

# **NEWS ALERT**

**NOVEMBER 16-23, 2018**



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# AGRICULTURE

PIONEER, NOV 16, 2018

## **India hosts agriculture summit to boost agri produce trade**

To increase agricultural produce trade in Asia and the Pacific countries, India hosted a two-day meet of the general assembly of Network for Development of Agricultural Cooperatives in Asia and Pacific (NEDAC) to chalk out a strategy for regional trade. NEDAC also adopted a new constitution on Thursday.

While inaugurating the assembly Parshottam K Rupala, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Panchayatiraj, said, “Realising the need to enhance the farmers income to address agrarian distress and promotes farmers welfare Prime Minister has embarked on a mission for doubling farmers income by 2022.” He further said that the cooperatives have exhibited better performance and are living success stories to enhance production and better returns to produce from market through collective action. He added that the India is determined to improve productivity of agriculture products and use resources effectively and improve trade for farmers.

To establish marketing linkages among cooperatives in the ASEAN countries for possible business undertaking of their agricultural products, Sundeep Kumar Nayak, Managing Director of National Cooperative Development Corporation said India has hosted the event with an

objective to increase trade between cooperatives of two or multiple countries. “Through this, we will be able stimulate the capabilities and training human resources at all levels and accelerate development through a more efficient utilisation of human, physical and financial resources available,” Nayak said.

The general assembly of 22 prominent cooperative organizations from eight countries unanimously decided to focus on cooperatives to cooperatives and capacity development to meet challenges of climate change as transformative cooperatives.

NEDAC was set up in 1991 by the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Cooperative Alliance(ICA) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Similarly, Orlando R. Ravanera, Chairman, Cooperative Development Authority, Philippines and Co-Chairman NEDAC hoped that the cooperatives of Asia and the Pacific must come together to face the challenges of climate change and linked violent extremism.

PIONEER, NOV 16, 2018

### **Erratic rainfall impacts Rabi crop sowing**

Delayed withdrawal of southwest monsoon and erratic rainfall across the country impacted the sowing of wheat and pulses crops in the ongoing season of rabi crops. According to Ministry of Agriculture's data, area sown to pulses has fallen 18 per cent to 69.95 lakh hectare so far in the ongoing rabi (winter) season over the year-ago period due to less planting in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Sowing of wheat, the main rabi crop, is also lagging behind marginally at Rs 51.63 lakh hectare so far in the rabi season of the 2018-19 crop year compared with 54.28 lakh hectare in the year-ago period. Sowing of rabi crops begins from October and harvesting from March onwards.

According to the data, farmers in Karnataka have sown pulses in only 7.35 lakh hectare so far this season as against 12.98 lakh hectare in the same period last season. Northern and south interior parts of Karnataka are reeling under severe drought. These areas received deficient rains even during the kharif (summer) season. Sowing of rabi crops begins in November and continues till February.

In Maharashtra too, farmers have planted pulses in only 5.62 lakh hectare so far this season as against 10.61 lakh hectare in the year-ago period. However in Madhya Pradesh, pulses was covered in 29.23 lakh hectare as against 30.9 lakh hectare in the said period. As many as pulses acreage remained lower at 69.95 lakh hectare so far this season as against 85.32 lakh hectare in the same period last season.

In case of wheat, farmers have sown the crop in 51.63 lakh hectare so far this season as against 54.28 lakh hectare in the same period last season. Area coverage remained lower in Punjab at 14.68 lakh hectare as against 17.58 lakh hectare, while in Haryana it stood at 5.54 lakh hectare as against 6.93 lakh hectare in the said period.

However, in Madhya Pradesh, wheat coverage was higher at 19.01 lakh hectare so far this season as against 15.58 lakh hectare in the same period last season. Oilseeds acreage also remained lower at 46.85 lakh hectare as against 49.50 lakh hectare, while that of coarse cereals area

was down at 16.27 lakh hectare compared with 29.74 lakh hectare in the said period.

Rice was sown in only 6.41 lakh hectare as against 8.57 lakh hectare in the said period.

In total, all rabi crops were planted in 191.12 lakh hectare so far this season, down from 227.41 lakh hectare in the year-ago period.

In a related development, the data released the centre shows that the water storage available in 91 major reservoirs of the country for the week ending on November 15, 2018 was 103.735 BCM ( Billion Cubic Meters )which is 64 percent of total storage capacity of these reservoirs. This percentage was at 67 percent for the week ending on November 08, 2018. The level of water storage in the week ending on November 15, 2018 was 99 percent of the storage of corresponding period of last year and 97 percent of storage of average of last 10 years.

## **ARMED FORCES**

HINDU, NOV 21, 2018

### **Nearly 400 paramilitary men killed in action in 2015-17: Ministry of Home Affairs**



### **The highest number of personnel killed in action were from the Border Security Force.**

Nearly 400 paramilitary personnel were killed in firing from across the border with Pakistan and in terrorist and insurgency violence in the country in the last three years, officials said on Wednesday.

The highest number of personnel killed was from the Border Security Force (BSF). It lost 167 persons between 2015 and 2017.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) lost 103 personnel, mostly while fighting Naxalites and militants in Jammu and Kashmir, a Home Ministry official said.

While the BSF lost 62 personnel in 2015, 58 in 2016 and 47 in 2017, the CRPF lost nine personnel in 2015, 42 in 2016 and 52 in 2017.

