

'Agniveers' are not only 'Surakshaveers' of Nation, but also 'Samriddhiveers' contributing to the Nation's prosperity: RM
RM calls upon other Ministries, State Governments and private sector to provide new opportunities to Agniveer

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: education of Agniveers while serving in the Agniphath is a game changer scheme for the Armed Forces which is going to act as force multiplier in making Indian military as one of the best in the world with youthful, high-tech and ultra-modern outlook. This was stated by Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh during his virtual address at the MoU Exchange Ceremony 'Outreach Programme with Ministry of Education (MoE) & and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE)' in New Delhi on January 03, 2023. He elaborated on the paradigm shifting changes the Agniphath scheme is going to make in transforming the Armed Forces into a tech-savvy, well-equipped and combat ready unit to face future challenges.

During the event, Ministry of Defence (MoD), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE) and all the three Services signed/exchanged MoUs/Agreements with various stakeholders to facilitate continued

education of Agniveers while serving in the Armed Forces and award of appropriate skill certificates in accordance with their expertise/experience. Under these MoUs with National Institute of Open School (NIOS) and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), suitable 12th Class certificates and Bachelor's degree will be awarded to the Agniveers respectively.

The Job Roles/Skill Sets of Agniveers, while being trained and deployed with the Armed Forces, have been mapped with National Occupational Standards (NOS), in coordination with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs). Based on these qualifications, market-ready and industry-accepted, 'Kaushal Praman Patra' will be issued to Agniveers at the time of their exit from the Armed Forces.

To seamlessly facilitate the process, various departments of MoSDE have extensively collaborated in the Armed Forces and awarded Dual Category



recognition as the Awarding Body (AB) and Assessment Agency (AA) by the National Council of Vocational Education and Training (NCVET). In addition, Directorate General of Training (DGT) under MoSDE would also facilitate award of National Trade Certificate (NTC) to Agniveers.

Shri Rajnath Singh stated that with the signing of these MoUs, Agniveers will be able to complete their education in a timely manner and

develop additional qualities and skills. When Agniveers return to the society after being equipped with all these qualities, they will contribute to nation building, he said.

The Raksha Mantri added that helping 'Agniveers' would be a win-win situation for all as they will not only become 'Surakshaveers' for the nation by rendering their services in the Armed Forces, but also become 'Samriddhiveers' by contributing to the

nation's prosperity. They will be beneficial for the whole society contributing to the nation building through their education, skill, discipline and other qualities. In addition to it, they would inspire the youth to become Agniveer, he said.

Complimenting the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Railways, state governments and the private sector for extending support to

Agniveers in various services, the Raksha Mantri called upon the rest of the Ministries, State Governments and the corporate sector to come forward with more enthusiasm and provide new opportunities to the Agniveers as far as possible. He termed it as the responsibility of the system to provide newer opportunities to the Agniveers who dedicate their life in the service of the nation."

In a video message, Education Minister Shri

Dharmendra Pradhan said, this MoUs/Agreements would empower the serving Agniveers to get maximum benefit from their academic education and skill development. He added that NOS will help them to pass 10th and 12th exam, while enrolled Agniveer in university could complete 50% syllabus of general higher studies, the rest credit could be earned through skill development training provided by defense institutions. They could get bachelor degree form IGNOU and with two year completed with necessary credit they could get Agniveer diploma. These degree would help Agniveer to get employment and higher education at national and international level.

The Government had launched Agniphath scheme on June 15, 2022 to recruit both male and female aspirants into 'below the officer's rank' cadre of the three services for a period of four years as Agniveers. Candidates between the age group of 17.5 to 21 years are eligible to apply for the scheme. These

Agniveers would undergo optimised basic military training and specialised trade training followed by up-skilling courses, as required.

The scheme provides a unique opportunity for transforming the Yuva Shakti into Agniveers and facilitates potential youth to realise their dream of serving the Nation through the Armed Forces. Exposure through Agniphath Scheme and fostered allegiance to Naam, Namak and Nishan, would shape Agniveers into Nation Builders.

There has been a whole of nation approach to empower the Agniveers with suitable Academic Qualifications & Skills, while serving in the Armed Forces, to help those Agniveers who wish to start a second career option outside, with other Governmental organisations, Industry or even as Startup Entrepreneurs.

The ceremony was attended by senior officials of Ministry of Defence, various ministries, including Chief of Defence Staff and also Chiefs of all three Services.

