

Finance

India signs loan agreement with World Bank Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project

- India today signed a loan agreement with the World Bank for 96 Million US dollars for additional financing of Uttarakhand Disaster Recovery Project.
- Finance Ministry in a release said the World Bank has been supporting the State Government since 2014 to restore housing and rural connectivity and to build the resilience of communities.
- It said, the Project has completed more than two thousand permanent houses and 23 public buildings and restored over one thousand 300 kilometers of roads and 16 bridges so far.
- The Ministry said, the additional financing of 96 million US dollars will further help in the reconstruction of bridges, road and river bank protection works in the state.

PM-SYM: PM Modi launches Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana from Gujarat

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 5, 2019 launched the Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan Yojana (PM-SYM), a mega pension scheme for unorganised sector, from Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The scheme was announced in the Interim Budget 2019.
- The PM-SYM is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme that will benefit as many as 10 crore workers in the unorganised sector.
- It will provide monthly pension of Rs 3000 to the employees of unorganised sector after 60 years of age.

Nepal Government officials join INGAF Training Course in New Delhi

- The Third group of 22 officials of Nepal's Ministry of Finance joined the training course on 'Global Perspectives on Public Financial Management' at the Institute of Government Accounts and Finance (INGAF) in New Delhi.
- The training is being held under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme of the Ministry of External Affairs.
- This is a special tailor-made training course on Public Finance Management designed at the request and requirement of Nepal's Ministry of Finance for a total of 62 officials.

India and states

Swachh Bharat Mission (G): Over 96 percent of households in Rural India actually use toilets

- Around 96.5 percent of the households in Rural India who have access to the toilet use it as per the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2018-19, conducted by Independent Verification Agency (IVA).
- The NARSS also re-confirmed the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status of 90.7 percent of villages which were previously declared and verified as ODF by various districts/States themselves.
- The survey was conducted under the World Bank support project to the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G).
- The survey was conducted between November 2018 and February 2019 and covered 92040 households in 6136 villages across all the States and UTs of India.

- The survey used the Probability Proportion to Size (PPS) sampling methodology, which yields 95 percent accurate results. The data was collected using the Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) platform.
- 93.1 percent of households were found to have access to toilets during the survey period
- 96.5 percent of the people, who had access to toilets, actually used them
- 90.7 percent of villages which were previously declared and verified as ODF were confirmed to be ODF.

Exercise Al Nagah III between India and Oman to be held

- **Exercise Al Nagah III**, third in the series of bilateral joint exercise between **India and Oman is scheduled to be held from March 12 to 25, 2019 at Jabel Al Akhdar Mountains in Oman.**
- The exercise will see both the armies exchanging expertise and experience in tactics, weapon handling and firing.
- **It aims to enhance interoperability in counterterrorist operations in semi urban mountainous terrain.**
- **Exercise Al Nagah III** follows the first two joint exercises that were held in Oman in January 2015 and India in March 2017 respectively.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of Shikshan Bhavan and Vidhyarthi Bhavan

- **The Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of Shikshan Bhavan and Vidhyarthi Bhavan at Annapurna Dham Trust in Adalaj, Gujarat.**
- **The Annapurna Dham Trust will give society the strength to ensure gender equality and prosperity for everyone.**
- **Remembering Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Prime Minister said that the efforts of Sardar Patel towards cooperative sector should never be forgotten.**
- **The Prime Minister urged the people of Gujarat to work on food processing.**
- He added that such value addition would benefit both farmers and industries.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh to inaugurate 28 major infrastructure projects of CAPF

- **Home Minister Rajnath Singh will inaugurate 28 major infrastructure projects of Central Armed Police Forces, Delhi Police and other Central Police Organizations in New Delhi.**
- **He will also lay the foundation stone for three infrastructure projects of Land Ports Authority of India.**
- These projects, involving 71 non-residential buildings, over five thousand residential quarters and 34 barracks, will be constructed at a **total cost of around Rs 1900 crore.**
- The projects are spread across 17 States including Assam, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan.

Reports

World Air Quality Report 2018: 7 of the top 10 most polluted cities in the world are in India

- **As per the World Air Quality Report 2018 released by IQAir AirVisual and Greenpeace on March 5, 2019, seven of the top 10 most polluted cities in the world are in India.**
- **India's Gurugram led the list of most polluted cities in the world in 2018, followed by Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Noida, and Bhiwadi in the top six worst-affected cities.**
- **Of the 10 cities with highest pollution, seven are in India, while one is in China and two are in Pakistan.**
- **Among the Indian cities are Gurgaon, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Bhiwadi, Noida, Patna and Lucknow. The other three are Hotan in China and Lahore and Faislabad in Pakistan.**

- The main objective behind the report was to measure the presence of fine particulate matter known as Particulate Matter (PM) 2.5, which has been recorded in real-time in 2018.
- The report, based on a study of 3000 cities, said that 64 percent of the cities exceeded the World Health Organisation's annual exposure guideline for PM 2.5. In South Asia itself, 99 percent of the cities exceeded the WHO's safe standard exposure of 10 micrograms/cubic metre annually.

World

US to end India's preferential trade treatment under GSP programme

- US President Donald Trump informed the US Congress on March 4, 2019 that he intends **to end India's preferential trade treatment under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme.**
- **The GSP programme allows \$5.6 billion worth of Indian exports to enter the United States duty-free.**
- Explaining the reason behind withdrawing the duty benefits on Indian products, Trump stated in a letter to the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi that India has failed to assure the United States that it would provide equitable and reasonable access to its markets in numerous sectors.
- Trump stated that he will continue to assess whether the Government of India is providing equitable and reasonable access to its markets, in accordance with the GSP eligibility criteria.

India nominates NITI Aayog's Ramesh Chand to head Food and Agriculture Organisation

- **India nominated NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand for the post of the new Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) Director-General.**
- The election of the Director-General is scheduled to take place in **June 2019 to pick the successor to Brazilian economist Jose Graziano da Silva, who has served two terms since 2011.**
- The other candidates are **Qu Dongyu of China, Medi MounGUI of Cameroon, Catherine Geslain-Laneelle of France and Davit Kirvalidze of Georgia.**

France reiterates support for India's permanent seat in UN Security Council

- **France, which assumed the Presidency of the United Nations Security Council for the month of March, has reiterated its support for India as the permanent member of the powerful UN body.**
- The nation also reiterated its support for Germany and Japan as permanent members of an expanded UNSC.
- Speaking on the occasion, **French Permanent Representative to the UN, François Delattre** said that enlargement of the powerful UN body in both permanent and non-permanent categories is the first crucial part towards its reform.
- He said that the reform of the Security Council through its enlargement is one of the key areas and key priorities of their diplomacy.