

Unique IAS Academy

1st Street Gandhipuram Coimbatore-12

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British-Indian Shankar Balasubramanian knighted for his work on DNA sequencing

02-Jan-17

- ✓ An Indian-origin British professor of chemistry and DNA expert at Cambridge University Shankar Balasubramanian received Knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for their contributions. He was recognised for his work as a co-inventor of Next Generation DNA sequencing (also known as Solexa sequencing), described as the most transformational advance in biology and medicine for decades.
- ✓ **Shraddha, Ghyansham Kumar Devansh chosen for 2016 Bharatiya Jnanpith Navlekhan award**
- ✓ 02-Jan-17
- ✓ Two new Hindi writers Shraddha and Ghyansham Kumar Devansh have been chosen for Bharatiya Jnanpith Navlekhan Award for the year 2016

About Bharatiya Jnanpith Navlekhan award

- ✓ The award is given to young authors in Hindi for their first creations. It was instituted in 2006 by Bharatiya Jnanpith trust. It consists of a statue of Goddess Saraswati, a citation and a cash prize each. Besides Jnanpith publishing their works

Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa takes charge as new Air Force chief

02-Jan-17

- ✓ Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa took charge as the 22nd Chief of the Air Staff (CoAS) of the Indian Air Force (IAF). He succeeded Arup Raha who retires from the service. He is the third person from Sikh community to head the IAF after Arjan Singh and Dilbag Singh. Prior to this appointment he was Vice-Chief of IAF.
- ✓ **General Bipin Rawat takes over as next Chief of Army Staff**
- ✓ 02-Jan-17
- ✓ General Bipin Rawat took charge as the new 27th Chief of Army Staff (CoAS) of India. He succeed General Dalbir Singh Suhag who retired from the service.

ICBM Agni-IV successfully test-fired off Odisha coast

02-Jan-17

- ✓ India successfully test-fired its home-grown long range intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) Agni-IV from the Abdul Kalam Wheeler Island off Odisha coast. The test was aimed at revalidating new technologies incorporated in Agni-IV system and checking the readiness of armed forces to launch the missile on its own.
- ✓ About Agni-IV missile
- ✓ Agni-IV is two-stage surface-to-surface nuclear capable intercontinental ballistic missile. It has been designed and developed indigenously by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Feature: It is 20 metres long and weighs 17 tonnes. It has many cutting-edge technologies which can meet global standards including Pershing missile of US

✓ **Andhra Pradesh Government launches NTR Arogya Raksha Scheme**

✓ 03-Jan-17

Andhra Pradesh Government has launched NTR Arogya Raksha Scheme to provide the medical treatment to the people below Above Poverty Line (APL) at Rs. 1200 premium per annum. It was About Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

- ✓ UPSC is constitutional body that conducts the prestigious civil services examination to select IAS, IFS and IPS officers among others. It has been established under Article 315 of the Constitution and consists of a Chairman and ten Members; appointed and removed by President.
- ✓ The chairman and members of the Commission hold office for a term of six years or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- ✓ launched by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada.

Google Doodle pays tribute to India's social reformer Savitribai Phule

04-Jan-17

- ✓ Search engine giant Google honoured India's 19th Century social reformer Savitribai Phule on the occasion of her 186th birth anniversary (3 January 2017) by dedicating a doodle on its webpage. The 'doodle' had a narration by New Delhi-based NGO Zubaan, with colourful paintings by Malvika Asher on the different historical aspects of Savitribai's life. It showed a group of demure women assembled outside what could be a school for education in a skyblue starry background which also doubles as her blouse.
- ✓ **Justice JS Khehar sworn in as 44th Chief Justice of India**
- ✓ 04-Jan-17
- ✓ Justice Jagdish Singh Khehar was sworn in as 44th Chief Justice of India (CJI). He was administered oath to the office by President Pranab Mukherjee at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi. With this, he became the first person from Sikh community to become the CJI

Government approves new projects under Namami Gange for Haridwar and Varanasi

04-Jan-17

- ✓ The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has approved new projects under Namami Gange programme in Haridwar (Uttarakhand) and Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).

Government launches Swachh Bharat Survekshan 2017 in 500 cities

04-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Ministry of Urban Development launched Swachh Survekshan 2017 to rank 500 cities/towns across the country on cleanliness with a population of 1 lakh and above. The survey will be conducted by **Quality Council of India (QCI)** under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in a bid to encourage competition to improve sanitation.
- ✓ **Election Commission announces dates for assembly elections in five states**
- ✓ 04-Jan-17
- ✓ The Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the dates for the assembly elections in five states— Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa.
- ✓ **January 4: World Braille Day**

Bunkar Mitra Helpline for Handloom Weavers went live

05-Jan-17

The Union Ministry of Textiles' Bunkar Mitra Helpline for Handloom Weavers went live. It was launched by the Union Textiles Minister Smriti Zubin Irani on the occasion of Good Governance Day (on December 25, 2016).