Restoration works on the existing Pamban Bridge is in progress RDSO advised to make suggestions for repairs to the bridge

Railways monitors the Pamban Bridge sensor system continuously in collaboration with IIT-Madras Work progressing fast on the New Pamban Bridge

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Rail traffic on Pamban rail bridge connecting Mandapam and Rameswaram was suspended from 23.12.22 onwards after Red alert was received from the monitoring system, for safety reasons so as to undertake detailed examination and repairs as necessary to restore the rail traffic on old Pamban bridge at the earliest. Southern Railway officials immediately conducted an inspection and assessed the condition of Bridge due to heavy corrosion & possibility of repairs for safe train operations.

Now, Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO), the R&D wing of the Ministry of Railways that functions as technical advisor and consultant to Railway Board and Zonal Railway, has been advised to inspect and suggest possible repairs required to put the old bridge back in service.

Continuous health Monitoring System installed by IIT, Madras helps in monitoring the

bridge condition. The monitoring system sends out alert based on weather and bridge conditions. Railway takes suitable measures in accordance to the nature of alerts given out by the Monitoring system.

Existing Pamban Bridge

Celebrated as one of the iconic structures built in the pre-independence era, the great Pamban cantilever bridge was commissioned in 1914. Bridging peninsular India and the Gulf of Mannar, this vintage structure interconnects Mandapam in Rameswaram mainland with Rameswaram Island.

The Great Pamban Bridge attracts thousands of tourists from all over the world. Offering a visual feast to the onlookers, the Scherzer rolling spans beautifully expand and allow cruisers and ships to pass through. The bridge transports scores of pilgrims visiting the famous Ramanathaswamy Temple. This century



old engineering marvel has stood the test of times amidst highly corrosive seas.

Century-old Pamban Bridge structure and the Scherzer rolling lift span

The existing bridge structure has a total length of 2058 metre comprising 146 spans of steel girders. There are 145 spans of 12.20m length and one navigational span of 61.0m length. The navigational span is also known as Scherzer rolling lift span after the name of the railroad engineer who invented it.

The bridge has already served more than 108 years which is much more than its codal life. The bridge was getting heavily corroded and was being repaired regularly by Railways in order to carry train traffic safely.

New Pamban Bridge

Southern Railway is actively engaged with RVNL the executing agency for completion of the new Pamban bridge by end of March 2023.

The new bridge now being constructed will have 99 spans of 18.3m

length and one 72.5m length. It will be navigational span of 3.0m higher than the

existing bridge with navigational air clearance of 22.0m above sea level. Because of vertical lift, full horizontal width of 72.5 m will be available for navigation. This will be India's first Vertical lift Railway sea Bridge, once the work is completed.

Substructure of the bridge is being built for the double line and the navigational span will also have provision for double line. Entire bridge including navigational span will be designed keeping in mind the Railways plan of electrification. In comparison to existing

manual operation and control, the new bridge will have electro mechanical controlled systems which will be interlocked with train control systems.

Work completed so far

Now 84% of the work has been completed. As on date, the work of all 333 piles, 101 pile cap and substructure and fabrication of all 99 approach spans have been completed. Of the 99 approach spans, 76 girders have been launched. Fabrication of Vertical lift span girder is nearing completion.

E-Sevai Maiyam
Star Rainbow Services
 11,SOUTH PERUMAL KOIL STREET, VADAPALANI, CHENNAI - 600 026.
8148231942 / 8144337349
PATTA | LEGAL HEIR | PAN | PASSPORT | AADHAAR
ALL ONLINE SERVICES

ADB, India sign \$350 million loan to expand metro rail network in Chennai

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India today signed a \$350 million loan to build new lines and improve the connectivity of the metro rail system in Chennai with the city's existing public transport system.

The signatories to the tranche 1 loan for the Chennai Metro Rail Investment Project were Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance who signed for the Government of India, and Mr Nilaya Mitash, Officer-in-Charge of

ADB's India Resident Mission, who signed for ADB. The tranche 1 loan is part of the \$780 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) for the project approved by ADB on 8 December 2022 to develop three new metro lines in Chennai.

After signing the loan agreement Mr. Mishra stated that the project will help expand connectivity of Chennai's central areas to major destinations in south and west of the city and integrate the metro system with existing bus and feeder services to benefit thousands of daily commuters.

"Beside expanding



the metro network in Chennai, ADB's support will facilitate better integration between measures and urban

mobility improvements through transit-oriented development (TOD)," said Mr. Mitash. "Such integration will improve access to jobs and

socioeconomic services, curb urban sprawling, and reduce dependency on motorized vehicles that will make the city more livable."

