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Awards

1. President Ram Nath Kovind confers 61st Lalit Kala Akademi awards to 15 artists

President Ram Nath Kovind conferred the 61st annual awards of the National Lalit Kala Akademi to 15 artists on March 4, 2020 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. The fifteen awardees were chosen for the honour by an esteemed jury panel. The annual Lalit Kala Akademi awards aim to recognise the outstanding work done by individuals in the field of art. The National Lalit Kala Akademi awards are conferred to recognize individuals for their outstanding work in the field of art. The awardees are selected by an esteemed panel of judges, nominated by the Akademi. The Akademi had nominated a seven-member selection jury this year comprising eminent artists, critics and art practitioners from across the country. The final 15 awardees were selected from among 283 artworks.

The awardees were honoured with a shawl, plaque and cash prize worth Rs 1 lakh.

The Lalit Kala Akademi- the National Academy of Arts was set up by the central government as an autonomous body on August 5, 1954. The Akademi received statutory authority in 1957 under the Societies Registration Act 1860. Since its establishment, the Akademi has been working to promote creative endeavors of Indian artists and redefining the sensibility of the entire art culture. The Akademi aims to involve all genres of creativity in its activities and has a vision that takes care of both traditional Indian art as well as contemporary art by helping artists imbibe many contemporary happenings in the international art scene.

2. PM Modi will be treated with highest honour during Bangladesh visit: Foreign Minister Dr Momen

Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen has said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be treated with the highest honour during his forthcoming visit to Bangladesh to attend the Mujib Centenary Celebrations. Speaking to media in Sylhet, Dr. Momen said that the government has invited Prime Minister Modi as the premier of India, which was its closest ally during the liberation war.

National News

1. Govt launches “Humsafar” mobile app for doorstep diesel delivery

Minister of State (I/C) for Labour and Employment, Santosh Gangwar launched a mobile application named ‘Fuel Humsafar’ for delivery of diesel at doorsteps of Housing societies, hotels and hospitals in the national capital region. The app will be used for the fuel delivery services to housing societies, hotels, hospitals, malls, construction sites, industries, banquets and other bulk buyers of diesel in various NCR cities, including Gurugram, Ghaziabad, Noida, Faridabad, Hapur, Kundli, Manesar, and Bahadurgarh. Humsafar has 12 bowser tankers in varying capacity from 4 kilolitres to 6 kilolitres and an experienced team of 35 people.

2. Setu Bharatam scheme: All level crossings on National Highways to be replaced by bridges, underpasses

The Indian Government has targeted to replace all level crossings on National Highways with road over bridges or under bridges under the Setu Bharatam scheme before the end of the year 2020. The Setu Bharatam Scheme is being implemented by the Union Road Transport and Highways Ministry to ensure a smooth flow of traffic on the national highways and reduce road accidents by at least 50 percent by 2020. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways had signed an MoU with the Railways Ministry to replace all level crossings with road over bridges or road under bridges.

The Setu Bharatam scheme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 4, 2016 for building rail over bridges and underpasses for safe and smooth travel on national highways. The scheme was launched to make all the National Highways free of railway level crossings to prevent frequent road accidents and loss of lives at level crossings. The government had identified around 208 places for the construction of rail over-bridges and underpasses and earmarked funds worth almost Rs 10,200 crore for the implementation of the scheme. The Indian government has also undertaken the task of rebuilding around 1500 bridges that are around 50-60 years old.

The unmanned railway crossings are one of the main causes of rail accidents in India, especially in rural areas. The Indian Government has targeted to eliminate all such crossings before the end of this year so that such accidents can be avoided.

