

Finance and Economy

Centre, ADB sign 26 million dollar loan pact for improving drainage infrastructure in Dibrugarh

- The Centre and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have **signed a 26 million dollar loan agreement to provide additional financing for improving drainage infrastructure in Dibrugarh town of Assam.**
- The ongoing loan of 51 million dollars under the Assam Urban Infrastructure Investment Program is helping to improve water supply infrastructure in Guwahati and solid waste management and drainage infrastructure in Guwahati and Dibrugarh.
- Additional Secretary in Department of Economic Affairs Sameer Kumar Khare and India Resident Mission of ADB, Hoe Yun Jeong signed the agreement in New Delhi yesterday.

Govt sets up a committee to examine insurance cover to advocates

- **The government has set up a committee to examine the issues related to framing of a proper, structured scheme for providing insurance cover to advocates** and suggest modalities for its implementation.
- Law and Justice Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad has set up the five-member panel under the **chairmanship of Secretary Legal Affairs.**
- The committee will recommend a comprehensive insurance scheme for the welfare of advocates all over the country to address concerns relating to untimely death and medical insurance.
- The committee will submit its reports within three months.

India, Russia sign USD 3 billion deal on nuclear submarine

- **India signed a USD 3 billion deal with Russia for leasing a nuclear-powered attack submarine for the Indian Navy for a period of 10 years.**
- The countries signed an inter-governmental agreement under which, Russia will have to deliver the Akula class submarine (Chakra III) to the Indian Navy by 2025.
- It will be the third Russian submarine to be leased to the Navy.

Businesses need to pay up to Rs 20 for customer verification for using Aadhaar services: UIDAI

- **Business organisations using Aadhaar services now need to pay Rs 20 for each customer verification and 50 paise for authentication** of each transaction carried out by the entities, as per the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).
- Aadhaar authentication services shall be charged at the rate of Rs 20 for each e-KYC transaction and Rs 0.50 for each Yes and No authentication transaction.
- However, the Aadhaar (Pricing of Aadhaar Authentication Services) Regulations, 2019 exempt government entities from authentication transaction charges.

Union Cabinet approves scheme to rebate state and central embedded taxes to support textile sector

- **The Union Cabinet has approved the scheme to rebate state and central embedded taxes to support the textile sector.** This will enable the government to take various measures for making exports of apparel and made-ups zero-rated.

- At present, apparel and made-ups segments are supported under the scheme for a rebate of state levies. However, certain state, as well as central taxes, continued to be present in the cost of exports.
- The cabinet decision provides for a scheme to rebate all embedded state and central taxes or levies for apparel and made-ups which have a combined share of around 56 per cent in India's textile export basket.

Cabinet approves Delhi Metro's Phase -4 project

- **The Union Cabinet has approved Delhi Metro's Phase -4 project comprising of 3 - priority corridors.** The total length of these 3 corridors will be 61.679 km.
- Out of the total 61.679 km, 22.359 km will be built underground and 39.320 km will be constructed as an elevated section.
- These corridors will consist of 46 stations, of which 17 stations will be underground and the rest 29 stations will be constructed as elevated sections.

Cabinet approves Mumbai Urban Transport Project Phase-IIIA

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved Phase-IIIA of the Mumbai Urban Transport Project.**
- **The total estimated cost of the project will be Rs 30,849 crore with the completion cost of Rs 33690 crore.** The project is likely to be completed in five years.
- The major benefit of the project includes the introduction of air-conditioned coaches with automatic door operation to improve comfort level and safety of commuters.
- The project will enable seamless travel for long distance suburban passengers by extending and creating corridors and improvement in passenger amenities and improved passenger movement at stations.

Cabinet approves procedure and mechanism for Strategic Disinvestment of the CPSEs

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has **approved procedure and mechanism for Strategic Disinvestment of the CPSEs.**
- The cabinet has approved the quantum of shares to be transacted, mode of sale and final pricing of the transaction or lay down the principles, guidelines for such pricing and the selection of strategic partner, buyer, terms and conditions of sale.
- It has also given its approval to decide on the proposals of CGD with regard the timing, price, the terms & conditions of sale and any other related issue to the transaction.

Cabinet approves implementation of Khurja Super Thermal Power Project in Uttar Pradesh

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the investment approval for **2x660MW Khurja Super Thermal Power Plant (STPP) in District Bulandshahar of Uttar Pradesh at an estimated cost of Rs 11,089.42 crore** and Amelia Coal Mine in District Singrauli, Madhya Pradesh.
- The project will be implemented at an estimated cost of **Rs 1587.16 crore and will be implemented by THDC India Limited, a Mini Ratna CPSU under the Union Ministry of Power.**
- The Khurja STPP will be based on Supercritical Technology with two units of capacity 660 MW each, equipped with latest emission control technology to protect the environment and has high efficiency and uses less fuel to generate power.