The investment project supports the development of three new metro lines—3, 4, and 5. For Line 3, the project will construct 10.1 kilometers (km) of

the elevated section between Sholinganallur to State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu-2, including 9 metro stations and system components. For line 4, the project will help construct 10 km of the underground section between Lighthouse and Meenakshi College including 9 stations. For Line 5 it will finance 31 km of system components, such as electrical, mechanical, power, and telecommunication infrastructure, between Chennai Mofussil Bus Terminus to Okkiyam Thoraipakkam. The stations will incorporate disaster- and climate-

resilient features and will be responsive to the needs of the elderly, women, children, differently abled, and transgender people.

Multimodal interchanges and facilities will be established along metro rail corridors to improve commuters' experience such as drop-off and pick-up areas, sheltered waiting areas, bicycle facilities, and passenger information. An additional \$1 million ADB technical assistance (TA) grant will help the Chennai Metro Rail Limited with the planning and management of the metro system's multimodal integration.

Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, India is determined to live upto global benchmarks to be able to play a global role in years to come and realise the vision of PM Narendra Modi

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Interacting with media on the sidelines of the Indian Science Congress here today, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology & Earth Sciences, Dr. Jitendra Singh said, India is determined to live upto global benchmarks to be able to play a global role in the years to come and realise the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that the focal theme of this year's Science Congress as "Science & Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment" was quite appropriate and thoughtful.

The Minister said, the conference will deliberate on holistic growth, circular

economies and sustainable goals, while at the same time address the possible obstacles to the growth of women in science & technology.

Dr Jitendra Singh said that in the last 8 and a half years of Modi Government, India has scaled many new heights in Science, Technology and Innovation and taken Bold Decisions like Unlocking the Space Sector to allow the private industry to realise the full potential of Aviation Ecosystem. He said to press persons in response to some questions that decisions like Cabinet Approval for Geospatial Guidelines, Drone Policy and Modi' Stress on Blue Economy will definitely propel India among the top 5 Nations in the World in the next decade.



Dr Jitendra Singh informed that India has reached at 40th Position in Global Innovation Index ranking 2022, 3rd in World Research Publications and 3rd in new start up Eco-system

which indicates the special focus by Prime Minister on science, technology, and innovation which has fired the imagination of the youth in the country to innovate and solve

problems with new ideas.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, by the year 2050, it is estimated that our global population will likely reach 9 billion people. And we have to ensure that every single

one of these people will be able to enjoy a substantial quality of life without being detrimental to our natural resources & environment. He said, Sustainable

Development can be said to be Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The 108th Indian Science Congress will discuss issues of Sustainable development, Women empowerment and the role of Science & Technology in achieving this in all its dimensions, the Minister added.

Dr Jitendra Singh said, STI and STEM will play crucial roles in realising Prime Minister Modi's vision and mission of an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat.'

Dr Jitendra Singh also informed that In 2023, India under PM Narendra Modi reiterates its stature in the international fora as

the host of G20 as well as the Nation on whose proposal the world is observing International Year of Millets.

Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology Dr S Chandrasekhar shared with media the whole itinerary G-20 as well as S-20 Meets of all the six Science Departments under Dr Jitendra Singh like DST, DBT, CSIR, DoS, DAE and Ministry of Earth Sciences.

Principal Scientific Advisor to Government of India, Dr Ajay Kr Sood, Secretary, DSIR, Dr N Kalaiselvi, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences Dr M Ravichandran and senior officials of both the Ministries were present during the press conference.

NTPC starts India's first green hydrogen blending operation in PNG network

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: The set-up is geared up to supply H₂-NG (natural gas) to households of Kawas township at Adityanagar, Surat

The project would bring India at the centre stage of the global hydrogen economy

India would not only reduce its hydrocarbon import bill significantly but can also bring forex ashore by being a green hydrogen and green chemicals exporter to the world.

NTPC Ltd commissions India's first green hydrogen blending project. The green hydrogen blending has been started in the piped natural gas (PNG) network of NTPC Kawas township, Surat. The project is a joint effort of NTPC and Gujarat Gas Limited (GGL).

The first molecule of



green hydrogen from the project was set in motion by Shri P Ram Prasad, head of project, Kawas in presence of other senior executives of NTPC Kawas and GGL.

After the start of blending operation, NTPC Kawas held awareness workshops for township residents with help of GGL officials.

