

CURRENT NEWS PUNJAB 2015

1) NGT Bans Straw Burning In Wake Of Increasing Pollution

National Green Tribunal (NGT) taking note of the deteriorating environment in the north has directed a ban on age-old agricultural practice of straw burning in pollution-ravaged **New Delhi** and 4 northern western states of **Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.**

NGT has directed Respective governments of Delhi and four northern to impose fine of 2,500 to 15,000 rupees fine on farmers indulged in straw burning.

District magistrates should form a committee to carry out awareness programmes for farmers and villagers in order to educate them about the ill-effects of straw burning.

Straw Burning Menace Straw Burning is age-old agricultural practice followed by farmers biannually by setting fire to their fields to clear the land of residue (Straw) of one harvest and sow the next. It is mainly carried in Northern western states in the month of November to save time under the rice-wheat crop rotation and to make the land more fertile and kill pests.

The menace of straw burning is making the atmosphere in national capital Delhi more blinding and suffocating as smoke from it moves towards the city. The open field burning **emits Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Carbon monoxide (CO)** and **Nitrous Oxide (NO)** along with **particulate matter.** Thus open burning of agriculture remains is considered as a serious issue contributing towards global warming and the environmental pollution. It is also principle cause of haze and air pollution.

The best remedy to stop this menace is to **set up bio-ethanol refineries** in order to extract sustainable bio-fuel from agricultural residue with the help of private-public-partnership (PPP) and private model, and Punjab govt. has already taken up steps in this direction.

2) Punjab Govt. Has Announced To Set Up Bio-Ethanol Refinery In The State

In order to tackle the menace of wheat and paddy straw burning, state government has inked MoU with consortium of Beta Renewables, Novozymes and CVC India Infrastructure Pvt. Ltd. for project estimated worth Rs. 950 crore during the Progressive Punjab Investor Summit, 2015.

Benefits of bio-ethanol refinery Would play an important role in solving the chronic problem of straw burning of leftover agro-based produce especially from wheat and rice feedstocks.

It will benefit farmers economically, as they would be paid for their agro-based produce to extract bio-ethanol.

It would also help in preventing the loss of fertility of soil and damage to environment by reducing air pollution.

It is important to understand the what exactly is bioethanol.

It is an alcohol derived by process of fermentation mostly from carbohydrates of plant produce and feedstocks.

Commonly obtained from crops such as **sugarcane, cassava, corn, potato, beetroot and recently grapes, banana and dates** etc.

As a quasi-renewable energy it can be blended with petrol or diesel making it a sustainable transport fuel.

It can also be used an alternative fuel in manufacturing processes and cosmetic products ETC

3) Punjab Government Establishes Special MGNREGA Cell

Punjab Government has established a special MGNREGA cell to coordinate effective implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the state. It has been **established by Punjab Rural Development and Panchayat Department** at Chandigarh with an outlay of 233 crore rupees.

This cell will monitor implementation of Union Government's flagship 100 days employment guarantee scheme of MGNREGA. It will also monitor the wage rate under MGNREGA which has been fixed by Union Government on the basis of consumer Price Index- Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) which is implemented on 1st April every year and will be applicable for whole financial year. It should be noted that all the districts of Punjab are being covered under MGNREGA with effect from 1st April, 2008. The recent wage rate has been revised from 202 rupees to 210 rupees with effect from 1st April 2015.

The wages will be directly transferred by state government in the bank accounts of the beneficiaries from 15th September 2015.

Punjab Government has won first award in the category of highest capacity addition in grid connected solar rooftop power in the country during the financial year 2014-15.

It is one of 5 awards won by Punjab New and Renewable Energy Department (PNRED) for outstanding performance in the various fields of Renewable Energy and Power Generation.

The other four areas in which Punjab won awards includes

1. Highest capacity addition of off-grid waste to energy plants.
2. Deployment of highest cumulative numbers of Solar Water Pumps.
3. Achieving highest cumulative grid connected solar rooftop power capacity.
4. Achieving highest capacity addition in grid connected solar power in the country.

