

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Union Cabinet Approvals – December 14, 2016

- Approval of Memorandum of Understanding signed between **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and **United States Geological Survey (USGS)** that was signed on July 9, 2016 at Bengaluru, for cooperation in the exchange and use of **U.S. Land Remote Sensing Satellite Data**.
- Approval for signing **Memorandum of Understanding** between the Ministry of Tourism, Government of the Republic of **India** and Ministry of Cultural, Information & Tourism of the Government of the **Kyrgyzstan** Republic for strengthening cooperation in the field of Tourism.
- Approval to India's approach to **Climate Change Negotiations** at the Conference of Parties (COP) to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC)**, held in Marrakesh, Morocco on November 7-18, 2016.
- Approved the proposal of Ministry of Shipping to **replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963 by the Major Port Authorities Bill, 2016**.
- Approval of the **MoUs** signed between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (**ICAI**) and College of Banking and Financial Studies (**CBFS**), Oman in 2008 and 2011 as well as the renewal of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- Approval for signing of the revised **Air Services Agreement (ASA)** between **India and Nigeria** which was signed on 31st January, 1978.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014

- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014**, which aims at securing and enhancing the rights and entitlements of disabled persons was passed with amendments in the Rajya Sabha
- The bill will replace the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.
- Amended Bill also complies with the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was signed by India in 2007.

Interim Nationwide Ban Imposed On Manja For Flying Kites By NGT

- Ban was imposed by the **National Green Tribunal** on December 14, 2016 on the procurement, sale and use of glass powder coated '**manja**' and other dangerous strings for flying kites.
- The ban would apply on the use of **nylon, Chinese and cotton manja coated with glass** until the next hearing on February 1, 2017.
- The order was passed after a petition was filed by the **People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)** India, to ban all kinds of sharp kite strings as the festival of Makar Sankranti was approaching and manja would be used for flying kites

9th Edition of INDRA NAVY Military Exercise Begins in Visakhapatnam

- 9th edition of the annual bilateral maritime exercise between **Indian Navy and Russian Navy, INDRA NAVY**, started off in the Bay of Bengal

- **Aim:** to increase inter-operability among the two navies and develop common understanding and procedures for maritime security operations.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India becomes Fourth Largest Defence Spender

- India has become the **fourth largest defence spender** in the world, after US, China, and the UK According to the **2016 Jane's Defence Budgets Report**, released by research firm IHS Markit
- India spent **\$50.6 billion** in 2016, from previous \$46.6 billion in 2015.

India to contribute \$500,000 to UN emergency response fund

- India will contribute **\$500,000** to the UN **Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)** for the year 2016-17
- This fund will be used to provide relief materials to emergency evacuation arises in any countries.
- 29 countries promised contributions totaling **\$273 million** to the CERF and till now 50 countries provided funding to CREF

Rio Gets UNESCO World Heritage Status

- **Rio de Janeiro** officially entered into the UN's list of **world heritage sites** while UNESCO status was announced in **2012** in recognition of its soaring granite cliffs, urban rainforest and beaches.
- The UN cultural body, UNESCO given this status to Rio to highlighted the "extraordinary fusion" of man-made and natural beauty.

Cuba signs deal with Google for faster internet access

- Google and the government of Cuba signed a deal that will enable Cuba to have faster access to internet content from the US technology giant.
- Under the deal, the internet giant will install servers called **Google Global Cache**, on the island that will store company's most popular content from sites like Gmail and Youtube on the local servers to provide faster access to its data.
- This agreement will enable users in Cuba to reduce access time for Google internet content, and bringing better speed and quality.

Qatar Ends Controversial kafala labour system

- Kafala System is a system used to monitor migrant laborers, working primarily in the construction and domestic sectors of Qatar and other gulf countries.
- The system requires a local sponsor -individual or company- and need their permission to switch jobs or leave the country.
- The Kafala system provide workers with little protection and was open to abuse. But the system was replaced with new **contract-based system** that aims to improve and protect the rights of the worker along with providing freedom of movement, right to change the job.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY CURRENT AFFAIRS

ADB Trims 2016 India's Growth Estimate to 7%

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** lowered the 2016 growth estimate for India to **7 per cent** from the previous **7.4 due to demonetisation, weak investment and agricultural slowdown**.
- India's growth forecast for 2017 remained unchanged at **7.8 per cent**.
- ADB also downgraded 2016 growth for **Asia** to **5.6 per cent**, from the previous **5.7 per cent** while for 2017, growth was kept same at **5.7 per cent**
- Growth estimate for **Southeast Asia** was kept at **4.5 percent** for 2016 and **4.6 percent** in 2017
- **China's** was projected to grow **6.6 per cent** in 2016 and **6.4 per cent** in 2017