NTPC and GGL have worked relentlessly towards achieving this milestone in record time after the foundation stone laying by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 30th July

2022. This set-up is geared up to supply H₂-NG (natural gas) to households of Kawas township at Adityanagar, Surat. Green hydrogen in Kawas is made by electrolysis of water using power from already installed 1 MW floating solar project.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), the regulatory body has given approval for 5% vol./vol. blending of green hydrogen with PNG to start with and the blending level would be scaled phase wise to

reach 20%. Green hydrogen when blended with natural gas reduces CO₂ emissions keeping net heating content same.

This feat is achieved only by few select countries like UK, Germany, and Australia etc. This would bring India at the centre stage of the global hydrogen economy. India would not only reduce its hydrocarbon import bill significantly but can also bring forex ashore by being a green hydrogen and green chemicals exporter to the world.

India takes over leadership of the Asian Pacific Postal Union

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: India will take over the leadership of the Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) having its Headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand from this month. Following the successful elections held during the 13th APPU Congress held in Bangkok during August- September 2022, Dr. Vinaya Prakash Singh, erstwhile Member (Personnel), Postal Services Board will take over the charge of Secretary General of the Union for a tenure of 4 years.

Asian Pacific Postal Union (APPU) is an intergovernmental organization of 32-member countries of the Asian-Pacific region. APPU is the only Restricted Union of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in the region, which is a specialized



agency of the United Nations. The goal of APPU is to extend, facilitate and improve postal relations between member countries and to promote cooperation in the field of postal services. As the regional center for various UPU projects, APPU also takes the lead in ensuring that all technical and operational projects of the UPU are fulfilled in the region so that the region is integrated into the global postal network in the best possible way. Secretary General leads the

Singh regarding his vision for the Union. Asia Pacific region generates around half of the global mail volume and has around one-third of the global postal human resource.

"This is the first time an Indian is leading an international organization in the postal sector. At this crucial juncture for the sector, it is a privilege for the Department to have its officer lead the activities of the Union, especially beginning from this year of India's G20 presidency" said Shri Vineet Pandey, Secretary, Department of Posts. "India will keep extending its full support to the APPU and further strengthen its contribution for effective realisation of the collective vision of APPU membership" he added.

President of India Graces the Launch of National Campaign on 'RISE- Rising India Through Spiritual Empowerment', Organized by Brahma Kumaris

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu graced the launch of the National Campaign on 'RISE- Rising India through Spiritual Empowerment', organized by Brahma Kumaris at Mount Abu, Rajasthan today (January 3, 2023). She also virtually inaugurated the Brahma Kumaris Silence Retreat Centre, Secunderabad, Telangana and laid the foundation stone for Brahma Kumaris Auditorium and Spiritual Art Gallery at Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

Addressing the gathering, the President said that she has had a deep connection with the Brahma Kumaris Institution. She learned the method of Raja Yoga which gave importance to inner spiritual power rather than external physical conveniences and events. This infused light and enthusiasm into her life at a time when she was feeling darkness around and lacked hope.

The President said that it is a matter of pride that, for the past nearly 80 years, the Brahma Kumaris Sansthan has been making invaluable contributions towards spiritual progress, inner



transformation of personality and revitalization of the world community. Through the spirit of service based on peace, non-violence and love, this organization has made significant contributions in many fields like holistic education, rural development, health, women empowerment, disaster management, welfare of divyangjans and orphans and environment protection. She appreciated Brahma Kumaris for these noble works.

The President noted that the Brahma Kumaris organization is running about 5000 meditation centers in 137 countries. She said that women play leading roles in this organization assisted by the spiritual brothers. This is the largest spiritual organization run by women which proves that, given the opportunity, women can do work at par with men,

or perhaps even better. She expressed happiness that Brahma Kumaris organization has played an active role in the empowerment of women. Brahma Baba believes that the overall development of the world lies in the spiritual, social and intellectual empowerment of women. She said that with this thinking Brahma Baba gave leading roles to women and today's world-community needs more of similar thinking.

The President said that spirituality is the guiding light which can show the right path to the entire humanity. Our country has to use both science and spirituality for world peace. Our aim is that India should become a knowledge super power. It is our aspiration that this knowledge should be used for sustainable development, for social harmony, for the upliftment of women

and downtrodden sections, for the proper use of the energy of the youth and for the establishment of everlasting peace in the world.

The President said that today we are facing an existential threat due to climate change. Conservation of the environment is also a kind of spiritual empowerment because a clean and healthy environment gives us peace. This interrelationship of environment and spirituality is not a new thing for us. We have been worshipping trees, mountains and rivers for centuries. To bring peace in our life, we must protect the environment.

