

It's not about time, it's about choices. How are you spending your choices?

Beverly Abamo

INDIA INTERNATIONAL SKILL CENTERS (IISC)

Workers will now have a chance to explore employment opportunities in a number of countries, including in West Asia and Japan, as part of the government's skill development programme.

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is working on establishing India International Skill Centers (IISC) to help those looking for jobs overseas get skills training.

The IISCs will train the youth so that when they go abroad, they already have a skill.

At present, most migrant workers who go abroad lead a difficult life initially.

The scheme is being run along with the Ministry of External Affairs, which provides pre-departure orientation training on language, culture and processes.

Pact with Japan:

The NSDC is also working on a programme to send youth to Japan, where they will be trained and will work for 3-5 years.

The candidates will be trained in the newest technologies and live and earn in Japan for three to five years. The candidate will then have the choice to come back or to continue to work there.

As part of the Skill India Mission, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has for long spoken of sending India's surplus workforce abroad where skilled labour is required.

13 INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ELEMENTS FROM INDIA INSCRIBED ON UNESCO'S LIST TILL DATE

A total of 13 Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) elements from India have been inscribed till date on the **UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.

For inclusion of an element in the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the state parties are required to submit nomination dossier on the relevant

element for evaluation and examination of the UNESCO Committee.

The Ministry of Culture has appointed the Sangeet Natak Akademi, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture, as nodal office for matters relating to the intangible cultural heritage including for preparation of the nomination dossiers for the Representative List of UNESCO.

Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

1. Tradition of Vedic chanting
2. Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana
3. Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre
4. Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India
5. Mudi yettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala
6. Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan
7. Chhau dance
8. Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India
9. Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur
10. Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India
11. Yoga
12. Nawrouz, Novruz, Nowrouz, Nowrouz, Nawrouz, Nauruz, Nooruz, Nowruz, Navruz, Nevruz, Nowruz, Navruz
13. Kumbh Mela

INCREDIBLE INDIA 2.0 LAUNCHED TO PROMOTE TOURISM

The Ministry of Tourism has launched the Incredible India 2.0 campaign, during the financial year 2017-18 to promote various destinations and tourism products of the

country including spiritual, medical and wellness tourism in important and potential source markets overseas. The Incredible India 2.0 campaign aims at a shift from generic promotions undertaken across the world to market specific promotional plans and content creation with thematic creative on different niche products including spiritual, medical and wellness tourism.

The “**Incredible India 2.0**” Campaign, aims at moving to the next level of promotion and marketing with a shift from generic promotions across the world to market specific promotional plans, content creation and use of thematic creative.

The Ministry, as part of its on-going activities, annually releases global print, electronic and online media campaigns in important and potential markets overseas, under the ‘Incredible India’ brand-line, to promote various tourism destinations and products of the country, including the cultural heritage. Promotions are also undertaken through the website and Social Media accounts of the Ministry.

NAMASTE SHALOM

The government has launched the social media of “Namaste Shalom”, a magazine devoted to India-Israel relations.

Namaste Shalom: It is a regular monthly magazine on bilateral relations between the two friendly nations. The magazine aims to strengthen India-Israel relations and provide a platform for exchanging views between Indians and Jews the world over.

INDIA'S FALLING SEX RATIO

Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB): The SRB is the number of girls born for every 1,000 boys.

A recent report from the NITI Aayog said sex ratio at birth (SRB) nationwide had dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015. In all, 17 of 21 large Indian States saw a drop in the SRB, with Gujarat performing the worst, declining 53 points. Also, newer data from India’s Sample Registration System show the

SRB fell even further in 2014-2016, from **900 to 898**.

India is a special case. Its SRB is far lower than 952 because of the preference for the male child. This means we are killing girl children in the womb. As on today, around 63 million girls are estimated to be ‘missing’ in India because of such actions.

It is also established by this year’s **economic survey (2017-18) that Indian society has a strong Meta preference for male child.**

Low SRBs starting from the Seventies have led to large numbers of “surplus men” today in countries like India and China. There are concerns that skewed sex ratios lead to more violence against men and women, as well as human-trafficking.

In India, some villages in Haryana and Punjab have such poor sex ratios that men “import” brides from other States. This is often accompanied by the exploitation of these brides.

PC- PNDD Act:

In 1994, the government introduced the Prenatal Diagnostics Techniques Act which punishes healthcare professionals for telling expectant parents the sex of a child with imprisonment and hefty fines. In 2003, when technologies that allowed gender-selection even before conception became available, the act was amended to become the **Prenatal Conception and Prenatal Determination Act (PC-PNDD)**.

By any token, this Act has been a failure. In November 2016, a report from the Asian Centre for Human Rights noted that between 1994 and 2014, 2,266 cases of infanticide were registered in India, against 2,021 cases of abortion under the PC-PNDD, even though abortions outnumber infanticides today. In all, 17 out of 29 States had either not registered any case, or had zero convictions.

