

December 11th and 12th news:

National:

Bodhi Parva inaugurated

Minister of State for Culture Mahesh Sharma inaugurated the three days 'Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage' in New Delhi. India hosted the "Bodhi Parva: BIMSTEC Festival of Buddhist Heritage" from 8 to 10 December as part of celebrations of 20th anniversary of BIMSTEC.

The Festival had diverse components including an exhibition of international and Indian Buddhist art and architecture, discourses by eminent scholars and practitioners of Buddhism, guided meditation and chanting by Buddhist monks and choir, screening of film on Buddhism, dance and music performances.

Organizing of the Festival is in keeping with the call of BIMSTEC Leaders to work collectively towards making BIMSTEC stronger, more effective, and result oriented at the BIMSTEC Leaders' Retreat hosted by India in Goa in October 2016.

'We The Women' held in Mumbai

UN Women in collaboration with **Facebook** inaugurated a two-day event in Mumbai titled 'We The Women' to empower and recognise the magnificent contribution of women in our society. The event witnessed speakers from different walks of life including Textile and I&B Minister, Smriti Irani, Sakshi Malik, Mithali Raj, Ekta Kapoor, Karan Johar and others.

Union I&B minister Smriti Irani said that it is time that every women should stand up for themselves and again the power to empower themselves. Smriti Irani also said clothes do not define women's identity but her work makes her identity.

Bilateral:

India, China, Russia vow to boost maritime trade, fight terrorism

Notwithstanding the South China Sea dispute, India, China and Russia on 10th December agreed to support freedom of navigation and overflight rights based on the principles of international law in an effort to boost maritime trade.

This was reiterated during the 15th Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and China, also known as the RIC. Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi and his Russia counterpart Sergei Lavrov held the meeting with Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj

The statement assumes importance considering that freedom of navigation has come under threat with China ignoring The Hague Tribunal's verdict on South China Sea. Ever since South China Sea dispute escalated, India has always asserted adherence to international maritime law.

On the issue of tackling terrorism, the joint communiqué called for "swift and effective" implementation of existing international commitments on countering terrorism, including the UN Global Counter-

Terrorism Strategy, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and targeted sanctions relating to terrorism and the FATF International Standards worldwide.

In another significant decision, the RIC Foreign Ministers also welcomed the beginning of the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed upon between E3/EU+3 and Iran in Vienna on July 14, 2015 regarding Iran's nuclear programme.

Economy:

UN puts GDP growth at 6.7%

Indicating a revival in the New Year, the United Nations, in its latest report, has forecast that the Indian economy will grow by 7.2 per cent in 2018 and 7.4 per cent in 2019.

This is however; lower than its earlier forecast of 8.2 per cent growth for next year and 7.8 per cent growth in 2019. For 2017, it has pegged GDP growth at 6.7 per cent.

Prabhu bats for food subsidies at WTO meet

India made an impassioned case at the World Trade Organization for the right to give unrestricted food procurement subsidies, stating that millions of impoverished people depended on it.

This is a matter of survival for 800 million hungry and undernourished people in the world. A successful resolution of this issue would fulfil our collective commitment to the global community," Commerce & Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu said in his Plenary speech at the 11th Ministerial Conference (MC 11) of the WTO in Buenos Aires on 11th December.

Prabhu also stressed that no new sub-categories of countries should be created at the WTO while carrying forward the development agenda. He was referring indirectly to the growing clamour over whether larger developing countries such as India and China should continue to get special and differential treatment like Least Developed Countries.

All Trade Ministers from the 164 member countries get an opportunity to air their positions on issues they consider important at the plenary session.

While agriculture committee's chair stated at a press conference on 10th December that there was a good chance of arriving at a permanent solution on public stockholding for food security, he remarked that India's insistence on more flexibilities than the existing peace clause was a "bone of contention".

Goa CM to unveil India's first mobile food testing lab

India's 'first' mobile food testing laboratory, which will enable on-the-spot food safety tests to be conducted in Goa, would be launched by Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar on December 10, 2017.

"This is the first ever 'Food Safety on Wheel' mobile laboratory in the country. The vehicle is equipped to conduct on-the-spot tests to check the food quality. It will also check the hygiene level of water, he said adding that the results can be received within 15 minutes.

The mobile laboratory costs Rs 45 lakh and it has been fully funded by the Centre.

Environment

China Starts World's Biggest Floating Solar Project

A unit of China Three Gorges Corp. is building a 1 billion yuan (\$151 million) floating solar power plant, the world's biggest, in the nation's eastern province of Anhui. China Three Gorges New Energy Company started building the 150-megawatt project in July and part of the plant was connected to the grid.

The project features panels fixed to floats on the surface of a lake that formed after a coal mine collapsed, according to the unit. The entire facility is expected to come online by May 2018.

Kacheguda Becomes Energy Efficient Railway Station

Kacheguda railway station in Hyderabad division of the SCR (South Central Railway), becomes India's 'First' Energy-Efficient 'A1 Category' Railway Station. It has achieved 100 per cent energy efficiency by replacing 1,312 conventional lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lighting, 370 ceiling fans with Brushless DC Electrical (BLDC) motors energy-efficient fans and 12 air conditioners with energy efficient inverter type ACs.

Sports:

Rs 1756 crore for Khelo India

Union Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Col. Rajyavardhan Rathore confirmed union government will launch a 'Khelo India' programme at a cost of 1,756 crore rupees for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20. The initiative marks a watershed moment in the history of Indian sports, as the programme aims at mainstreaming sports as a tool for individual development, community development, economic development and national development.

The main aims to promote 150 select schools in as many districts, and 20 universities across the country, as hubs of sporting excellence, which would enable talented sportspersons to pursue the dual pathway of education and competitive sports.

Mehuli Ghosh and Tushar Mane qualified for Youth Olympic Games

Mehuli Ghosh and Tushar Mane became the first Indian shooters to secure the women's and men's quota places for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games (YOG) by winning a gold and bronze each at the 10th Asian Championship 10M Rifle/Pistol at Wako City, Japan

Persons in news:

Uma Shankar, chief general manager (CGM) in charge of the Reserve Bank of India's financial inclusion and development department has taken over as executive director (ED) in the central bank.

He has been elevated after Meena Hemchandra the executive director in charge of the central bank's supervision department retired recently.

Obituary

Lalji Singh, a pioneer of DNA fingerprinting technology in India and former Vice-Chancellor of Benares Hindu University, BHU (2011 to 2014), passed away. Lalji Singh and his team developed the indigenous probe that was first applied to settle paternity disputes in the late 1980s at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) Hyderabad.