

CURRENT AFFAIRS APRIL 4

Poet Shankha Ghosh conferred Jnanpith Award:

Eminent Bengali poet and literary critic Sankha Ghosh has been conferred the 52nd Jnanpith Award. He is also a Sahitya Akademi awardee. Ghosh was also honoured with Padma Bhushan in 2011.

The Jnanpith Award is one of the prestigious literary honours in the country. The award was instituted in 1961. Eligibility: Any Indian citizen who writes in any of the official languages of India is eligible for the honour.

All-woman battalion:

The Centre has decided to raise an all-woman India Reserve Battalion (IRB) in Jammu and Kashmir to tackle women stone throwers.

The all women contingent will be among the five IRBs sanctioned by the Centre for the State last year. The women battalion would also be assigned other law and order duties but its personnel will be primarily deployed for tackling protesters.

The IRBs are being raised to provide jobs to the local youths with 60% of the vacancies to be filled with candidates from the border districts. The cost of raising each battalion is around Rs. 61 crore, and 75% of the expenditure will be borne by the Centre.

Online Statement Of Transaction (e-SOT) and the e-PRAN card launched for Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

With a view to digitally empower the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) subscribers and improve the quality of service, the facility of online viewing of the statement of transaction (e-SOT) and also the e-PRAN card have been launched. More than 45 lakhs APY subscribers are likely to be benefited.

The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) was launched in May, 2015. APY is available for all citizens of India in the age group of 18-40 years.

Under the APY, the subscribers would receive a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 per month from the age of 60 years, depending on their

contributions, which depends on the age of the subscriber at the time of joining the APY.

The Same amount of pension is paid to the spouse in case of subscriber's demise. After the demise of both i.e. Subscriber & Spouse, the nominee would be paid with the pension corpus. There is option for Spouse to continue to contribute for balance period on premature death of subscriber before 60 years, so as to avail pension by Spouse. There are tax benefits at entry, accumulation and pension payment phases. If the actual returns on the pension contributions during the accumulation phase are higher than the assumed returns for the minimum guaranteed pension, such excess returns are passed on to the subscriber, resulting in enhanced scheme benefits.

IPR Awareness Campaign for Schools

The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) in collaboration with the International Trademark Association (INTA) has kicked off the IPR Awareness campaign for schools across the country.

The National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy, which was approved by the Union Cabinet in May 2016, is a significant move forward to encourage creativity and stimulate innovation in the country. Outreach and Promotion is the first and foremost objective of the National IPR Policy and is critical to shaping an IP environment that is conducive to fostering creativity & innovation in the country.

- The new policy seeks to encourage innovation and improve access to healthcare, food security and environmental protection.
- The Policy will allow compulsory licensing with restrictions in case of a public health emergency such as epidemics and it is compliant with the World Trade Organization's guidelines.
- The policy seeks to put in place a legal framework that will encourage the IPR regime and reduce the time taken by the government to approve a trademark to a month by 2017. Currently, the process takes more than a year.
- The policy makes the department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) the nodal agency for regulating IP rights in the country.
- The Policy states "India shall remain committed to the (World Trade Organisation's) Doha Declaration on Trade Related IPR Agreement (TRIPS) and Public Health."

Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been created as a professional body **under the aegis of DIPP** to take forward the implementation

of the National IPR Policy that was approved by the Government in May 2016, with the slogan – “Creative India; Innovative India”.

Northeast India’s largest IT hub opens in Tripura:

Northeast India’s sixth and largest Information Technology (IT) hub was recently inaugurated in Tripura to boost employment and e-governance besides to export software technology. This IT hub would help to create employment opportunities for the IT educated youths and to further extend the e-governance to the door step of people.

India is now 5th largest military spender:

The report titled “Trends in world Military expenditure, 2016, which ranks countries based on their military spending was recently released. The report was released by Swedish think-tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

India is now the world’s fifth largest spender on defence for 2016 after having moved up from the 7th place following its largest annual military spending increase since 2009. While India spent \$55.9 billion in 2016, its northern neighbor China — the second largest spender — did four times more at \$215 billion. Pakistan does not figure in the top 15 spenders. The US is the top spender at \$611 billion. Russia is third at \$69.2 billion and Saudi Arabia fourth at \$ 63.7 billion.

