

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Cabinet Approvals- January 24, 2017

- **Approval of Indian Institute of Management(IIM) Bill, 2017** that aims to declare IIMs as **Institutions of National Importance**.
- Approval on for **interest waiver** for the **two months** of November and December, 2016 for farmers accessing short term crop loans from **Cooperative Banks**.
- Approval to launch **Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017 (VPBY 2017)**
- Approved a **new scheme for promotion of Rural Housing** in the country.
- Approval for the **ratification of the Second Commitment Period of the Kyoto Protocol** on containing the emission of **Green House Gases (GHGs)** which was adopted in 2012.
- Approved the proposal of **India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO)** for **redevelopment of Pragati Maidan** by setting up of a world class **Integrated Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (IECC)**

Union Cabinet Transfers Disinvestment Advice to Economic Affairs Department

- Union Cabinet has decided to **transfer the role** of advising the government on how to **utilize the proceeds** from disinvestment from the **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)** to the **Department of Economic Affairs**.
- Decision aims to make the process more efficient since the Department of Economic Affairs is in charge of budget-making, it will better decide the utilization of stake sales in public sector undertakings (PSUs).
- **National Investment Fund** was created by the government in 2005 to deposit the proceeds from the disinvestment of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs).
- Department of Economic Affairs in the Finance Ministry will now be in charge of financial policy in regard to the utilisation of the proceeds of disinvestment channelised into the National Investment Fund.

SC Directs Providing Daily Drug Dosage Regimen for TB Patients

- **Supreme Court** directed the government to replace the **current practice** of giving **three-times-a-week dosage norm** of **tuberculosis (TB) drugs** with a **daily dosage norm** within a period of nine months to curb relapse and deaths during treatment.
- According to doctors, the current dosage practice is unscientific and improper and promotes relapses while producing a lethal drug-resistant strain in patients. Besides, the relapsed cases are even harder to treat than first-time infections.

Ministry of Steel proposes Draft National Steel Policy 2017 at an Investment of Rs.10 lakh crore

- The draft policy aims to create a globally competitive steel industry for inter-sectorial growth and a self-sufficient steel industry that is technologically advanced, globally competitive and promotes inclusive growth.

- Under the policy, the ministry has set an ambitious production target of building a capacity of **300 million tonnes (MT) per annum by 2030-31** which is more than double from 2015-16. The total capacity of India in 2015-16 was 122 MT.
- The ministry estimates that an investment of **Rs 10 lakh crore** would be required to achieve the 300 MT target. Besides it would also generate 11 lakh new job opportunity. The steel sector presently employs about 25 lakh people.
- The draft policy recognizes that due to shortage of domestic coking coal, pig iron producers in India have to significantly depend on import of coking coal. The policy aims to cut down dependence on expensive imports of coking coal by 50% by 2030-31.
- For this, it is set to introduce **gas-based steel plants and technologies such as electric furnaces** to bring down the use of coking coal in blast furnaces.
- The draft policy aims at increasing the per capita steel consumption to 160 kg by 2030-31 and make the industry a world leader on energy and raw material efficient steel production, in a safe and sustainable manner.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

China Develops World's Biggest Solar Park

- China has built the world's biggest solar park, **Longyangxia Dam Solar Park**, in the western province of **Qinghai**.
- The park spans over **27 square km** of area and can produce **850 MW** of power which is enough to supply up to **200,000 households**.
- The construction of the solar park began in 2013 and total costs around **\$875 million (around Rs. 6,000 crore)**.
- China hopes to produce 110GW of solar power and 210GW of wind power as part of an ambitious plan to slash pollution and emissions by 2020. Besides, by 2030, China has pledged to increase the amount of energy coming from non-fossil fuels to 20% of the total.

Trump Signs Order to Withdraws US from Trans-Pacific Partnership Deal

- The new US president, **Donald Trump** signed a formal executive order on to **withdraw** the country from the **Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)** trade deal
- During his campaign for the presidency, Trump said that trade deals with other countries leads to job reduction for the citizens as the employers move to seek talent outside the United States to save on labor costs.
- The TPP accord was negotiated by former President Barack Obama's administration and was the main economic pillar of the Obama administration to formulate the massive free trade deal that was set to reshape commerce throughout the Asia-Pacific region to counter China.
- Trump also signed an order to impose a federal hiring freeze with the exception of the military and ban US NGOs that perform abortions abroad from receiving federal funding.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

BCSBI Launches 'Know Your Rights' Program

- **Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI)** has announced an initiative as per which it would organise **"Know Your Rights" programme** in select urban and rural areas of the country to enhance awareness on Banking Codes at the grassroot level among the people.
- The move aims to create awareness among the people about the commitment of the banks towards their customers.
- The program would be conducted at three levels including **Tier II cities, metros and other backward areas**.
- The Banking Codes and Standards Board of India (BCSBI) is an independent banking industry watchdog that protects consumers of banking services in India.

T-Hub Collaborates with Esri India for GIS Innovation Hub

- Telangana based India's largest incubator for start-ups, **T-Hub** has launched a **'GIS Innovation Hub' (GIH)** in collaboration with **Esri India** for the start-ups belonging to the capital Hyderabad.
- Esri India is country's leading **Geographic Information System (GIS)** software and solutions provider.
- GIH aims to provide a platform to start-ups within T-Hub to make use of GIS technology by Esri India for better efficiency in work.
- Under the collaboration, the start-ups would have to undergo a three year 'Start-up' program training under Esri India where they would get free access to Esri's ArcGIS, a cloud-based mapping platform, software development tools and ready-to-use content.
- Esri India will also provide training and technical support to make the adoption of GIS technology easy for the start-ups.

