

**January 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> news:**

**International:**

#### **First International Dam Safety Conference held in Thiruvananthapuram**

The first International Dam Safety Conference-2018 was held in Kovalam, Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) from January 23-24, 2018. It was inaugurated by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and was presided over by Union Minister of State for Water Resources Arjun Ram Meghwal.

This Conference is fourth in series organized under the aegis of ongoing Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP). It was organized jointly by Central Water Commission (CWC), Kerala Water Resources Department (KWRD), National Institute of Technology, Calicut (NITC), and College of Engineering.

A software programme known as Dam Health and Rehabilitation Monitoring Application (DHARMA) was also launched to document authentic asset.

**National:**

#### **Lalu Yadav Gets 5 Years In Jail In Third Fodder Scam Case**

Former Bihar chief minister Lalu Yadav and his longtime aide, Jagannath Mishra were sentenced to five years in jail and a Rs. 5 lakh fine each in a third fodder scam case. Mr Yadav is already serving a jail term in the second fodder scam case. Verdicts in two more cases against him are expected over the next few months.

The fodder scam involved the embezzlement of more than Rs. 970 crore in government funds during Lalu Yadav's term as the Chief Minister of undivided Bihar from 1990 to 1997. The latest case involves the siphoning of Rs. 33.67 crore from the Chaibasa treasury against an allocation of Rs. 7.10 lakh in 1992-93. Mr Yadav was named as the main conspirator by the Central Bureau of Investigation.

**Bilateral:**

#### **India and ASEAN agreed on maritime cooperation**

Indian Prime minister Narendra Modi and the 10 visiting leaders from the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) have agreed to set up a mechanism on maritime cooperation to counter the common "traditional" and "non-traditional" challenges they face.

This idea evolved during a two-hour-long informal discussion on "maritime cooperation and security" at a "retreat" hosted by Modi at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 25<sup>th</sup> January.

At Rashtrapati Bhavan, India's objective was to steer the conversation towards developing an understanding on the maritime sector, with China asserting its dominance in the South China Sea, but several leaders raised the issue of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

At the summit, Modi said India shares ASEAN's vision for rules-based societies and peace. "Freedom of navigation will be a key focus of India-ASEAN in the maritime domain," he said.

"India shares ASEAN's vision of peace and prosperity through a rules-based order for the oceans and seas. Respect for international law, notably UNCLOS is critical for this.

Since South China Sea has emerged as a major dispute between China and several ASEAN countries like Vietnam, Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia, the issue has divided the grouping down the middle. With no unanimity emerging on how to deal with China, India is concerned because over 40 per cent of its trade passes through the South China Sea.

The Delhi declaration on 25<sup>th</sup> January said they reaffirm the importance of maintaining and promoting peace, stability, maritime safety and security, freedom of navigation and overflight in the region, other lawful uses of the seas, unimpeded lawful maritime commerce and peaceful resolutions of disputes, in accordance with universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and the relevant standards and recommended practices by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

It also said they would strengthen maritime cooperation through existing relevant mechanisms including the Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF) to address common challenges on maritime issues.

### **Bilateral Meetings**

During his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, discussed the menace of "urban terrorism" and "drug trafficking", and agreed to cooperate on intelligence sharing and capacity-building.

Singapore's PM Lee Hsien Loong expressed optimism about India-ASEAN ties, and said Singapore can share experience and know-how on "fintech" (financial technology) which will help the move towards digital cashless economy, one of the government's flagship initiatives after demonetisation.

The ASEAN leaders, along with India, decided to encourage early completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project and extend this Trilateral Highway to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. This broadens the scope of the much-delayed project to a total of six countries.

### **Asean and India: 25 years and beyond**

While we commemorate 25 years of Asean-India relations, India's ties with South-east Asia date back more than 2,000 years. Ancient trade between India and countries such as Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand is well documented.

South-east Asian cultures, traditions and languages have been profoundly influenced by these early linkages. We see Indic Hindu-Buddhist influences in historical sites such as the Angkor Temple Complex

near Siem Reap in Cambodia, the Borobudur and Prambanan temples near Yogyakarta in Indonesia, and the ancient candis in Kedah in Malaysia.