The Paths We Walk

A Documentary Photo exhibition called “**The Paths We Walk**” was recently inaugurated in New Delhi.

The exhibition has been organized by the **National Trust under Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in collaboration with Society for Child Development.**

The Documentary photo exhibition is intended to tackle negative myths of disability and employment of persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual Disability and Multiple Disabilities. The photo exhibition is just a glimpse of the vast capabilities of persons with Disabilities. It has been a joint collaborative effort of NGOs working for the welfare of persons with disabilities.

The **month of April is celebrated across the World as the World Autism Awareness Month**. The National Trust has been organizing conferences and events during the months to create awareness and celebrate diversity.

The National Trust is a **statutory body** under the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India and set up under the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation & Multiple Disabilities Act.

Objectives

- To ensure people with disabilities lead independent life with dignity.
- To support & strengthen NGOs & other service providers.
- To appoint legal guardian to take care of the need of people with disabilities.

Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

In the light of alleged irregularities, the government has reiterated that GeM is the most transparent, accountable and efficient public procurement portal and has already resulted in savings of crores of Rupees to the Government.

The government noted that the processes on GeM are completely transparent and GeM is the first Government portal that places all the procurements- big or small- by Government organizations in public domain, with details about the buyer, seller, item, quantity and price.

Government e-Marketplace (GeM) aims to **transform the way in which procurement of goods and services** is done by the Government Ministries/Departments, PSUs, autonomous bodies etc.

DGS&D with technical support of NeGD (MeitY) has developed GeM portal for procurement of both Products & Services.

GeM is a **completely paperless, cashless and system driven e-market place** that enables procurement of common use goods and services with minimal human interface.

Panel moots UID numbers for cows

The Centre has proposed issuing “**Unique Identification Number Sequences**” for cows and their progeny to protect them from cattle smuggling. A government committee has also iterated the same.

The plan is the brainchild of the Union Agriculture Ministry for “tamper-proof identification of cattle using polyurethane tags with a Unique Identification Number Sequence.”

Each animal be tagged with proper records of identification details, including age, breed, sex, lactation, height, body, colour, horn type, tail switch and special marks.

Cattle smuggling has become a “by-product” of the dairy industry. Stray, “retired” and abandoned cattle face high risk of falling into smugglers’ hands.

Solve a problem, win ₹1 crore

The Centre is set to launch a scheme for students from higher educational institutions to volunteer to offer innovative, original and practical solutions to problems facing the country and get rewarded for their efforts.

The scheme will be **called IDEAS, or Innovations for Development of Efficient and Affordable Systems**. It is an initiative to challenge young minds with problems of society in general, to come up with innovative, original, practical and economical solutions.

The Human Resource Development Ministry has identified a handful of areas pertaining to which the problem-solving skills of students will be tested. These are affordable healthcare, computer science and ICT, energy (making solar/renewable resources cheaper, energy efficiency, etc.), affordable housing, healthcare, agriculture, education, water resources and river systems, affordable infrastructure, defence, cybersecurity and information security, and environment and climate change.

The scheme will invite students to find solutions to problems in these fields — and offer a prize of ₹1 crore to the best solution in each field. Under each of the above areas or themes, 10 problem statements will be prepared and widely publicised. All higher educational institutions will be eligible and encouraged to participate, but participation of IITs, NITs and CFTIs will be mandatory.

Hindi being 'promoted' as per Act: Rijju

Faced with criticism that the Central government is unfairly imposing Hindi on non-Hindi-speaking States, the government has iterated that it was only promoting the language as per an Act of Parliament. In May 2015, the government had issued an order that as per the Official Languages Act, 1963, all government files would have to be issued bilingually, in Hindi and English.

In March, the Department of Official Language of the Home Ministry pulled out a 2011 report of a Committee of Parliament on Official Language and sent it to the President for approval.

The “progressive” use of Hindi in the Central government offices is reviewed by this Committee every 10 years under the Official Languages Act, 1963 and the Rules framed under it.

Important recommendations made by the committee include:

Giving students the option of writing their exams in Hindi. Making minimum knowledge of Hindi compulsory for government jobs. Ensuring that the government spends more on Hindi advertisements than English ones. The railway ministry should buy equipment with lettering in Devnagri script. Railway tickets should be bilingual, with Hindi being one of the two languages. Hindi should be an option for UPSC aspirants. Cabinet ministers should deliver their speeches in Hindi as much as possible. Making it mandatory at railway stations in ‘C’ category (non-Hindi speaking) states such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana and Kerala to have announcements in Hindi.