The President said that in this era of uncertainty, along with safeguarding its national interests, India is also playing the role of a harbinger of peace in the world. According to its culture and tradition, our country is active in building a world order based on spirituality and morality. She expressed confidence that the 'RISE' campaign would contribute in making India a leading nation by spiritually empowering its people and supporting the welfare of the entire humanity.

India has the potential to become a world leader in Footwear and leather - Piyush Goyal

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles, Shri Piyush Goyal today said India has the potential to become a world leader in Footwear and leather sector with the efforts of both government and industry. He was addressing the gathering at the Council for Leather Exports National Export Excellence Award function in New Delhi today.

In his address to the awardees, Shri Goyal asked the organisers to explore the possibility of encouraging new companies, entrepreneurs, startups and those who come up with innovative ideas, enter into uncharted territory with newer markets and products, by recognizing them through these awards. He suggested some niche award segments can be created for recognizing their contribution- such as rewarding those who make effective use of FTAs etc.

The Minister said as we celebrate Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, we hope to achieve higher exports than last year - both in goods and services. He said while most of the developed world, who are large consumers of leather products, are going



through inflation and subdued consumer spending, he was happy to get reassurance from Leather sector that it would see higher growth compared to last year.

Shri Goyal asked the leather industry to utilize the FTAs being signed by India with various countries to grow. He cited the example of UAE, where exports in the sector registered a jump of 64 percent in November last year as a result of the new agreement.

Shri Goyal noted the concerns of the Leather Industry about import duties on certain types of Leather and assured that it will be taken up for consideration. He also urged the industry stakeholders to avail MOOWR scheme by Department of Revenue, wherein no duty is to be paid on goods which are being imported for the purpose for exports. This will certainly help make business more competitive, he added.

The Minister emphasised that Indian Industry has huge untapped potential. He noted that while the

Quality of Products manufactured is good, more focus is required on packaging and branding to get better value for the product. Indian Mission across the world can help in providing support in terms of outreach and can help connect them with international companies engaged in branding business.

He encouraged the industry to aspire to set new goals, especially as India is entering into Amrit Kaal, that aims at inclusive growth and bringing prosperity to each and every citizen of India. Minister said we are trying to enter into more FTA with other developed nations of the world. He urged the Leather and footwear industry to aim for significant increases over the next 25 years and draw up a plan to achieve those goals. He asked them to look up at expanding horizons- explore new territories, manufacturing new products in india for import substitution.

Shri Goyal reassured that the Government is open to amending any

standards which are hurting the interests of the Industry. He also assured full support in terms of setting up testing facilities/ laboratories anywhere in the country to meet the needs of the industry. He said the Government is willing to engage with the Industry on ease of doing business and asked them to give ideas on how to bring improvement in different areas where industry faces difficulty in business. He asked them to give suggestions on how to increase compliance, how to simplify laws, and which laws/ provisions can be decriminalized.

Shri Goyal informed that the Government is working on formulating a new scheme to support manufacturing of machinery required in the industry. He asked the industry to take advantage of all the schemes of the government.

He asked the industry to look at innovation and sustainability in their products. He also called for new collaborations with international companies to bring high quality products into India. Minister spoke about a few areas of immense potential such as Kolhapuri Chappals and asked young entrepreneurs to go beyond the routine and explore new designs/ branding in this area.

ADB, India sign \$350 million loan to improve in Maharashtra

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India today signed a \$350 million loan to improve the connectivity of key economic areas in the state of Maharashtra.

The signatories to the Connecting Economic Clusters for Inclusive Growth in Maharashtra project were Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance who signed for the Government of India, and Mr Hoe Yun Jeong, Officer-in-Charge of ADB's India Resident Mission, who signed for ADB.

After signing the loan agreement Shri Mishra stated that the project will help address intra-regional disparities by improving connectivity, facilitating access to services, and accelerating inclusive economic growth of lagging districts in the state.

"This project builds on ADB's ongoing support to upgrade state highways and major district roads in



Maharashtra," said Mr. Jeong. "It demonstrates approaches and practices that are not yet common practice, including road safety demonstration corridors; climate change adaptation and disaster-risk reduction; and highway works programs responsive to the needs of women, children, the elderly, and people with disability."

At least 319 kilometers (km) of state highways and 149 km of district roads will be upgraded incorporating climate and disaster-resilient features to strengthen the state's core road network in the 10 districts of Ahmednagar, Hingoli,

Jalna, Kohalpur, Nagur, Nanded, Nashik, Pune, Sangli, and Satara. This will help connect underdeveloped rural communities with off-farm opportunities and markets, improve access to health and social services and improve agricultural value chains by reducing transport costs for small and medium-sized enterprises.

