And the cause for concern is that the figures are not one or two but many and such reports come back to haunt us every year.

There are many reasons, which have deep-rooted implications why farmer suicides are so rampant in this country. The lands are not as productive as it used to be earlier, the markets are failing big time, the debts are piling up like crazy, and the pests cannot be kept at bay at any cost. More than an economic problem, farmer suicides in India has now become a national issue, with far-reaching political and humanitarian dimensions, especially since the past decade.

Weather playing foul: Indian weather is extremely erratic with no sure-shot prediction of rainfall. In many years, moderate rainfall, which is needed so much for proper agriculture, become a scarcity and a thing of the past. For a nation that is dependent on rain water for cultivation, this is certainly a grave situation. The situation is especially serious in Central India, which can be broadly regarded as the agricultural heartland of India.

Lack of farm labour: Urban migration has increased so much in the last few decades that the situation has brought in a scarcity in farm labour. Dedicated agricultural work has taken a backseat and this in a way is affecting agricultural production.

Bleak price market: One of the most crucial problems Indian farmers face is regarding marketing. The laws

in India are most often unclear and farmers are left with no choice but to sell their produce in regulated markets, where the middlemen are the ones making the maximum gains. At times, they can make up to 75% profits. If the middlemen can be eliminated then the farmers can have sell their products at better rates.

Lack of storage facilities: According to figures given by ASSOCHAM, each year 30-40% of the entire agricultural produce in India is damaged because there are not enough cold storages. In monetary terms, this translates to INR 35,000 crore. Farmers who do not have cold storages have to sell their produce as early as possible so that they do not rot. This means they are sold at a loss since supply exceeds demand by some distance. And cold storages are very costly, so most poor farmers are not in a position to buy them.

This is an impossible situation, which needs serious government intervention very promptly. So far in 2016, as many as 116 farmers have committed suicide due to agrarian reasons, with maximum cases reported in Maharashtra, followed by Punjab and Telangana.

More than 2,000 farmers' suicide cases were reported due to agrarian reasons in 2015 with highest number of 1,841 cases in Maharashtra alone, as per the data placed before Lok Sabha by minister of state for agriculture Mohanbhai Kundariya.

Women empowerment in India

"One is not born a woman, but becomes one." – Simone de Beauvoir, one of feminism's key thinkers.

Women empowerment is one topic that will always generate a lot of heat and excitement. Sadly speaking this topic has also been evoking a lot of amusement these days, so much so that it has become a fashion statement to talk about women empowerment.

What is implied by empowerment?

What exactly is women empowerment? Well the essence of this can be quite far-reaching. To begin with, we can just say it's freeing women from all social shackles and allowing them to make their own life choices. For a change, to put parity over patriarchy, that is how we can start off with when we begin to analyse what women empowerment is all about.

Swami Vivekananda, had once said, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing. " Therefore, in order to achieve the status of a developed nation, India needs to transform its colossal women force into an effective human resource and this can be possible only through the empowerment of women.

World scenario:

And the discrimination of women is not something exclusive to India. Inequalities between men and women have also been age-old issues all over the world. Thus, women's quest for equality with man is a universal phenomenon.