As many as 48 personnel of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) were killed in action in the last three years of whom 16 were killed in 2015, 15 in 2016 and 17 in 2017, the official said. The SSB guards the Indo-Bhutan and Indo-Nepal border. The force is also deployed in internal security duties.

A total of 40 personnel belonging to the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) were killed in action in the period. Among them, 15 were killed in 2015, 10 in 2016 and 15 in 2017.

Altogether 35 personnel of the Assam Rifles, which guards the India-Myanmar border and fights militants in the Northeast, were killed in action in the last three years.

Eighteen personnel of the Assam Rifles were killed in 2015, nine in 2016 and eight in 2017.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has lost two personnel in action in the last three years — one each in 2016 and 2017. There were no casualties in 2015 from the CISF, which guards, airports, nuclear installations, metro services and other sensitive locations, another official said.

## **CIVIL SERVICE**

PIONEER, NOV 23, 2018

### **Upright IAS officer Mundhe shifted yet again, Nashikars stage protest**

Known for his uprightness, discipline and people-friendly approach, IAS officer Tukaram Mundhe has been transferred yet again, his 12th transfer in 13 years and fourth since May 2016. Not unexpectedly, his latest transfer from being the Nashik Municipal Commissioner to a relatively insignificant post as joint secretary in the State Planning department at Mantralaya (State Secretariat) has sparked protests from citizens in Nashik.

After having been transferred to the state secretariat within nine months of being taking over as the Nashik Municipal Commissioner, Mundhe arrived at the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) for the last time on Thursday morning before handing over the charge to the district collector, only to witness a protest being staged by local citizens against his sudden transfer to Mumbai.

The protesters, who had come to express their solidarity with the outgoing Municipal Commissioner, were shouting slogans like “We want Mundhe” in support and against the Maharashtra government for shifting him out of Nashik at the behest of the ruling BJP’s elected representatives at the NMC.

No wonder, around e the same time, BJP corporators celebrated Mundhe's transfer by bursting crackers at Nashik Mayor Ranjana Bhansi's official bungalow "Ramayan". The celebrations by the BJP's elected representatives should be seen in the context of a proposal by the BJP corporators to move a non-confidence motion against Mundhe at a special civic general meeting that the Mayor had called on September 1 this year ostensibly in protest against the Municipal Commissioner's move to increase the rateable value for property tax from 3 paise per sq foot to 40 paise per sq foot and likewise in differing categories.

However, the BJP corporators dropped the no-confidence move at the last moment, following intervention by Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. This was the second time Fadnavis intervened and stalled the no-confidence motion proceedings against Mundhe. Earlier, in July 2016, the chief minister had come to the rescue of Mundhe's by refusing to act on a no-confidence motion adopted by the corporators of Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) seeking his removal as Municipal Commissioner of Mumbai's satellite city.

Talking to local media persons later, Mundhe said: "My only regret is that I never complete my full term in any responsibilities I am assigned by the state government. My frequent transfers have had a negative impact on my family. My children have to change their schools every time I am transferred. At every new place, I have to build new relations and friendships to carry on with my work. Henceforth, I will try to given stability to my children. I will take care to ensure that my frequent transfers will not have a bearing on my children's studies".

Thanking the people of Nashik for extending full support to him, Mundhe said: “ All through my tenure with the NMC, the people extended their love and full co-operation to me. Their support inspired and encouraged me to accomplish whatever I could during the last nine months”.

“I have got good response from people. After all people have say in governance. Its participatory in nature. I would thank people that they have supported me...this is what is inspiration to me,” Mundhe said.

Mundhe, who took charge as the Nashik Municipal Commissioner in February 2018, had become popular among the people of Nashik because of citizen friendly initiatives like the cleansing drive the he had launched within the NMC, which involved early disposal of files, curbing corruption and cost-cutting, quick citizens’ grievance redressal mechanism and steps towards making Nashik a smart city like waste management, ensuring adequate water supply, installation of street lights and health initiatives. During his stint, he covered considerable ground on starting a civic bus service in Nashik.

However, he had rubbed the ruling BJP and also a section of corporators from the Opposition the wrong way through his measures to curb corruption indulged in by the elected representatives and drives against encroachers.

Earlier, his capacity as the Navi Mumbai Municipal Commissioner, was unsparing in his efforts to remove laxity among the officials in the NMMC. So much so that he had suspended at least a dozen civic officials, including Deputy Municipal Commissioner Prakash Kulkarni

who had been heading the property tax department. He had acquitted himself well in his earlier assignment as the Managing Director of Pune Municipal Transport Corporation Limited.

A 2005 batch IAS officer, 43-year-old Mundhe, who is the son of a farmer at Tadsonna village in Beed district of Marathwada region, had in the past taken on builders' lobby, sand mafia and land sharks in all the places where he worked during the past 13 years.

Coming as it does in the midst of the ongoing winter session of the Maharashtra Legislature, Mundhe's sudden transfer is bound to trigger fireworks in both the Houses of the State Legislature where the Congress-led Opposition will pillory the state government over the "questionable motive" behind popular IAS officer's transfer.

## CONSUMER

PIONEER, NOV 16, 2018

### **Government mulls gold hallmarking mandatory: Consumer Affairs Min**

The Government is planning to soon make hallmarking mandatory for gold jewellery sold in the country, Food and Consumers Affairs Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said on Thursday.