3. Govt has formed committee to finalise modalities of Kisan Rail Railways

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to set up a 'Kisan Rail' through the public-private-partnership (PPP) mode for a cold supply chain to transport perishable goods in her budget speech. The committee has been formed under the aegis of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, which includes representative from Ministry of Railways also, to work out the modalities of 'Kisan Rail'. The government has formed a committee under the Ministry of Agriculture which also includes representatives of the Indian Railways to work out the modalities of 'Kisan Rail'. Nine such refrigerated vans were already available on its network. These vans, with a carrying capacity of 17 tonnes each for transportation of highly-perishable parcel traffic, were developed and procured through the Rail Coach Factory at Kapurthala.

Temperature-controlled perishable cargo centres were commissioned at Ghazipur Ghat (UP), New Azadpur (Adarsh Nagar, Delhi) and Raja ka Talab (UP) as a pilot project under the Kisan Vision Project by Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR) through a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiative. Another project is under construction at Lasalgaon in Maharashtra's Nasik.

4. Kerala govt gives nod to enable students take up part-time jobs during study

The Kerala government has given its nod to a proposal aimed at encouraging students aged between 18 and 25 years to take up part-time jobs while pursuing education so as to help them gain work experience and hone their skills. The government has decided to accept the proposal as a policy decision at the Cabinet meeting. The aim is to ensure that in a fiscal, 90 days of work is assured for students in government departments, local body organisations, PSUs and private companies. This will help in developing a work culture among students. Honorariums will be given to students by the organisations employing them part-time. Students aged between 18 and 25 years will be permitted to become part of the scheme which will help them to gain work experience and hone their skills.

5. Coronavirus hits India-EU Summit: PM Modi cancels Brussels visit after rise in Covid-19 cases in Belgium

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Brussels has been rescheduled, said the Ministry of External Affairs. Responding to questions about the India-EU summit, official MEA spokesperson Raveesh Kumar told media persons that it has been decided that delegates from the respective countries should not travel in each other's countries owing to the recent coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. The summit will be rescheduled to a mutually convenient date which is yet to be decided. The India-EU summit was expected to take place at the EU office in Brussels on March 13 of this year.

6. UP Government provides Rs 900 per month to farmers willing to keep stray cattle

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced that his government will pay Rs 900 per month to farmers willing to keep stray cattle.

Earlier in 2019, the farmer protests in Uttar Pradesh had gone up over stray cattle destroying their fields. The population of stray cattle in the state increased as the UP Government had banned illegal animal slaughtering in the state.

7. Tribal affairs ministry constitutes committee on CFR guidelines under FRA

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has constituted a committee to examine and recommend Community Forest Resources (CFR Guideline) under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA)

Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 It seeks to recognize forest rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been occupying and are dependent on the forest land for generations.

It envisions the forest rights committee of a village as the central unit in managing forest resources.

8. Genome India Project Approved

The Department of Biotechnology under the Ministry of Science and Technology has cleared the Genome India Project. It is a gene-mapping project involving 20 leading institutions including the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru and a few Indian Institute of Technology (IITs).

The project is said to be among the most significant of its kind in the world because of its scale and the diversity it would bring to genetic studies.

The first stage of the project will look at samples of 10,000 persons from all over the country to form a grid that will enable the development of a reference genome.

The Centre for Brain Research, which is an autonomous institute in the IISc, Bengaluru, will serve as the nodal point of the project.

The diverse genetic pool of India will be mapped and it will help in making personalised medicine. The Government of India got inspiration from the Human Genome Project.

Human Genome Project was an international research effort to determine the sequence of the human genome and identify the genes that it contains.

It was a 13-year-long, publicly funded project that ended in 2003.

The HGP has revealed that there are probably about 20,500 human genes. This information can be thought of as the basic set of inheritable "instructions" for the development and function of a human being.

International News

1. China takes over Presidency of UN Security Council

China has assumed the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council for March 2020. While taking on the role, China vowed to advance solidarity and cooperation among the members.

China's permanent representative to the UN, Zhang Jun said in a press note that his country attaches great importance to the work during its presidency and will act responsibly and constructively. The presidency of the UN Security Council is rotated among its members every month according to the English alphabetical order. Vietnam held the Presidency in January 2020, followed by Belgium in February 2020. After China, the Presidency of the UNSC will go to Dominican Republic in April 2020.

