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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 16-12-2023

NATIONAL NEWS

Finance Ministry Allocates Rs 10,000 Crore as Urgent Aid NREGS

· The finance ministry has released ₹10,000 crore in urgent assistance to meet unexpected enhanced expenditure under the rural job guarantee scheme until the first batch of supplementary demands for grants is approved by parliament at its next session.

· The unusual move came after 95% of the FY24 budgetary outlay of ₹60,000 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) was exhausted well before the commencement of the winter session of parliament.

· The urgent funds, released to the rural development ministry, will form a part of the additional ₹28,000 crore that could be allocated for the scheme in the first batch of supplementary demands for grants for FY24.

· The budget for FY24 had trimmed the MGNREGS outlay by a third to Rs 60,000 crore from the revised estimate of Rs 88,400 crore for FY23.

· However, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had pledged more funds for the scheme if required.

Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme Launched

· The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has launched the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme.

· The national forest certification scheme offers voluntary third-party certification designed to promote sustainable forest management and agroforestry in the country.

· The scheme includes forest management certification, tree outside forest management certification, and chain of custody certification.

· It can provide market incentives to various entities that adhere to responsible forest management and agroforestry practices in their operations.

· Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal will act as the scheme operating agency and will be responsible for overall management of the scheme.

· The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies under the Quality Council of India will accredit the certification bodies which will carry out independent audits.

The 29th Kolkata International Film Festival

· Kolkata International Film Festival was organized by the Information and Cultural Affairs Department, Government of West Bengal.

· Israeli film 'Children of Nobody' won the Best Film Award under International Competition in Innovation Moving Images.

· It is directed by Erez Tadmor.

· 219 films from 39 countries were screened at different locations across Kolkata.

· Carlos Daniel Malave won the Best Director award. Anjan Dutta's 'Chalchitro Ekhon' won the Special Jury Award.

· Director duo Sharmistha Maity and Rajdeep Paul's 'Mon Potongo' won the award for the best film under the Bengali Panorama category.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India, South Korea, and the United States to Establish Technology Trialogue

· India, South Korea and the United States (US) will start an informal trilateral technology dialogue in the first quarter of 2024 in response to China's rapid progress in critical technologies within the Indo-Pacific region.

· The decision was made during the inaugural US-South Korea Next Generation Critical and Emerging Technologies Dialogue held in Seoul.

· The aim of this programme is to increase cooperation in strategic and defence technologies between the two countries, including their private sector and academia.

· These include semiconductor supply chains and technology, biotechnology, batteries, clean energy technology, quantum science and technology, digital connectivity, and artificial intelligence.

BANKING

Reliance Industries Collaborates with DBS Bank

· Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) and DBS Bank India have collaborated to establish a financing programme customised to the requirements of the compressed biogas project initiated by RIL.

· The financing initiative aims to support the ecosystem development for vendor partners involved in

aggregating agri-residue as inputs for Reliance's CBG production plants across India.

· At Reliance's 46th annual general meeting (AGM), Chairman Mukesh Ambani had informed that the company targets to establish 100 compressed biogas (CBG) plants in the next 5 years, consuming 5.5 million tonnes of agro-residue and organic waste.

· The CBG plants are expected to mitigate nearly 2 million tonnes of carbon emissions annually and produce 2.5 million tonnes of organic manure.

· DBS Bank is engaged as the finance partner for RIL's CBG project, providing financial support for the establishment and operation of the biogas facilities.

RBI Increases UPI Automatic Payment Limit

· The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the limit for automatic payments through Unified Payments Interface (UPI) to Rs 1 lakh per transaction from the existing Rs 15,000 for certain categories, including subscription to mutual funds.

· As of now, relaxation in Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) is permitted while processing e-mandates/standing instructions on cards, prepaid payment instruments and UPI (Unified Payments Interface), for subsequent recurring transactions with values up to Rs 15,000.

· UPI has emerged as a preferred mode of payment for a large section of the population with over 11.23 billion transactions recorded in November, 2023.

AWARDS & PRIZES

Vyas Samman Award

· Pushpa Bharati from Moradabad of Uttar Pradesh 2016 memoir 'Yaadein, Yaadein aur Yaadein' has been selected for the 33rd Vyas Samman.

· The award is presented to an outstanding Hindi literary work by an Indian citizen published during the last 10 years.

· A selection committee headed by eminent litterateur Prof Ramji Tiwari picked Bharati's Yaadein, Yaadein aur Yaadein for the Vyas Samman award.

· The award carries a cash prize of ₹4 lakh, a citation and a plaque.

· The Vyas Samman Award was instituted in 1991. It is given by the KK Birla Foundation.

Italy's Highest Civilian Honour

· Kabir Bedi has been honoured with the highest civilian honour of Italy.

· He was awarded the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic (Merito della Repubblica Italiana).

· Niccolo Fabi gave a unique live musical performance following the occasion in Mumbai.

· Order of Merit is Italy's highest honour.

· The scroll of honour was signed by President Mattarella and counter-signed by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

Indira Gandhi Peace Prize, 2023

· Renowned pianist Daniel Barenboim and peace activist Ali Abu Awwad have been announced to be jointly awarded the Indira Gandhi Award 2023.

· Both of them were selected for their efforts towards a non-violent solution to the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

· More than 17,000 people have lost their lives so far in the Israel-Hamas conflict.

· Barenboim and Awwad have been selected by an international jury headed by former Chief Justice of India TS Thakur, according to the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.

· Barenboim and Awwad have played a major role in resolving political and humanitarian conflicts and establishing peaceful public cooperation through music and peace dialogue.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Prime Minister of Poland

· Poland's parliament 'Sejm' has elected Donald Tusk as its new Prime Minister.

· The current Prime Minister of Poland, Mateusz Morawiecki, lost the vote of confidence in the parliament.

· Tusk will present his Cabinet to parliament and outline his governance programme.

· After this, members of the Polish Parliament will place their vote of confidence on it.

· The new government led by Donald Tusk will be sworn in by Polish President Andrzej Duda.

DEFENCE

Indian Navy to induct Fast Attack Craft, 'INS Tarmugli'

· The Indian Navy will be re-inducting a refurbished 22-year-old fast attack craft, INS Tarmugli, in a commissioning ceremony at the naval dockyard, Visakhapatnam.

· The ship has a unique distinction of having served under the flag of two nations with three names during her distinguished service till date.

· Commissioned in the Indian Navy as INS Tillanchang, a Trinkat Class ship, she was in active service till 2006, and thereafter gifted to the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) by the Govt of India, as part of diplomatic outreach in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

· The vessel was originally designed and constructed by Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers and was commissioned into the Indian Navy on March 17, 2001.

· The ship has undergone extensive repair and upgradation by the Indian Navy at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, over the last 6 months, and is scheduled to be commissioned as 'INS Tarmugli' on 14 December 2023 at Visakhapatnam.

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