The hallmarking of gold, which is voluntary in nature at present, is a purity certification of the precious metal. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), under the Consumer Affairs Ministry, is the administrative authority of hallmarking.

"BIS has set standards for hallmarking of gold jewellery in three grades of 14 carat, 18 carat and 22 carat. We are going to make it mandatory soon," Paswan said at a BIS event organised to commemorate World Standards Day with a theme on 'Global Standards and the fourth Industrial Revolution'.

Paswan, however, did not specify the date of implementation of the mandatory gold hallmarking, but stressed on the need to adopt the standards in the interest of consumers.

India has 653 (rpt) 653 BIS-recognised assaying and hallmarking centres; and maximum of them are located in Tamil Nadu, followed by Kerala.

As fourth industrial revolution would be of smart technologies, the Minister said the BIS has a challenge to speed up the work in setting standards to ensure the country is not lagging behind in this area.

Paswan launched the revamped website of BIS and the pre-standardisation report on smart manufacturing.

Minister of State for Consumer Affairs C R Chaudhary too emphasised that the need of the hour is to discuss setting of standards for new smart technologies like artificial intelligence that are being embraced by the industry.

## DEFENCE

PIONEER, NOV 2117, 2018

### **6 killed, 10 hurt in ammunition depot blast at Pulgaon**

At least six persons were killed and 10 others injured when a massive explosion rocked the Central Ammunition Depot (CAD) at Pulgaon in Wardha district of eastern Maharashtra on Tuesday morning.

The explosion took place between 7-7:15 am at Sonegaon destruction area near the CAD-Pulgaon, when staffers of the Ordnance Factory Khamaria (OFK) from Jabalpur, were disposing off non-serviceable ammunition.

Official sources that the explosion took place when the OFK staffers, along with the hired casual labourers, were disposing of vintage shells of 23 mm Schilka air defence ammunition.

The exercise to dispose of the expired ammunition began on November 19 and is scheduled to continue till December 8.

Spread over 9,000 hectare area, the CAD-Pulgaon is considered one of the biggest ammunition depots in Asia. A wide range of ammunition ranging from bullets to shells and rockets to missiles are stored here.

Those killed in the mishap comprised one employee of OFK and five casual workers hired by the authorised contractor for digging the pits and placing sand bags on the explosives.

Ten others injured in the mishap were rushed to a Government Hospital at Sawangi in Wardha district, where the condition of four was described as “critical”.

The deceased were identified as one Udayvir Singh from OFK, Rajkumar Bahute (23) Prabhakar Ramdas Wankhede (32), Pravin Prakash Munjewar (25), Vilas Lakshmanrao Pachare (36), and Narayan Pachare (48), all of whom were casual labourers.

Incidentally, OFK employee killed in the mishap Udayvir Singh was had experience to handle such ammunition disposals.

"One of the boxes containing ammunition blew up all of a sudden, while the workers were unloading the consignment of unusable ammunition for disposal. The incident took place in an open land," Wardha district's Additional Superintendent of Police Nikhil Pingle said.

Nagpur-based defence spokesperson Group Captain Basantkumar B Pande said that teams of officials from Ordnance Factory Chandrapur and Ordnance Factory Khamaria had rushed to the site to ascertain cause of accident.

"Pending an inquiry into the cause of mishap, we have registered a case of accidental death. A thorough inquiry will be conducted and legal action will be initiated accordingly," said Inspector General of Police (Nagpur Range) KMM Prasanna said.

Meanwhile, the General Manager of the Ordnance Factory, Khamaria has ordered an inquiry into the case of the mishap.

Tuesday's was the major explosion that took place at Pulgaon CAD. Earlier on May 31, 2016, 19 persons including a Lieutenant Colonel and a Major had been killed and 17 others injured after a series of explosions and resultant fire ripped through the CAD -Pulgaon.

At that time, the incident had taken place in one of the one of the sheds of the Pulgaon depot where anti-tank mines were stored. As much as 130 tonnes of material (anti-tank mines) blew up in the incident. Some of it was quite old and they were as good as discarded. What is more important is that 16 personnel sacrificed their lives to contain the explosions and the resultant fire to an area of 100 meters of CAD.

# EDUCATION

HINDU, NOV 20, 2018

## Literacy levels in rural India suffer due to migration, finds UNESCO study



***UNESCO report says that 80% of seasonal migrant children in 7 cities lacked access to education, and 40% were likely to end up in work***

Literacy levels in rural households of India dip with seasonal migration, the UNESCO global education monitoring report 2019 has observed, bringing out the educational challenges thrown up by migration.

“In India, 10.7 million children aged 6 to 14 lived in rural households with a seasonal migrant in 2013. About 28% of youth aged 15 to 19 in these households were illiterate or had not completed primary school, compared to 18% of the cohort overall,” says the report. “About 80% of seasonal migrant children in seven cities lacked access to education near work sites, and 40% are likely to end up in work rather than education, experiencing abuse and exploitation.”

## **Construction sector**

The report says that the construction sector absorbs the majority of short-term migrants. “A survey in Punjab state of 3,000 brick kiln workers in 2015-16 found that 60% were inter-State migrants. Between 65% and 80% of all children aged five to 14 living at the kilns worked there seven to nine hours per day. About 77% of kiln workers reported lack of access to early childhood or primary education for their children,” it says.