UN appoints Director of UNIC in New Delhi

- **Derk Segaar** has been appointed **Director** of the New Delhi based **United Nations Information Centre (UNIC)** covering India and the Kingdom of Bhutan by the UN
- Segaar had served as the Chief of the United Nations Resident Coordinators Office and Head of the **United Nations Mission in South Sudans (UNMISS)** Relief, Reintegration and Protection Section from 2013
- Earlier he was the Head of Communications of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York.

Virender Sehwag Named Kings XI Punjab Brand Ambassador

- Former Indian opener **Virender Sehwag**, the mentor of Kings XI Punjab, will also be the team's head of Cricket Operations and Strategy in the 10th edition of the Indian Premier League.
- Sehwag will not only be the **head of Cricket**, but also be the **brand ambassador** for the Punjab franchise.

Siddhartha Murarka appointed ICSI Chairman

- **Siddhartha Murarka** has been appointed as the Chairman of the Eastern India Regional Council of The **Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)**.
- Murarka is also a “regular faculty” at ICAI and other professional bodies and chambers of commerce like the Merchant Chamber of Commerce and the BCCI.

Kansas Congressman Mike Pompeo Appointed CIA Director

- A conservative **Republican from Kansas, Mike Pompeo** was sworn in as the new director of **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)**
- Pompeo won with a vote of **66-32**. This makes him the third official cabinet member of US Senate.
- The previous CIA director, John Brennan, resigned when Trump was sworn in as president on January 20, 2017.

AWARDS

Assam Launches ‘Chief Minister’s Award’ For Performing Districts in Cashless Transaction

- In a bid to promote digital transaction in **Assam**, the Chief Minister of Assam, announced the launch of **‘Chief Minister’s Award’** while inaugurating the Digi Dhan Mela in the state.
- The Chief Minister’s Award would be given to the **best performing district** of the state that adopts digital payment methods and also educate larger section of the society about the cashless transaction.
- The winning district’s Deputy Commissioner would be presented a prize of **Rs 50,000** at the end of financial year 2016-2017 after March 31, 2017.

Vladimir Putin Awarded with the First Hugo Chavez Peace Prize by Venezuela

- **Russia’s President Vladimir Putin** was awarded the first ever **Hugo Chavez Prize for Peace and Sovereignty** by the **Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro**
- The Peace Prize has been named in honor of late Venezuelan leader **Hugo Chavez** who served as the **64th President** of Venezuela from 1999 to 2013.
- Putin was chosen by the award committee set up in October 2016 for being a fighter of peace. He has been recognized as a great leader of peace, a great ruler of the multi-centric and multi-polar world.
- The Hugo Chavez Prize for Peace and Sovereignty aims to recognize global and national personalities who have stood out in the struggle for peace, for sovereignty and the independence of peoples.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Rubber Soil Information System (RubSIS) launched for Rubber Growers

- The system will provide details about the soil quality to the rubber growers to enhance productivity besides reducing the cost of production.
- RubSIS is an online platform developed to recommend application of appropriate mix of fertilizers to the specific plantations of rubber growers depending upon their soil nature.
- The system would enable to bring the data about the soil quality to the rubber growers and also recommend the optimum mix and quantities of chemical fertilizers required for the growth of specific rubber plant.
- The system has been developed by Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII) under the Rubber Board in collaboration with Indian Institute of Information Technology and Management, Kerala; National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning, ICAR and National Remote Sensing Center, ISRO.

Guided Pinaka test fired successfully again

- The **Guided Pinaka** was successfully test fired from the Launch Complex-III, **ITR, Chandipur** for a further enhanced range.
- The **Pinaka Rocket Mark-II**, equipped with Navigation, guidance and control kit, was transformed into a guided Pinaka.

PVR Launches Theater on Demand Service VKAAO

- Multiplex chain operator **PVR** has launched a theatre on demand service '**VKAAO**'
- Vkaao is an **online platform** that will enable consumers to watch any movie of their choice at a theatre of their choice.
- Initially 500 films titles would be listed for selection in different languages and genres and minimum 50 seats would be required to confirm a show.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

India UK Join Hands to Launch Project to Tackle Delhi Air Pollution Risks

- **Indian** has partnered with the **British experts** over a project that aims to study the **air pollution level in Delhi** and health problems associated it.
- The project '**ASAP-Delhi: An Integrated Study of Air Pollutant Sources in the Delhi National Capital Region**' would be led by **University of Birmingham** and would also involve experts from the **Indian Institute of Technology Delhi**, the **Indian National Physical Laboratory** and the **University of Surrey**.

- The project has been granted a support of **1.4 million pound** from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC) Air Pollution and Human Health program.
- The project will run for a period of **four years** and involve a series of field studies and follow-on analyses to determine the sources and processes responsible for airborne particulate matter in Delhi.
- Delhi was declared as the most polluted city in the world in 2014 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) with air pollution level 30 times more than that of UK.

www.AmbitionIAS.com