UN declares 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development

06-Jan-17

- ✓ The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has declared the year 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The declaration recalls the potential of tourism sector to advance the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- ✓ **Government constitutes Injeti Srinivas Committee to frame National Sports Code**
- ✓ 06-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Sports Ministry has constituted committee to frame comprehensive National Sports Development Code across sports disciplines.
- ✓ About Financial Stability and Development Council
- ✓ The Central Government had established Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) in December 2010 with the Finance Minister as its Chairman. The idea to create it was first mooted by the Raghuram Rajan Committee on Financial Sector Reforms in 2008. It is a super regulatory body for regulating financial sector which is vital for bringing healthy and efficient financial system in the economy

- ✓ **India and Kazakhstan sign Protocol to amend DTAC**
- ✓ 06-Jan-17
- ✓ India and Kazakhstan have signed a Protocol to amend the existing Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC) between the two countries in New Delhi

- ✓ **Delhi Government unveils Good Samaritan Policy**
- ✓ 07-Jan-17
- ✓ Delhi Government has approved 'Good Samaritan Policy' to encourage people to help road accident victims in emergency situation.

- ✓ **14th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas begins in Bengaluru**
- ✓ 07-Jan-17
- ✓ The 14th edition of Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) began in the country's IT hub Bengaluru, Karnataka. The theme of this edition is "Redefining Engagement with the Indian Diaspora"

About Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD)

- ✓ PBD is an annual event organised since 2003 by Ministry of External Affairs to foster greater interaction between the Indian Diaspora and Indian government. It is a very important platform for engagement of the Union Government and the state governments with the overseas Indian community. It provides the single platform to Indian diaspora to put forth their issues and grievances before the government and in turn government can leverage their resources in nation building activities.
- ✓ It is held annually on 9 January to mark the return of Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa to India i.e. on 9 January, 1915.

About Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- ✓ IWT is a bilateral water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan signed in 1960. It was brokered by the World Bank (then the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development). The treaty deals with sharing of water of Indus water system having six rivers — Beas, Ravi, Sutlej, Indus, Chenab and Jhelum between the two countries.
- ✓ **Gen. Raheel Sharif to head Islamic Military Alliance**
- ✓ 07-Jan-17
- ✓ Pakistan's former Army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif (retired) was appointed head of Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT), a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition of 39 nations. The appointment was confirmed by Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif as both the government and the Army allowed Gen
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20th National Conference for e-Governance begins in Visakhapatnam

09-Jan-17

- ✓ The 20th Edition of the National Conference for e-Governance 2016-17 has started in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. The theme of this year's conference is '**Internet of Things and e-Governance**' and will be covering newly evolving areas of e-Governance across five plenary sessions.

What is VVPAT?

- ✓ The VVPAT system is a new initiative of the Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections. In the VVPAT system, when a voter presses the button for a candidate of his choice in the electronic voting machines (EVM), a paper ballot containing the serial number, name of the candidate and poll symbol will be printed for the voter.

- ✓ **New Ginger species with medicinal properties discovered in Andamans**
- ✓ 09-Jan-17
- ✓ Scientists from Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have discovered a new species of Zingiber (commonly referred as ginger) from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The new species has been named as *Zingiber pseudosquarrosum* and belongs to genus **Zingiber**. It is used for its medicinal values by the local *Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)* of the Andamans

- ✓ **PM Narendra Modi announces Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana**
- ✓ 09-Jan-17
- ✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY), a skill development program targeted at Indian youth seeking overseas employment to make India the Skill Capital of the World. It was launched after inauguration of 14th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas convention at India's IT hub Bengaluru, Karnataka. Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa was the Chief Guest of the event

- ✓ **Indian Army conducts test of indigenous heavy artillery gun Dhanush**
- ✓ 09-Jan-17
- ✓ The Indian Army has successfully conducted 'user-validation' trials of indigenous Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) **Dhanush** in the Himalayas

74th Golden Globe Awards

09-Jan-17

- ✓ The 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards ceremony was organized at Beverly Hills, California, United States (US). The Golden Globe Awards are the annual awards that honour the best in Motion Pictures and American Television for the previous year. This year, La La Land, a romantic musical comedy-drama film won in all the seven categories including the top award of best musical or comedy.
- ✓ **January 10: World Hindi Day**
- ✓ 10-Jan-17
- ✓ The World Hindi Day is observed annually on 10 January. On this occasion, Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has conducted special events to spread the greatness of the language through its missions abroad
- ✓ **Sex ratio in Haryana touches 900-mark for first time in 20 years**
- ✓ 10-Jan-17
- ✓ The child sex ratio at birth (SRB) in Haryana for the first time has touched 900-mark in two decades. SRB in December 2016 in Haryana was 914
- ✓ **Cristiano Ronaldo named the world's best player for 2016**
- ✓ 10-Jan-17
- ✓ Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo was named the world's best player for the year 2016 at the inaugural Best FIFA Football Awards held in Zurich, Switzerland
- ✓ **Ministry of Power unveils World's Largest Street Light Programme**
- ✓ 10-Jan-17
- ✓ The Union Ministry of Power unveiled world's largest street light replacement programme in South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) area. It is implemented under LED based Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP) by the Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture under the Union Ministry of Power

Pakistan test-fires first nuclear-capable submarine cruise missile Babur-3

10-Jan-17

- ✓ Pakistan successfully test-fired its first Submarine-Launched Cruise Missile (SLCM) Babur-3 capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. This launch gives Pakistan a "credible" second-strike capability. The Babur-3 missile was fired from an underwater mobile platform from an undisclosed location in the Indian Ocean and hit its target with precise accuracy.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates India's first international exchange at GIFT city

11-Jan-17

✓ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first international exchange India INX at the International Financial Service Centre (IFSC) of GIFT (Gujarat International Financial Tech) City Gandhinagar, Gujarat. India INX is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). It will enable Indian firms to compete on equal footing with offshore firms.