Cabinet approves investment approval for Buxar Thermal Power Project in Bihar

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for investment approval for **2x660 MW Buxar Thermal Power Project (Buxar TPP) in District Buxar of Bihar.**
- The project will be completed at an estimated cost of Rs 10,439.09 crore and implemented by SJVN Thermal Private Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of SJVN Ltd.
- The Buxar TPP will be based on supercritical technology with two units of 660 MW each, equipped with latest emission control technology to protect the environment and has high efficiency and use less fuel to generate power.

Cabinet approves Teesta Stage-VI HE project

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the investment sanction for acquisition of **Lanco Teesta Hydro Power Ltd (LTHPL) and execution of balance work of the Teesta Stage-VI HE project by NHPC Ltd in Sikkim.**
- **The project will be implemented at an estimated cost of Rs 5748.04 crore (at July, 2018 Price Level), which includes bid amount of Rs 907 crore** for acquisition of LTHPL and estimated cost of balance work of Rs 3863.95 crore with includes Interest During Construction (IDC) and Foreign Component (FC) of Rs 977.09 crore.

Cabinet approves additional funds for extending financial assistance to sugar mills

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for funds amounting to Rs 2790 crore towards interest subvention for extending indicative loan amount of Rs 12900 crore by banks to the sugar mills under the scheme** for extending financial assistance to sugar mills for enhancement and augmentation of ethanol production capacity.
- The cabinet has also approved Rs 565 crore towards interest subvention for extending indicative loan amount of Rs 2600 crore by banks to the molasses-based standalone distilleries to augment capacity through installation of incineration boilers and other methods in the existing distilleries for achieving ZLD and additional equipment for ethanol production as well as for setting up of new standalone distilleries for ethanol production.

India and states

India, Japan hold inaugural space dialogue

- The inaugural India-Japan Space Dialogue was held in New Delhi yesterday. **The dialogue brought together Ministries and agencies related to outer space in the two countries and provided an opportunity for information exchange on the respective space policies.**
- **Discussions were also held on bilateral cooperation between JAXA-ISRO,** their space industries, global navigation satellite system, space situational awareness, space security and space-related norms.
- The Indian delegation was led by Additional Secretary for Disarmament and International Security Affairs in Ministry of External Affairs, Indra Mani Pandey.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of Kashi Vishwanath corridor

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid foundation stone of Kashi Vishwanath corridor and beautification at Baba Vishwanath Temple.**
- This temple corridor will be a role model for all temples and their safety and security.
- The corridor is spread over around 39 thousand square metre at Baba Vishwanath temple and nearby areas.

- One of the 12 Jyotirlingas across the country, this world famous Baba Vishwanath Temple attracts crores of devotees not only in India but also from abroad.

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman approves reforms in Indian Army

- **The Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman approved the first batch of reforms in the Indian Army.**
- Some of these reforms are - relocation of 229 officers from the Army headquarters, creation of a new post of Deputy Chief for Military Operations and Strategic Planning, and setting up new wings for vigilance and human rights issues.
- The reforms aim to make the 1.3 million-strong force leaner and meaner.
- The post of Deputy Chief of the Army Staff, Strategy was created to deal with military operations, intelligence, strategic planning and operational logistics.

Regional Air Connectivity- UDAN: CCEA approves revival of un-served and under-served air strips

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)**, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on March 7, 2019 approved the extension of time and scope for **revival and development of un-served and under-served air strips of State Governments, Airports Authority of India (AAI), Civil enclaves, CPSUs, helipads and water aerodromes.**
- The revival of these un-served and under-served air strips will be carried out at the total cost of Rs 4500 crore with the budgetary support of the Union Government under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik).
- The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation received overwhelming response from the airlines in two rounds of bidding held so far under the RCS - UDAN.
- In the first round of UDAN bidding, 128 routes were assigned to five airline operators for 43 un-served/underserved airports/airstrips on March 31, 2017.
- In second round of UDAN bidding, the response from airline operators considerably improved wherein 86 proposals involving 325 routes were awarded to 15 selected airline operators in January 2018.

Prime Minister attends the National Women Livelihood Meet -2019 at Varanasi

- **The Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the National Women Livelihood Meet 2019, held at Deendayal Hastkala Sankul in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh** on the occasion of International Women's Day 2019.
- The Prime Minister visited the exhibition on products manufactured by **Self Help Groups aided by Uttar Pradesh Rural Livelihood Mission.**
- He distributed Electric Chaak, Solar Charkha and Honey Warp to women beneficiaries and appreciation letters to five women Self Help Groups.