2. The US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha

The US and the Taliban signed a landmark deal in Doha on February 29 to bring lasting peace in war-torn Afghanistan and allow US troops to return home from America's longest war. Under the US-Taliban pact signed in Doha, the US has agreed to reduce its troops in Afghanistan from 13,000 to 8,600 in the next 130 days and withdraw all its soldiers in 14 months. Under the agreement, the militants also agreed not to allow al-Qaeda or any other extremist group to operate in the areas they control.

3. World Bank Group Announces Up to \$12 Billion Immediate Support for COVID-19 Country Response

As COVID-19 reaches more than 60 countries, the World Bank Group is making available an initial package of up to \$12 billion in immediate support to assist countries coping with the health and economic impacts of the global outbreak. This financing is designed to help member countries take effective action to respond to and, where possible, lessen the tragic impacts posed by the COVID-19 (coronavirus).

Through this new fast track package, the World Bank Group will help developing countries strengthen health systems, including better access to health services to safeguard people from the epidemic, strengthen disease surveillance, bolster public health interventions, and work with the private sector to reduce the impact on economies. The financial package, with financing drawn from across IDA, IBRD and IFC, will be globally coordinated to support country-based responses.

The COVID-19 support package will make available initial crisis resources of up to \$12 billion in financing — \$8 billion of which is new — on a fast track basis. This comprises up to \$2.7 billion new financing from IBRD; \$1.3 billion from IDA, complemented by reprioritization of \$2 billion of the Bank's existing portfolio; and \$6 billion from IFC, including \$2 billion from existing trade facilities. It will also include policy advice and technical assistance drawing on global expertise and country-level knowledge.

4. Sri Lanka will lead science, technology and innovation sector in BIMSTEC

The 20th Session of the senior officials' meeting (SoM) was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 3 March 2020. The meeting was chaired by Sri Lankan Foreign Secretary Ravinatha Aryasinha.

In the meeting, it was decided that Sri Lanka will lead the science, technology, and innovation sector in the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). It was also decided that a facility for technology transfer is planned to be opened in the future. Sri Lanka also appointed a Director to the BIMSTEC secretariat in June.

5. COVID-19 | PM Netanyahu encourages Israelis to replace handshakes with 'Namaste

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke about the spread of coronavirus in Israel, suggesting that Israelis forego the normal greeting ritual of shaking hands and instead adopt the Indian meeting tradition of the Namaste. Netanyahu claimed the Namaste may help to slow the person-to-person spread of coronavirus on Israeli soil. Traditionally, the Namaste greeting is conducted by placing one's hands together, palms touching and fingers pointing upwards. It can be used with or without a slight bow of the head, but using the bow is seen as a show of respect to the person being greeted.

Israel currently has at least 50,000 people on quarantine with more expected to be placed in isolation after it was reported that an individual infected with coronavirus attended a soccer game at a stadium in Tel Aviv.

6. Global Coalition for Biodiversity launched on World Wildlife Day (3 March)

The European Commission (EC) launched the 'United for Biodiversity' coalition made up of zoos, aquariums, botanical gardens, national parks, and natural history and science museums from around the world, on World Wildlife Day 2020. The coalition offered the opportunity for all such institutions to "join forces and boost public awareness about the nature crisis, ahead of the crucial COP-15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Kunming, China in October 2020," when nations will adopt a new global framework to protect and restore nature, the statement added.

The coalition adopted a common pledge, citing the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment finding that one million species were already at risk of extinction, and appeals to visitors to each of their institutions to "raise their voice for nature."

