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Awards & Honors

Priyanka Chopra conferred Mother Teresa Memorial award for social justice

Indian actor, Priyanka Chopra has been bestowed with the 2017 Mother Teresa Memorial Award for her contribution towards lending her support to social causes such as her recent visit to Syria where she met and interacted with refugee children.

The 35-year-old is also UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador and is known for supporting various philanthropic activities. The award was received by her mother Madhu Chopra, on her behalf.

Speaking on the occasion, the actor's mother said, "I humbly accept the award on her behalf. As a mother, I am immensely proud to have a child who is so compassionate and has so much kindness in her. She exemplifies the fact the more you give the more you get. Even as a child, she was influenced by Mother Teresa and has been supporting Prem Niwas in Bareilly."

She continued by saying that it is justifiable for her to receive this honourable award and that the actor would be humbled that her efforts have been recognised by the foundation that believes in helping the needy and supporting the deprived and raising funds for those who are impoverished.

The award has been conferred to several famous personalities in the past such as Malala Yousafzai, Anna Hazare, Kiran Bedi, Oscar Fernandes, Sudha Murty, Sushmita Sen and Bilquis Bano Edhi.

Hindi writer Mamta Kalia selected for Vyas Samman 2017

Renowned Hindi writer Mamta Kalia was on 8 December 2017 selected for the Vyas Samman 2017 for her novel "Dukkhham Sukkham" published in 2009.

She was chosen by a selection committee headed by Sahitya Akademi director and author Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari.

She will receive Rs 3.5 lakh as the prize money of Vyas Samman.

She is known for her works in Hindi and English including "Beghar", "Janch Abhi Jaari Hai", "Nirmohi", and "Bolne Wali Aurat".

She has been conferred with various awards for her work including Yashpal Katha Samman from Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sansthan, Sahitya Bhushan Samman and Ram Manohar Lohia Samman.

India's Lakshmi Puri among six diplomats felicitated with Diwali 'Power of One' award at UN

Six top diplomats including one Indian were felicitated with the inaugural Diwali 'Power of One' award at the UN headquarters in New York for their contribution to help form a more perfect, peaceful and secure world.

The awards were presented on 11 December, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the issuance of a 'forever Diwali stamp' by the US Postal Services.

Following is the list of awardees:

1. Matthew Rycroft: The outgoing British Ambassador to the UN
2. Nawaf Salam: The Lebanese Ambassador to the UN. He was also elected to the International Court of Justice in November 2017.
3. Lakshmi Puri: She is the Indian head of the UN Women.
4. Maged Abdelaziz: The former Permanent Representative of Egypt to the UN
5. Ion Botnaru: The former Permanent Representative of Moldova to the UN
6. Yuriy Sergeyev: The former Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the UN

Organisers of the event

- The event was jointly organised by the Permanent Missions of Belarus, Georgia and India.
- It was co-sponsored by around two dozen nations including the US, Britain, France, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Spain, Kuwait and Algeria.
- It was held at the prestigious Trusteeship Council Chambers at the UN headquarters in New York.

Speaking on occasion, Ranju Batra of the Diwali Foundation stated that the inaugural Power of One award was bestowed upon globally exceptional people, who have toiled selflessly to help form a more perfect peaceful and secure world for all of us.

Indexes

India ranks 100 in Legatum Global Prosperity Index 2017

India has moved up four spots in the latest edition of the Legatum Prosperity Index. The country now ranks 100th on the index, up from 104th last year. Norway heads the ranking, followed by New Zealand, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden.

The rankings are based on a country's performance on nine pillars, namely — economic quality, business environment, governance, personal freedom, social capital, safety and security, education, health and natural environment.

Of these nine pillars, India's performance over the past year has improved the most on economic quality, business environment and governance. Much of this improvement is due to higher scores on international surveys conducted by Gallop and the World Economic Forum.

According to the report, "India has significantly improved in the economic quality and education pillars. For example, more people are now satisfied with their standard of living and household incomes."

Current Affairs related to India

Government sets up first NIC-CERT centre to prevent, predict cyber attacks

The first NIC-CERT, a setup of National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology was inaugurated by Law and Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on 11 December 2017.

Explaining the move, the Minister stated that the union government as a part of its Digital India initiative had introduced a lot of services online and while this made the services easily accessible to citizens, it also exposed them to threats and vulnerabilities that are an inherent part of cyberspace.

The Minister mentioned that in the recent past there has been an exponential growth in cyber attacks leading to concerns of data theft, which led to the government drafting the Data protection Act.

He further stated that the National Informatics Centre has been doing remarkable job of securing the Government cyberspace for a long time and by setting up the centre they have taken their experience and expertise to the next level.

