

CURRENT AFFAIRS APRIL CLASS 1

Project Saksham:

The Government has approved Rs. 2,256 crore outlay for Project Saksham to bolster the information technology network for the new GST regime.

Project Saksham is the name given to CBEC's IT Infrastructure Project. This IT Infrastructure project will enable not just the implementation of Goods and Services tax (GST) but also support all existing services in Customs, Central Excise and Service Tax.

In addition, it will also enable extension of the Indian Customs Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT) and other taxpayer-friendly initiatives under Digital India and Ease of Doing Business of CBEC.

Hyderabad becomes first city to have 1 GBPS internet speed:

Internet Service Provider (ISP) ACT Fibernet has announced the launch of 1Gbps (gigabits per second) wired broadband internet services in Hyderabad, making the 'City of Pearls' India's first 'Giga City'.

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana was recently launched by the government. It was launched in District Nellore, Andhra Pradesh.

The Scheme aims at providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age related disability/infirmity viz. Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability, with such assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested.

The Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens will be distributed in Camp mode and the Scheme will be implemented through the sole implementing agency, 'Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)', (a PSU under M/o SJ&E), which will undertake one year free maintenance of the aids & assisted living devices.

This is a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Central Government. The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the “Senior Citizens’ Welfare Fund“.

Under the scheme, free of cost distribution of the devices, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens will take place.

Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector. As far as possible, 30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.

Under the Scheme, the following Aids and Assisted-Living Devices will be provided to eligible elderly beneficiary senior citizens, depending upon their physical impairment:

- Walking sticks.
- Elbow crutches.
- Walkers / Crutches.
- Tripods / Quadpods.
- Hearing Aids.
- Artificial Dentures.

Govt withdraws subsidy to mild hybrids cars

The government has withdrawn incentives given to mild hybrid vehicles under FAME India scheme.

A mild hybrid vehicle has an electric motor, which on its own cannot run a vehicle but assists normal engine by using recovered energy stored in a battery and helps save fuel.

Mild hybrid technology is different from plug-in or conventional hybrid vehicles. Mild hybrid vehicles use the energy generated while applying the brakes and turns it into electric energy that is then stored in a battery. This energy can then be used to turn the starter motor when the car’s start stop system needs it.

In most cases, a mild hybrid will turn its engine off when at idle or when it comes to a halt at a traffic signal for instance. Research shows that mild-hybrids are only

7-15% more fuel efficient as compared to conventional hybrid systems that can run on pure electric power for short distances too.

With an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles, the government had launched the FAME India scheme in 2015 offering incentives on electric and hybrid vehicles of up to Rs 29,000 for bikes and Rs 1.38 lakh for cars.

- FAME India – Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles in India – is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. The scheme envisages Rs 795 crore support in the first two fiscals starting with the current year.
- It is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry.

Eclipses of binary star shed light on orbiting exoplanet

A team of scientists from Raman Research Institute, Bengaluru, and University of Delhi have seen for the first time indications of a massive planet orbiting a low mass X-ray binary star system. The technique that has been used, namely, X-ray observations, is a new way of detecting exoplanets.

X-ray binaries consist of a pair of stars orbiting each other of which one is compact one such as a black hole or a neutron star (in this case, a neutron star). The neutron star draws matter from its less-massive companion. The mass when drawn generates X-rays which are detected by detectors placed in satellites in space.

- The star system in question, MXB 1658-298 is an X-ray binary and a part of the constellation Ophiuchus (serpent bearer).
- The system is nearly 30,000 light years away and the planet is expected to be nearly 8,000 times as massive as the earth.

How was the planet discovered?

Discovered in 1976, this binary star system is so far and so faint that it may be observed only when it shows “outbursts” of X-rays. That is, an increase in X-ray intensity by a factor of 100 or more. Recently this system showed an outburst. This provided researchers with an excellent opportunity to try to trace the orbital evolution of this system.

As the two stars revolve around each other, the less-massive companion star hides the compact star everytime it crosses the line of sight, in between the detector and

the neutron star, giving rise to eclipses. In X-ray binaries, the time in-between eclipses of the source can increase, decrease and also shows abrupt changes. This system, MXB 1658-298, is special in that the time between the eclipses increases and decreases periodically. The eclipse first arrived about ten seconds earlier and after about a year, arrived about ten seconds later than what would be expected [if there was no other body disturbing the system]. The team was surprised by this unusual behaviour. This periodic variation implied that there was a third body orbiting the system.