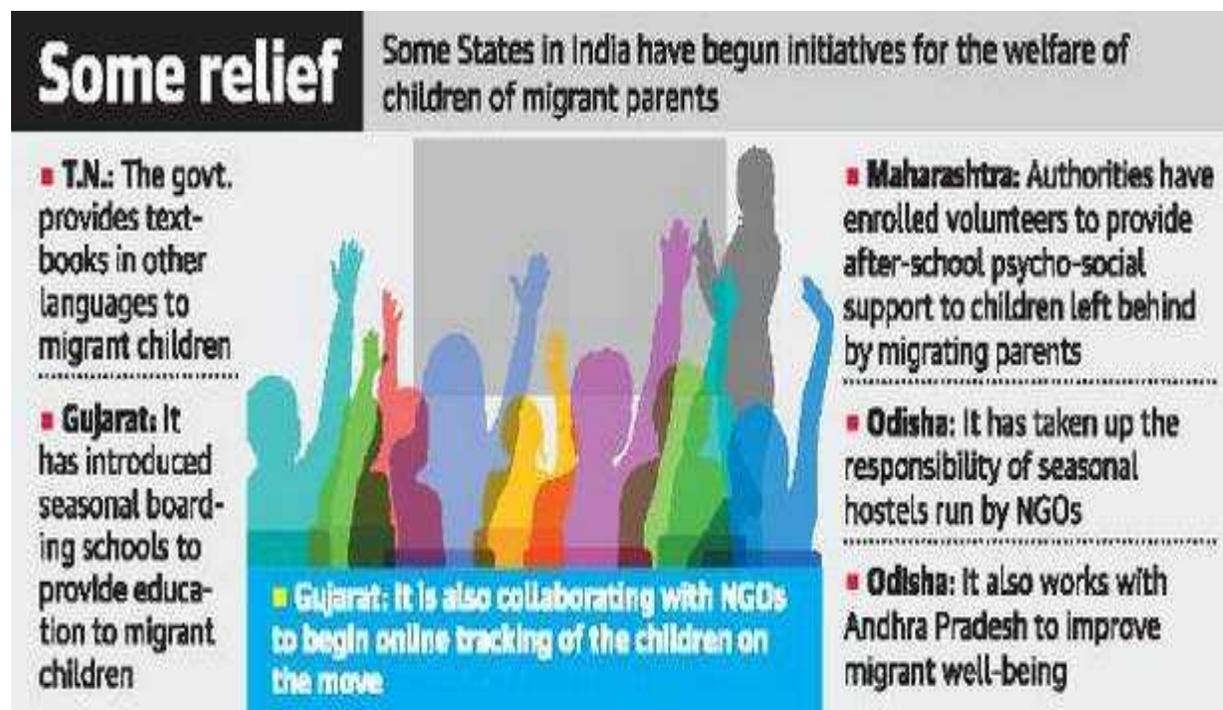
Inter-State migration rates have doubled between 2001 and 2011. “An estimated 9 million migrated between States annually from 2011 to 2016,” the report says.

It also warns of the negative impact on education for children who are left behind as their parents migrate: “Test scores were lower among left-behind children aged 5-8.”

## Addressing the issue

The report, however, acknowledges that India has taken steps to address the issue.

“The Right to Education Act in 2009 made it mandatory for local authorities to admit migrant children. National-level guidelines were issued, allowing for flexible admission of children, providing transport and volunteers to support with mobile education, create seasonal hostels and aiming to improve coordination between sending and receiving districts and states,” it says.



**Some relief** Some States in India have begun initiatives for the welfare of children of migrant parents

- **T.N.:** The govt. provides text-books in other languages to migrant children
- **Gujarat:** It has introduced seasonal boarding schools to provide education to migrant children
- **Gujarat:** It is also collaborating with NGOs to begin online tracking of the children on the move
- **Maharashtra:** Authorities have enrolled volunteers to provide after-school psycho-social support to children left behind by migrating parents
- **Odisha:** It has taken up the responsibility of seasonal hostels run by NGOs
- **Odisha:** It also works with Andhra Pradesh to improve migrant well-being

The report says some State governments have also taken steps for migrant children's education. It, however, observes that most interventions are focused on keeping children in home communities instead of actively addressing the challenges faced by those who are already on the move.

It also talks of a failed initiative: "A pilot programme used on brick kiln sites from 2010-2011 in Rajasthan to track the progress of out-of-school children did not improve learning in any substantial way. Teachers on the sites cited culture, language, lifestyle, cleanliness and clothing as major barriers between them and the kiln labour community. Teacher and student absenteeism were rampant."

The report sees the growth of slums and informal settlements — where schools are often scarce — due to migration as a challenge. "18% of the students displaced by a riverfront project in Ahmedabad dropped out and an additional 11% had lower attendance," it says, citing an example.

The report shows there is only one urban planner for every 1,00,000 people in India, while there are 38 for every 1, 00,000 in the United Kingdom.

## ELECTION

PIONEER, NOV 22, 2018

### **76.35% voting in C'garh polls slightly lower than 2013 polls**

Releasing the final voting figures, the Election Commission on Wednesday said that Chhattisgarh recorded 76.35 per cent voter turnout in the two-phase polls to the 90-member State Assembly, which is slightly lower as compared to the last elections. The second phase of polling, held on Tuesday in 72 Assembly seats, recorded 76.34 per cent voter turnout, the EC said.