The setting up of NIC-CERT is an initiative by the Ministry of Information Technology under Digital India to enhance the security posture of NIC and the government, which will in turn lead to enhanced trust of the citizens as the services offered to them would be configured in a framework that is secured by design.

It has been set up to create a comprehensive framework that integrates world class security components and inbuilt threat intelligence for detection, prevention and incident response.

The centre will operate in close coordination and collaboration with sectoral CERT's and more so with Cert-in.

Union Government launches new initiatives on Universal Health Coverage Day 2017

Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare J P Nadda on 11 December 2017 launched various initiatives to observe Universal Health Coverage Day 2017.

Universal Health Coverage Day is observed every year on 12 December to commemorate the first unanimous United Nations resolution calling for countries to provide affordable, quality health care to every person, everywhere.

LaQshya Initiative

- Considering that there is a need to improve the quality of care in Labour rooms especially on the day of birth for maternal and neonatal survival, the Ministry launched 'LaQshya' Initiative also known as 'Labour Room Quality Improvement Initiative'
- LaQshya was launched as a safe delivery mobile application for health workers who manage normal and complicated deliveries in the peripheral area.
- It is expected to improve the quality of care provided to the pregnant mother in the Labour Room and Maternity Operation Theatres with an aim to prevent undesirable adverse outcomes associated with childbirth.
- It will be implemented in government Medical Colleges (MCs) besides District Hospitals (DHs), and high delivery load Sub- District Hospitals (SDHs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs).
- It plans to conduct quality certification of labour rooms and provide facilities to achieve the outlined targets.
- Operational Guidelines for Obstetric High Dependency Units and Intensive Care Units
- The Ministry also released the Operational Guidelines for Obstetric High Dependency Units (HDUs) and Intensive Care Units (ICUs).
- These guidelines will complement the already existing National guidelines and will help the states and state level policy makers in setting up and operationalising the critical care units dedicated to the pregnant women.

mHealth: Safe Delivery Application

- The ministry also launched the safe delivery application mHealth for health workers who manage normal and complicated deliveries in the peripheral areas.
- The application has Clinical Instruction films on key obstetric procedures which can help the health workers translate their learnt skills into practice.
- It has been field tested in few districts and has been found to be useful for health workers who provide maternity care.

Union WCD Ministry launches logo and tagline contest for National Nutrition Mission

The Ministry of Women & Child Development on 11 December 2017 launched a contest inviting people to design a logo and suggest a tagline for prestigious 'National Nutrition Mission'.

The ministry also proposed to award a prize money of Rs 1 lakh to the winner of the contest. In case the logo and tagline selected by the jury are from separate participants, then the prize money would be split.

The last date to submit entries for the contest on Ministry's mail nm.mwcd@gmail.com is 17 December 2017.

The Union Cabinet on 30 November 2017 approved the setting up of National Nutrition Mission (NNM) with a three year budget of Rs 9046.17 crore.

The mission will be partly funded by Government Budgetary Support (50 per cent) and the remaining 50 per cent by IBRD or other MDB.

The mission will be rolled out in three phases from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

It aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.

Current Affairs around the World

Microsoft to invest \$50 million for its 'AI for Earth' project

Announcing its plan to broaden the AI for Earth programme, Microsoft has pledged \$50 million over the next five years to put artificial intelligence technology in the hands of those who are working to mitigate climate change.

Microsoft rolled out the AI for Earth programme six months ago with an aim to put the power of artificial intelligence towards tackling environmental challenges.

"At Microsoft, we believe artificial intelligence is a game changer. Our approach as a company is focused on democratising AI so its features and capabilities can be put to use by individuals and organisations around the world to improve real-world outcomes," Microsoft President and Chief Legal Officer Brad Smith wrote in a blog post on Monday.

The announcement came on the eve of the second anniversary of the Paris Agreement.

AI can be very useful in monitoring, modelling and managing the Earth's natural systems.

Data can speak volumes about the health of our home planet, including the conditions of air, water, land and the well-being of our wildlife.

Saudi Arabia lifts ban on movie theatres after 35 years

The kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced that a resolution was passed on 11 December 2017 that lifted the decades-old ban on providing licenses to commercial movie theatres.

The decision will pave way for the opening of the country's first public cinemas after more than 35 years. According to the nation's Minister of Culture and Information Awwad bin Saleh Alawwad, the opening of the cinemas will act as a catalyst for economic growth and diversification.

Key Highlights

- The lifting of the ban will help develop a broader cultural sector in the kingdom and enrich its entertainment options.
- It will also create new employment and training opportunities.
- The licensing process for cinema operators would start within 90 days and the first cinemas are expected to open in March 2018.
- All the films scheduled to be screened at the theatres will be subjected to censorship according to the media policy standards of the kingdom.