✓ **Health Ministry to roll out measles-rubella vaccine**

✓ 11-Jan-17

✓ The Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare will roll out measles-rubella (MR) vaccine in the Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) in February 2017. In addition, Pneumococcal conjugate (pneumococcal pneumonia) vaccine will also become a part of the UIP basket in three other states from March 2017

Universal Immunization Programme: It is a free vaccination program launched by the Union Government in 1985 against vaccine preventable diseases. It is currently one of the key areas under National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) since 2005. The program consists of vaccination for 10 diseases- *Tuberculosis, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (whooping cough), Poliomyelitis, measles, Hepatitis B, Diarrhoea, Japanese Encephalitis and Pneumonia*

January 12: National Youth Day

12-Jan-17

The National Youth Day is observed every year on 12 January to mark the birth anniversary of social reformer, philosopher and thinker Swami Vivekananda

India, Kenya sign MoU in area of agriculture

Effects of Endosulfan use devastating: SC

12-Jan-17

The Supreme Court has described side effects of Endosulfan, a highly toxic agrochemical (pesticide) as devastating

Guided Pinaka successfully test-fired

12-Jan-17

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test-fired the Pinaka Rocket converted to a Guided Pinaka from Launch Complex-III, ITR, Chandipur (Odisha)

About Pinaka

Pinaka is an unguided rocket weapon area system (WAS) with a range of 40 km. It meant to neutralise large areas with rapid salvos. It can fire a salvo of 12 rockets in 44 seconds with 1.2 tonnes of high explosives. The battery of six launchers can neutralise at a time a target area of 3.9 sq km.

Second Scorpene class submarine INS Khanderi launched

12-Jan-17

INS Khanderi, the second Scorpene class submarine was launched at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai, Maharashtra.

Delhi declared free of bird flu

13-Jan-17

National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi was declared free from bird flu (H5N8 avian influenza) after consecutive samples collected at 15 days' intervals from the last positive results tested negative

Hope Island becomes graveyard for Olive Ridleys Turtles

13-Jan-17

Hope Island in Andhra Pradesh has become graveyard for Olive Ridleys turtles after 54 carcasses of this species were spotted on the shores of island. This indicates that the breeding cycle of this species got severe blow due to mechanized fishing boats scouring in the Bay of Bengal coastline

About Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

The IIP is compiled and published every month by Central Statistics Office (CSO) of the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. It covers 682 items comprising Manufacturing (620 items), Mining (61 items) & Electricity (1 item). The weights of the three sectors are 75.53%, 14.16%, 10.32% respectively and are on the basis of their share of GDP at factor cost during 2004-05. The eight Core Industries comprise nearly 38 % of the weight of items included in IIP

Unemployment in India to increase marginally in 2017-18: ILO

14-Jan-17

According to recently released World Employment and Social Outlook for 2017, the number of unemployed people in India is expected to rise by 1 lakh in 2017 and another 2 lakh in 2018

Key highlights of the report

- ✓ Number of jobless in India will increase from 17.7 million in 2016 to 18 million by 2018 even though the country's unemployment rate is expected to go down from 3.5% to 3.4% in 2017. India performed slightly well in terms of job creation in 2016, as majority of the 13.4 million new employment were created.

Globally, the number of jobless people will increase by 3.4 million in 2017. The global unemployment rate is expected to rise modestly from 5.7 to 5.8% in 2017 as pace of labour force growth outstrips job creation

About Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

- ✓ SEBI is the statutory regulator for the securities market in India. It was established in 1988 and given statutory powers through the SEBI Act, 1992. Purpose: Protect the interests of investors in securities, promote the development of securities market and to regulate the securities market.
- ✓ Gwadar port
- ✓ The strategic Gwadar port is located in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province. It has been developed under CPEC which link western China through Pakistan with the Middle East, Africa and Europe

Richest 1% own 58% of total wealth in India: Oxfam Study

17-Jan-17

- ✓ According to study conducted by rights group Oxfam, India's richest 1% now hold a huge 58% of the country's total wealth, indicating rise income inequality. It is higher than the global figure of about 50%. It shows that 57 billionaires in India now have same wealth (\$216 billion) as that of the bottom 70% population of the country. Globally, just 8 billionaires have the wealth as the poorest 50 % of the world population.