These awards were conferred to the Punjab state by Union Minister of State for Power, Coal and New and Renewable Energy Piyush Goyal at a function held in Bengaluru, Karnataka. **Chandigarh bagged the second spot** in the highest capacity addition in grid connected solar rooftop power in the country category.

4) Punjab Government Has Announced To Release 15 Gharials In The Beas Belt

In order boost tourism, The Gharials species will be released as part of state government's plan to make Beas belt, a natural habitat of the fish-eating crocodile species. The release of Gharials has been planned in February-March 2015 near Karmowal village (near Harike Patan water bodies) by the Experts from World Wide Fund for Nature (WWFN). **Karmowal village** has ample water bodies with sand banks making it suitable site for developing as habitat for the species.

Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus) is also known as the gavial.

It is last surviving species of the family Gavialidae. It is a fish-eating crocodile and belongs to one of the three crocodylian species found in the Indian Sub-Continent. In historic times it was present in Indus River system, including Beas and Sutlej rivers, indicating healthy river system.

It is listed in Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

It is also listed as Critically Endangered in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Endangered Species.

5) **World Bank Has Approved An Additional Loan Of 650 Million Dollars For India's Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) Project.**

It was approved in third round of World Bank funding and follows earlier two other loans by the bank for this project. This loan will fund To build 401 km **Ludhiana-Khurja section** that falls in three North Western states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) Project DFC Project aims at the faster delivery of goods between the northern and eastern parts of the country. The project will further help to increase the capacity of freight-only lines. It will raise the axle-load limit from existing 22.9 tonnes to 25 tonnes. The speeds of freight carriers will be further boosted up to 100 km/hr due to dedicated freight lines. Apart from faster delivery of goods, this project is also going to help to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) emissions caused by road transportation in this region.

6) **Satnam Singh Bhamara**

Became the first Indian born basketball player to be drafted in the National Basketball Association (NBA). He was chosen by the Dallas Mavericks team as the 52nd pick in the NBA Draft. He was selected amongst the 60 young men who will play in the next season of NBA. About Satnam Singh Bhamara Born: 10 December 1995. The 19-year-old Satnam hails from a small village Ballo Ke in Barnala district of Punjab. He stands 7 feet 2 inches tall and comes from a farmer's family. Prior to this selection he was going training at IMG Academy at Florida, US and was coached by Scott Fleming.

He had played for the IMG Academy graduate team during the season 2014–15. He was undergoing training in the US since September 2010 as part of a scholarship program between IMG and Reliance.

Earlier in 2011, Singh had represented the India national basketball team at the FIBA Asia Championship. He also had represented India at the 2013 FIBA Asia Championship. **It should be noted that Canada born Sim Bhullar was the first Indian origin player to play in NBA.** He had briefly featured for the Sacramento Kings in the 2014 season of NBA.

7) **Union Cabinet Has Given To 81,459 Crore Rupees Revised Estimate For Eastern And Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) Project**

Decision in this regard was taken in Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. Cabinet also has given nod to include land costs and financing plan for this for East-West freight corridor. The revised cost estimate comprises construction cost of 73,392 crore rupees of the Eastern and Western DFC along with additional land acquisition cost of 8,067 crore rupees. In this revised estimate, the cost of the 534-km Sonnagar-Dankuni section has been excluded as this section is proposed to be implemented through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) route.

Eastern and Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) Project on completion will pass through 9 states. **They are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.** This project will significantly help to reduce transportation cost and benefit mines, powerplants and ports present along its route. It will also help to boost trade and industry.

8) Punjab Has Become The First State In India To Issue Soil Health Cards (SHCS)

A Union Government initiative to all farmers in the state. In this regard, every district of state has been assigned mobile soil testing lab. These labs will take soil sample from every farm and issue a digitalised soil health details. Presently, state government has 66 such laboratories and has capability to test 3.5 lakh soil samples annually. State government also has made mandatory for these labs to check soil health on quarterly basis. Importance of SHC in Punjab The advent of green revolution in Punjab has made soil testing more necessary in view of over exploitation of soil. It will help farmers in maintaining the balanced health structure of the soil and educate them to use right quantity of fertilisers in order to prevent soil from becoming arid.

About Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme

The SHC contains all basic and **crop-wise recommendations** of fertilizers or nutrients required for farms of different soil types. It also provides crop-wise nutrient recommendation and other inputs in order to increase the productivity of farms. It will also lead in profiling of soil structure which will in turn help in diversification of crops as per the soil content of that area as well. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had formally launched the nationwide 'Soil Health Card' Scheme in February 2015 in **Suratgarh, Rajasthan**.

9) 8th Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan (All India Marathi Sahitya Sammelan) On 3 April 2015 Began In Ghumaan Village In Gurdaspur District Of Punjab.

It Was Inaugurated By Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari along with the Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. The three-day long sammelan is dedicated to **Marathi Saint Bhagat Namdev** (Sant Namdeo). In this conference large contingent of Marathi litterateurs is going to take part. The President of 88th Akhil Bhartiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan is Dr. Sadanand More. Apart from inaugurated the sammelan, foundation stone of Bhagat Namdev Degree College was also laid in the Ghumaan village.

Village Ghumaan is the place where Marathi Saint Bhagat Namdev had spent 18 years of his life and gave valuable teachings to the society. It is believed that in Ghuman, Sant Namdeo had composed his shlokas in Awadhi, Marathi and Punjabi. **His 61 shabads were included in holy scripture of the Sikhs i.e. in Guru Granth Sahib.**

10) Punjab Punjab Government Launches Padho Punjab- Khedo Punjab Mission

Recently Punjab Government has launched 'Padho Punjab- Khedo Punjab Mission' i.e. Learn Punjab- Play Punjab Mission.

It is a special mission launched to provide school students a separate period in the curriculum for playing along with studies. The purpose of the mission is to encourage more youngsters towards sports to produce quality players for the country. This will also inculcate the sportsmanship spirit and competitiveness amongst them.

Under this mission a 40 to 50 minute special period has been kept for sports. During this period students of middle schools will be taught various games including the games played locally.

Mission's pilot project was launched by State Education Minister Dr. Daljeet Singh Cheema at a government girl's school in **Rupnagar district** of state. As part of it five teachers have been trained for purpose Padho Punjab- Khedo Punjab Mission. They will further give training to other teachers to physically train students in sports and bring out he desired results.

11) Punjab Government Has Launched E-Stamping Project In The State.

This project aims to computerise revenue departments of the state in order to remove malpractices and end leakages of government revenue. It also seeks to make revenue transactions safe and secure. Key facts At present, e-stamping has been initiated as a pilot project in **five districts** of state.

They are **Mohali, Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Bathinda.**

All districts of state will be covered under this project by 31 March 2015. This project will help citizens to pay the exact fee through a wire transfer, a draft or even a cheque for stamp instead of buying it from middlemen at higher cost.

E-stamps have various safety features which includes a unique ID generated by computer and could be verified online and also UV, ultra violet, micro film and thermal fixtures besides an encrypted 2 D bar code so as to keep them **safe from piracy and other such undesirable events.**

12) Punjab Has Become First State In India, To Completely Ban The Sale Of Loose Cigarettes (Even As Single Sticks) And Loose Tobacco.

State government had banned the sale of loose cigarettes and tobacco under Section 7 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA Act, 2003).

Section 7 of COTPA bans sale of these products if they are traded, supplied or distributed without specified warning including pictorial warning on it.

State government notification in this regard clearly mentions that loose cigarettes and tobacco products do not carry a pictorial or a written warning so they are banned.

Earlier state government had banned sale of nicotine in the form of e-cigarette. About COTPA Act, 2003 It was enacted by Parliament in 2003. It prohibits advertisement and regulates tobacco business in India.

This Act has put restriction on tobacco products which includes cigarettes, gutka, panmasala (containing tobacco), cigar, cheroot, Beedi, Snuff, chewing tobacco, hookah, tooth powder containing tobacco.

13) Punjab's First Mega International Food Park Was Inaugurated At Dabwala Kalan, In Fazilka District

It was inaugurated by Union Food Processing Industry Harsimrat Kaur Badal.