In addition, the project will construct 5 km of major district roads connecting Nanded and neighboring Telangana. The project will promote gender equality and social inclusion in highway programs, schools, health, and

social services and set up integrated service centers to provide basic sanitation, education, and other services. Skills training for enterprises led by poor women and disadvantaged groups will be conducted to provide livelihood opportunities. The project will demonstrate the private sector's effectiveness in undertaking long-term road maintenance for greater life-cycle quality and operational efficiency. It will also develop a good practice handbook for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction in road design and maintenance.

ADB, India sign \$300 million loan to improve connectivity in Assam

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India today signed a \$300 million loan to upgrade over 300 kilometres of state highways and major district roads (MDRs) in Assam.

The signatories to the Assam South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Corridor Connectivity Improvement Project were Shri Rajat Kumar Mishra, Additional Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance who signed for the Government of India, and Mr Nilaya Mitash, Officer-in-Charge of ADB's India Resident Mission, who signed for ADB.

After signing the loan agreement, Shri Mishra stated that the project supports the Government of Assam's flagship Asom Mala road improvement program to enhance the



quality and service of priority sections of state highway and MDR networks and fill critical infrastructure gaps.

"Improved connectivity and safe road networks developed through the project will enhance mobility and accessibility of people in the less developed areas of the state to markets and services to spur growth and contribute to its potential as a growth catalyst for the SASEC region," said Mr Mitash.

The roads to be upgraded under the project, including six road sections in the state's western, central and southern regions, are connected to SASEC corridors linking India

with Bhutan and Bangladesh, and are expected to boost cross-border trade and transport. The project will complement the multimodal logistics park being built in Jogighopa and another proposed in Silchar to serve road, rail, inland waterway, and air transport facilities.

The project will expand state highways and major district roads from single lane to two lanes and introduce new climate- and disaster-resilient structures. It will establish pedestrian and public transport facilities, elevate highways in flood-prone areas, and include landslide prevention structures in hilly and

mountainous areas.

Community schools, water, health, and sanitation facilities, and heritage and tourism sites will be restored in affected indigenous peoples' villages. To protect wildlife and habitats in project areas, viaduct structures will be constructed to avoid human-elephant conflict in the elephant habitats. In addition, community road users, drivers, motorcycle riders, schoolteachers, and students will be informed and trained on road safety. The project will strengthen the capacity of the Assam Public Works (Roads) Department in managing road assets, integrating climate and disaster resilience in road projects, and ensuring safeguards—such as environment, resettlement, and indigenous peoples concerns—are considered.

KURKURE EXPANDS ITS PORTFOLIO AND LAUNCHES A YOUTHFUL NEW SUB-BRAND, KURKURE PLAYZ

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Bringing in a playful twist to the new year, Kurkure, one of India's most loved snack brands, has expanded its brand with the launch of a youthful new sub-brand, Kurkure Playz. It comes with the widely popular and successful Kurkure Playz Puffcorn and all-new Kurkure Playz Pastax, based on the growing affinity of consumers towards light textured snacks.

The modern sub-brand caters to the rise in demand for soft textured snacks, one of the fastest growing variants in the overall salty snacks category. Kurkure Playz is backed by the success of Kurkure Puffcorn, which enjoyed a rapid growth rate momentum over the last few years. Kurkure Playz Puffcorn has a distinct shape with a light texture and comes in cheese flavour whilst the



all-new Kurkure Playz Pastax has a creamy, herb and onion flavour in a pasta-shaped bite.

Expressing her thoughts on the launch, Neha Prasad, Associate

Director and Brand Lead, Kurkure said, "The launch of Kurkure Playz allows our iconic brand to tap into the rapidly growing soft texture snacks and expand its product format. The

winning product propositions with irresistible flavours of Kurkure Playz Puffcorn and Kurkure Playz Pastax will help us create differentiation and build taste superiority in the category. In true Kurkure style, its light texture will encourage the consumer to take a lighter approach to life, no matter what the situation is."

Kurkure Playz Puffcorn is available at INR 5, INR 10, INR 20, INR 50 and Kurkure Playz Pastax at INR 5, INR 10, and INR 20 at leading retail and e-commerce platforms across the country. For this launch, Kurkure will highlight the distinct, light texture of the product with its upcoming TVC and robust 360-degree digital surround campaign panning across multiple platforms.

Joy Bhattacharjya, Director-General, FIFS

Federation of Indian Fantasy Sports on MeitY Draft Rules

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: "We welcome the draft rules for online gaming by MeitY. They strike a great balance

between promoting responsible gaming and providing impetus to the online gaming industry.