In the first phase, the poll percentage was 76.39. The overall voter turnout of both the phases comes out to 76.35 per cent, it said.

A total of 38 seats out of 90 recorded above 80 per cent voter turnout, which the EC said, is a record for Chhattisgarh. In the 2013 assembly polls, the voting percentage was 75.93 per cent and 77.72 per cent in the two phases respectively. The overall voter turnout was 77.40 per cent.

The voters turnout dipped by 1.05 per cent as compared to 2013, according to data from the EC. As many as 13 cases of people boycotting polls over a variety of reasons including jobs, road construction and removal of encroachments were recorded.

The EC also said that at the 19,336 polling stations in the second phase of polls, a total of 25,640 ballot units, 19,336 control units and 19,336 paper trail machines were used.

Only 47 ballot units, 37 control units and 131 paper trail machines needed replacement during the polls. Given sufficient reserves available, these replacements were handled swiftly by local polling personnel, the EC said.

Voters aged above 100 exercised their voting rights in Balodabazar and Lundra. These included a 113-year-old woman in Chirmiri and a 100-year-old couple in Jashpur, the poll panel said.

In phase 2, rural areas recorded a high turnout (by two to seven percentage points) compared to urban areas. In 23 assembly seats, women voters outnumbered men. The largest gap between men and women voters was 3.54 per cent in Bharatpur Sonhat seat in Koriya.

The Kurud seat recorded 88.99 per cent turnout, the highest in the state. Raipur (North), the commission said, recorded the lowest turnout of 60.3 per cent.

PIONEER, NOV 23, 2018

## **J&K polls to be held within next 6 months: EC**

Chief Election Commissioner OP Rawat on Friday said that Assembly elections in Jammu & Kashmir will be held within the next six months. Rawat did not rule out the possibility of holding polls in the State before

the Lok Sabha polls scheduled to be held next year. The EC is expected to meet next week to this effect.

"SC has ruled whenever such dissolution takes place, the Commission should hold elections on 1st occasion and in no case, later than 6 months. For commission, 6 months is good enough for getting preparedness at satisfactory level. Law and order situation in Jammu & Kashmir will also be kept in mind," Chief Election Commissioner OP Rawat said.

The CEC said that the Commission came to know about dissolution of J&K assembly on November 21.

"Now commission will have to gather all other facts relating to the State. Next week we'll deliberate upon as to how should we go about planning for elections to that house", the CEC said.

The Jammu & Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik dissolved the Assembly on Wednesday evening, after People's Democratic Party leader Mehbooba Mufti staked claim to form Government along with her arch-rival Omar Abdullah's National Conference (NC) and the Congress. They claimed the support of 56 lawmakers in the 87-member State Assembly.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

HINDU, NOV 19, 2018

### **Centre for Science and Environment wins Indira Gandhi peace prize**

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has won this year's Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, an award conferred by Indira Gandhi Trust each year on the late Prime Minister's birth anniversary.

The international jury for the awards was headed by former President Pranab Mukerjee.

The CSE was established in 1980 under leadership of the late Anil Agarwal and is presently headed by Sunita Narain.

It has over the years worked on various burning issues from air and water pollution, food safety, waste water management, climate change and so on.

“As the world and particularly India faces growing challenges that threaten the future of the planet, CSE has built up expertise and credibility to make a difference,” the award citation read.

## HEALTH SERVICES

PIONEER, NOV 17, 2018

### **India led world in reducing malaria in 2017: Report**

India and 10 other countries in sub-Saharan Africa accounted for around 70 per cent of estimated malaria cases (151 million) and deaths (274,000) globally last year, with only India reporting progress in reducing its malaria cases when compared to 2016, a report said on Monday.

India has turned out as the only country among the 11 highest-burden countries to mark progress in reducing its disease burden, registering a 24 per cent decrease in 2017 compared to 2016, according to WHO World Malaria Report 2018.

By leading the world in malaria case reductions in 2017, India is no longer among the top three countries with the highest malaria burdens. However, 1.25 billion Indians remain at risk of malaria.

India has set a target of being malaria-free by 2027 and eliminating the disease by 2030.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

PIONEER, NOV 22, 2018

### **HRD Ministry launches innovation cell for research**

With an aim to promote new ideas for innovation in all higher education institutions (HEIs) across the country, HRD Ministry on Wednesday established an innovation cell at the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE). HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said the new cell will be a significant step in institutionalising innovation and developing a scientific temperament in the country.

"The purpose of formation of network of Institution's Innovation Councils (IICs) is to encourage, inspire and nurture young students by exposing them to new ideas and processes resulting in innovative activities in their formative years," Javadekar said.

"More than 1,000 HEIs have already formed IICs in their campuses and enrolled for the IIC network managed by MHRD's innovation cell to promote innovation through multitudinous modes leading to an innovation promotion eco-system in their campuses," he said.

Javadekar said varsities are the main research centers of developed countries and because of their research they are at the top in global innovation ranking. "Now Indian universities are also setting up research centers through the IIC programme and we are expecting good rank in

global innovation ranking in next two to three years through this initiative," he added.

