

15th APRIL to 21st APRIL 2017 CURRENT AFFAIRS CONTENT

INTERNATIONAL

1. France, India ink pact to upgrade Railways

The French Minister of State for Transport, Marine Affairs and Fisheries **Alain Vidalies** signed an agreement with Railway Minister **Suresh Prabhuf** for collaboration in areas such as **high-speed and semi-high speed rail**, modernisation of current operations and infrastructure, station renovation and operations, suburban trains and safety systems, operations and security.

➤ On semi-high-speed, the parties had decided in 2015 to carry out a technical and execution study for upgrading the speed of passengers trains on the current rail corridor between Delhi and Chandigarh (244 km) up to 200 kmph.

2. Nepal, China to hold first ever military exercise

Nepal and China will hold the first-ever joint military exercise from April 17 with a special focus on combating terror and disaster management, the Nepal Army announced.

➤ The 10-day-long military drill that will last till April 26 is being organised by the two countries as part of their preparedness against terrorism that has posed as a serious security threat globally, it said.

➤ The military exercise named '**Sagarmatha Friendship-2017**' will also focus on common interests like disaster management.

➤ **Sagarmatha is the Nepali name of Mount Everest**, the world's highest peak, that is bordering between Nepal and China.

3. BRICS envoys on Middle East meet in India

Special Envoys of five BRICS member states who specialises on West Asian Affairs held a quiet meeting in Vishakhapatnam.

➤ This was first meeting of the BRICS special envoys on Middle East held in India and gained significance following growing instability in West Asia and North Africa.

➤ The five envoys also expressed resolve for renewed and committed efforts to find a political and diplomatic solution in Syria.

4. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte Wins Time's Reader Poll

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has won the Time magazine's Reader Poll of the 100 most influential people in the world.

• Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, however, didn't garner any 'yes' votes in the online survey.

5. 18 April: World Heritage Day

Every year on 18 April, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) celebrates the International Day for Monuments and Sites or World Heritage day, whose establishment was approved by the 22nd UNESCO General Conference in 1983.

➤ In 2017, the theme is "**Cultural Heritage & Sustainable Tourism**", chosen in relation to the United Nations International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Australia abolishes visa programme popular with Indians

Australia has abolished a visa programme used by over 95,000 temporary foreign workers, majority of them Indians, to tackle the growing unemployment in the country.

➤ The programme known as 457 visa allows business to employ foreign workers for a period up to four years in skilled jobs where there is a shortage of Australian workers.

➤ The majority of the visa holders were from India followed by the UK and China.

7. India, Russia to upgrade military exercises

India and Russia have agreed to upgrade their annual Indra bilateral military exercise to a multilateral level involving the three services. This will be a first for India in bilateral military exercises with any other country.

8. China to host BRICS Film Festival in June

The 2017 BRICS Film Festival will be held in **Chengdu**, southwest China's Sichuan Province from June 23 to 27.

➤ There will be 30 films from BRICS countries screened during the festival.

➤ The first BRICS Film Festival was held in New Delhi, India, last September.

➤ This year's festival would be held ahead of the BRICS summit to be held in September this year in China's Xiamen city.

9. Sri Lanka to host UN Vesak Day in 2017

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate UN Vesak Day in Colombo on May 12, Sri Lanka's Minister for Justice and Buddhasasana Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe said.

- **Vesak Day, also known as Buddha Poornima**, is a traditional holiday commemorated by Sri Lanka's majority Sinhala Buddhists.
- This year's theme is '**Buddhist teachings for social justice and sustainable world peace**'.

10. India contributes \$250,000 to UN election assistance programme

India has made a 250,000 dollar contribution to the UN programme for helping countries to hold elections and develop their electoral systems.

- This is the second Indian contribution of \$250,000 to the programmes for electoral assistance and capacity building.
- The first was made in 2012.

NATIONAL

11. Haryana launched Durga Vahini squad

BJP government of Haryana announced the launch of Durga Vahini - police squads that would aim to stop harassment of women on public spaces.

