

January 20th news:

National:

EC disqualifies 20 Delhi AAP MLAs

The Election Commission on 19th January recommended disqualification of 20 Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLAs for holding an Office of Profit. While the Delhi High Court refused to grant interim relief to the 20 legislators

In its opinion sent to President Ram Nath Kovind on 19th January, the Election Commission said the MLAs, by occupying the post of Parliamentary secretaries between March 13, 2015 and September 8, 2016, held offices of profit, and were liable to be disqualified as legislators. Parliamentary Secretaries assist ministers with their work.

Numerically, even if the disqualification of the 20 MLAs is approved, the AAP will have a majority in the 70-member Assembly. However, the number of its MLAs will come down to 45 and bye-elections will have to be held.

Govt launches Cyber Surakshit Bharat Yojna to strengthen cyber security

Union Government has launched the Cyber Surakshit Bharat Yojna to strengthen cyber security. Inaugurating the initiative in New Delhi, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology K J Alphons said, it will be operated on the three principles of awareness, education and enablement.

He said that the Government has launched this initiative with a primary objective to keep the country data safe and protected. He said, the initiative is the first public-private partnership of its kind and will leverage the expertise of the IT industry in cyber security.

Mr Alphons said, digital India has led to a rapid transformation in the governance system and securing the cyber space is vital for achieving the vision of a Digital India. The Minister said, Cyber Surakshit Bharat aims to conduct a series of training programs in the next six months across Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai.

Govt launches 100 accessible websites for Divyangs

Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thaawarchand Gehlot on 19th January launched 100 accessible websites for Divyangs. These 100 government websites are now divyang friendly.

The divyang-friendly websites, especially for visually impaired, use features such as screen readers and screen magnifiers, which can relay website content to the user in audio format. Mr Gehlot said 900 such websites will be launched in a phased manner.

Saying divyangs are full of capabilities but should be given opportunities to prove themselves, Mr Gehlot asserted a lot needs to be done to empower divyangs in the country.

The Minister urged the states to increase the pace of the work which is being done in favour of divyangs. He said, the Centre is extending all assistance to empower divyangs and bring them into the mainstream.

Bilateral:

India joins Australia Group export control regime

India on 19th January joined the Australia Group export control regime, an informal forum which seeks to ensure that exports do not contribute to the development of chemical or biological weapons.

The inclusion is expected to raise India's stature in the field of non-proliferation and help in acquiring critical technologies.

India has managed entry into Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

India is the 43rd member of the Group. The group is looking forward to work together to strengthen the collective efforts against the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons.

India thanked Australia Group participants for inducting it into export control regime, after MTCR and Wassenaar Arrangement.

According to External Affairs Minister Spokesperson, Raveesh Kumar, India's entry into the AG will be mutually beneficial and further contribute to international security and non-proliferation objectives.

Economy:

Govt announces name of nine new smart cities

Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on 19th January announced the name of nine more smart cities, taking the total to 99. Silvassa in Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli has topped the list of winning cities in this round of competition.

The other cities include Erode in Tamil Nadu, Diu in Union Territory of Daman and Diu, Biharsharif in Bihar, Bareilly, Saharanpur and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh, Itanagar in Arunachal Pradesh and Kavaratti in Lakshadweep.

The nine cities have proposed an investment of 12 thousand 824 crore rupees to develop 409 projects. With the selection of these nine cities, the total proposed investment in 99 Smart Cities will be two lakh three thousand 979 crore rupees.

Smart City Centers have become operational in Pune, Surat, Vadodara and Kakinada and work is in progress in another 18 cities. Nearly three thousand projects worth over one lakh 38 thousand crore rupees are in various stages of implementation. He also said, 189 projects have been completed so far. The mission of hundred Smart Cities was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June 2015.

Environment

2017 sees warmest ocean on record: CAS

The temperature of oceans in 2017 reached a record high, putting the marine ecosystems in jeopardy, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) said.

Compared to 2015, the extra heat in the upper two kilometres of sea water across the globe in 2017 was 700 times the energy China's electricity used in 2016, the CAS said in a report.

The Atlantic and Antarctic oceans warmed up the fastest, as warming has already taken place in most of the other seas, state-run Xinhua news agency quoted the report as saying.

The marine ecosystems remain in jeopardy as a result, with coral reefs and the creatures that live on them threatened, researchers at the institute said.

The expansion caused by warming contributes to rising of sea levels, while more sea ice and ice shelves will melt and ocean currents will be affected.

The heat content of the ocean is a key indicator of climate change. Due to its high specific heat capacity, sea water contains the main signals, as it stores 90 percent of the energy for global warming