The Minister said that the educational advancement in higher education can only be achieved by encouraging best practices in innovation and advance research and Innovation Cell has undertaken many initiatives in this direction such as implementing programs like Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievement (ARIIA), Smart India Hackathon (SIH)- 2019, etc.

## **INFORMATION SERVICES**

PIONEER, NOV 20, 2018

### **Change data collection procedure: CIC to RGI**

The CIC has directed the Registrar General of India (RGI) to change its practices of data collection, especially with regard to births and deaths.

Information Commissioner Yashovardhan Azad, in an important order, issued directives to make changes in the software and practices of the RGI.

He was hearing a petition filed by an RTI applicant, seeking information about the deaths reported in all the wards of Mumbai in 2016.

The information was not provided to him, following which he approached the Central Information Commission (CIC).

During the hearing, the official representing the RGI said the office was a data aggregator.

He submitted that the States were tasked with the overall implementation under section 3 of the Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, whereas the ground-level record was maintained by the registrars appointed by the respective States, Azad noted.

"Despite the contention of the PIO that the CRS (Civil Registration System) Division of the Registrar General, India cannot be held to be the custodian of ward-wise data as sought by the appellant, the commission

finds that the role of the Registrar General in the implementation of the RBD Act cannot be lost sight of," he said.

Azad added that the present controversy was limited only to the practices related to data maintenance and preservation.

"There is no legal impediment in creation of two or more equally effective access points of information, both at the central as well as at the state level. It is rather a question of 'data mirroring' and the essential question raised in the present case requires forging new practices of data management, which is in furtherance of the RBD Act as well as the RTI Act," he said.

The CIC also took note of the PIO's submission that it was comparatively difficult to register the data of deaths with the cause of the deaths, in contrast to the data regarding births, Azad added.

"The judicious aggregation as well as the preservation of the 'data of death' are very important for ensuring the quality of life of the living. The data is a crucial indicator of various factors, which is a key for ensuring good governance and efficient policy planning.

PIONEER, NOV 21, 2018

## **Most of Central Govt dept websites lack transparency: CIC audit**

Most of the Central Government department websites lack in suo-motu disclosure of public information under a mandatory provision of the

Right to Information (RTI) Act, according to an official report released on Tuesday.

It said the ultimate objective of transparency by them can be performed only by the Government who control all supply side of information.

Transparency watchdog Central Information Commission (CIC) has undertaken an evaluation to ascertain the quality of suo-motu disclosures under Section 4 of the RTI Act made by various public authorities.

The evaluation was conducted by a committee comprising A N Tiwari, former Chief Information Commissioner, and M M Ansari, former Information Commissioner.

The committee evolved an evaluation format and requested all public authorities to fill it up. Out of 2,092 public authorities registered with the commission, feedback was received from 838.

"It has been found that out of 838 public authorities, 158 public authorities got grade A, 157 public authorities got grade B, 118 public authorities got grade C, 133 public authorities got grade D and 272 public authorities got grade E," the report said.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PIONEER, NOV 16, 2018

### **Top India, China Def officials agree to maintain border peace**

A year after the Doklam standoff, top defence officials of India and China have agreed on the importance of maintaining peace in the border areas while implementing the consensus reached between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping at Wuhan.

The ninth annual defence and security dialogue on November 13 was held over a year after the 73-day military standoff in the Sikkim sector.

The talks were held between the two defence delegations headed by Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra and China's Deputy Chief of Joint Staff Department of the Central Military Commission Lt General Shao Yuanming, a press release by the Indian Embassy here said on Thursday.

Asked about the outcome of the defence and security dialogue, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said the two sides have exchanged ideas on the management of border affairs and upholding peace and tranquillity.

"We believe the two sides will try to follow the consensus between the two leaders to ensure peace and tranquillity at our border areas and ensure stability of our bilateral ties," she said.

At the talks, both sides agreed on enhancing defence exchanges and interactions at different levels between the two militaries, the press release said.

After the talks, Mitra called on Chinese State Councillor and Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe on Wednesday, the release said.

Mitra was accompanied by senior officials of the ministry of defence and Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.

The annual dialogue did not take place last year following the tense standoff between the two militaries at Doklam, which was triggered by the Chinese PLA's plan to build a road close to the narrow Chicken's Neck corridor connecting India's northeastern states in an area also claimed by Bhutan besides China.

The standoff ended when Chinese troops stopped the road construction after which both countries stepped up efforts to normalise relations leading to the informal summit between Modi and Xi at Wuhan in April this year.

The defence dialogue was also held ahead of the 21st round of border talks between the Special Representatives of the two countries in the Chinese city of Dujiangyan on November 23-24.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi are the designated Special Representatives for the border talks.

# JUDICIARY

PIONEER, NOV 17, 2018

## **‘Enough is enough’, says SC over tardy approach to fill up vacancies in lower courts**

"Enough is enough", said the Supreme Court on Thursday expressing displeasure over tardy approach of different High Courts and State Governments in filling up vacant posts for judges in lower courts and providing proper infrastructure for them.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi on its own had taken note of over 5,000 vacancies for judicial officers and directed all the 24 High Courts and 36 States and UTs to apprise it of remedial measures.

On Thursday, it took stock of the situation in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and the NE States. "We want our judges. We want our judges to function. We want courtrooms, infrastructure and man power (support staff) for them. They say that there is pendency. Enough is enough..." said the bench, which also comprised Justices S K Kaul and K M Joseph.