The Ramayana is embedded in many South-east Asian cultures, including in Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand. Singapore's Malay name is Singapura, derived from Sanskrit and meaning "lion city".

### **Padma Awards for ASEAN nations**

A novelty of this year's Padma awards list was Padma Shris being given to one person from all 10 Asean nations to mark 25 years of India's partnership with the southeast Asian grouping.

Malai Haji Abdullah Bin Malai Haji Othman of Brunei Darussalam got the award in the medicine category. He is the founder of the Society for Management of Autism Related Issues in Training, Education and Resources (Smarter).

Hun Many of Cambodia, the son of former PM Hun Sen, was awarded for his role in public affairs. He is Cambodia's youngest parliamentarian and president of Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia.

Indonesian sculptor and one of the pioneers of the New Art movement I Nyoman Nuarta was also awarded. He is known for works like Garuda Wisnu Kencana statue, devoted to Vishnu in Bali.

Bounlap Keokangna of Laos was another on the list. He was deputy director of Vat Phou World Heritage Site and had helped in restoration of the Shiva temple of Bhadreshwara, known as Vat Phou along with ASI.

Datuk Ramli Bin Ibrahim of Malaysia is a classical Odissi dancer and has been teaching dance for over 40 years. He got the Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 2011

Among the others were Dr Thant Myint U of Myanmar, a historian and author; Jose Ma Joey Concepcion III of the Philippines, CEO and president of RFM Corp; Tommy Koh, ambassador in the ministry of foreign affairs, Singapore; Somdet Phra Ariya Wongsu Khottayan, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand who trained as a monk at the age of 10; and Nguyen Tien Thien, secretary general of National Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

### **Economy:**

#### **Union Government To Infuse Over Rs88 Thousand Crore In 20 PSB**

The Union Government announced 88,139 crore rupees capital infusion in 20 public sector banks, PSBs, during the current fiscal ending 31st March to boost lending and revive growth. IDBI Bank will get the most- Rs10,610 crore followed by State Bank of India 8,800 crore rupees.

The 20 banks that will receive the capital infusion during this phase include Bank of India, UCO Bank, and Punjab National Bank.

In October last year, the government had announced over two lakh crore rupees bank recapitalization plan spread over spread over two financial years 2017-18 and 2018-19.

## **Science and Technology:**

### **New schemes launched for young scientists**

Minister for Science and Technology, on 24<sup>th</sup> January launched four new schemes which seek to help young researchers to realise their potential more fully for their own benefit as well as for the betterment of the society at large.

The first initiative called Teacher Associateship for Research Excellence (TARE) Scheme aims to tap the latent potential of faculty working in state universities, colleges and private academic institutions who are well trained but have difficulty in pursuing their research due to varied reasons including lack of facilities, funding and guidance.

The scheme facilitates mobility of such faculty members to carryout research in well established public funded institutions such as IITs, IISc, IISERS and other National Institutions including NITs, CSIR, ICAR, ICMR laboratories and Central Universities located preferably nearer to them. Upto 500 teachers will be supported under this scheme.

The second initiative called Overseas Visiting Doctoral Fellowship will seek to enhance international mobility of Indian research students with a view to create a pool of globally trained manpower. The scheme will provide opportunities for research students to access top class research facilities in academia and laboratories across the world. This scheme will offer fellowships for up to 100 PhD students admitted in the Indian institutions to take up training in overseas universities and institutions of repute working in areas of importance for the country for periods up to 12 months during their doctoral research.

The selected students will be paid a monthly fellowship equivalent to US \$ 2,000 and one-time contingency or preparatory allowances of Rs. 60,000 to cover expenses such as visa fee, airport transfer charges, medical insurance and air fare.

The third initiative is designed to recognise and reward Principal Investigators (PIs) of projects funded by Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) under the Department of Science and Technology, who have performed remarkably well. Called SERB Distinguished Investigator Award (DIA), the scheme would be a one-time career award devised to specifically cater to the younger scientists who have not received any other prestigious awards or fellowships. The award carries a fellowship of Rs. 15,000 per month and an optional research grant for three years, based on peer review of the project proposal submitted.