Article 351 says it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language, to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India and to secure its enrichment by assimilating without interfering with its genius, the forms, style and expressions used in Hindustani and in the other languages of India specified in the Eighth Schedule, and by drawing, wherever necessary or desirable, for its vocabulary, primarily on Sanskrit and secondarily on other languages.

Niyamgiri's hero gets Goldman Prize

Activist Prafulla Samantara is one of the six winners of the **Goldman Environmental Prize** for 2017. He is being honoured for his historic 12-year legal battle that affirmed the indigenous Dongria Kondhs' land rights and protected the Niyamgiri Hills from a massive, open-pit aluminum ore mine.

The **annual prize** awarded by the Goldman Environmental Foundation honours grassroots environmentalists, who risk their lives to protect the environment and empower those who have the most to lose from industrial projects that threaten their traditional livelihoods.

Since 1990 when the awards were first instituted, six Indians — Medha Patkar, M.C. Mehta, Rasheeda Bi, Champaran Shukla, Ramesh Agrawal and Prafulla Samantara have won the prize.

The Goldman Environmental Prize recipients are selected by an international jury from confidential nominations submitted by a worldwide group of environmental organizations and individuals. The winners are announced every April to coincide with Earth Day.

The Dongria Kondh in southwestern Odisha is one of India's so-called **“particularly vulnerable tribal groups.”** The Kondhas are believed to be from the Proto-Australoid ethnic group. Their native language is Kui, a Dravidian language written with the Odia script.

They have a subsistence economy based on foraging, hunting & gathering but they now primarily depend on a subsistence agriculture i.e. shifting cultivation or slash and burn cultivation or Podu. The Dongria Kondh **call themselves Jharnia** meaning those who live by the Jharana (streams). Hundreds of perennial streams flow from Niyamgiri hill, and there are hundreds of Dongria villages by the streams. The Dongria are considered the protectors of these streams, hills and jungles by the people of the nearby plains.

Veteran actor K. Viswanath wins Dadasaheb Phalke award for 2016:

Renowned filmmaker and actor Kasinadhuni Viswanath, best known for his award-winning movies in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, has won the Dadasaheb Phalke award for the year 2016 for his outstanding contribution to the film industry.

He won the Padma Shri in 1992 and the Andhra Pradesh government has honoured him with 20 Nandi awards. He will be the 48 recipient of the award, the highest recognition in Indian cinema, which consists of a golden lotus, a cash prize of ₹10 lakh and a shawl.

Astronaut Peggy Whitson Sets NASA Record For Most Days In Space:

NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson has officially set the U.S. record for most cumulative days in space, surpassing astronaut Jeff Williams' record of 534 days. Whitson also is the first woman to command the space station; she has commanded it twice. Her first stint as commander was in April 2008 and she's commanding the current crew. She also holds the record for most spacewalks by a female astronaut. Whitson took her eighth spacewalk in March.

A step forward for Indo-Bangla ties

The Tripura government has commenced the land acquisition process for the construction of **India-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge over river Feni** that demarcates boundaries between the two countries in south Tripura.

The process for acquiring land for a four-lane approach road and a connecting road on Indian side in southern Tripura has also begun.

Government of India is bearing the entire burden of expenditure towards the construction of the 150-metre bridge which will connect Sabroom of India and Ramgarh in Bangladesh.

Rehabilitation package is ready to compensate people who would be dislodged for construction purposes. The bridge would facilitate implementation of a protocol India earlier signed with Bangladesh to use **Chittagong sea port as a 'port of call'**. The port is 72 kilometre away from Sabroom.

Material tougher, more conductive than copper developed

Researchers have developed thin carbon nanotube (CNT) textiles that exhibit high electrical conductivity and a level of toughness about 50 times higher than copper films, currently being used in electronics.

Tough nano-architected conductive textile are made by capillary splicing of Carbon nanotubes.

Beginning with catalyst deposited on a silicon oxide substrate, vertically aligned carbon nanotubes were synthesised via chemical vapour deposition in the form of

parallel lines of 5 micrometre wide, 10 micrometre in length, and 20-60 micrometre in heights.