India and IBRD signs Grant Agreement for Additional Financing in MSME Project

- India signed a **Grant Agreement** of USD 5.19 million with **International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)** for Additional Financing for Financing Energy Efficiency at MSMEs Project- Programmatic Framework for Energy Efficiency.
- The agreement signed was a part of the **parent project – India: Financing Energy Efficiency at MSME Project (FEEMP)** that was initiated from September 29, 2010 with Grant amount of US\$ 11.3 million.
- The parent project aimed at increasing demand for investment in energy efficiency in micro, small and medium enterprise sector and build their capacity to access commercial finance.
- Additional financing agreement will bridge the gap in understanding between different stakeholders, energy professionals, technology suppliers, entrepreneurs, banks and financial institutions and also contribute to achievement of the initiative taken under parent project.

Paytm partners with NHAI for digital payments at toll plazas

- **Paytm** has announced partnership with National Highways Authority of India (**NHAI**) to enable cashless payments at all national and city toll plazas.
- Travellers can pay their toll charges instantly with Paytm app by scanning the **QR code** placed at toll payment counters.

Vodafone launches e-wallet M Pesa Pay for retailers

- Vodafone India launched Vodafone **M Pesa Pay** to enable merchants and retailers to receive payments from their customers. It will also be enabled for M Pesa customers.
- M Pesa Pay replaces the need for **point of sale (PoS)** machine.

AWARDS

Rajiv Gandhi International Airport Achieves Carbon Neutral Status

- **Rajiv Gandhi International Airport** (RGIA), Hyderabad operated by **GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd** (GHIAL), has achieved neutral status with regards to carbon emission.
- Hyderabad Airport has become the first airport in **Asia-Pacific region** under the **5-15 Million Passengers Per Annum category** and second among all categories in the Asia-Pacific region to achieve the Carbon Neutral status.
- GMR Group-led **Delhi Airport** became the first airport in Asia-Pacific to achieve carbon neutral status among all categories in September 2016

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Malaysia enthrones 15th king, Sultan Muhammad V

- Malaysia government has been installed its 15th king **Sultan Muhammad V** in the Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur(KL)
- Muhammad succeeds **Sultan Abdul Halim of Kedah** who was king previously in the 1970s and he was the first person to hold the position twice.
- He was elected to ascend the throne for a five-year reign by the Conference of Rulers in October, 2016

Kannan takes charge as new Indian Banks' Association (IBA) chief

- **V G Kannan** took charge as Chief Executive of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- He replaced **M V Tanksale**.
- Kannan had working as Managing Director & Group Executive (Associates & Subsidiaries) of State Bank of India

Legendary Horse Trainer and Jockey Swinburn dies at 55

- Renowned English jockey and horse trainer **Walter Swinburn**, passed away on December 12, 2016, in **London**.
- Swinburn won the Britain's richest horse race 'Epsom Derby' three times in his career including the legendary Shergar Derby at the age of 19 in 1981.
- Swinburn won the other Derby's on Shahrastani in 1986 and Lammtarra in 1995

SPORTS CURRENT AFFAIRS

Sochi, Russia won't host 2017 Bobsleigh and Skeleton World Championships

- **International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation (IBSF)** announced that Russia will not host the **2017 Bobsleigh and Skeleton World Championships**.
- The reason cited by IBSF for this was that Russia is accused of state-sponsored doping and IBSF wants to focus on sport rather than accusations.
- The reason for change of spot is also that many countries and players had warned of boycotting the Championship if it was held in Russia.
- **Latvia** was first nation to say they would boycott the World Championships.

Shiva Thapa and Manoj Kumar wins gold in 1st Elite Senior Men's Nationals

- **Shiva Thapa** won **Gold Medal** in **lightweight (60kg) National Boxing Championships**.
- **Manoj Kumar** also won a **Gold medal** in **69 Kg category**. He represented Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB)
- The overall title was won by the **Services Sports Control Board (SSCB)**, the team won four gold, one silver and three bronze medals.
- Commonwealth Games silver-medallist **L Devendro Singh (52kg)** lost to Deepak Singh of Chandigarh in the flyweight (52kg) category and had to settle for **silver**.

Andy Murray and Angelique Kerber named 2016 ITF World Champions

- International Tennis Federation (ITF) named **Andy Murray of Great Britain** and **Angelique Kerber** of Germany as the 2016 ITF World Champions.
- This is for the first time that either of them has received this award.
- Earlier this year Andy Murray sealed his spot of **No. 1 ranking** in the final match of the season after defeating his Novak Djokovic to win the ATP World Tour Finals.