✓ **Timothy Gonsalves committee recommends reservation for girl students in IITs**

✓ 17-Jan-17

- ✓ The sub-committee under chairmanship of professor **Timothy Gonsalves** has recommended reservation for girl students in IITs to address the issue of slump in number of female students entering the prestigious institutes

✓ **India ranks 60th in Inclusive Development Index**

✓ 17-Jan-17

- ✓ India ranked 60th among the 79 developing countries in 2017 Inclusive Development Index (IDI) released in World Economic Forum's (WEF) 'Inclusive Growth and Development Report'

✓ **India ranks 92nd in 2017 Global Talent Index**

✓ 17-Jan-17

- ✓ India was ranked 92nd among 118 countries in the 2017 Global index of talent competitiveness (GTI) list. The index measures ability of countries to compete for talent i.e.

India becomes associate member of CERN

18-Jan-17

- ✓ India formally became an associate member of CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) with the government completing the internal approval procedures for the agreement it signed in November 2016. Prior to it, in September 2016, CERN Council had adopted a resolution upgrading India's position as associate member from earlier 'observer' status (since 2004).

About European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN)

- ✓ CERN as an organisation is world's largest nuclear and particle physics laboratory. It is situated in North West suburbs of Geneva on France-Swiss Border. It was established in 1954. Members: It has 22 member states, four associate members (including India, Pakistan, Turkey and Ukraine) and three International Organisations have observer status.

Railway Ministry unveils Mission 41K to save energy worth Rs 41,000 crore

18-Jan-17

- ✓ Union Railway Ministry has unveiled 'Mission 41K' to save Rs. 41,000 crore on the Indian Railways' expenditure on energy consumption over the next 10 years. The launch of this programme was announced at a Roundtable Discussion on Energy Initiatives of Indian Railways with external stakeholders headed by Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu.

Second Raisina Dialogue held in New Delhi

- ✓ 18-Jan-17 The second edition of Ministry of External Affairs' annual Raisina Dialogue was held in New Delhi with the theme "The New Normal: Multilateralism in a multipolar world". The flagship geo-political conference was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and was attended by delegates from 65 countries.

Government launches ShaGun portal to monitor Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

19-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Government launched a dedicated web portal ShaGun (<http://ssashagun.nic.in>) for monitoring the progress of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The portal was developed by World Bank in collaboration with Union Ministry of Human Resource Development. Its name has been derived from the words Shala (means schools) and Gun (i.e. Gunvatta meaning Quality).

Key Facts

- ✓ ShaGun portal was developed with a twin track approach to monitor schools under the SSA and also the quality of education imparted by them. It will capture and showcase innovations and progress in Elementary Education sector of India by continuous monitoring SSA.
- ✓ ShaGun will help in monitoring progress in implementation of SSA by assessing the performance of states/UTs on key parameters that will help Government to plan and deliver quality education to all. It will collect and report data to enable the government and administrators to track the efficiency with which SSA funds are being utilised and the results are been delivered.
- ✓ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): It is a centrally sponsored flagship scheme for providing universal access to education to children in the age group of six to fourteen years of age. In addition, Toolkit for Master Trainers in Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) was also unveiled. The toolkit is part of the series of 5 training modules that will provide the teachers with practical information on the effective inclusion of CWSN.
- ✓ It will help in building pedagogical practices that will address the needs of all children with special needs.

Delhi Police commissioner Alok Verma appointed as new CBI director

19-Jan-17

- ✓ Delhi Police Commissioner and Senior IPS officer Alok Kumar Verma was appointed as new Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation. He will have tenure of two years. He was selected by a three-member committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice J S Khehar and Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge.

Government constitutes negotiation committee on Mahanadi and its Tributaries

21-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Ministry of Water Resources has constituted negotiations committee to assess availability and utilisation of waters of Mahanadi and its tributaries to resolve disputes over sharing of river waters among five states. These five states are Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand.

This will ensure that provisions of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA), 1960

India Innovation Index to measure performance of Indian states

21-Jan-17

- ✓ The World Economic Forum (WEF), NITI Aayog, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Cornell University will work to develop an India Innovation Index to provide impetus to states to drive innovative spirit. Based on the WIPO's GII (Global Innovation Index), the India Innovation Index will be tailored to better reflect of India's ground reality and include metrics well suited to the Indian context for innovation.

Key Facts

The India Innovation Index will measure and rank the innovation performance of all states in India with the aim of moving India towards an innovation-driven economy

About Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- ✓ IORA is an international organisation consisting of coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean established in 1997 to promote cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. It was formerly known as the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative and Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). Its coordinating Secretariat is located at Ebene, Mauritius.

- ✓ **Himachal Pradesh overtakes Kerala in learning outcomes: ASER**

- ✓ 23-Jan-17

- ✓ According to Status of Education Report (ASER) 2016, students of Himachal Pradesh stand ahead of Kerala and all other states in terms of learning outcomes.

ISRO to launch record 103 satellites on a single rocket

23-Jan-17

- ✓ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to set a new world record in space history by launching 103 satellites in one go on a single rocket in the first week of February, 2017. These satellites will be launched on board of ISRO's workhorse PSLV (C37) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh. The mission will carry three satellites from India and rest from other countries.

