

November 4th news:

International:

International Conference on Ramayan Circuit

An International Conference on "Ramayan Circuit and Mithila-Awadh Relations" started in Janakpur of Nepal on 3rd November. This is a two day event. During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Nepal Visit in 2014, an agreement was signed between India and Nepal to develop Ayodhya and Janakpur as twin cities. The basic objective of the conference is to give thrust on all aspects of social, cultural and religious ties between Mithila and Awadh besides developing connectivity between Janakpur and Ayodhya.

National

Haj subsidy to be phased out next year

Haj subsidy borne by the government and extended to pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia could be phased out as early as 2018. The subsidy was to be phased out after a Supreme Court order recommended the same to the government in 2012, with 2022 as the outer limit.

A meeting of the review committee on the subsidy and Haj services, comprising senior officials of the Ministries for Minority Affairs, Civil Aviation and External Affairs and the Haj Committee of India, was held on 1st November where the decision was announced.

The Haj Committee reportedly asked for a phasing out with the 2022 deadline in mind saying it would affect pilgrims from small towns.

Union Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi confirmed that the phase out would be as early as 2018, with the subsidy reduced to "almost nil" from the Rs 450 crore being spent this year.

The Ministry for Minority Affairs had constituted a five member panel headed by former Secretary, minority affairs, Afzal Amanullah in January this year to formulate a new Haj policy in the light of the Supreme Court's 2012 order.

India shows improvement in pneumonia and diarrhoea control

The Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report 2017 released by the International Vaccine Access Centre (IVAC), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health on 3rd November said India has shown the largest positive change among 15 high-burden countries (for pneumonia and diarrhoea).

India's Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) score has seen a 7-point increase.

The researchers claimed that the progress was largely due to increase in measles vaccine coverage by 1%, haemophilus influenzae type B vaccine by 35%, 3 doses of diphtheria tetanus and pertussis vaccine (DTP3) by 1%, and rotavirus vaccine (RVV) by 4%.

India began a phased introduction of rotavirus vaccine in 2016 (introduced in nine states so far) and pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) to prevent pneumonia in 2017 (introduced in 3 states so far). Besides, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of an infant's life protects infants from pneumonia and diarrhoea.

The report also highlighted that India could save over \$1 billion every year in economic benefits and avert more than 90,000 needless child deaths a year by introducing and scaling up coverage of vaccination programs targeting pneumonia and diarrhoea.

Economy:

With 100% FDI, food sector priority in Make In India: PM at Food conference

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 3rd November said the food sector that allows 100 per cent foreign investment was the priority in the government's ambitious "Make In India" programme.

Launching a three-day global conference on the food industry in New Delhi, Modi said food processing was an age old practice in India and simple, home-based techniques like fermentation had resulted in the creation of famous pickles, papads, chutneys and murabbas

Apart from representatives of 28 states, it will also see participation of 18 ministerial and business delegations, nearly 50 global CEOs along with heads of all leading domestic food processing companies.

Modi said the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana aimed at creating world class food processing infrastructure was expected to leverage "investment of \$5 billion, benefit two million farmers and generate more than half a million jobs over the next three years".

Karnataka is the focus State in the three-day 'World Food India 2017' trade fair

Science and Technology:

Indian Air Force, DRDO successfully test-fire guided 'Glide Bomb

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) on 3rd November successfully tested an indigenously-built lightweight 'glide bomb' at the Integrated Test Range in Odisha's Chandipur. Designated as the Smart Anti-Airfield Weapon (SAAW), the bomb released from the IAF aircraft was guided through precision navigation system.

The 'glide bomb' reached the targets at greater than 70 km range, with high accuracies. As many as three test-fires were conducted with different release conditions and ranges. The bomb has been developed by the DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in collaboration with DRDO's other laboratories and IAF. The SAAW is a long-range precision-guided anti-airfield weapon, designed to be capable of engaging ground targets with high precision out to a range of 100 km

Awards:

Krishna Sobti: Eminent Hindi Litterateur Krishna Sobti has been awarded the 53rd Jnanpith Award for the year 2017 for her path-breaking contribution to Indian literature. Jnanpith is the highest literary award of the country.

The Jnanpeeth said the language used by Sobti in her writings is influenced by the intermingling of Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi cultures where her characters are always bold and daring - ready to accept all challenges thrown by the society.

Persons in news:

Kenneth Juster: He is a top economic expert on India, was on 3rd November unanimously confirmed by the Senate as the next U.S. Ambassador to New Delhi, filling a key position as the two countries push forward their strategic ties. Mr. Juster is an old India hand who played a key role in developing the landmark Indo-U.S. civil nuclear deal.

He will replace Indian-American Richard Verma as the top American diplomat to India. The position has been lying vacant since January 20 after Mr. Verma resigned from the post after the swearing-in of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the U.S.