

**April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> news:**

**International:**

**UN in security talks with Syria after chemical probe put on hold**

The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has said, it is trying to make arrangements for the fact-finding experts of Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to travel to Douma in Syria at the earliest.

It said they were negotiating with Syrian and Russian authorities for international chemical inspectors to deploy to the site of an alleged toxic gas attack near Damascus after a reconnaissance mission came under fire.

It said, the UN security team came under fire and there was an explosion after it entered one of the sites. Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who is in Qatar for a meeting with his counterpart, said that the Syrian government is responsible for delays in inspectors reaching sites of a suspected chemical weapons attack

**National:**

**UIDAI introduces updated QR code for offline Aadhaar verification**

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has introduced an updated 'QR code' to provide an extra layer of privacy to Aadhaar. It holds non-sensitive details, such as name, address, photo, and date of birth, and can be used for offline user verification without the 12-digit ID number.

The new QR code can be used in offline mode in a way that will safeguard against any tampering of documents.

Aadhaar holders can download and print their biometric ID with the QR code from the website of UIDAI or its mobile app. Users can manually blacken the Aadhaar number and use the printout with the new QR code for establishing their identity, offline too.

**Law Commission favours simultaneous elections**

A draft white paper released by the Law Commission of India on 18<sup>th</sup> April recommends holding of simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies, possibly in 2019. It suggests amending the Constitution to realise this objective.

In a public notice annexed to the draft, the commission, which is the government's highest law advisory body, said the white paper would be circulated to "constitutional experts, academia, political parties, bureaucrats, students, etc." The commission, headed by former Supreme Court judge Justice B.S. Chauhan, says opinions and suggestions should come in by May 8, 2018.

The commission says simultaneous elections were held in the country during the first two decades after Independence up to 1967.

Dissolution of certain Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 followed by the dissolution of the Lok Sabha led to the “disruption of the conduct of simultaneous elections.” The panel refers to a January 2017 working paper of the NITI Aayog on simultaneous elections.

The white paper contains a series of “possible recommendations” of the commission.

The first among these is that “simultaneous elections may be restored in the nation by amending the Constitution, Representation of the People Act of 1951 and the Rules of Procedure of the Lok Sabha and Assemblies.”

It recommends that in 2019, the election could be held in phases. In the first phase, it says, elections to the legislatures which are scheduled to go for polls synchronous with the Lok Sabha in 2019 could be held together. The rest of the States could go to elections in proximity with the Lok Sabha elections of 2024.

Citing no-confidence motion and premature dissolution of House as major roadblocks to simultaneous elections, the commission says the parties which introduce the no-confidence motion should simultaneously give a suggestion for an alternative government.

It even suggests the relaxation of the “rigours” of the anti-defection law in the Tenth Schedule to prevent a stalemate in the Lok Sabha or Assemblies in case of a hung Parliament or Assembly.

The panel says that in case of mid-term elections, the new Lok Sabha or Assembly would only serve the remainder of the term of the previous Lok Sabha/Assembly and not a fresh term of five years.

The commission says the Centre should get the Constitutional amendments, if agreed upon, to be ratified by all the States so as to avoid any challenge to them.

It also says that the Prime Minister/Chief Minister should be “elected” to lead by the full House like the Lok Sabha Speaker.

### **Bilateral:**

#### **India And UK Sign 10 Agreements In Several Sectors**

India and the UK have signed 10 agreements in several sectors including cyber-relationship, rejuvenation of Ganga and skill development. The Important agreements signed between the 2 countries

- ❖ The two countries have agreed to an overarching cyber-relationship framework that among others enables the development of a common and shared understanding of the international cyber activity.
- ❖ A MoU on the rejuvenation of River Ganga, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the UK-based Natural Environmental Research Council (NERC).

- ❖ A MoU on Skill Development, Vocational education and Training and seek to promote greater collaboration in domains such as strengthening skill delivery in high demand sectors where the UK has technical and skilling expertise.
- ❖ A Statement of Intent between NITI Aayog and UK's Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) has also been signed.
- ❖ Inked the deal on cooperation in the field of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Sectors seeking to strengthen collaboration in livestock health and husbandry, breeding, dairying, and fisheries.
- ❖ A MoU on Exchange of Information for the Purposes of Combating International Criminality and Tackling Serious Organised Crime has been signed.

### **Economy:**

#### **Commerce Ministry Launches Digital Platform For MSME Exporters**

Commerce and Industry Minister launched the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) GlobalLinker platform for MSME exporters in New Delhi. This move is aimed at assisting the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in exports.

This initiative will help in expanding India's multi-focused export strategy and also aid in connecting art and artisans to the market. FIEO GlobalLinker is setup with a view to making the business growth of SMEs simpler, more profitable and enjoyable.

#### **Union Government launches first tranche of Sovereign gold bonds for FY19**

The Union Government (Finance Ministry) in consultation with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) launched the first tranche of sovereign gold bonds (SGBs) for Background Households in India hold a large amount of their savings as physical assets such as gold, silver and other precious metals and real estate.

The Households in India hold a large amount of their savings as physical assets such as gold, silver and other precious metals and real estate. The minimum subscription for individual and HUF is 1 gram and maximum is 4 kg.

#### **235 districts to be covered in Phase-II of POSHAN Abhiyaan**

The government will cover 235 districts in the second phase of its POSHAN Abhiyaan which aims to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia among children, women and adolescent girls along with reducing low birth weight in the country.

The decision was taken in the first meeting of the National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under the POSHAN Abhiyaan, chaired by vice chairman of NITI Aayog Rajiv Kumar in New Delhi on 18<sup>th</sup> April Regarding the direct transfer of funds to states and UTs to frontline functionaries, instead of the

creation of a corpus fund, it was decided that the matter will be examined in consultation with the Finance Ministry.

During the meeting, it was decided that a pilot project will be conducted in 10 districts for conditional cash transfer (CCT) through direct benefit transfer and the states/UTs would continue their existing system of providing supplementary nutrition under Anganwadi services.

Awards:

### **Madhya Pradesh conferred most film Friendly state award**

Madhya Pradesh has been announced as the Most Film Friendly State. The Most Film Friendly State Awards will be presented by President Ram Nath Kovind on the 3rd of next month during the presentation of the National Film Awards.

Among the sixteen states that participated, Madhya Pradesh has conferred the award for its efforts towards easing filming in the state by creating a well-structured website, film-friendly infrastructure, offering incentives, maintaining databases, undertaking marketing and promotional initiatives.

The state also received positive feedback from established filmmakers who have shot there. The efforts taken by the state to present their case for the Awards were also appreciated.

Uttarakhand has been chosen for the Special Mention Certificate to recognize the efforts made by it towards creating a film-friendly environment. The jury for selecting the Most Film Friendly State Award 2017 was chaired by acclaimed filmmaker Ramesh Sippy

**Aditi Rao Hydari** will receive Dadasaheb Phalke Excellence Award 2018 for the Best Leading Lady (Critics Award) for her memorable performance in Bhoomi.

### **Persons in news:**

**Diaz-Canel:** He is the new President of Cuba. A stalwart of the ruling Communist Party, Diaz-Canel was sworn in to replace Raul Castro by the National Assembly in a carefully managed new chapter for the Caribbean island, aimed at preserving the political system