PM Modi releases Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle spanning 1857-1947

- The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 7, 2019 released **the Dictionary of Martyrs of India's Freedom Struggle (1857-1947) at an event in Lok Kalyan Marg, New Delhi.**
- This five-volume dictionary contains account of the martyrs from India's First War of Independence in 1857, to India's Independence in 1947.
- This is the first ever attempt by the Government to compile the names of martyrs on this scale.
- The dictionary includes the martyrs of 1857 Uprising, Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (1919), Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), Quit India Movement (1942-44), and Revolutionary Movements (1915-34).

Cabinet approves continuation of National AIDS Control Programme-IV beyond 12th five-year plan

- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the continuation of National AIDS Control Programme-IV beyond 12th five-year plan for a period of three years from April 2017 to March 2020. The total outlay will be Rs 6434.76 crore.**
- The major benefit of the programme is that more than 99 per cent of the population will be kept HIV free, more and more than 70 lakh of key population will be covered annually through a comprehensive HIV prevention programme.
- Around 15 crore of the vulnerable population including five crore pregnant women will be tested for HIV in three years of project and about two crore 32 lakh units of blood will be collected at NACO's supported blood banks during the three years of the project.

Kummanam Rajasekharan resigns as Mizoram Governor

- **Mizoram Governor Kummanam Rajasekharan resigned from his post on March 8, 2019.**
- President Ram Nath Kovind accepted the resignation of Rajasekharan.
- **Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi has been given additional charge of the state.**
- Mukhi will discharge the functions of the Governor of Mizoram, in addition to his own duties, until regular arrangements are made.

Cabinet approves proposal to constitute committee to recommend conferring ownership to residents of unauthorised colonies

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal **for constitution of a committee to recommend the process for conferring ownership or transfer, mortgage rights to the residents of unauthorized colonies in Delhi.**
- The Committee will be chaired by the Lt. Governor of Delhi and it will comprise DDA Vice Chairman, Urban Affairs Additional Secretary, Delhi Chief Secretary, Commissioners of East, North and South MCD, Delhi Urban Arts Commission Chairman, SPA Professor, Urban Planner & Director of National Institute of Urban Affairs, Former Director of Delhi Fire Services and DDA Principal Commissioner as Member Secretary.
- The Committee constituted will submit its report in 90 days to the Ministry of Home Affairs. On submission of this report by the Committee, the cabinet secretariat will be informed and further action was taken after considering recommendations of the Committee.

NABL launches quality assurance scheme for basic composite medical laboratories

- **The National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories launched a voluntary scheme called Quality Assurance Scheme (QAS) for basic composite medical laboratories in February 2019 for sensitising small laboratories to basic doable quality practices.**
- The scheme is expected to bring transformational change in more than 5000 laboratories over the next 5 years and to transform them into labs providing quality service.
- To familiarise and encourage more and more small labs, even in the remotest part of the country, to avail the scheme, NABL would be organising awareness programs in various cities of India.

Appointments

Padma Lakshmi appointed as UNDP Goodwill Ambassador

- **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has appointed Indian-American television personality and food expert Padma Lakshmi as its new Goodwill Ambassador**, in support of its fight against inequality and discrimination around the world.
- The announcement was made by **UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner in a ceremony at the UNDP headquarters on March 7, 2019, on the eve of International Women's Day.**
- In her new role, the award-winning author will help mobilise support for the Sustainable Development Goals with a focus on fighting inequality, discrimination and empowering the disenfranchised.

Sports

BCCI Central Contracts: Rishabh Pant promoted, Shikhar Dhawan demoted

- The BCCI in the latest list of Central Contracts rewarded the young wicketkeeper-batsman **Rishabh Pant with a Grade A retainership while demoted senior opener Shikhar Dhawan from the elite A plus category.**
- The BCCI handed retainership to 25 cricketers in four groups of **A plus (Rs 7 crore), A (Rs 5 crore), B (Rs 3 crore) and C (Rs 1 crore).**
- Pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar was also dropped from the highest-paying category.
- Now only three players -- skipper **Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah** - figure in the elite category.

World

Bill Shine resigns as Donald Trump's communications director

- **US has said today Former Fox News executive Bill Shine has resigned as President Donald Trump's communications director.**
- White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said in a statement that Assistant to the president and communications director Bill Shine offered his resignation to the president yesterday and the president accepted it.
- Sanders didn't go into Shine's reasoning but said he continued to support Trump and his agenda and would be a senior advisor to the 2020 re-election campaign.