We believe this will

strengthen India's position as a global gaming hub and help create a thriving AVGC ecosystem."

Kimberly-Clark relaunches its iconic diaper brand Huggies with the new 'Huggies Complete Comfort®' range in India



Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Kimberly Clark brings a fresh new identity for its iconic brand Huggies with the relaunch of Huggies Complete Comfort® in India. Based on extensive consumer research, the relaunch focuses on the core proposition of 5-in-1 comfort, which includes key attributes like softness and absorption. The brand is going to embrace an all-new visual language via its packaging design across the range that spotlights the brand's key attributes and consumer benefits.

To mark the relaunch, Huggies has rolled out its new campaign, 'We got you, baby' that promises to make the world a more comfortable place for babies. Conceptualized by Ogilvy India, the endearing launch film uses the baby's voice as a creative device to highlight their discomforts with diapers. Huggies comes to their rescue by providing 5

comforts in 1 diaper that includes bubble bed softness, 12-hour absorption, triple leak guard, breathable material, and a comfy fit waistband.

Saakshi Verma Menon, Marketing Director, Kimberly - Clark India on the relaunch said, "Huggies as a brand has always strived to go the extra mile to make the world a more comfortable place for babies. Through extensive consumer research, we realized that babies need complete comfort with multiple benefits in one product. We are proud to introduce the new 'Huggies Complete Comfort®' to our Indian consumers to help babies and their parents navigate the unknowns of babyhood. Our research showed that 9 out of 10 moms feel that Huggies is more comfortable than their regular diaper which reinforces the trust that

consumers have on this iconic brand."

On the campaign, she added, "We are launching a digital first campaign across platforms where mums today are spending most of their time. The content is hyper personalized and contextualized to specific consumer cohorts for heightened relevance and engagement.

Also, as a challenger brand in India it is imperative for us to break clutter and stand out as a preferred brand. Our creative partners at Ogilvy have cracked an enjoyable and distinctive way of landing the key message which is sure to cement our position in the hearts of our consumers."

Commenting on the film, Sukesh Kumar Nayak, Chief Creative Officer, Ogilvy India said, "To get the attention of parents, in our new campaign for Huggies,

babies go on a protest to boycott incomplete diapers that do not have full comfort. Voicing their displeasure in a disruptive narrative, babies seek a diaper that provides more than the usual fare of dryness, for one which actually gives complete comfort.

As baby's wingman, Huggies helps babies word their unspoken needs with a message that is playfully irreverent and memorable to ensure their problems are heard loud and clear. And solved with the new Huggies Complete Comfort diapers which will never allow babies to settle for incomplete comfort."

The Huggies Complete Comfort® range is now available in offline stores and on e-commerce platforms.

Link to the film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2WSvh54Fr>



Mahindra Auto sells 28,333 SUVs with a 62% growth and 56,677 vehicles across portfolio with a 45% growth in December 2022

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&MLtd.), one of India's leading automotive companies, today announced that its overall auto sales for the month of December 2022 stood at 56,677 vehicles.

In the Utility Vehicles segment, Mahindra sold 28,333 vehicles in December 2022. The Passenger Vehicles segment (which includes UVs, Cars and Vans) sold 28,445 vehicles in December 2022.

Exports for the month



were at 3,100 vehicles. In the Commercial Vehicles segment, Mahindra sold 20,080 vehicles in

December 2022.

According to Veejay Nakra, President, Automotive Division, M&M Ltd., "Continuing interest from our customers have led to strong demand across our portfolio in December 2022. We have seen growth of 61% in our Passenger Vehicles and a 45% overall growth. Due to continuing international disruptions and increasing coronavirus cases, we are keeping a close watch on the dynamic supply chain situation."

Microsoft celebrates Future Ready Champions of Code with over 100K developers and technology enthusiasts

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Microsoft today announced over 100,000 developers participated in the Future Ready Champions of Code program to receive Microsoft certifications. The program, launched in December 2022, equips developers with globally recognized and industry-endorsed skills and competencies in digital and cloud technologies. Developers also participated in a nationwide hackathon to 'Innovate for India's Growth' as part of the program.

The hackathon saw innovative solutions and prototypes built on cloud-native architecture, leveraging the Microsoft Azure platform, around the themes of Industry innovation, Smart city and Green or Sustainable software.

The top three winning teams from the hackathon, shortlisted based on their innovation and impact, were from Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro and IndusNet. The winning teams will receive cash

rewards and exclusive invites to the Future Ready Technology Summit to be held in Bengaluru on January 5th, 2023.