Economy, Defence and Business News

1. Centre launches second phase of Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)

The Centre has launched the second phase of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen)- SBM(G) Phase-II. It will be implemented from 2020-2021 to 2024-2025 in a mission mode with an outlay of one lakh 40 thousand 881 crore rupees. Union Minister of Jal Shakti Gajendra Singh Shekhawat launched the second phase of the mission at a National Dissemination and Consultation workshop in New Delhi. The second phase will focus on sustaining the gains made under the programme in the last five years in terms of toilet access and usage, ensuring that no one is left behind. It will also ensure that effective solid and liquid waste management (SLWM) is instituted in every Gram Panchayat of the country. Mr Shekhawat lauded the enormous success of Phase-I of the SBM (G) and said that the cabinet approval of Phase II is a great recognition to the significant achievements made under the mission. It will continue to generate employment and provide impetus to the rural economy through the construction of household toilets and community toilets. Union Minister released a study done by the UNICEF and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) on the impact of the SBM(G) on rural women. The study titled Impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) on the convenience, safety and self-respect of women in rural India - surveyed 6,993 women across the 5 states in February this year. These states are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The survey indicated that the increased access to household toilets has led to the improvement in the Suvidha, Suraksha and Swabhimaan of women in rural India.

2. Govt invites bids for BPCL, to sell full 52.98% stake in company

The government has invited bids for the sale of its entire 52.98 percent stake in Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL). To be eligible for participation, bidders must have a minimum net worth of \$10 billion as on date. Besides this, a consortium bidder can constitute a maximum four members, where the lead member must 40 percent in proportion, while other members must have a minimum net worth of \$1 billion.

3. Pilot Auction to Help Reduce 4.2 Tons of Emissions in 2020

The World Bank Group auctioned \$8.25 million dollars of climate funds and this could lead to a reduction of the equivalent of 4.2 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions by the end of 2020. Twenty-one companies took part in a pilot online auction for the right to sell carbon credits. Eligible projects will cut methane emissions from waste disposal including landfill, wastewater, and agricultural waste. Methane is a highly potent greenhouse gas with a global warming potential of at least twenty-five times that of carbon dioxide. This auction attracted bidders in ten developed and developing countries, ranging from large multinationals to small, local businesses.

This is the fourth auction of the Pilot Auction Facility for Methane and Climate Change Mitigation (PAF). The PAF tests multiple auction formats to attract private sector investments, maximizing the use of public finance dedicated for climate results by having private companies compete against one another to deliver the most emission reductions at the lowest cost. This auction was funded through public contributions and money raised from the private sector in previous auctions.

4. Western Railway announces bonus of 5% for every recharge to R-Wallet until 24th Aug 2020

As an incentive to promote mobile ticketing, Western Railway had announced a bonus of 5 percent for every recharge to the R-Wallet until 24th August 2020. The existing bonus scheme, which expired last week, has been extended to encourage more and more users to use mobile ticketing.

5. Govt will remain majority shareholder in LIC, says Finance Minister

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman made it clear that the government will remain the majority shareholder in Life Insurance Corporation and will continue to retain the management control safeguarding the interest of policyholders. It had a market share of 74.71 percent in a number of policies and 66.24 percent in first-year premium income as on 31st of March 2019. The Corporation has a market share of 77.61 percent in a number of policies and 70.02 percent in first-year premium income.

In her Budget speech 2020-21, the government proposed to sell a part of its holding in LIC through Initial Public Offer. The IPO would be brought out after the necessary legislative changes and regulatory approvals. It was announced that the listing of companies on stock exchanges disciplines a company and provides access to financial markets and unlocks its value. It also gives the opportunity to retail investors to participate in wealth creation.

6. IIT Mandi signs deal with NABARD for setting up FPOs

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi & Enabling Women of Kamand (EWOK) Society has inked a tripartite deal with the National Bank For Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for setting up three Farmer Producer Organization in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh. NABARD has sanctioned an amount of Rs 35 lakhs to EWOK Society and IIT Mandi for 3 FPOs to be established in the next 3 years.