Tamil Nadu Assembly unanimously passes Jallikattu Bill

24-Jan-17

- ✓ The special session of Tamil Nadu Assembly has unanimously passed Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment), Act, 2017 to lift Supreme Court imposed ban on the traditional sport of Jallikattu. The bill will now replace the ordinance promulgated in this regard by the Governor on the recommendation of state government.

- ✓ **N K Singh panel submits report on changes in FRBM Act**

- ✓ 24-Jan-17

- ✓ The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Committee has submitted its 4 volume report on changes in FRBM Act, 2013 to the Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

- ✓ About Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

- ✓ The TPP is a trade agreement under negotiation among 12 Pacific Rim nations accounting for 40% of the world economy. It was promoted by US and signed by 12 countries in 2015. 12 members are Australia, Brunei, Chile, Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, US and Vietnam. India was not part of TPP. The aimed to ease the flow of goods, services and investments among member countries and set trade rules for 21st century especially on labour standards

✓ **Pakistan conducts first flight test of Ababeel missile with MIRV technology**

✓ 25-Jan-17

- ✓ Pakistan successfully conducted the first flight test of Ababeel surface-to-surface medium range ballistic missile. The test flight was aimed at validating various design and technical parameters of missile's weapon system

Cabinet approves New Scheme for promotion of Rural Housing

25-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Cabinet has approved a new scheme for promotion of Rural Housing in the country. It will enable people in rural areas to construct new houses or add to their existing pucca houses to improve dwelling units. Under it, Government will provide interest subsidy to every rural household who is not covered under the Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana (Grameen)-PMAY(G).

Features of Scheme

- ✓ It will be implemented by National Housing Bank (NHB). Under the scheme, the beneficiary will be provided interest subsidy for loan amount upto Rs. 2 Lakhs for taking loan. Government will provide net present value of interest subsidy of 3% to NHB upfront which will, in turn, pass it to the Primary Lending Institutions (Scheduled Commercial Banks, NBFCs etc.).
- ✓ Government will also take necessary steps for proper convergence of the scheme with PMAY-G including technical support to beneficiary through existing arrangements. It will improve housing stock in the rural areas, as well as create employment opportunities in rural housing sector.

Union Cabinet approves ratification of the Second Commitment Period of Kyoto Protocol

25-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Cabinet has given its approval to ratify the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol on containing the emission of Green House Gases (GHGs). The second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 2012 and is set to expire in 2020. So far, 75 countries have ratified the Second Commitment Period.

Significance

- ✓ This decision is considered as token measure to put pressure on developed countries to deliver on climate change commitments. It further underlines India's leadership in the comity of countries committed to global cause of environmental protection and climate justice. India's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol will encourage other developing countries also to undertake this exercise.
- ✓ It will attract some investments in implementation of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects under this commitment period in accordance with Sustainable Development priorities.

About Kyoto Protocol

- ✓ The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997 to fight global warming by reducing GHGs emission and came into effect in 2005. The 1st commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol was from 2008-2012. The 2nd commitment period for the period 2013- 2020 was adopted in 2012 by the Doha Amendment of the Kyoto Protocol. The protocol is based on principle of Equity and Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR).
- ✓ It places obligations on developed nations to undertake mitigation targets to reduce emissions by 5.2% of 1990 levels during 2008-2012 period) and provide financial resources and technology to developing nations. Developing countries like India have no mandatory mitigation obligations or targets under the Kyoto Protocol.

Improved Guided Pinaka rockets successfully test-fired for 2nd time

25-Jan-17

- ✓ Improved Pinaka rockets, with a guidance system and an enhanced range were successfully test-fired for the second time from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha. The guided version dubbed as Pinaka mark-II, has been evolved version of Pinaka mark-I. Its first successful test flight was conducted from the same venue on January 12, 2017.

Union Government releases National Action Plan for Children, 2016

25-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Ministry of Women & Child Development (WCD) has released National Action Plan for Children (NPAC), 2016 on the occasion of National Girl Child Day (24th January). It was released by Union Minister of Women & Child Development Meneka Sanjay Gandhi in New Delhi. The NPAC has been developed by the Ministry of WCD.

Features of NPAC, 2016

- ✓ The Action Plan has four key priority areas. They are survival, health and nutrition; education and development; participation and protection. It defines objectives, sub-objectives, strategies, action points and indicators for measuring progress under the four key priority areas. It also identifies key stakeholders for the implementation of different strategies.

Union Cabinet approves Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017

25-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Cabinet has given its approval for launching of **Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017 (VPBY 2017)**. The scheme will be launched as part of Government's commitment for financial inclusion and social security. The scheme will be implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) during the current financial year i.e. FY 2016-17. It will be open for subscription for a period of one year from the date of launch.