Ambarish Ganguly from TCS, whose solution was adjudged the best, used Azure Cognitive Services and AI to design an Agriculture Hub to serve as a one-stop destination for farmers, helping them cultivate better crops, improve yield, and enhance the quality of their lives with a futuristic and easy to use smart solution.

The Wipro team of two, which stood second, built a next generation smart-search solution using Azure Cognitive Search Service to demonstrate how to boost search operations and improve productivity, employee engagement and lower operational costs.

The team of five developers from IndusNet, which was adjudged the third winner, built a Smart Commercial Vehicle Tracking System using Azure IoT Services. The system provides real-time monitoring of vehicles on

the move and helps fleet management companies improve efficiency and maximize their return on investment.

The program also saw developers from the ITES, consulting, financial services, manufacturing and startup industries participate in a blogathon. Select blogs from the blogathon contest will be featured on the Microsoft Azure website.

Aparna Gupta, Executive Director, Customer Success, Microsoft India, said, "We are delighted to see the overwhelming response that the Future Ready Champions of Code program received from India's vibrant developer and tech community. Our heartiest congratulations to all the developers who have completed their certifications and to the hackathon winners. India's developer community is one of the youngest and fastest growing in the world and we continue to empower them with the richest set of technologies and platforms

to enable their dreams and to build for the future."

The Future Ready Champions of Code program was supported by Microsoft's customers and partners as they sought to use the opportunity to fast-track competency development among their developer teams. The program was also supported by government and industry partners such as AICTE, NASSCOM, ICT Academy and Foundit.

Microsoft has been empowering people with the right skills and technologies through platforms such as LinkedIn, Microsoft Learn and its non-profit skilling efforts, as well as through various joint skill building initiatives with customers and partners and governments. So far, 7.3 million learners from India have been engaged through the Skills for Jobs initiative to make India future-ready with in-demand skills in areas such as cloud computing, emerging technologies like AI and cybersecurity.

Mahindra's Farm Equipment Sector Sells 21,640 Units in India during December 2022

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.'s Farm Equipment Sector (FES), part of the Mahindra Group, today announced its tractor sales numbers for December 2022.

Domestic sales in December 2022 were at 21,640 units, as against 16,687 units during

December 2021.

Total tractor sales (Domestic + Exports) during December 2022 were at 23,243 units, as against 18,269 units for the same period last year. Exports for the month stood at 1,603 units.

Commenting on the performance, Hemant Sikka, President - Farm

Equipment Sector, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. said, "We have sold 21,640 tractors in the domestic market during December 2022, a growth of 30% over last year. Rabi crop sowing has progressed very well and is higher than last year acreage and also higher than the average of last 5 years. Wheat and oil seeds are expected to be bumper

harvest. On the back of strong Rabi sowing, good kharif procurement and likely exports of wheat, the sentiments continue to remain upbeat in the farming sector, leading to strong demand for tractors and farm implements. In the exports market, we have sold 1,603 tractors, a growth of 1% over last year."

YES BANK partners with Microsoft to transform mobile banking experience

Chennai, Jan 03 2023: YES BANK announced that it has partnered with Microsoft to bring forth a next generation mobile application (app) with a view to provide customers with a personalised banking experience. YES BANK will leverage Microsoft's Azure platform to create the app which will offer customers - a host of services such as online payments, shopping, rewards, offers, as well as customized dashboards, in addition to traditional banking functions.

Using a cloud-native

approach, the all-new app will run on Microsoft's enterprise-grade cloud platform, and will support YES BANK in scaling up various services by bringing merchants and ecosystem partners on to a common platform. This will empower the Bank to cater to diverse financial needs of customers across loans, payments, deposits, investments, cards and more.

Commenting on the development, Mr. Prashant Kumar, MD & CEO, YES BANK said "We, at YES BANK, have always been in the

forefront of leveraging technology to bring forth solutions that provide a differentiated banking experience. Our partnership with Microsoft is a testament to this effort, as we look forward to co-creating a proposition that will offer customers with the benefit of transacting, as well as undertaking a host of other activities on a common platform. We believe, the proposition will bring in the right mix of convenience and flexibility while being within the realms of a highly secured network of both YES BANK and

Microsoft."

Commenting on the collaboration, Mr. Anant Maheshwari, President, Microsoft India, said, "YES BANK has been embracing the shift from traditional banking to creating personalized technology-driven customer experiences. We are excited to collaborate with YES BANK on their digital transformation efforts. Microsoft Azure enables YES BANK with secure and resilient architecture that helps them build new experiences for their customers."