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Current Affairs relate to Banking and Finance

Asian Development Bank signs agreement to lend \$169 mn loan to Tamil Nadu

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India on Friday signed an agreement for a \$169 million loan as the First Tranche of a \$500 million multi-tranche financing to develop climate-resilient water supply, sewerage, and drainage infrastructure in at least 10 cities in the Tamil Nadu.
- The signatories to the loan for the Tamil Nadu Urban Flagship Investment Program were Sameer Kumar Khare, Additional Secretary (Fund Bank and ADB), Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, who signed for the Government of India; and Kenichi Yokoyama, Country Director of ADB's India Resident Mission, who signed for ADB.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Sign \$105 Million Loan to Support Hydropower Transmission in Himachal Pradesh

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India today signed a \$105 million loan to continue financing the transmission system upgrades in Himachal Pradesh for increased supply of hydropower to the state and the national grid.
- The tranche 3 loan is part of the \$350 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) for Himachal Pradesh Clean Energy Transmission Investment Program approved by the ADB Board in September 2011.
- The program is aimed at developing and expanding the transmission network to evacuate clean and renewable power generated from the State's hydropower sources to load centers within and outside the State.
- It also supports the institutional capacity development of the state transmission utility, Himachal Pradesh Power Transmission Corporation Limited (HPPTCL), as the executing agency for this project.

ADB extends \$300 mn to support IIFCL's lending

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Centre have signed a \$300-million loan agreement to support lending by India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL).
- The move is expected to enhance the availability of long-term finance for public-private partnership projects, improve operational capacity of IIFCL, and expand the portfolio of infrastructure financing instruments available to the company.
- Sameer Kumar Khare, Additional Secretary (Fund Bank and ADB), Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, said the loan is expected to complement the government's infrastructure-building efforts.

NITI Aayog organises South Asian Regional Conference on Urban Infrastructure

- The South Asian Regional Conference on “Urban Infrastructure: New Approaches to Public and Private Partnerships and Municipal Finance Innovations” began on November 15, 2018 in New Delhi.
- The two-day conference is being organised by NITI Aayog, the premier think tank of the Union Government in partnership with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- In the inaugural address, NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant emphasised upon the need to ensure adequate return on investments in infrastructure through properly structured Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) and de-risking of projects. He said that it is required to evolve unique models and systems of urban planning that are creative, innovative and sustainable and suited for South Asian countries.
- The main objective of the conference is to discuss the key issues, perspectives and the way forward in the Urban Infrastructure.
- It aims to review overall issues and assess the sustainability of PPPs and urban finance in South Asia, specifically India, while broadening the knowledge base and engaging on international best practices.

NITI Aayog constitutes 'Himalayan State Regional Council'

- NITI Aayog on November 15, 2018 constituted the ‘Himalayan State Regional Council’ to ensure sustainable development of the Indian Himalayan region.
- The Himalayan State Regional Council will be chaired by the Dr VK Saraswat, Member of NITI Aayog.
- It will consist of the Chief Secretaries of the Himalayan States as well as the Secretaries of key Central Ministries, senior officers of NITI Aayog as well as special invitees.
- The Council was constituted with an aim to review and implement identified action points based on the Reports of five Working Groups, which were established along thematic areas to prepare a roadmap for action.

Current Affairs relate to India and states

WCD Ministry approves 3 proposals under Nirbhaya Fund

The Empowered Committee of Officers under Nirbhaya Fund, under the Chairmanship of Secretary, Women and Child Development Ministry on November 16, 2018 approved the following three major proposals:

1. Law Ministry’s proposal to set up 1023 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) to dispose of pending cases of rape, and POCSO Act across the country. The project has a total financial implication of Rs 767.25 crores. In the First phase, 777 FTSCs may be set up in 9 states and in second phase 246 FTSCs will be set up.

2. The Proposal of Home Ministry for procurement of forensic kits for sexual assault cases to kick start usage of such kits in States/UTs through TOTs (Training of Trainers), capacity building/training for forensics in sexual assault cases and strengthening of State FSLs under Nirbhaya Fund with a total financial implication of Rs 107.19 crores.
3. The Proposal from Konkan Railway Corporation Limited for setting up video surveillance system at 50 Railway Stations with a total Project cost of Rs 17.64 crores that will be utilised for surveillance hardware and accessories, local connectivity equipment and power supply devices.

India's first specialised hospital for elephants opens in Mathura

- India's first specialized hospital for elephants was on Friday formally opened by Agra Divisional Commissioner Anil Kumar at Farah block's Churmura village.
- The unique medical centre offers wireless digital X-ray, laser treatment, dental X-ray, thermal imaging, ultrasonography, hydrotherapy and quarantine facilities.
- Located close to the elephant conservation and care centre, the hospital is designed to treat injured, sick or geriatric elephants and is equipped with a medical hoist for lifting elephants, as also an elephant restraining device with a dedicated indoor treatment enclosure for long duration medical procedures.
- An observation deck will allow veterinary students and interns to observe and learn about elephant's behaviour and treatment from a safe distance.