Features of Scheme

- ✓ The purpose of the scheme is to provide social security during old age and protect elderly persons aged 60 years and above against future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions. It will provide an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% per annum for ten years, with an option to opt for pension on a monthly, quarterly, half yearly and annual basis.
- ✓ The Union Government will bear the differential return i.e., the difference between the return generated by LIC and the assured return of 8% per annum as subsidy on an annual basis.

India, UAE sign 14 agreements

25-Jan-17

India and the UAE (United Arab Emirates) inked 14 agreements in various areas to boost bilateral cooperation between both countries.

Agreement on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

- ✓ MoU on Institutional Cooperation on Maritime Transport
- ✓ MoU on Mutual Recognition of Certificates of Competency
- ✓ MoU on cooperation in prevention and combating of human trafficking
- ✓ MoU on Bilateral Cooperation in the Road Transport and Highways Sector
- ✓ MoU on trade remedial measures to promote cooperation in areas of mutual interest
- ✓ MoU for the cooperation in the field of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and innovation

MoU on mutual exemption of entry visa requirements to the holders of Diplomatic, special

68th Republic Day celebrated on 26 January 2017

✓ 27-Jan-17

- ✓ India celebrated its 68th Republic Day on January 26, 2017 with the theme "Skill India and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao". The day honours the date on which the Indian Constitution came into force on 26th January, 1950 replacing the Government of India Act, 1935 as the governing document.

Key Facts

- ✓ This year, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and the Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the Chief Guest of the official ceremony. The country's military prowess and achievements in different fields, state-of-the-art defence platforms, and diverse culture was displayed at the Republic Day parade at Rajpath in Delhi.

For the first time, a contingent of the National Security Guard (NSG), popularly known as the Black Cat Commandoes, also took part in the parade.

Padma awards 2017

27-Jan-17

President Pranab Mukherjee announced the names of recipients of year 2017 Padma awards viz. Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri. He approved conferment of Padma Awards on 89 persons. The list includes 7 Padma Vibhushan, 7 Padma Bhushan and 75 Padma Shri Awardees. Out of these selected 89 persons, 19 are women, 5 awardees are from the category of foreigners, NRIs, PIOs while 6 are posthumous awardees

✓ **PADMA VIBHUSHAN:** It is the second highest civilian award. It is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service.

1. K J Yesudas Art-Music Kerala
2. Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev Others-Spiritualism Tamil Nadu
3. Sharad Pawar Public Affairs Maharashtra
4. Murli Manohar Joshi Public Affairs Uttar Pradesh
5. Prof. Udipi Ramachandra Rao Science & Engineering Karnataka
6. Sunder Lal Patwa (**Posthumous**) Public Affairs Madhya Pradesh
7. PA Sangma (**Posthumous**) Public Affairs Meghalaya

✓ **Padma Bhushan:** It is the third highest civilian award. It is awarded for distinguished service of high order.

8. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt Art-Music Rajasthan
9. Prof. (Dr.) Devi Prasad Dwivedi Literature & Education Uttar Pradesh
10. Tehemton Udwadia Medicine Maharashtra
11. Shri Ratna Sundar Maharaj Others-Spiritualism Gujarat
12. Swami Niranjana Nanda Saraswati Others-Yoga Bihar
13. H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (**Foreigner**) Literature & Education Thailand
14. Cho Ramaswamy (**Posthumous**) Literature & Education –Journalism Tamil Nadu

✓ **Padma Shri:** It is the third highest civilian award. It is awarded for distinguished service of high order.

15. Basanti Bisht Art-Music Uttarakhand
16. Chemanchery Kunhiraman Nair Art-Dance Kerala
17. Aruna Mohanty Art-Dance Odisha
18. Bharathi Vishnuvardhan Art-Cinema Karnataka
19. Sadhu Meher Art-Cinema Odisha
20. T K Murthy Art-Music Tamil Nadu
21. Laishram Birendrakumar Singh Art-Music Manipur
22. Krishna Ram Chaudhary Art-Music Uttar Pradesh
23. Baoa Devi Art-Painting Bihar
24. Tilak Gitai Art-Painting Rajasthan
25. Dr. Prof. Aekka Yadagiri Rao Art-Sculpture Telangana
26. Jitendra Haripal Art-Music Odisha
27. Kailash Kher Art-Music Maharashtra
28. Parassala B Ponnammal Art-Music Kerala
29. Sukri Bommagowda Art-Music Karnataka
30. Mukund Nayak Art-Music Jharkhand
31. Purushottam Upadhyay Art-Music Gujarat
32. Anuradha Paudwal Art-Music Maharashtra