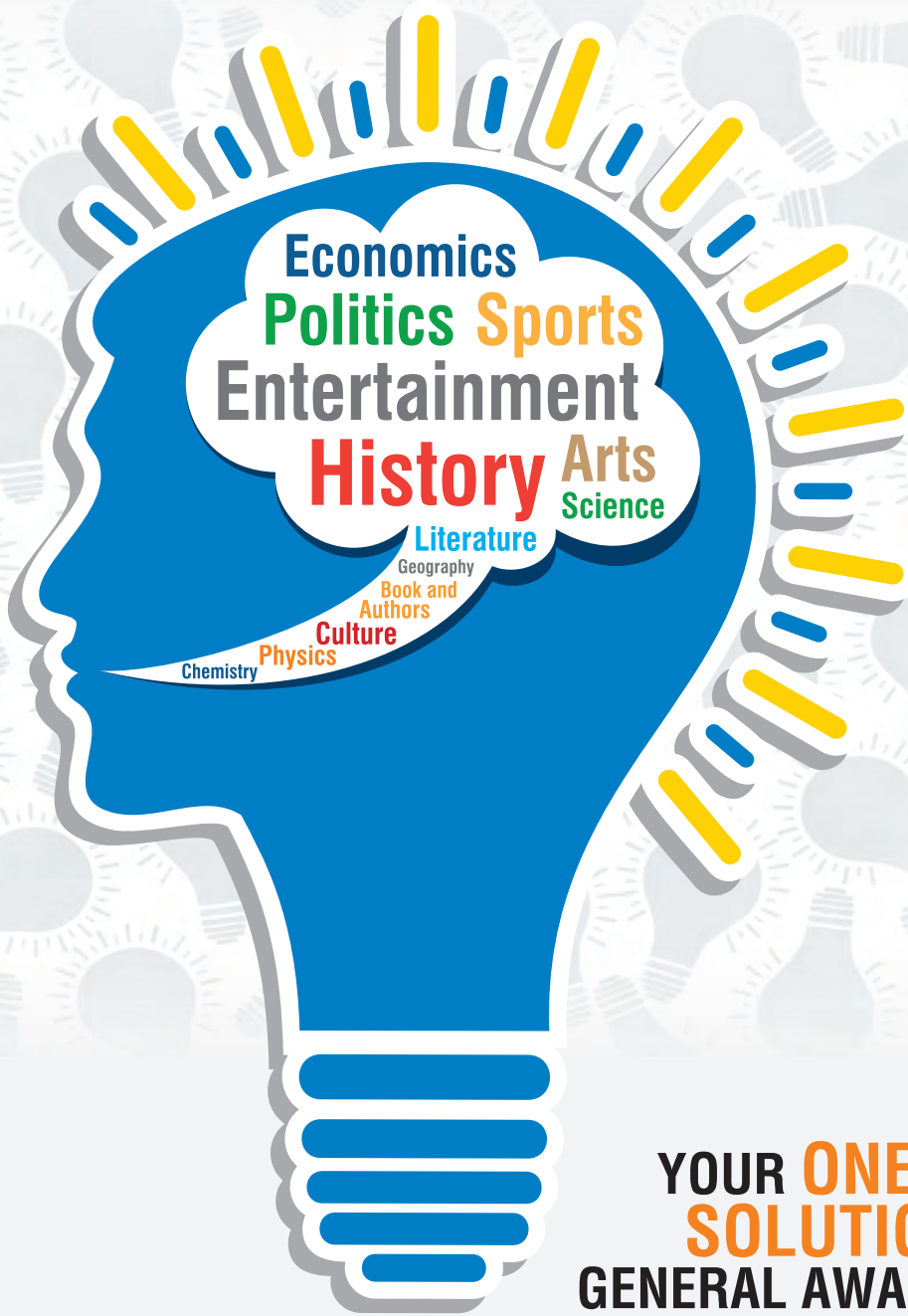
If we go back over a century, women went through ages of struggle over property rights, voting rights, equality in civil rights before the law in matters of marriage and employment. Thankfully in India, women did not have to struggle for voting rights as we find in other countries.

Need of the hour:

Well, no one quite knows what the exact solution is. However, a change in perception is required from both the men and the women if the situation is to improve. The age-old customs, beliefs, traditions, rules are all tilted in favour of women. Education will play a pivotal role in increasing consciousness among people. Laws need to be enforced, executed and more than that people have to realise that women empowerment is the need of the hour and not a fancy topic to be merely discussed. A bias based on gender is an utter stupidity that needs to be abolished at any cost.

A humanitarian attitude should rule all perceptions. Financial independence of woman is extremely important and will play a significant part in easing the situation. However, that wouldn't solve all the issues until and unless clarity of thought is maintained at home, at work and mostly at all quarters.





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