ICF despatches DEMU coaches to Sri Lanka

- Integral Coach Factory on Monday despatched a set of 'Made in India' Diesel Electric Multiple Units (DEMU) – used for short and medium distance travel in non-electrified sections – to Sri Lanka.
- The first rake of 13-car DEMUs for the Sri Lanka Railways was handed over to senior officials of RITES Ltd at ICF and will be shipped to the island nation from the Chennai port in a few days.
- ICF has exported coaches and coach components to various countries, including Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria and Uganda since 1971-72.

Government to refund employers for seven weeks of maternity leave given to employees

- The Union Women and Child Development Ministry announced on November 15, 2018 that the government will refund the employers the salaries for the first seven of the 26 weeks of maternity leave for women earning more than Rs 15,000 a month.
- The Ministry's decision came in the wake of complaints that many companies were reluctant to hire pregnant women after maternity leave was extended from 12 to 26 weeks and some were even firing women employees.
- The utilisation of the cess lying with the state governments has been very less.

- Hence, the government decided after talks with the Labour Ministry that the seven of the 26 weeks of maternity leave for all women employees in the private and government sector getting more than Rs 15,000 a month would be paid from that fund.
- The maternity leave for pregnant women was extended from 12 weeks to 26 weeks in 2017.

Rural Jharkhand declared ODF

- The rural Jharkhand was declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) on November 15, 2018 during a regional review meeting of the eastern states held in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- The workshop comprised discussions on sustaining Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM), and rural water supply. It saw participation from teams belonging to West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha.
- The key aspects of sustainability such as geo-tagging, verification of ODF villages, conversion of dysfunctional toilets, IEC expenditure, Swachhagrahi engagement were reviewed during the workshop.
- The West Bengal Government, on the occasion, shared the state's commitment towards achieving open defecation free status by December 2018.

First India-Japan joint military exercise concludes

- The first joint military exercise of Indian and Japanese armies concluded in Mizoram on November 14, 2018.
- The two-week exercise 'Dharma Guardian 2018' commenced on November 1 at Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, Vairengte with India describing it as a significant step towards fostering military and diplomatic ties between the two countries.

Current Affairs relate to Days

World Tolerance Day observed

- The International Day for Tolerance was observed globally on November 16, 2018.
- The global campaign, "TOGETHER" aims to reduce negative perceptions and attitudes towards refugees and migrants, and to strengthen the social contract between host countries and communities and refugees and migrants.

World Philosophy Day observed

- 2018 World Philosophy Day was observed on 15 November, 2018.
- In 2005 the UNESCO General Conference proclaimed that World Philosophy Day would be celebrated every third Thursday of November.

National Press Day Observed

- National Press Day was observed across India on November 16.
- The theme of National Press Day for this year is “Journalistic Ethics and Challenges in Digital Era”.

Current Affairs relate to World

World Tolerance Summit held in Dubai

- The World Tolerance Summit (WTS) 2018 was inaugurated on November 16, 2018 in Dubai, UAE. The theme of the summit was ‘Prospering from Pluralism: Embracing Diversity through Innovation and Collaboration’.
- The two-summit is the biggest gathering of government leaders, ambassadors, change-makers and key figures from the public and private sectors. Over 2,000 ministers and government leaders from around the world are expected to participate in the event. It is being held in the UAE for the first time.
- The summit is being held to commemorate the UN-designated International Day of Tolerance. UNESCO had declared November 16 as World Tolerance Day.

UNSC condemns killing of UN peacekeepers & national soldiers in DRC

- UN Security Council has condemned the killing of at least 20 soldiers during operations against insurgents in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- In a press statement, the council members expressed condolences to the families of the killed, including seven Malawian and one Tanzanian UN peacekeepers and at least 12 Congo soldiers, and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.
- The soldiers were killed on November 14 during joint operations of the UN peacekeeping mission in Beni territory of North Kivu.

Current Affairs relate to Sports

Sushil, Swapna dropped from revised TOPS list

- Double Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar and India's first Asian Games gold medallist heptathlete Swapna Barman were on November 15, 2018 dropped from the latest Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) that was revised keeping in mind the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.
- Sushil, who won bronze and silver medals respectively in 2008 Beijing and 2012 London Olympics in 66kg freestyle category, crashed out in his first qualification bout at this year's Jakarta Asian Games in the 74kg and the latest result didn't go in his favour.
- Besides Sushil, another big name to have been dropped from the latest TOPS list, which was reviewed last in July 18 before the Asian Games, is Swapna, who created a flutter in Jakarta by becoming India's first gold medallist in heptathlon.