- While strong action will be taken against "eve-teasers", "the government has directed the police to take precautionary measures to avoid causing any inconvenience to the women.

12. Cisco launches 5th global cyber range lab in Gurugram

US-based tech giant Cisco has launched its fifth global cyber range lab here with an aim to train Indian firms and government agencies on real-world cyber attacks in Gurugram.

- The facility was inaugurated by National Cyber Security Coordinator Gulshan Rai.

13. BHIM-Aadhar –a digital payment platform launched by the Prime Minister

Enroute to the digital payments gaining the proportions of a mass movement, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a series of initiatives on the 126th birth anniversary of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar in Nagpur.

- He launched the BHIM Aadhaar platform for merchants, Cash back and Referral bonus schemes for BHIM and declared about 75 townships going less-cash.
- The Prime Minister felicitated the winners of the Mega draw of the two major incentive schemes to promote digital payments- **Lucky Grahak Yojana and Digidhan Vyapaar Yojana..**
- The Prime Minister also launched two new incentive schemes for the BHIM – Cash back and Referral bonus – with an outlay of Rs. 495 crore for a period of six months.

14. Maharashtra to have India's first ideal digital village

Harisal village in Maharashtra was adopted by Microsoft to be developed as India's first ideal digital village.

- Underpinned by public health initiatives of the state government, the village is now in the reckoning for the Prime Minister's Award for excellence in Public Administration.

15. National Green Tribunal impose Rs.50 lakh fine on THDC

The National Green Tribunal has imposed a fine of Rs.50 lakh on the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Ltd (THDC), for disposing debris and muck excavated out of construction road for power house of the Chamoli based Vishnugad-Peepalkoti Hydroelectric Project into the Alaknanda River.

16. Jharkhand police initiates Tare Zameen Par programme

With a motive to enlighten children in naxal-affected areas of Jharkhand's Palamau district, Jharkhand Police has initiated Tare Zameen Par program to encourage children to lead happy lives.

- People from all sections of society took part in the program held in Jharkhand's Daltongunj city, contributing basic amenities for children.

17. PM Modi inaugurates new units in Koradi thermal power station

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated various units of thermal power plants in Nagpur at Koradi, Chandrapur and Parli with a total capacity of 3,230 Mega Watts.

- These include three super-critical units 660 MW each at Koradi, two of 500 MW each at Chandrapur and one of 250 MW at Parli.
- The Prime Minister also released two special commemorative postal stamps - one depicting Deekshabhoomi in its full glory and the other with twin pictures of Lord Gautam Buddha and Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar at another function in the city.

18. Madhya Pradesh: No plastic or polythene bags from May 1

Plastic or polythene bags will be banned in Madhya Pradesh from May 1.

19. Manipur CM launches web applications to check corruption

Manipur Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh has launched two web applications to check corruption and keep track of government activities.

- The two web applications were **Anti-Corruption Cell and Digital Application for Review by Public And Nation (DARPAN)**, an official release said here.
- The two web applications would monitor all government funded projects and ensure transparency and accountability.

20. Chandrababu Naidu launches CM Connect app

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu launched a new mobile app CM Connect, which runs on

Microsoft's Kaizala platform, at Secretariat at Velagapudi.

21. Bhopal to have India's first privately-run railway station

Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu has said that for the first time in Indian Railways' history, **Habibganj station** in Bhopal has been handed over to a private firm to be operated by it.

- The station building will be developed in line with airport terminals, he added. However, Prabhu clarified that trains at the station will still be run by the Railways.

22. President Of India Inaugurates Global Exhibition on Services

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated 3rd edition of the Global Exhibition on Services (GES-2017) at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

- Speaking on the occasion, the President said that India can be a key partner for emerging services such as facilities management, event and exhibition, urban infrastructure and environmental services.

23. Prakash Javadekar launches Portal and Mobile App of RUSA

Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar has launched the unique portal and mobile app of **Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)**, a body under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource Development in New Delhi.