33. Wareppa Naba Nil Art-Theatre Manipur
34. Tripuraneni Hanuman Chowdary Civil Service Telangana
35. T.K. Viswanathan Civil Service Haryana
36. Kanwal Sibal Civil Service Delhi
37. Birkha Bahadur Limboo Muringla Literature & Education Sikkim
38. Eli Ahmed Literature & Education Assam
39. Narendra Kohli Literature & Education Delhi
40. Prof. G. Venkatasubbiah Literature & Education Karnataka
41. Akkitham Achyuthan Namboothiri Literature & Education Kerala
42. Kashi Nath Pandita Literature & Education Jammu & Kashmir
43. Chamu Krishna Shastry Literature & Education Delhi
44. Harihar Kripalu Tripathi Literature & Education Uttar Pradesh
45. Michel Danino Literature & Education Tamil Nadu
46. Punam Suri Literature & Education Delhi
47. VG Patel Literature & Education Gujarat
48. V Koteswaramma Literature & Education Andhra Pradesh
49. Balbir Dutt Literature & Education-Journalism Jharkhand
50. Bhawana Somaaya Literature & Education-Journalism Maharashtra
51. Vishnu Pandya Literature & Education-Journalism Gujarat
52. Dr. Subroto Das Medicine Gujarat
53. Dr. (Smt.) Bhakti Yadav Medicine Madhya Pradesh
54. Dr. Mohammed Abdul Waheed Medicine Telangana
55. Dr. Madan Madhav Godbole Medicine Uttar Pradesh
56. Dr. Devendra Dayabhai Patel Medicine Gujarat
57. Prof. Harkishan Singh Medicine Chandigarh
58. Dr. Mukut Minz Medicine Chandigarh
59. Arun Kumar Sharma Others-Archaeology Chhattisgarh
60. Sanjeev Kapoor Others-Culinary Maharashtra
61. Meenakshi Amma Others-Martial Art Kerala
62. Genabhai Dargabhai Patel Others-Agriculture Gujarat
63. Chandrakant Pithawa Science & Engineering Telangana
64. Prof. Ajoy Kumar Ray Science & Engineering West Bengal
65. Chintakindi Mallesham Science & Engineering Andhra Pradesh
66. Jitendra Nath Goswami Science & Engineering Assam
67. Daripalli Ramaiah Social Work Telangana
68. Girish Bhardwaj Social Work Karnataka
69. Karimul Hak Social Work West Bengal
70. Bipin Ganatra Social Work West Bengal
71. Nivedita Raghunath Bhide Social work Tamil Nadu
72. Appasaheb Dharmadhikari Social Work Maharashtra
73. Baba Balbir Singh Seechewal Social Work Punjab
74. Virat Kohli Sports-Cricket Delhi
75. Shekar Naik Sports-Cricket Karnataka
76. Vikasa Gowda Sports-Discus Throw Karnataka
77. Deepa Malik Sports-Athletics Haryana
78. Mariyappan Thangavelu Sports-Athletics Tamil Nadu
79. Dipa Karmakar Sports-Gymnastics Tripura

80. P R Shreejesh Sports-Hockey Kerala
81. Sakshi Malik Sports-Wrestling Haryana
82. Mohan Reddy Venkatrama Bodanapu Trade & Industry Telangana
83. Imrat Khan (NRI/PIO) Art-Music USA
84. Anant Agarwal (NRI/PIO) Literature & Education USA
85. H.R. Shah (NRI/PIO) Literature & Education-Journalism USA
86. Suniti Solomon (Posthumous) Medicine Tamil Nadu
87. Asoke Kumar Bhattacharyya (Posthumous) Others-Archaeology West Bengal
88. Dr. Mapuskar (Posthumous) Social Work Maharashtra
89. Anuradha Koirala (Foreigner) Social Work Nepal

India inks deal with UAE for strategic oil reserves storage

27-Jan-17

India has signed a deal with United Arab Emirates (UAE), fifth biggest oil supplier as part of its quest for energy security and strategic reserve system.

India ranks 79 in Corruption Perception Index

27-Jan-17

India has been ranked 79th out of 176 countries in the recently released Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for the year 2016 by the Berlin-based corruption watchdog Transparency International (TI)

Key Facts

Top 10 Countries: New Zealand and Denmark in joint first place (with a score of 90), followed by Finland (3rd), Sweden (4th), Switzerland (5th), Norway

Somalia was ranked the most corrupt country

About Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- ✓ FATF is an inter-governmental policy making body established in 1989 with ministerial mandate to establish international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing. Its objectives are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for *combating money laundering, terrorist financing* and other related threats to integrity of international financial system.

Sports Ministry reconstitutes committee to identify athletes under TOP Scheme

28-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has reconstituted TOP committee with objective of identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games under
The committee will be headed by Abhinav Bindra, Olympic Gold Medalist.

ISRO Successfully tests Cryogenic Engine for Upper Stage of GSLV Mk III

28-Jan-17

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully tested indigenously developed cryogenic engine for the upper stage 'GSLV Mk III' rocket. The cryogenic upper stage, designated as **C25**, was tested for 50 seconds at ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC) at Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu demonstrating all the stage operations. It was the first test in a series of two tests. The second test is planned for flight duration of 640 seconds

- ✓ The C25 stage is most powerful upper stage developed by ISRO. It uses Liquid Oxygen and Liquid Hydrogen propellant combination. This stage carries 27.8 tons of propellants loaded in two independent tanks.

- ✓ **Note:** Development of a cryogenic stage has unique design challenges liquid Oxygen stored at -195 deg C and as liquid Hydrogen is stored at -253 deg C in its tanks. To store these cryogenic fluids, special multi-layer insulation is provided for the tanks and other structures.