PowerTex India:

The Government has launched PowerTex India, a comprehensive scheme for powerloom sector development.

The comprehensive scheme has the following components:

- In-situ Upgradation of Plain Powerlooms.
- Group Workshed Scheme (GWS).
- Yarn Bank Scheme.
- Common Facility Centre (CFC).
- Pradhan Mantri Credit Scheme for Powerloom Weavers.
- Solar Energy Scheme for Powerlooms.
- Facilitation, IT, Awareness, Market Development and Publicity for Powerloom Schemes.
- Tex Venture Capital Fund.
- Grant-in-Aid and Modernisation & Upgradation of Powerloom Service Centres (PSCs).

Chenani-Nashri tunnel:

Chenani-Nashri tunnel, a 10.9 km road tunnel which will shorten the driving time between Jammu and Srinagar by two hours, was recently inaugurated. The two-lane Chenani-Nashri tunnel will be Asia's longest, which will cut the distance between Jammu and Srinagar to around 250km from the current 350km.

The tunnel, which took seven years to build, will act as an all-weather alternative to the existing Jammu-Srinagar highway. It will link Chenani in Udhampur district with Nashri in Ramban district. It is the world's sixth road tunnel with a transverse ventilation system enabled and controlled by ABB software. It also boasts features like Integrated Traffic Control System (ITCS), Video Surveillance System, FM

Rebroadcast System, Entrance Detection Control System and Active Firefighting System.

HRD Ministry releases India Rankings 2017

Union Human Resource and Development Ministry has released the Indian rankings 2017 with the inclusion of two new categories: Common Overall Rank and the General Degree.

- The India rankings 2017 were done under the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) that considered more than 3,300 institutes across 20 parameters.
- Regional diversity, gender equity, the inclusion of disadvantaged sections were among some of the specific parameters in the India Rankings 2017.
- According to the India Rankings 2017, the Indian Institute of Technology(IIT) Madras tops the list in the Engineering category while IISC, Bangalore sits at the top of the Common Overall Rankings, followed by IIT Madras, IIT Bombay, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Delhi, JNU, IIT Kanpur, IIT Guwahati, IIT Roorkee respectively.
- In the list of the best Management institutes in the country, the Indian Institute of Management(IIM) Ahmedabad gets the top spot while being followed by IIM Bangalore, IIM Calcutta, IIM Lucknow, IIM Kozhikode respectively.
- Similarly, IISc Bangalore tops the list of the best universities in the country, followed by JNU, Delhi and the BHU, Varanasi. Meanwhile, in the list of top colleges in the country, Miranda House, Delhi leads the way with Loyola College, Chennai & Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi following it respectively.
- In the list of the top pharma institutions, Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi tops the chart, while being followed by the National Institute of Pharma. Education and Research, Mohali.

African Development Bank to hold 52nd annual meet in Gujarat

India is hosting 52nd annual meeting of the African Development Bank in Ahmedabad.

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) is a multilateral development finance institution established to contribute to the economic development and social progress of African countries. The AfDB was founded in 1964 and comprises three entities: The African Development Bank, the African Development Fund and the Nigeria Trust Fund.

Voting: The voting power on the Board is split according to the size of each member's share, currently 60%-40% between African (or "regional") countries and "non-regional" member countries ("donors"). The largest African Development Bank shareholder is Nigeria with nearly 9% of the vote.

India joined the African Development Bank in 1982. The country is a key member of the institutions 24 Non-Regional Member Countries, which support the African Development Fund (ADF), the concessional resource window of the Bank. In 2013, Delhi increased its contribution to the 13th replenishment of the fund by 57.28% to USD 18.5 million, among other investments.

India becomes associate member of International Energy Agency

India has become part of IEA Association that will allow the country play a more "visible and influential" role in the global energy landscape. This does not cast any additional obligation on India, however, gives an opportunity for the country to become the voice of the developing countries.

- India's engagement with the International Energy Agency (IEA) has enhanced over the last two decades and the "Association" status would facilitate it to participate in meetings of the standing groups, committees and working groups that constitute the IEA governance structure.
- The "Activation of Association" is expected to serve as a bridge and platform for wider-ranging and deeper co-operation and collaboration between IEA member and Association countries in the future.
- India pursues its key development objectives of energy access, energy security and environmental sustainability. In this context, India has a vision of ensuring 24x7 affordable and environment friendly 'Power for All' and deeper engagement with IEA is a component of achieving this vision.