"Some part of the problem has to be dealt with. We will show them (Government) that there is not adequate courtrooms, staffs and residences for judges," it added. The top court was particularly critical of the lack of progress in States like UP, Delhi and Bengal. In day-long hearing, the bench first perused the responses of the UP Government,

UP Public Services Commission (UPPSC) and the Registrar General of the Allahabad HC on vacancies, the recruitment process and the aspects relating to man power and infrastructure for the judges.

HINDU, NOV 19, 2018

## **India's Act East policy can meet OBOR: Chinese envoy**

### ***Makes pitch for India to join China's mega corridor project***

India's Act East policy and China's Belt and Road Initiative (One Belt One Road or OBOR) are a "natural" area of cooperation between the two countries, said China's Ambassador to India Luo Zhaohui on Thursday, making another pitch for India to join China's mega-infrastructure corridor, which New Delhi has rejected thus far.

However, instead of the more contentious part of the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor that he has spoken of in the past, Mr. Luo suggested that the cooperation could come through the "China-India-Myanmar" BCIM corridor to India's North-East.

In a written message for the Youth event, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he hoped it would "provide a platform for the youth of both nations to build a 'Great Wall of Trust and Cooperation' between the two countries."

## **Finding synergy**

“Act East and OBOR are quite natural.... And [we must see] how to synergise these two strategies together between the two countries and between the two leaders and benefit from cooperation and development. That is the right direction... and I am quite optimistic,” Mr. Luo said, speaking to delegates at a “China-India Youth Dialogue” seminar.

## POLICE

HINDU, NOV 19, 2018

### **NSA, Minister hampered Asthana probe: CBI officer**



A senior CBI officer, who supervised the team probing the corruption FIR against the agency's Special Director R.K. Asthana before he was transferred out, moved the Supreme Court on Monday leveling a series of allegations involving National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Central Vigilance Commissioner K.V. Chowdhury, Union Law Secretary Suresh Chandra and Union Minister of State for Coal and Mines Haribhai Parthibhai Chaudhary.

Urging the court to step in before the CBI became the ‘Centre for Bogus Investigation,’ Manish Kumar Sinha, DIG (Head of Branch), CBI, Anti-Corruption Branch, Nagpur, narrated alleged instances in which Mr. Doval seems to have stalled his team’s investigation into the FIR against Mr. Asthana and CBI officer Devender Kumar, among others.

### **Plea before Bench**

A three-judge Bench, led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi, is to hear the petition filed by the exiled CBI Director Alok Verma in which he has alleged that his removal was the work of “high functionaries” in the government who want to shackle the agency’s probe into several sensitive cases.

Mr. Sinha said Mr. Verma had briefed the National Security Advisor (NSA) on October 17 about the FIR against Mr. Asthana. The application alleged that when the NSA informed Mr. Asthana the same night, the latter “reportedly made a request to NSA that he should not be arrested”.

The CBI officer said his team had wanted the cell phones of officials involved in the FIR as they would contain evidence. But the CBI Director did not give “immediate permission and reverted that the NSA has not permitted the same”.

“The Director replied that he was not getting clearance from the NSA/Shri Doval,” the application, filed through advocate Sunil Fernandes, alleged.

The application narrated how Manoj Prasad, an accused in the Asthana FIR, “bragged” about his “close links” with the NSA when he was picked up by the CBI while on his way back from Dubai. The application said Manoj Prasad had threatened that his brother Somesh, another accused in the Asthana FIR, was “very close” to Samant Goel, presently Special Secretary, R&AW and he could “get us ‘finished off’/‘kicked out’”.

Manoj Prasad, the application alleged, had said “his brother Somesh and Samant Goel, helped the NSA Shri Ajit Doval on an important personal matter”.

### **Whistle-blower coerced**

Mr. Sinha, in his application, detailed how Law Secretary Chandra got in touch with Sathish Babu Sana, the person who lodged the complaint against Mr. Asthana.

Mr. Sana was under investigation in the Moin Qureshi case before he became a “whistle-blower”. It was based on this complaint that the FIR against Mr. Asthana was lodged on October 15.

“The investigation team has been penalised/victimised because of its impartiality and diligence,” Mr. Sinha said, seeking the quashing of his transfer.

## PRISON

PIONEER, NOV 23, 2018

### **Is parallel system running in jails: Bench**

Is there a parallel system running in jails?," the Supreme Court asked on Thursday while referring to media reports that LED TV, sofa and other prohibited items were found in a Tihar jail cell where Unitech MD Sanjay Chandra and his brother Ajay have been lodged. A Bench headed by Justice Madan B Lokur asked the Centre as to what action has been taken in the matter.

It said a report by Additional Sessions Judge, who carried out inspection in the jail on September 4 following complaints from inmates that the Chandra brothers and others were enjoying "luxurious lifestyle", was already available.

"Report of a judge says that Unitech officials are enjoying facilities in Tihar. Is there a parallel system running in jails? Do they have special rights in jails? What have you done about it?," the bench, also comprising justice Deepak Gupta, asked the Centre's counsel. "These persons are enjoying TV. God knows what all they are enjoying.

They are sitting on sofas," the bench observed. Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aman Lekhi, appearing for the Centre, said that action must be taken in such cases and such instances have to be "tackled seriously". When the ASG said the top court was dealing with the issue related to speedy trial for undertrial prisoners, the bench observed, "We are dealing with something which is shocking".