The fourth initiative called AWSAR (Augmenting Writing Skills for Articulating Research) is designed to encourage, empower and endow popular science writing through newspapers, magazines, blogs, social media, etc. by young PhD Scholars and Post-Doctoral Fellows during the course of their higher studies and research pursuits.

Over 20,000 youth are awarded PhD in S&T every year in India and the scheme aims to tap this tremendous potential to popularize and communicate science and also to inculcate scientific temperament in the masses.

The scheme put together by the National Council of Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) offers monetary incentive of Rs.10,000 each for 100 best entries for research scholars in a year along with a Certificate of Appreciation. Besides, the Ministry will take special steps to get the top stories published/projected in mass media and three leading stories from the selected hundred would be awarded cash prize of Rs.100,000, Rs.50,000 and Rs.25,000 respectively. Twenty entries would be selected from articles submitted exclusively by Post-Doctoral Fellows relating to their research for monetary incentive of Rs.10,000 each and the most outstanding story to be given a cash prize of Rs.100,000.

### **Chinese scientists break key barrier by cloning monkeys**

Chinese scientists have cloned monkeys using the same technique that produced Dolly the sheep two decades ago, breaking a technical barrier that could open the door to copying humans. Zhong Zhong and Hua Hua, two identical long-tailed macaques, were born eight and six weeks ago, making them the first primates -- the order of mammals that includes monkeys, apes and humans -- to be cloned from a non-embryonic cell.

It was achieved through a process called somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT), which involves transferring the nucleus of a cell, which includes its DNA, into an egg which has had its nucleus removed.

Genetically identical animals are useful in research because confounding factors caused by genetic variability in non-cloned animals can complicate experiments. They could be used to test new drugs for a range of diseases before clinical use.

### **Sports:**

#### **Rakhi Halder wins**

Lifter Rakhi Halder created a new national record in clean and jerk to a gold medal in the 63kg women's category in the 33rd Women Senior National Weightlifting Championships, in Mangaluru, Karnataka. Rakhi lifted 128kgs in the clean and jerk for a total of 230kgs to create a new national record, bettering Karnam Malleswari's feat (127kg) created in Athens in 1999

#### **Padma Awards**

Padma Awards, one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, have been announced. The President approved the Awards, for 85 individuals, which includes 3 Padma Vibhushan, 9 Padma Bhushan and 73 Padma Shri.

Fourteen of the awardees are women and 3 persons have been awarded posthumously. Two duo case award have been given. In a duo case, the award is counted as one. Prominent citizens from each of the 10 ASEAN member countries are among the 16 foreigners named for the Award.

The second highest civilian award Padma Vibhushan has been conferred upon, Well-known classical singer Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan, ace music composer Ilaiyaraaja and Litterateur P Parameswaran.

In sports personalities, former India cricket captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and multiple world champion cueist Pankaj Advani have been conferred with the third-highest civilian award, Padma Bhushan.

Besides the duo, 2017 World Weightlifting Champion Saikhom Mirabai Chanu and former Asian Games gold medallist tennis player Somdev Devvarman have been conferred with the Padma Shri.

**Palini swami:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palanichamy received UNESCO Award of Merit awarded to the iconic Srirangam Ranganathaswamy temple in Tiruchirapalli. The award of merit was awarded by UNESCO Asia Pacific region for the reconstruction activities undertaken in the temple without in the least affecting its traditional splendor and Vedic rituals. It is considered as one of the most important of the 108 main Vishnu temples (Divyadesams)

#### **Persons in news:**

**Usha Ananthasubramanian:** MD and CEO, Allahabad Bank, has been elected the first woman chairman of Indian Banks' Association (IBA). Usha was elected IBA Chairman for the year 2017-18 by its Managing Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> January.

**Somnath:** RO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) director S Somanath taken charge as the new director of Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC). It is ISRO's lead center for launch vehicles. He replaced K Sivan who has joined ISRO as Chairman.