Aligned carbon nanotube sheets are suitable for a wide range of application spanning from the micro to the macro-scales. The structural robustness of thin metal films has significant importance for the reliable operation of smart skin and flexible electronics, including biological and structural health monitoring sensors.

Engaging Asia arbitration summit:

The summit was recently held in New Delhi.

The Summit brings together lawyers and corporates from participating countries to discuss Asia's potential in driving worldwide growth in commercial arbitration. It provides participants an opportunity to discuss the surge in arbitration in Asia, especially among economic powers such as India and China, and Southeast Asia.

Panchayati Raj Diwas:

National Panchayati Raj Day is the national day of India celebrated by Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 24 April annually.

This date marks a defining moment in the history of decentralization of political power to the grassroots level. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 that came into force with effect from 24th April, 1993 has institutionalized Panchayati Raj through the village, Intermediate and District level Panchayats.

India and Republic of Korea sign Inter-Governmental MOU for Defence Industry Co-Operation in Shipbuilding

India and the Republic of Korea (RoK) have signed an Inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Defence Industry Co-operation in Shipbuilding.

The Inter-Governmental MoU, was conceived under the overall umbrella of the 'Special Strategic Partnership' between both sides as declared in the Joint Statement of the Prime Minister of India and the President of RoK in May 2015.

The salient points of the MoU are as follows:

- Develop and strengthen defence industry co-operation between Republic of India and the Republic of Korea.
- The two sides will recommend the organisations for collaborating in the implementation of specific projects.
- The organisations recommended for co-operative projects may conclude separate agreements (contracts) between them to implement the specific projects.
- The MoU will come into effect from the date of signature by both sides and will be initially valid for a period of five years and would be automatically extendable for further successive five year at a time.

“Quality Mark” Award Scheme for Dairy Cooperatives initiated by NDDB

As part of the innovative initiatives under the “White Revolution” umbrella Schemes, the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries has supported the National Dairy Development Board(NDDB) developed initiative of “**Quality Mark**” Award Scheme for dairy Cooperatives to promote and encourage enhancement of safety, quality and hygiene of milk and milk products manufactured by dairy cooperatives.

Aim of the scheme: It is aimed at bringing about process improvement in the entire value chain from producer to the consumer to ensure availability of safe and quality of milk and products both for the domestic and foreign market.

- The “Quality Mark” Award Scheme for dairy Cooperatives in the country has been initiated to instill confidence in the consumers for the quality of milk being marketed by them by ensuring availability of safe and good quality milk and milk products.

QUESTIONS

1. In which of the following regions of India are you most likely to find people affected by the Blackfoot Disease?

- a) Ganga river basin
- b) Southern portions of the Western Ghats
- c) Telangana plateau
- d) Rann of Kachchh

Solution: a.

2. The 'IDEAS' initiative of the Union Government will

- a) Test the problem-solving skills of students
- b) Encourage students to participate in events that promote Mathematics and Science subjects
- c) Enable NRIs and overseas scientific community to participate and contribute to research and development in India
- d) None of the above

Solution: a.

3. The Governing Council of NITI Aayog comprises of

1. Prime Minister as Chairperson
2. Chief Ministers of all States
3. Special Invitees of NITI Aayog

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 1 only

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

Solution: d.

4. The Goldman Environmental Prize honours

- a) Grassroots environmental activists
- b) Corporations engaging in and promoting sustainable utilisation of natural resources
- c) Nongovernmental environmental organisations involved in protecting and documenting tribal biodiversity knowledge systems
- d) Governmental Institutions that proactively take effective steps to protect biodiversity

Solution: a.

5. Consider the following pairs:

National Park – State in which it is located

1. Gorumara National Park – Assam
2. Jaldapara National Park – West Bengal
3. Panna National Park – Madhya Pradesh

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

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

Solution: c.

6. Which of the following states are contiguous with three or more neighbouring countries?

1. Sikkim
2. Assam
3. West Bengal

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: d.

7. The National Dairy Development Board's "Quality Mark" will be specific for

1. State Milk Federations
2. The location of a dairy unit
3. The process employed for a particular dairy product
4. A dairy cooperative, regardless of the location of its units or processes employed therein, as long as the final product conforms to set quality parameters

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Solution: c.