- The portal is a one-stop for States' Higher Education Plans, decision of the States' Higher Education Councils and details of the resources under this scheme. Also, the gallery is a rich repository of the projects initiated under RUSA.
- Javadekar also released the Booklet **"Digital Launch of Projects; Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)"** on this occasion.

24. In a first, Maharashtra started special drive for transgenders to register as voters

Maharashtra is the first state to launch a special awareness drive to ensure that transgenders in the state register as voters in greater numbers.

- The state branch of the Election Commission of India (ECI) launched the drive on April 15, celebrated as Third Gender Day.

25. Maharashtra announces scheme to increase farmers' income

Amidst demands of farm loan waiver in **Maharashtra**, the State government has announced **'Advanced Farming – Enriched Farmer'** scheme.

- The aim is to **increase farmers' income** by cutting production cost and increasing the output.
- The scheme will be launched in the upcoming kharif season.
- Under the initiative, the government has declared each tehsil in the State as a unit where planning will be done for agri-development.

26. India jumps to 8th place on Global FDI Confidence Index

India has jumped one spot to 8th rank in the 2017 A.T. Kearney Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Confidence Index.

- While US topped the list, Germany and China were at the second and third respectively. United Kingdom and Canada make up the rest of top 5.

27. Agra, Gorakhpur airport terminals named after Upadhyay, Gorakhnath

The Uttar Pradesh cabinet has decided to name the civil terminal of Agra's Kheria Air Force airport after BJP ideologue Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay.

- Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath presided over the cabinet meeting that also decided to name the civil terminal at IAF's Gorakhpur airport after Mahayogi Gorakhnath, founder of 'Nath Pant' (monastic movement).
- The chief minister is the mahant of Gorakhnath temple.

28. National civil services day: 21 April

Government of India has taken a decision to observe the 21st of April every year as "Civil Services Day".

- First such function was held in Vigyan Bhawan on 21/04/06.
- The purpose for this day is to rededicate and recommit civil servants to the cause of the people.

29. Narendra Modi, Paytm's Vijay Shekhar Sharma in Time magazine's 'most influential people list'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma were the only two Indians to make it to an annual list of '100 most influential people in the world' this year released by the Time magazine.

- The magazine has also included US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and British Prime Minister Theresa May in the new list of 100 most influential people.

30. PM to inaugurate Textiles India 2017 on June 30

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Textiles India, a mega event showcasing the country as a global sourcing hub in Gandhinagar on June 30.

- It will provide a platform to connect and collaborate with global manufacturers, investors and buyers in the textiles sector.

31. Tata Motors arm launches first Made in India industrial robot

TAL Manufacturing Solutions, a unit of Tata Motors has launched a Made in India industrial robot, which it claims will be 30 to 40 per cent cheaper than competing products.

- TAL, which also makes components for commercial airplanes, officially launched two variants of the robot named **BRABO**.
- Brabo can be used in areas like assembly of parts, machine and press tending.

TRADE / BANKING

32. Bank Boards Bureau evolves 'GRAF' for Public Sector Banks

To help **public sector banks** (PSBs) against private sector rivals and to prepare them for possible mergers in the future, the **Bank Boards Bureau**(BBB) has drawn up an elaborate **Governance, Reward and Accountability Framework** (GRAF).

➤ The GRAF seeks to ensure that corporate governance at PSBs is in keeping with various pieces of legislation, including the Companies Act, 2013, Banking Regulation Act, 1949, and Securities and Exchange Board of India (listing obligations and disclosure requirements) Regulations, 2015.

33. Indian Academy of Highway Engineers signs MoU with University of New South Wales

In line with the Ministry of Road Transport and Highway's vision to influence and adopt global innovation into the transportation sector, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry through the **Indian Academy of Highway Engineers** and **University of New South Wales** (UNSW) to set up a Centre for Advanced Transportation Technology and Systems (CATTS).

