

August-19

NATIONAL

EPFO Housing Scheme

- ❖ Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Bandaru Dattatreya launched the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation Housing Scheme in a function organised in Thoothukudi.
- ❖ EPFO has allowed members i.e. the contributory employees of the provident fund (PF) scheme to use 90 percent of EPF accumulations to make down payments to buy houses and use their accounts for paying EMIs of home loans.
- ❖ Under the new rules, an essential requirement for a PF member to withdraw one's PF money to buy a real estate property is that he or she has to be a member of a registered housing society having at least 10 members.
- ❖ The scheme is a part of 'Housing for All by 2022' scheme announced by the central government. In the next two years, 10 lakh houses will be completed under this scheme.
- ❖ The scheme guarantees social security, job security and wage assurance to the labour force. The Central Government had raised the minimum wages of employees to 12000 rupees per month. Maternity Benefit Act assures that Women workers get 26 weeks paid leave as against the existing 12 weeks when pregnant.

Navika Sagar Parikrama - Circumnavigating the Globe by Indian Women Naval Officers

- ❖ Navika Sagar Parikrama is a project wherein a team of women officers of the Indian Navy would circumnavigate the globe on an Indian-built sail boat INSV Tarini. This is the first ever Indian circumnavigation of the globe by an all-women crew. The project is scheduled to commence in early Sep 17.
- ❖ INSV Tarini is the sister vessel of INSV Mhadei. The project is considered essential towards promoting Ocean Sailing activities in the Navy while depicting Government of India's thrust for 'Nari Shakti'.



Additional aims of the Expedition are as follows,

Nari Shakti

- ❖ In consonance with the National policy to empower women to attain their full potential, the expedition aims to showcase 'Nari Shakti' on the world platform.
- ❖ This would also help to discard the societal attitudes and mindset towards women in India by raising visibility of participation by women in challenging environment.

Environment and Climate Change

- ❖ Sailing encourages the use of environment friendly non-conventional renewable energy resources which affects the life of women. The expedition thereby aims at harnessing the energy to optimise the livelihood of the women on board.

Make in India

- ❖ The voyage also aims to show case the 'Make in India' initiative by sailing on board the indigenously built INSV Tarini.

Meteorological/ Ocean/ Wave Data Observation

- ❖ The crew would also collate and update Meteorological/ Ocean/ Wave data on a daily basis for subsequent analysis by research and development organisations.

Marine Pollution

- ❖ The crew would monitor and report marine pollution on the high seas.

Interaction with Local PIOs

- ❖ Since the expedition aims to promote Ocean Sailing and the spirit of adventure, the crew would interact extensively with the local PIOs at the various port halts.



- ❖ The first Indian Solo circumnavigation was undertaken by Capt. Dilip Donde, SC (Retd.) from 19 Aug 2009 to 19 May 2010 on board the Indian built vessel, INSV Mhadei.
- ❖ The first Indian non-stop solo circumnavigation was undertaken by Commander Abhilash Tomy, KC from 01 Nov 2012 to 31 Mar 2013.

Defence ministry clears proposal to buy six Apache attack helicopters for Indian Army

- ❖ The Defence Acquisition Council cleared a proposal to buy six Apache attack helicopters for the Indian Army at a cost of around Rs. 4,168 crore.
- ❖ The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister also cleared another proposal for buying gas turbines from Ukraine for two Admiral Grigorovich class ships being made in Russia for India. The six Apache AH-64E choppers will come with associated equipment which includes spares, training, weapons and ammunition.
- ❖ At present the fleet of Russian Mi-25 and Mi-35 attack helicopters are with the Indian Air Force, and used by the Indian Army.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MyFASTag, FASTag Partner apps launched by NHA

- ❖ National Highways Authority of India has launched two mobile Apps, MyFASTag and FASTag Partner. These mobile apps will help in the availability of FASTags for Electronic Toll Collection.
- ❖ From 1st October 2017, all lanes of all 371 NHA toll plazas in the country will become FASTag enabled. One lane in every toll plaza will be a dedicated FASTag lane where no other form of payment will be accepted.

What is Electronic Toll Collection (ETC)?

- ❖ Electronic payment of highway tolls without human involvement. ETC systems use vehicle-to-roadside communication technologies to perform an electronic monetary transaction between a vehicle and the toll collection agency.

What is MyFASTag?

- ❖ FASTags are an electronic toll collection system, where the amount is automatically deducted from one's bank account once the tag is scanned by a radio frequency identification scanner.

What is MyFASTag Partner?

- ❖ 'FASTag Partner' is for banks and agencies selling the tag. A total of 10 banks, including mobile wallets, provide FASTags.



ENVIRONMENT

Environment Ministry Launches “Harit Diwali, Swasth Diwali” Campaign

- ❖ Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the “Harit Diwali, Swasth Diwali” campaign to make awareness to the children about the importance of their contribution towards reducing pollution by not bursting harmful fire crackers during Diwali.
- ❖ As a part of the campaign, the Environment Ministry will undertake various activities to create awareness among various stakeholders and encourage people to participate in combating air pollution.
- ❖ As has been the experience in the past few years, airborne pollution has been rising above safe limits during winter in many cities. The excessive burning of crackers during Diwali aggravates the problem.
- ❖ The pollution levels in Delhi last year, especially post Diwali, reached such levels that the government had to declare an emergency situation, which had socio-economic consequences like closing down of schools, construction sites and power stations.