Farmer Producer Organization is basically a group of farm producers, with members as the shareholders in an organization. It is a registered body that deals with business activities related to farm produce and also works for the benefit of the member producers.

Enabling Women of Kamand (EWOK), is an initiative of IIT Mandi Women's Center to aid rural women set up small enterprises in 5 panchayats of Kataula, Katindhi, Navlaya, Batheri and Kamand in Mandi by giving them proper guidance, training & information. According to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the three sides, IIT Mandi & EWOK Society will identify clusters to set up Farmer Producer Organizations, help establish and register the FPOs, train the CEO & Board of Directors of FPOs, besides making the business development plan & helping them in raising credit.

7. Govt Permits NRIs to Own up to 100 Percent Stake in Air India

The government permitted NRIs to control up to 100 per cent stake in disinvestment-bound Air India. The decision comes at a time when the government has sought preliminary bids for 100 per cent stake sale in the national carrier.

Non-resident Indians (NRIs), who are Indian nationals, will get permission to participate in Air India's strategic sale. Earlier, they were allowed to own up to 49 per cent stake. Allowing 100 per cent investment by NRIs in the carrier would also not be in violation of Substantial Ownership and Effective Control (SOEC) norms. NRI investments would be treated as domestic investments.

Under the SOEC framework, which is followed in the airline industry globally, a carrier that flies overseas from a particular country should be substantially owned by that country's government or its nationals. Earlier, NRIs were allowed to acquire only 49 per cent in Air India. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) permit in the airline was also 49 per cent through the government approval route. As per the existing norms, 100 per cent FDI is permitted in scheduled domestic carriers, subject to certain conditions, including that it would not be applicable for overseas airlines. In the case of scheduled airlines, 49 per cent FDI is permitted through automatic approval route and any such investment beyond that level requires government nod.

8. IRDAI asks insurance companies to cover coronavirus

Regulator IRDAI asked insurers to expeditiously settle hospitalisation claims related to coronavirus disease under health policies. It also instructed insurance companies to come out with policies to cover treatment costs for coronavirus infection, which has impacted thousands of people worldwide. In order to provide need-based health insurance coverage, insurers are introducing products for various specific diseases, including vector borne diseases. There are 28 confirmed cases of coronavirus infection in India. Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has asked insurers to expeditiously attend to claims for treatment of coronavirus.

9. Nabard infuses ₹1.46 lakh crore in rural banking system in 2019-20

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has infused 1.46 lakh crore rupees in the rural banking system during the current fiscal. NABARD has said that 66,397 crore rupees have been given in short-term credit and 6,704 crore rupees in long-term credit to rural cooperative banks. Regional rural banks have availed 14,141 crore rupees in short-term credit and 8,417 crore rupees in long-term credit. In addition, other banks, including small finance banks, have obtained long-term refinance of 37,895 crore rupees.

While short-term refinance is essentially production credit, long-term refinance is aimed at supporting sectors like dairy, poultry, fishery, farm mechanisation, irrigation, and non-farm sectors, among others.

10. Cabinet clears merger of 10 PSBs into 4 banks effective April 1

The Cabinet approved the amalgamation of the 10 public sector banks (PSB) into 4 PSBs that was announced on August 30, 2019. The nod was given today and the merger would come into effect from April 1, 2020. The Cabinet's approval will lead to the merger of -

Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India into Punjab National Bank;

Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank into Union Bank of India;

Syndicate Bank into Canara Bank; and

Allahabad Bank into Indian Bank

According to the government, the merger of the 10 banks will lead to the creation of stronger establishments that will be able to meet the challenge of a \$ 5 trillion economy. The investment in technology-enabled smart banking will lead to improvements such as paperless tab-banking, faster loan processing, banking from home, and customer-need driven credit offers.

