

News Digest

NATIONAL

First India-Australia Annual Summit Concludes with Commitment to Deepen Strategic Partnership

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Mr Anthony Albanese held delegation-level bilateral talks in New Delhi during the first India-Australia Annual Summit on 10th March 2023. Both countries reiterated their commitment to deepening their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and exchanged Memorandums of Understanding for cooperation in sports and audio-visual co-production. Indian and Australian sides also exchanged Terms of Reference for the India-Australia Solar Task Force and a Letter of Intent between the Atal Innovation Mission and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization. The two leaders discussed strengthening security and defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, as both countries are members of the Quad, and the development of credible and robust global supply chains. Renewable energy was identified as a key priority area for cooperation, with both countries working together on clean hydrogen and solar power.



India and US Agree to Launch Strategic Trade Dialogue

India and the US have agreed to launch a Strategic Trade Dialogue, as decided during the meeting between External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar and US Commerce Secretary Ms. Gina Raimondo in New Delhi on 9th March 2023. The Strategic Trade Dialogue aims to address export controls, explore ways of enhancing high-technology commerce, and facilitate technology transfer between the two countries. Both Ministers also discussed initiatives such as Critical and Emerging Technology (ICET) and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). Meanwhile, the two countries have signed an MoU on semiconductor Supply Chain and Innovation Partnership seeking to establish a collaborative mechanism on semiconductor supply chain resilience and diversification in view of the US's CHIPS and Science Act and India's Semiconductor Mission. The visiting US Commerce Secretary also met with Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan. Discussions were held on creating lifelong learning opportunities on a large scale and deepening collaborations in 3S-Skilling, Start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises. Both the leaders agreed that the size of India's workforce and the size of opportunities in critical and emerging technologies in the US can be aligned for mutual benefit.



BJP Alliances Retain Power in Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya

BJP alliances have retained power in Tripura, Nagaland and Meghalaya state assemblies. In Tripura, the BJP easily won a second term. In Nagaland, BJP formed a coalition government in Nagaland with the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party. The National People's Party called on the BJP in Meghalaya to prevent a hung house. While Dr. Manik Saha took oath of office as Chief Minister of Tripura, Shri Conrad Sangma became the Chief Minister for the second consecutive term in Meghalaya. Shri Neiphiu Rio took oath as the Chief Minister of Nagaland for the fifth term.



Group Captain Shaliza Dhani Becomes First Woman Officer to Command Frontline IAF Combat Unit

Group Captain Shaliza Dhani has become the first woman officer in the Indian Air Force to command a front line combat unit. Group Captain Dhani will command a missile squadron in the Western sector. Dhani was commissioned as helicopter pilot in 2003, and has over 2800 hours of flying experience and is commended by Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief on two occasions. In the past, she has conducted several search-and-rescue missions, and also undertook flood relief operations.



Exclusive Women's Portal for Research Grants and Funds Launched

Minister of State for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh has announced the launch of a new portal exclusively for women to apply for research grants and funds. The portal will be functional from 1st April this year, and the Special Call inviting proposals from Women Scientists will also open on the same day. Dr. Singh praised Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for his vision to empower women and put Nari Shakti (women power) at the forefront of India's development journey.

Photojournalist Sipra Das Conferred Lifetime Achievement Award

Thirteen photographers, including senior photojournalist Ms Sipra Das, received the National Photography Awards on 7th March 2023 by the Photo Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Ms Sipra Das was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award. Six photographers each received awards in the cate-

gories of Professional and Amateur Photographers. Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Dr L. Murugan, who presented the awards, said photographers are artists and excellent storytellers as their single picture can sensitize thousands of people towards important causes. On the occasion while complimenting the awardees, Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, Shri Apurva Chandra suggested to the Photo Division to have some more awards on government's flagship schemes where photographers can display their skills.



10% Reservation for Ex-Agniveers in BSF Recruitment Announced

The Central government has announced that 10 percent reservation will be given to ex-Agniveers in the BSF recruitment. In a notification issued by the Home Ministry on 9th March 2023, the government has amended the recruitment rules of the Border Security Force stating that ex-Agniveers will be exempted from the physical efficiency test. The Government has also announced that the upper age limit will be relaxable up to five years for the candidates of the first batch of ex-Agniveers.

INTERNATIONAL

Xi Jinping Secures Unprecedented Third Term as China's President

Mr Xi Jinping has been re-elected for an unprecedented third term as China's President, making him the most powerful leader in China since Mao Zedong. The largely ceremonial display at the National People's Congress saw nearly 3000 members of China's parliament unanimously vote for Mr Xi Jinping who was the only candidate. In addition to being reappointed as head of the Central Military Commission, his trusted allies will be appointed to key government roles. Meanwhile, China's parliament on Friday approved a plan on reforming the institutions of the State Council - China's cabinet, that would put public security, financial regulation and technology - areas now handled by the state - under direct control of the Communist Party of China.



Ram Chandra Poudel Elected Third President of Nepal

Shri Ram Chandra Poudel has been elected as the third President of Nepal. The 78-year-old politician born in the remote village of Satiswara, located in the Tanahun district of western Nepal, has previously served as the Deputy Prime Minister and Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nepal, and is a veteran leader of the Nepali Congress. Poudel was elected as a Member of Parliament in the General Elections of 2022, and is now serving his 6th term as a parliamentarian in Nepal.



ECONOMY

Money Laundering Act to Apply on Trade in Crypto Currencies

The government has said that the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 will apply to trade in crypto currencies or virtual assets. In a notification, the Ministry of Finance said that the exchange between virtual digital assets and fiat currencies, the exchange between one or more forms of virtual digital assets and the transfer of virtual digital assets will be covered under the money laundering act. Besides, the safekeeping or administration of virtual digital assets and the participation in financial services related to the offer and sale of virtual digital assets will also come under the provision of the Act.



PM Announces Support for SHGs for Creating New Unicorns

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has announced that support will be provided to SHGs (Self Help Groups) for creating new Unicorns (Startup company with a value of over \$1 billion). Currently, one out of five non-farm businesses in India is run by a woman, with over 7 crore women having joined SHGs in the last 9 years. These groups have taken loans worth 6.25 lakh crore and are creating value through their entrepreneurial endeavors. Furthermore, the PM has emphasised the importance of leveraging new technologies and prioritising their integration into the training provided to SHGs. He pointed out that GeM and e-commerce are becoming ways of expanding women's business opportunities and need to be embraced. Through these initiatives, the Prime Minister hopes to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation that empowers women and drives economic growth in India.

SPORTS

Khelo India Dus Ka Dum Gets Underway

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is organising the Khelo India Dus Ka Dum event from 10th March to 31st March as part of the celebration of International Women's Day 2023. The tournament features 10 sports, to be held across 10 cities in the country. The main objective of organising this tournament is to provide a platform for women athletes who were unable to participate in national or state-level competitions, and also to ensure that competitive sports reach untapped geographical areas. Close to 15,000 women athletes are participating in the event. The sports disciplines that are part of the event include Kho Kho, Wushu, Wrestling, Fencing, Archery, Swimming, Basketball, Judo, Athletics, and Yogasana.



(Source: AIR/PIB)