➤ The MoU was exchanged between the Director of IAHE Mr. V L Patankar and Vice Chancellor of UNSW Prof. Ian Jacobs on April 10th, 2017 in the presence of Simon Birmingham, Australian Minister for Education.

34. Income Tax department launches 'Operation Clean Money'-II, to probe 60,000 people

The income-tax department has identified more than **60,000 persons**, some of them described as "high-risk", under the second phase of **Operation Clean Money** launched on April 14 to detect the generation of black money after demonetisation.

➤ It will also probe government or public sector employees who made "large cash deposits" as well as people who made high-value purchases.

➤ The threshold under the first phase of the operation, which began on January 31 and ended on February 15, was kept at deposits of Rs **5 lakh** and above.

35. Tackling NPAs: RBI issues new framework effective from April 1

Within a week of promising to issue new guidelines to resolve bad loans problem, Reserve Bank has issued a new set of enabling provisions under the label of revised prompt corrective action (PCA) framework.

➤ The RBI said the new set of provisions is effective April 1 based on the financials of each bank as of March 2017, and override the existing PCA framework. It also said the new framework will be reviewed after three years.

➤ More importantly, it said if a bank crosses the third level of risk threshold (wherein a bank's common equity tier I capital falls below the threshold of 3.625 per cent by 3.125 per cent or more) the said bank will be either amalgamated or merged or taken over by another entity.

36. Paytm partners with Genesis Luxury for payment gateways in India

Digital wallet player Paytm has partnered with luxury brand distributor Genesis Luxury in India which markets and distributes global luxury and premium brands in the country.

➤ This would allow users to scan the store QR code and pay using the balance on their Paytm wallet.

37. Google launches Aero for hyper local services in India

Google has launched an app named Aero in India to cater to restaurant delivery and home services.

➤ This is the first time that Google is entering the business of food delivery and home services in India.

➤ However, the new app by Google- Aero is an accreditor that provides services through other startups in the domain.

38. PNB launches three new products

On the occasion of its 123rd Foundation Day, Punjab National Bank (PNB) launched three new products.

➤ These are: automated electronic toll collection to facilitate hassle-free toll payment/collection; credit card mobile app; and a scheme for financing grid connected roof solar power projects.

➤ Usha Ananthasubramanian, MD and CEO, launched these products. A mobile app to facilitate PNB staff to do their HR-related operations was also launched.

39. RBI to set up computer emergency response unit

The Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) discussed the setting up of a Computer Emergency Response Team for the Financial Sector (CERT-Fin), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

➤ The sub-committee reviewed the major developments on the global and domestic fronts that impinge on the financial stability of the country.

➤ Apart from the RBI governor and deputy governors, Ajay Tyagi, Chairman, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), T. S. Vijayan, Chairman, Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Hemant Contractor, Chairman, Pension Funds Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), and finance ministry representatives were present in the meeting.

➤ The move to set up an emergency response team comes in the backdrop of growing cyberattacks in the financial system.

40. India will grow at 7.2% this year: World Bank

A World Bank report said that the Indian economy is expected to grow from 6.8% in 2016 to 7.2% by 2017.

➤ It said growth is expected to further gather momentum by 2019.

➤ The report also confirms that South Asia remains the fastest-growing region in the world.

41. IMF pegs India's growth at 7.2% in FY18 ahead of China's 6.6%

World Economic Outlook (WEO), **International Monetary fund's** flagship publication, has revised upwards India's growth forecast for **FY17 to 6.8** per cent, just ahead of China's 6.7 per cent for 2016 calendar.

- IMF has retained its India growth forecast for **FY18 at 7.2** per cent and **FY19 at 7.7** per cent, well ahead of its forecast for China.
- In its January review, the Fund had slashed India's growth estimate to 6.6 per cent for FY17.

42. RBI opens new banking ombudsman office in Jammu

The **Reserve Bank** has opened a new ombudsman office in **Jammu** as part of its efforts to expand banking grievances complaint cells across the country.