This merger would follow in the example of the amalgamation of Bank of Baroda, Vijaya Bank, and Dena Bank last year. As a result of this amalgamation, the number of PSBs will get consolidated from 27 banks in 2017 to 12 banks in 2020. The amalgamation of the two banks into Bank of Baroda was extremely successful, according to

the government. Bank of Baroda, after the merger, had posted strong financial results as compared to results before the merger with the operating profit up by 11.4% (Rs. 1,487 crore), deposits increasing by 8.8%, capital ratio increasing by 171 basis points, and retail lending growing by 15.3%. The government expects that the amalgamation of the 10 PSBs will yield similar results as the Bank of Borda. The banks are ready for the transition and the process should be smooth. The banks will adopt approaches through which the salary and other benefits of the of the employees would be safeguarded.

11. After Mumbai, Google to launch its cloud infrastructure in Delhi by 2021

Google announced that it plans to open cloud region in Delhi that is expected to be operational by 2021. This will be the company's second cloud region in India; the first one was in Mumbai that was launched in 2017. The new cloud region will expand Google's existing network which stands at eight regions in the Asia Pacific and 22 regions globally today. Google cloud regions bring Google Cloud Platform (GCP) services to global organisations in industries like media and entertainment, retail and manufacturing. Projected to launch in 2021, the Delhi cloud region will have three zones to protect against service disruptions.

The region will also include a portfolio of key GCP products, offer lower latency to nearby users and, when combined with the existing region in Mumbai, enable geographically separate in-country disaster recovery for the customers' mission-critical applications, it said.

12. Railways and defence procurement to soon be through GeM portal

Public procurement by two of the country's largest government purchasers, the ministries of defence and railways, will soon be subsumed under the Commerce Department's Government e-Marketplace. By September, all general use goods and services currently purchased through the Indian Railways E-Procurement Systems (IREPS), the Defence e-Procurement portal, and the Central Public Procurement Portal, will have to be made through GeM, officials said on Thursday. IREPS publishes over 30,000 tenders every month and has an online transaction value of Rs 10,600 crore as of mid-2019.

13. Intel and CBSE join hands to digitally empower 1 lakh students with AI

Tech giant Intel and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Friday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to digitally empower nearly one lakh students with Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in India's education system. Initiatives include the roll-out of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) curriculum framework for grades VIII, IX and X for 22,000 schools, with the aim to empower one lakh students within 2020. The curriculum is based on "Intel AI For Youth", which is an immersive, hands-on learning programme using experiential methodologies covering both social and technological skills.

14. APEDA Signs MoUs with various organisations for Implementation of Agri Export Policy

Agricultural and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA) has been focusing on collaborative approach to bring synergy with number of organisations and institutions having inherent professional and specialised expertise in different areas for capacity building of various stakeholders and providing solutions for addressing some of the identified interventions for the development of Agriculture and its export enhancement in consonance with the objectives set under Agri Export Policy (AEP) announced by Government of India. The

Agriculture Export Policy was framed with a focus on agriculture export oriented production, export promotion, better price realization to farmer and synchronization within policies and programmes of Government of India. It focuses on “Farmers’ Centric Approach” for improved income through value addition at source itself to help minimize losses across the value chain. Policy therefore suggests to adopt the approach of developing product specific clusters in different agro climatic zones of the country to help in dealing with various supply side issues viz., soil nutrients management, higher productivity, adoption of market oriented variety of crop, use of Good Agriculture Practices etc.

15. RBI caps withdrawals from Yes Bank to Rs 50,000: Panicked depositors line up outside ATMs, police issue alert

The RBI capped deposit withdrawals at Rs 50,000 per account for a month for customers of YES bank. Harried Yes Bank depositors rushed to ATMs to withdraw cash but faced a multitude of problems including closed down machines and long queues after the RBI placed the bank under a moratorium.

In another move indicating the deepening crisis in India's banking sector, the RBI announced that Yes Bank will not be able to grant or renew any loan or advance, make any investment, incur any liability or agree to disburse any payment.