The PHFI report in 2010 found major gaps in the training of personnel implementing PC-PNDD. Poor training meant that they were unable to prepare strong cases against violators to secure convictions.

Now, India must implement the PC-PNDT more stringently, but must also dedicate more resources to fighting the preference for boys.

INDIA INTERNATIONAL SKILL CENTERS (IISC)

India and Vietnam have signed a MoU on Cooperation between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) and the Vietnam Atomic Energy Institute (VINATOM). The two countries had signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement in 2016 and the MoU will enhance training and research collaboration possibilities.

GCNEP:

Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP) is located near Bahadurgarh in Haryana. GCNEP is the sixth R&D unit under the aegis of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

GCNEP will help in capacity building, in association with the interested countries and the IAEA, involving technology, human resource development, education & training and giving a momentum to R&D in enlisted areas.

The main objectives of the centre include:

- Mark Development of enhanced nuclear safeguards to effectively and efficiently monitor nuclear materials and facilities.
- Mark Promoting the development of advanced, more proliferation resistant nuclear power reactors.
- Mark Training manpower in the field of Nuclear Security and Radiological Safety.
- Mark Educating in the field of Advanced Nuclear Energy Systems, Isotopes and Radiation Technologies, nuclear forensic.
- Mark Establishing accreditation facilities for radiation monitoring.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAS DELAYED ITS DECISION ON H-4 VISA

The Trump administration has delayed its decision on terminating the work authorization of H-4 visa users, spouses of H-1B visa holders, till June as it needs time to

review the economic impact of such a decision. The extension of decision-making process by four months comes as a temporary relief to the spouses of H-1B visas holders, a significantly large number of whom are Indian workers.

However, in January 2018, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reevaluated the rule and determined that significant revisions to the draft proposal were necessary.

H-4 visa holders are immediate family members of H-1B visa holders. Most H-4 visa holders are spouses who want to join their partner in a new country. They enjoy many of the benefits of living in the United States, but some limitations exist. That's why an H-1B visa is better.

They can live in the United States on a continuous basis. They can also travel to and from the country as needed. H-4 visa holders can either join their spouse immediately or choose to move to America at a later date. They also have the right to attend college in the United States and may even enjoy discounted tuition.

The only people who qualify are dependents. In the United States, those people are spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21.

No official termination date exists for an H-4 visa. Instead, the holder of the primary visa, the H-1B, will determine length of stay. When that visa expires, both the H-1B and H-4 holders are no longer eligible for American residency.

JAIVAM

Kottayam, the 'land of lakes, latex and letters' in Kerala and the first district in the country to achieve total literacy is now piloting a silent revolution in organic living, at the behest of the Mahatma Gandhi University headquartered there.

The Inter University Centre for Organic Farming and Sustainable Agriculture at the University is driving the massive programme.

Titled 'Jaivam' this is a unique public education programme on organic means of living and chemical-free farm practices covering each household in the district.

INDIA-MYANMAR AGREEMENT ON BORDER

Citing "domestic compulsions", Myanmar has indefinitely deferred signing an agreement with India to streamline the free movement of people within 16 km along the border.

On January 3, the Union Cabinet had approved the agreement between India and Myanmar on land border crossing to enhance economic interaction between people of the two countries.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been deferred twice in the past seven months.

The Centre had asked four States — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram to distribute "border pass" to all the residents living within 16 km from the border

India and Myanmar share a 1,643 km unfenced border along Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram (510 km).

As per the proposal, there would have been no restrictions on the movement of people across the borders

India had raised the issue of movement of extremists and smugglers freely across the border.

Significance of the agreement:

- The agreement aims to enhance economic interaction between people of the two countries.
- It is expected to provide connectivity and enhance interaction of the people from north-eastern states of India with those of Myanmar.
- The agreement will also safeguard the traditional rights of the largely tribal communities residing along the border which are accustomed to free movement across the land border.

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY: MARCH 3RD

World Wildlife Day was celebrated on March 3rd.

Theme: "Big cats: predators under threat".

3 March, the day of signature of the Convention on **International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**, as UN World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants. The UNGA resolution also designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar.

CITES:

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international regulatory treaty between 182 member states. It was formed in 1973 and regulates the international trade in over 35,000 wild species of plants and animals.

The focus of the convention is not solely on the protection of species. It also promotes controlled trade that is not detrimental to the sustainability of wild species.

The convention works primarily through a system of classification and licensing. Wild species are categorized in Appendices I to III. This often reflects species' threat status on the Red List of the IUCN, the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of Threatened Species first created in 1964.

Appendix I prohibit trade in species classified as highly endangered. Appendix II allows trade under very specific conditions. This requires exporting countries obtain a permit, but not the importing country. Appendix III species require only a certificate of origin to be traded.

National CITES management authorities may issue permits once scientific authorities show non-detriment findings. In other words, scientific evidence must demonstrate that species sustainability will not be adversely affected by trade. Where data is lacking, the precautionary principle applies.