- Earlier, the banking services related complaints from entire Jammu & Kashmir used to fall under the jurisdiction of **New Delhi-I** banking ombudsman office.
- There are two banking ombudsman offices in **New Delhi**.
- With the new addition, banking ombudsman offices have now increased to **20** across the country.

43. RBI sign MOU with Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has inked a supervisory cooperation pact with the **Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan** for information sharing.

- A memorandum of understanding on 'Supervisory Cooperation and Exchange of Supervisory Information' was signed by RBI Deputy Governor **S S Mundra** and Royal Monetary Authority of Bhutan Deputy Governor **Phajo Dorjee**.
- The objective of such pacts is to promote greater co- operation and share supervisory information, the RBI said.

44. SBI beats ONGC to become most-valued PSU firm in m-cap

State Bank of India (SBI) surpassed **ONGC** to become the country's most valued state-owned firm in terms of market valuation.

- At the end of trade, the market cap of SBI stood at Rs 2,35,307.51 crore. This is about Rs 2,961.79 crore more than that of PSU energy major **ONGC's** Rs 2,32,345.72 crore.

45. ISRO, BHEL tie-up for lithium-ion batteries to have buyback agreements

The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** which is finalising a memorandum of understanding with **BHEL** to help develop low-cost lithium ion batteries for electric vehicles, also envisages a buyback commitment for such batteries.

- According to the MoU, **BHEL** will set up a production plant, while **ISRO** will provide support for scale-up, joint effort in cost optimisation, research and development for alternate chemistry and buyback commitment, according to sources.
- **BHEL** will develop the battery for commercial applications.
- This is part of India's plan to promote **low-cost electric vehicles** with the use of lithium-ion batteries.

46. ICICI Data Centre gets India's first CII-IGBC Platinum rating

ICICI Bank Data Centre in Hyderabad gained the unique distinction of becoming **India's first Platinum rated project to be rated under IGBC Green Data Center Rating System**.

- Dr Prem C Jain, chairman, **IGBC** presented **IGBC** plaque to Chanda Kochhar, MD & CEO, **ICICI Bank** at a programme in Hyderabad recently.
- **IGBC Green Data Center Rating System** would facilitate in providing tangible and intangible benefits.
- Tangible benefits include 20 to 25 per cent reduction in Power Usage Effectiveness (PUE), 25 to 30 per cent reduction in water consumption.
- Intangible benefits include: enhanced air quality, excellent daylighting, health & well-being of the staff operating such facility.

47. Rajasthan inks fresh MoU with HPCL for Barmer refinery

The Rajasthan government has inked a fresh MoU of Rs 43,129 crore with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (**HPCL**) for an oil refinery in Barmer district which will produce BS-VI fuel.

- The state government will have 26 per cent stake in the refinery project while **HPCL** will have the rest shareholding.
- The work for the refinery will commence in the current financial year and will complete in next four years.

48. Nomura launches fintech partnership in India

As part of its attempts to encourage entrepreneurship in the financial market space, Japanese financial major **Nomura** has launched its '**Voyager -Nomura FinTech Partnership**' in India.

- The global financial major is inviting entrepreneurs to participate in the program to build innovative solutions for capital markets and investment banking.
- To achieve this, it has set up **Nomura Innovation Centre (NICe)** at Powai in Mumbai to provide a platform to start-ups that will be selected for the **Voyager** program.

49. Global economy will grow 3.5% in 2017, IMF predicts

International Monetary Fund predicts that the world economy will grow 3.5 per cent this year, as compared to 3.1 per cent in 2016.

- The **IMF's** latest outlook for 2017 is a slight upgrade from the 3.4 per cent global growth it had forecast in January.

APPOINTMENTS

50. B.N.Mohapatra takes over as the New Financial Commissioner of Railways

B.N.Mohapatra has been appointed as the new **Financial Commissioner (FC) (Railways)** and ex-officio Secretary to

the Government of India and has taken over the charge on 17/04/2017.