The Reserve Bank of India assured Yes Bank depositors that their interest will be fully protected and that there is no need to panic. The regulatory actions, undertaken by the RBI and the government, came hours after finance ministry sources confirmed that SBI was directed to bail out the troubled lender. For the next month, Yes Bank will be led by the RBI-appointed administrator Prashant Kumar, an ex-chief financial officer of SBI.

16. Female Labour-force Participation in India Dropped from 34% in 2006 to 24.8% in 2020: Study

According to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) India study, India is the only country among the 153 surveyed countries where the economic gender gap is larger than the political gap. Female labour-force participation in India has declined from 34% in 2006 to 24.8% in 2020, according to a new study. The study found that raising women's participation in the labour force to the same level as men can boost India's GDP by 27%. Gender stereotypes and lack of infrastructure has traditionally sidelined women from core manufacturing functions. As a result, not many are able to reach leadership roles.

17. Giving Impetus to the Women Entrepreneurs, Day -Nulm Under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Signs MoU with Amazon for E-Marketing of Products Made by Self Help Groups Across the Country

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) under Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs today signed MoU with Amazon for e marketing of products made by Self Help Groups (SHGs) across the country in urban areas. With an underlying narrative of women empowerment, the collaboration aims to provide access to wider customer base for products made by SHGs and strengthening the mission of creating sustainable livelihoods in urban areas. The Mission has also undertaken similar collaboration with Flipkart recently. These collaborations are part of the key initiatives for the 2nd edition of Shehri Samridhi Utsav to be organised from March 28 to April 12, 2020. By promoting the products made by SHGs, the initiative will be helpful in documenting and preserving the unique traditional art and crafts of different states.

DAY-NULM is a Flagship programme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to reduce poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households by enabling them to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage

employment opportunities, resulting in an appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis, through building strong grassroots level institutions of the poor.

People in News

1. Indian-American Seema Verma appointed as key member of US COVID-19 task force

Indian-American Seema Verma has been appointed as one of the key members of the White House Coronavirus Task Force constituted by US President Donald Trump to combat the deadly disease that has claimed six lives in the country and infected over 90 others. Trump on January 30 created the coronavirus task force to lead his administration's response to the deadly virus that emerged in China and has wrecked havoc across the globe. The task force is led by Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar, and is coordinated through the National Security Council.

2. Britain's World War II spy Noor Inayat Khan becomes first Indian-origin woman to get Blue Plaque in UK

Britain's World War II spy Noor Inayat Khan will become the first Indian-origin woman to be honoured with a memorial Blue Plaque at her former central London home this year. The Blue Plaque scheme, run by the English Heritage charity, honours notable people and organisations who were based at particular buildings across London and Khan's plaque is set to go up at 4 Taviton Street in Bloomsbury, where she lived as a secret agent during the war. Khan was unveiled as among six women to be honoured with blue plaques during the course of 2020, in an effort to address a gender imbalance as only 14 per cent figure of around 950 London blue plaques celebrate women in the UK capital so far. Major Indian figures to be honoured with Blue Plaques in London include Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and BR Ambedkar.

Days and Events

1. Antar Rashtriya Yog Mahotsav begins in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand

Antar Rashtriya Yog Mahotsav has been inaugurated in Rishikesh, Uttarakhand by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Yoga teachers and practitioners from eleven countries are taking part in this week-long event. The 'Yog Mahotsav' is held in Rishikesh every year from March 1 to March 7.

2. Mumbai poised to host IOC session in 2023

Mumbai is set to host the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) session in 2023, IOC president Thomas Bach has confirmed.

2023 will be a significant year for India as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of Indian independence. The decision will now be ratified at the 136th IOC session in Tokyo in July this year. India last hosted an IOC session way back in 1983 in New Delhi. An IOC session is considered as a general meeting of the members of the IOC and it is held once a year in which each member has one vote.