## MASS MEDIA

PIONEER, NOV 17, 2018

### **DIP holds seminar on journalism ethics and challenges**

For the first time, Directorate of Information and Publicity (DIP) organised a seminar on the theme of Journalism Ethics and Challenges in Digital Era to observe National Press Day at Media Hut on Friday. Several media persons and officials attended the event.

Dr Jayadev Sarangi, Secretary (PR) welcoming the participants said, “Social media has lent pace to dissemination the news and views and also made the space more participative and competitive. I hope that this media will be utilised more responsively and not for propaganda.”

Giving a detailed presentation on cyber law, Nalin Chauhan, Deputy Director talked about fake news and content regulation, importance of digital media/social media in government programme and policy in recent era.

In the interaction session, DPAC Chairman Sharad Sharma presented his views on the theme Journalism Ethics and Challenges in Digital Era. He expressed his views on difficulties of live reporting and commercialisation of corporate media houses and challenges of fake news spreading through social media.

In the session, several journalists from various newspapers, news channels and web portals also expressed their views on the topic.

# SANITATION

PIONEER, NOV 16, 2018

## **NE States to be ODF by Dec 2018**

While Sikkim has already taken lead in becoming the first Open Defecation Free (ODF) in the country, the other States from the Northeast region have committed to make the region ODF by December end this year.

This was decided at a regional review meeting of the North Eastern States —Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim held in Guwahati in Assam recently.

The workshop comprised discussions on sustaining ODF status, solid and liquid waste management (SLWM), and rural water supply. Teams from Key aspects of sustainability such as geo-tagging, verification of ODF villages, conversion of dysfunctional toilets, IEC expenditure, Swachhagrahi engagement were reviewed.

Speaking on the occasion, ParameswaranIyer, Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation emphasized the importance of the joint effort being made by the Central and State SBM teams towards sustaining gains made under the program so far.

He spoke about the importance of continued focus on behavior change communication and periodic verifications to ensure that the safe sanitation habits and practices developed over the past few years are sustained in the future as well.

The teams from the ODF States of the region spoke about efforts to sustain their ODF status. Sikkim highlighted the solid and liquid waste management initiatives being undertaken in the first ODF State of the country.

Non-ODF States committed to declaring themselves as ODF by December 2018. Assam shared highlights of “Mission Sambhav”, under which more than one lakh pit digging activities were initiated on a single day during the Swachhata Hi Seva fortnight.

Akshay Rout, Director General, Special Projects from the Ministry pointed to the criticality of the sustainability phase of SBM and the necessity for the managers for regular monitoring.

V Radha, Joint Secretary from the Ministry spoke about the need to increase the coverage of household water supply connections by taking up community-managed, low cost schemes.

Since its launch in October 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission, the world’s largest sanitation program, has changed the behaviour of hundreds of millions of people with respect to toilet access and usage. About 300 million people have stopped defecating in the open since the Mission began, down from 550 million at the beginning of the programme to about 200 million today, according to the Government data.

PIONEER, NOV 17, 2018

## **PM praises sanitation coverage increase**

With as many as 60.53 lakh individual household toilets constructed and 4.7 lakh seats of community or public toilets under construction under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban), Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) for its remarkable speed of construction on the occasion of World Toilet day.

Hailing the HUA Ministry, Modi said India is proud of the remarkable speed with which sanitation coverage has increased in the last four years and reiterated his Government's commitment to enhancing sanitation facilities. The Prime Minister said the drive for a cleaner India and ensuring better sanitation facilities is in fact a people's movement.

Modi took to Twitter to thank women and youth for taking the lead in the sanitation drive. World Toilet Day, celebrated on November 19, is about taking action to ensure that everyone has a safe toilet by 2030.

"Today, on World Toilet Day, we reiterate our commitment towards enhancing cleanliness and sanitation facilities across the nation. We in India take pride at the remarkable speed with which sanitation cover has increased in the last four years," he wrote. He said it is the 130 crore Indians, particularly women and youths, who have taken the lead in the movement. "I congratulate all those working to fulfil the dream of a Swachh Bharat," he said.

According to the Ministry, around 4.7 lakh public toilet seats have been constructed so far. The target set under the mission was 5.07 lakh public

toilet seats. More than 12,000 public toilets have been built in Delhi since 2015, the ministry said. Speaking at an event here, HUA Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said 19 states and UTs were already Open Defecation Free (ODF) in their urban areas.

"This has been achieved by the construction of nearly 60.53 lakh individual household toilets (against a mission target of 66 lakhs; i.e. 91.7% constructed and under-construction against target)," Mishra said in an official statement.

"In the area of solid waste management, at least 40 percent of the total waste generated in the country is being processed, and 52 percent of wards are practising source segregation," the ministry officials said.

On the occasion of the "World Toilet Day", the government also released Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks for field staff who respond to sewer overflows or spills.

The workshop on urban sanitation is aimed at addressing challenges in the urban sanitation space thereby enable participating states and cities in proactively implementing viable, affordable and sustainable sanitation solutions for a Swachh Bharat.

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission) aims to achieve 100 per cent open defecation free (ODF) and scientific solid waste management in India by October 2, 2019, the 150th birthday anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

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