Dr Vijay Bhatkar appointed new vice-chancellor of Nalanda University

28-Jan-17

President Pranab Mukherjee has appointed Dr Vijay Bhatkar, architect of India's first supercomputer the Param series, as the chancellor of Nalanda University

Indian Navy's Theatre Level Exercise TROPEX 17

28-Jan-17

- ✓ The Indian Navy's Annual Theatre Readiness Operational Exercise (TROPEX) 2017 is being conducted off the Western Seaboard. The month long exercise will see participation of ships and aircraft of both the Western and Eastern Naval Command and also assets from the Indian Air Force, Indian Army and the Indian Coast Guard.

January 29, 30, 2017

Government launches Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign

30-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Government has launched nationwide "Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign (SLAC)" on the occasion of Anti-Leprosy Day (observed on the last Sunday of January). The day is observed every year on January 30 in the memory of Mahatma Gandhi who attained martyrdom on this day in 1948, to remember his selfless efforts and care for the people affected with Leprosy.

- ✓ **Karnataka government to amend law for conducting kambala**

30-Jan-17

- ✓ The Karnataka government has decided to bring an amendment to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA), 1960 for conducting traditional sports of Kambala and bull-cart race in the State

- ✓ **SC appoints Committee of Administrators headed by Vinod Rai to run BCCI**

30-Jan-17

- ✓ The Supreme Court has appointed former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) **Vinod Rai** as head of four-member **Committee of Administrators** to run Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

- ✓ **Vampire star caught in the act by ASTROSAT**

31-Jan-17

- ✓ India's first dedicated space observatory, ASTROSAT has captured the rare phenomenon of a small six-billion-year-old vampire star preying on a bigger celestial body. The vampire star phenomenon is observed when smaller star sucks material (mass and energy) out of the bigger companion star, causing its eventual death.

- ✓ **Finance Ministry to aid Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh for rail safety**

31-Jan-17

- ✓ The Union Finance Ministry has agreed to contribute partially to a new dedicated railway safety fund named as 'Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh' in the upcoming Union Budget 2017-18

Highlights of Economic Survey 2016-17

31-Jan-17

- ✓ Union finance Minister Arun Jaitley tabled the Economic Survey 2016-17 in Parliament budget session. The survey prepared by chief economic adviser in the finance ministry Arvind Subramanian. The survey projects the economy to grow in the range of 6.75% to 7.25% in fiscal year 2017-18 in the post-demonetisation year.
- ✓ It says that the adverse impact of demonetisation on GDP growth will be transitional. Major highlights from the Economic Survey 2016-17. Growth Forecast: Gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2016-17 pegged at 6.5%, down from 7.6% in last

fiscal 2015-16. Economic growth to rebound to 6.75 to 7.5% in 2017-18. Farm sector to grow at 4.1% in 2016-17, up from 1.2% in 2015-16. Growth rate of industrial sector estimated to moderate to 5.2% in 2016-17 from 7.4% in 2015-16.

- ✓ Service sector is estimated to grow at 8.9% in 2016-17 GST, other structural reforms should take the growth rate trend to 8-10%. Taxation: Prescribes cut in individual Income Tax rates, real estate stamp duties. IT net could be widened gradually by encompassing all high income earners. Time table for cutting corporate tax should be accelerated.
- ✓ Tax administration could be improved to reduce discretion and improve accountability. **Goods and Services Tax (GST):** Fiscal gains from GST will take time to realise. **Fiscal Deficit:** Implementation of muted tax receipts, wage hike to put pressure on fiscal deficit in 2017-18. For fiscal health of the economy fiscal prudence for both centre and states is needed.
- ✓ Fiscal windfall from low oil prices to disappear in 2017-18. **Inflation:** The average consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate declined to 4.9% in 2015-16 from 5.9% in 2014-15. CPI-based core inflation remained sticky around 5% in the 2016-17. Oil prices, seen rising by one-sixth in 2017-18 over the previous fiscal 2016-17 prices which could dampen India's economic growth.
- ✓ **Monetary Policy:** monetary easing headroom may be capped due to sharp rise in prices in 2017-18. Market interest rates seen lower in 2017-18 due to demonetisation. **Government Debt to GDP ratio:** It was 68.5% in 2016, down from 69.1% in 2015. **Banking:** Suggests setting up public sector asset rehabilitation agency (PSARA) to take charge of large bad loans in banks. With government backing, PSAR can overcome coordination and political issues on bad loans.
- ✓ **Demonetisation:** The adverse impact of demonetisation on GDP growth will be transitional. It will affect growth rate by 0.25-0.5%, but to have long-term benefits It may affect supplies of certain agricultural products like sugar, milk, potatoes and onions. Remonetisation will ensure that the cash squeeze is eliminated by April 2017. **Universal Basic Income (UBI):** Advocates the concept of UBI as an alternative to the various social welfare schemes in an effort to reduce poverty. It will be alternative to plethora of state subsidies for poverty alleviation. UBI would cost between 4 and 5% of GDP.