51. **Vinay Sah is new MD & CEO of LIC Housing Finance**

Vinay Sah has assumed charge as MD and CEO of LIC Housing Finance. He comes in place of Sunita Sharma, who has been promoted as Managing Director of Life Insurance Corporation of India.

AWARDS

52. **Hanchinal receives M.S. Swaminathan Award**

The sixth prestigious M.S. Swaminathan Award for contribution in the field of agriculture was given to R.R. Hanchinal, Chairperson of Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Authority, government of India.

- The award is instituted and given under the aegis of Retired ICAR Employees Association (RICAREA) in association with the Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd (NSL).

53. **BEML bags Hindustan PSU award**

BEML, a defence public sector, has received the **Hindustan PSU Award** under the category 'Fastest Growing Organisation – Miniratna'.

- **Umesh Chandra**, Executive Director, received the award on behalf of the company.
- The award was presented by Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of State for Road Transport, along with Piyush Goel, Union Minister of State for Power, Dharmendra Pradhan, Union Minister of State for Petroleum, and Manoj Sinha, Union Minister of State for Railway.

54. **Shambhavi Puraskar for Hari Shankar Rout**

The prestigious **Shambhavi Puraskar**, 2017 was presented to **Hari Sankar Rout** for his outstanding contribution towards **social change**.

55. **Italian mayor Giusi Nicolini wins Unesco Peace Prize**

The Unesco has awarded its Peace Prize to Giuseppina (Giusi) Nicolini, the mayor of the Italian island of Lampedusa, for her commitment to saving the lives of migrants and refugees.

- Since becoming Mayor in 2012, Nicolini has been an outspoken defender of refugee and migrant rights.

SPORTS

56. **Pankaj Advani wins Asian Billiards Championship title**

Sixteen-time world champion Pankaj Advani won his seventh Asian title by defeating Sourav Kothari 6-3 in an entertaining final of the Asian Billiards Championship, in Chandigarh.

- This is his sixth Asian Billiards and seventh overall Asian championship.
- The other title being 6-red snooker which he won last year.

57. **Praneeth clinches maiden Super Series title at Singapore Open**

Indian shuttler B Sai Praneeth clinched his maiden Super Series title at the Singapore Open after defeating compatriot K Srikanth in a historic final.

58. **Ferrari's Vettel wins Bahrain Grand Prix**

Sebastian Vettel claimed a well-judged victory for Ferrari in the Bahrain Grand Prix for his second win of the season.

- The 29-year-old four-time champion came home seven seconds ahead of three-time champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes.

59. **Video gaming to be featured at 2022 Asian Games**

Video gaming will be featured as a full sport at the 2022 Asian Games, with competitors in electronic sports set to receive medals for their digital prowess.

- The Olympic Council of Asia says it will introduce e-sports to the official program of the Asian Games at Hangzhou, China.
- It will also be a demonstration sport at the 2018 Asian Games in Palembang, Indonesia.
- The council is collaborating with Ali sports, a unit of China's Alibaba Group, to bring e-sports to the games.

60. **Visually impaired Indian runner Sagar Baheti completes historic Boston Marathon**

Bangalore-based Sagar Baheti has become the first visually impaired Indian runner to complete the historic Boston Marathon, the world's oldest, most competitive and the hardest marathon to qualify for.

- Baheti travelled to the USA and became the first visually impaired Indian to participate in the famous marathon.
- Baheti completed approximately 42.16 km distance in just over four hours.

DEATHS

61. **Ex JK Governor G C Saxena Dies At 90**

Former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Girish Chandra Saxena, lovingly called Gary, died after a brief illness. He was 90.

62. **Emma Morano: World's oldest person dies at age 117**

The world's oldest person Emma Morano has died at age 117 in her home in northern Italy.

- Emma Morano was born on November 29, 1899.
- She was also believed to have been the last surviving person in the world who was born in the 1800s.

63. **Veteran journalist Nora Chopra no more**

Senior journalist and columnist, Nora Chopra passed away following a period of illness.

**** ALL THE BEST ****