- India can also richly gain from IEA's data gathering processes, survey methodologies and range of energy data, which could enable India in the near future to set up its own robust integrated database agency.

Founded in 1974, the IEA was initially designed to help countries co-ordinate a collective response to major disruptions in the supply of oil, such as the crisis of 1973/4. While this remains a key aspect of its work, the IEA has evolved and expanded significantly.

The four main areas of IEA focus are:

- **Energy Security:** Promoting diversity, efficiency, flexibility and reliability for all fuels and energy sources;
- **Economic Development:** Supporting free markets to foster economic growth and eliminate energy poverty;
- **Environmental Awareness:** Analysing policy options to offset the impact of energy production and use on the environment, especially for tackling climate change and air pollution; and
- **Engagement Worldwide:** Working closely with partner countries, especially major emerging economies, to find solutions to shared energy and environmental concerns.

Padayani Dance

Padayani festival was recently celebrated in Kerala.

Padayani is a traditional folk dance and a ritual art from the central portion of the Indian state of Kerala. A ceremonial dance involving masks, it is an ancient ritual performed in Bhagavati temples.

Padayani was performed by magico-medicine men of Kerala to heal the illnesses not amenable to medical modalities of intervention. It is believed that it is evolved from a symbolic past reminiscent of fencing march of martial art Kalari. Eventually in Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Kottayam districts of Kerala, the Nair folk became the performers of the modern form of Padayani art, but the design and making of costumes vested with Kaniyar people.

- The dance is performed in honor of Bhadrakaali.

- Meaning, a row of warriors, Padayani is an art form that blends music, dance, theatre, satire, facial masks, and paintings.
- Padayani is unique to central Travancore, comprising the Pathanamthitta district of Kerala.
- Padayani is regarded as a remnant of the Dravidian forms of worship that existed before the advent of Brahmanism.
- Kalan Kolam is the major attraction in padayani. This is about a child who is begging his life to lord siva while death comes in his 16th birthday.
- A major attraction of padayani is the song associated with it. Traditionally only a single type of instrument is used to associate the song, thappu.

QUESTIONS

1. The McMahon Line, the result of the 1914 Simla Convention, between British India and Tibet, demarcated the boundary line between Tibet and present-day state(s) of

- a) Jammu and Kashmir
- b) Arunachal Pradesh
- c) Both a and b
- d) Neither a nor b

Solution: b.

2. Consider the following list of lakes surrounding an African nation:

1. To its East is Lake Victoria
2. To its North is Lake Edward and Lake Albert
3. To its South is Lake Tanganyika
4. Its western border runs through Lake Kivu

This nation's capital is

- a) kigali
- b) Mogadishu
- c) Bujumbura

- d) Pretoria

Solution: a.

3. India is a founder-member of

1. International Labour Organisation
2. African Development Bank Group
3. South Asian Subregional Economic Cooperation
4. Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1, 3 and 4 only
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 3 and 4 only
- d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Solution: a.

4. 'Sanskritisation', in the realm of sociology, refers to

- a) A process of upward social mobility
- b) A phenomenon in which western cultural trends are co-opted by Indians while giving them an "Indian flavour"
- c) A process whereby members of upper castes attempt to raise their own social status by occupying the "corridors of power"
- d) None of the above

Solution: a.

5. Consider the following statements with reference to the International Labour Organisation:

1. It is the only tripartite United Nations agency
2. India is a founder member

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Solution: c.

6. The satellite-based information service for detection and monitoring of Harmful Algal Bloom is being implemented by

- a) Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services
- b) National Centre for Earth Science Studies
- c) National Institute of Ocean Technology
- d) Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management Project Directorate

Solution: a.

7. The e-Visa facility was recently extended to the nationals of 161 countries for entry through

- a) airports

- b) seaports
- c) Both a and b
- d) Neither a nor b

Solution: c

8. Of the eight core industries, the combination of which of the following accounts for the largest weight in the Index of Industrial Production?

- a) Electricity, Fertilisers and Natural Gas
- b) Fertilisers, Natural Gas and Cement
- c) Refinery Products, Steel and Electricity
- d) Cement, Coal and Crude Oil

Solution: c.