

October 26th news:

International:

Award for top SA Aids Researchers

South Africa's leading Aids researchers, professors Salim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, have scooped the esteemed Institute for Human Virology (IHV) Lifetime Achievement Award for exceptional public service for their contributions to the global Aids response.

The prestigious award was presented by Dr Robert Gallo, who discovered HIV as the cause of Aids, at the 19th international meeting of the IHV on 25th October in Baltimore in the US.

Professor Salim Abdool Karim is the director of the Centre for the Aids Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) and Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim is its associate scientific director. They are both professors of epidemiology at Columbia University in New York and are honorary academics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Russia Vetoes UN Resolution

Russia has vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended for one year the work of international inspectors investigating chemical-weapons attacks in Syria.

The October 24 veto came immediately after Moscow failed to secure a one-month postponement of the vote in order to allow the body to consider a report from the inspectors that is due on October 26

The October 26 report will cover an April 4 chemical-weapons attack using sarin gas in the village of Khan Sheikhun, which was controlled by the Syrian opposition at the time.

The United States, France, and Britain have accused forces loyal to Assad of carrying out the attack, which left more than 80 people dead.

Russia, which is a key ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, has criticized the inspectors, or Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), in the past.

National:

Gujarat Election Schedule Released

Gujarat will vote in two phases to pick a new assembly, the election commission said on the 25th of October. Chief election commissioner AK Joti said voting will take place on December 9th and 14th. Polling will be held first in 89 seats across 19 districts and then 93 seats in 14 districts. Results will be out on December 18. Joti said that all polling stations will have voting machines with a paper trail attached called the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). The system records the candidate and symbol a person voted for but the voter cannot take the receipt home.

Economy:

India and Asian Development Bank Sign \$300 Million Loan

The Asian Development Bank and the Government of India signed a \$300 million loan to continue a series of fiscal reforms in the State of West Bengal to improve the quality of public service delivery. The Second West Bengal Development Finance Program targets a further increase in public investment through the reduction of unproductive expenditure

First Highway Project Under Bharatmala by 2018-end

The first project under Bharatmala is expected to be awarded by the end of next year as the land acquisition process and detailed project reports for the mega infrastructure scheme are underway, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said on the 25th of October. Gadkari said that the government was hopeful that the scheme would elicit a great response from the private sector.

All the projects under Bharatmala would be technically, financially and economically appraised by an empowered project appraisal and technical scrutiny committee under the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, he said.

Bharatmala is the second-largest highways project after the National Highway Development Programme (NHDP) that saw the development of about 50,000 km.

The programme that was mooted in April 2015 aims to connect Gujarat and Rajasthan, then move to Punjab and cover Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and further to Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and right up to the Indo-Myanmar border in Manipur and Mizoram.

The aim is to improve the speed of traffic flow on key corridors by providing uniform four-lane roads between two identified points. These corridors will permit faster movement of cargo vehicles. According to government estimates, the construction of 10,000 km of highways annually has the potential of generating four crore man-days of work.

Bharatmala was proposed on the lines of Sagarmala in which a string of ports will be built in the Indian Ocean to protect maritime interests. The government plans to improve road connectivity not just to coastal and border areas but also backward areas.