

June 2nd news:

National:

Foundation laid for India's First Advanced Forensic Lab

Union Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi on 1st June laid the foundation stone of an advanced DNA forensic laboratory here as part efforts to reduce the backlog of cases needing advanced forensic analysis.

Built at a cost of Rs 99.76 crore from the Nirbhaya Fund, the state-of-the-art 'Sakhi Suraksha' lab, will come up at the Central Forensic Science Laboratory campus to assist in investigation and prosecution of crimes including those committed against women and children

On the completion of the project by the end of this year, the new laboratory will help to meet the demand for more admissible, accurate and powerful forensic proof in the cases of crime against women and children.

The Minister mentioned that the current capacity of CFSL, Chandigarh is less than 160 cases per year and the Sakhi Suraksha Advanced DNA Forensic Laboratory is estimated to increase the capacity to 2,000 cases per year. The Minister further said that 5 more advanced forensic labs would come up in Mumbai, Chennai, Guwahati, Pune and Bhopal in the next 3 months bringing the total minimum annual capacity of the labs to 50,000 cases.

The Labs in Chennai and Mumbai would be set up with WCD funds while remaining 3 labs would be set up with funds by Home Ministry. To meet international standards and deliver timely justice to women, advanced forensic DNA laboratories with latest high throughput DNA technology, are required, she added.

According to the plan, the lab will have four units-- sexual assault and homicide, paternity, human identification, and mitochondrial. Apart from the sexual assault and homicide units, the other three are interlinked and will work to examine cases related to crime against women and children

The paternity unit is essential to solve cases related to criminal paternity, gender selection and child swapping in hospitals. Human identification unit is important in cases of missing persons or children.

The mitochondrial unit will conduct mitochondrial DNA analysis in cases where regular nuclear DNA analysis is not possible such as in case of highly degraded samples. It can also be used to better explore family relationships

At present there are 6 Central Forensic Science Labs (CFSLs) in Chandigarh, Guwahati, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune and Bhopal and one State Forensic Science Lab in each State/UT. These labs are responsible for conducting forensic analysis of all cases in the country including sexual assault, criminal paternity and homicide.

Bilateral:

India, Singapore agree to upgrade economic cooperation agreement

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 1st June said that India and Singapore will soon upgrade their Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) following a bilateral summit with his Singaporean counterpart Lee Hsien Loong here during which both sides called for regional peace and stability.

The two sides also signed eight agreements across different sectors after the summit. India and Singapore signed the CECA in 2005. Singapore is the first country with which India signed such a treaty.

On his part, Lee said that bilateral trade between India and Singapore has doubled to \$25 billion since the CECA came into effect.

He also said that as the current chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Singapore will work with India in the regional security architecture.

Modi said that while Singapore is a significant source of foreign direct investment for India, the southeast Asia city state is also a top destination of Indian investments.

Stating that air traffic between India and Singapore is increasing rapidly, the Indian Prime Minister said that the two countries will soon sign an air services agreement.

The Indian Prime Minister also stressed on the unity and centrality of Asean and regional stability through the Asean institutions.

He also said that he reiterated Indian's commitment to a quick conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

RCEP is a proposed free trade agreement between the 10 Asean member states and the six states with which this regional bloc has existing free trade agreements – Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand.

The agreements signed on 1st June included those on naval cooperation, cyber security and mutual recognition on nursing.

According to a joint statement issued, both sides reiterated their desire and determination to work together to maintain peace, stability, growth and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Economy:

Govt approves construction of 1.5 lakh houses for urban poor

The Centre has approved construction of 1.5 lakh houses for urban poor under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), taking to 47.52 lakh the tally of houses under the programme so far, the Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) Ministry said.

The latest approval entails an investment of Rs 7,227 crore with central assistance of Rs 2,209 crore, the ministry said in a release.

The approval was given in the 34th meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee at its meeting

Andhra Pradesh was sanctioned 56,512 houses, while Uttar Pradesh got 23,060, Madhya Pradesh 17,920, Jharkhand 14,526 and Maharashtra 13,506 houses. Other states for which houses were approved included Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Punjab and Assam.

With the latest approval for construction of affordable houses, the cumulative figure under under PMAY(U) has reached 47.52 lakh houses. Under the PMAY(U), the HUA Ministry targets construction of 1.2 crore houses for urban poor by 2022