3. Pune to host 108th Indian Science Congress in 2021

Pune will host the 108th Indian Science Congress in January 2021, the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA) has announced. This will be the fourth time that the city will host the prestigious meet in the last 100 years. The event, set to be held at Symbiosis International University's Lavale campus between January 3 and 7 next year, will be themed on 'Science and Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment' and focus on economic growth, environmental protection and social inclusion of all communities using science and technology. It will also see deliberations on providing equal opportunities to women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), while achieving sustainable development.

Dr Vijay Laxmi Saxena has been elected general president of the Indian Science Congress, 2021.

The science congress had commenced in 1914 from then Calcutta with 105 members. Currently, the association has more than 60,000 members from various streams of science like agriculture, archaeology, biochemistry, earth system science among others.

4. Saudi Arabia's Red Sea Film Festival postponed over coronavirus fears

Saudi Arabia's inaugural Red Sea International Film Festival has been postponed over fears of the ongoing coronavirus outbreak, organisers have said. The event now joins the likes of Qatar's Qumra Film Festival and Greece's Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, both of which have also been postponed due to the coronavirus. The 10-day festival was ready to kick off in Jeddah on 12 March and was set to feature a number of local and regional films and acclaimed guests. American directors Spike Lee and Abel Ferrara were scheduled to attend.

While the Red Sea Film Festival is not the country's first film festival - that credit goes to the Saudi Film Festival - it was a part of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030, a grand economic package designed to wean the kingdom off oil and diversify its economy.

The country just recently lifted a ban on cinemas in late 2017.

5. Pragyan Conclave 2020

Recently, the “Pragyan Conclave 2020”, a two-day Indian Army International Seminar was organised by Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) at New Delhi. The event brings together cross-domain national and international experts to deliberate on the complex subject of ‘Changing Characteristics of Land Warfare and its Impact on the Military’.

The seminar provided a platform for deliberations on emerging ideas, perspectives and narratives that define the ‘New Age Warfare’ which is increasingly witnessing a change in its character as well as battlespace with the usage of new ‘means’ to pursue the ‘ends’.

Centre for Land Warfare Studies

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) is an autonomous think tank on strategic studies and land warfare in the Indian context.

CLAWS aims to develop and promote strategic culture and futuristic thinking on security issues across the continuum of conflict affecting Land Warfare.

It is located in New Delhi.

CLAWS is registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 and is a membership-based organisation. It is governed by a Board of Governors and an Executive Council.

CLAWS organises seminars and conferences, round-table discussions, workshops and guest lectures and undertakes research projects on national security related issues, especially those pertaining to land warfare.

6. 3 day Namaste Orchha festival begins in Madhya Pradesh

In Madhya Pradesh, 'Namaste Orchha' festival is starting from today in Orchha, a famous tourist destination of the state. Orchha is famous for its Ramaraja temple as well as other historical buildings. Three days Namaste Orchha festival is an attempt to creating new opportunities and initiatives to promote the state and its rich cultural, natural and architectural heritage and its traditions and history. Namaste Orchha festival will showcase cultural landscape of Madhya Pradesh through a range of activities like art, music, dance, guided history tours and photography. To beautify Orchha, all the houses of the main road of Orchha have been painted with cream color on the lines of Pink City Jaipur. In the festival, special helicopter services will be provided to tourists from Gwalior to Orchha and Orchha to Gwalior. Apart from this, business meet and KisanMela will also be organized. The festival will also feature a food and crafts bazaar that will have local cuisine and traditional handicrafts of the region.

7. Chapchar Kut, the biggest and most joyful festival of Mizos, being celebrated

In Mizoram, the biggest and most joyful festival of Mizos, Chapchar Kut is being celebrated across the state. The Chapchar Kut is also regarded as the most popular spring festival to the people of the state. The gaiety and fervour of Chapchar Kut shines through with plenty of dancing and music to keep everyone in good spirits. This festival is a public holiday in the state.