This food park is constructed on 55 acre land and has additional facilities for processing milk and milk products besides packaging vegetables and fruits.

Initially it will provide employment for more than 700 local youth and later more will be employed in the park once other companies establishes their units in this facility.

Mega Food Park Scheme:

This scheme is based on cluster approach and on hub and spoke model. It aims at facilitating the establishment of a strong food processing industry backed by an efficient supply chain, which includes collection centres, central processing center (CPC) and cold chain infrastructure. This scheme envisages one time capital grant of 50 per cent of the project cost (excluding land cost) subject to a maximum of Rs 50 crore in general areas. 75 per cent of the project cost (excluding land cost) subject to a ceiling of Rs 50 crore, in difficult and hilly areas including north east region and J&K.

14) Copper And Brass Crafts Of Punjab's 'Thatheras' On UNESCO Heritage List.

The traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of **Jandiala Guru, Punjab** is being inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 2014.

It was announced at UNESCO's **9th Session** of the Intergovernmental Committee (IGC) for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in Paris, France.

The craft of the Thatheras constitutes the traditional techniques of manufacturing brass, copper and kansa (an alloy of copper, zinc and tin) utensils. They have a unique ethnic and historical identity with an **oral tradition** that underpins their skill. The name of the community – 'Thatheras' is identical with the name of the element. These craft utensils of Thatheras have both utilitarian and ritualistic value. The tradition of using the metals is recommended by the ancient Indian school of medicine, Ayurveda. Skills of the Thatheras have been orally transmitted from one generation to other generations.

During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1883) – the great 19th Century Sikh Monarch, the Thatheras crafts colony was established in Jandiala Guru, Punjab. Thus, Jandiala Guru became an area of repute due to the skill of the Thatheras.

The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is made up of those intangible heritage elements that help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance. It encourages dialogues between communities worldwide that practice traditional metal craftsmanship to manufacture handcrafted products that are both useful and beautiful.

15) Punjab Government Launches E-Pms (Project Management System.)

Partaking in 'Digital India' week, Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday launched the State Portal ePMS (Electronic Projects Management System) to fast track infrastructural development.

The project was kicked off to enhance efficiency, bring transparency, boost the investor confidence, revive the investment cycle, eliminate the human interaction and improve the communication between industries/business to Government (B2G), State to Centre (G2G), or vice versa (G2B).

He hoped that this State portal would act as a catalyst to seek clearances from various Central agencies expeditiously required for the timely implementation of the ongoing development projects and welfare schemes thereby cutting down inordinate delay.

This would include submission of a new project, editing/updating the projects, reviewing the projects, submission of details relating to bottlenecks.

It also includes preparation of agenda that could be generated online and circulated with auto mailer to all the Nodal Officers, Secretary of the Ministries or Departments and Invitees with their name, he said.

16) Industrial Policy 2015 for Chandigarh city launched

The Governor of Punjab, Haryana and Administrator of UT Chandigarh Kaptan Singh Solanki released the Industrial Policy 2015 for the Chandigarh city.

The policy is aimed at boosting employment and motivates medium and small industries in the city.

The policy was formulated by the Department of Industries after inviting suggestions from Industries Association of

Chandigarh, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chandigarh.

The Industrial Policy will be reviewed at periodic intervals by the Administration.

Highlights Of The Industrial Policy 2015

1. The objectives of the policy are **to promote non-polluting industry in Chandigarh** and to maximize production
2. Achieve higher productivity through modern and efficient work techniques and optimum utilization of available resources.
3. The services like water connection, sewer connection, acknowledgement under Micro, Small And Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006 (MSMED, Act 2006) and power connection, CST/TIN number, and license services under Factories Act, 1948 will be provided in a time bound manner.
4. If the department does not provide these services within the prescribed time limit, the services will then be deemed to have been approved.
5. The policy mandated creation of online single window system by 2 October 2015. This would save the new and existing entrepreneurs from the hassle of going from one office to another for various applications.
6. The administration would start self certification under various Acts of the Labour Law and exemption would also be given from inspection there under.
7. **VAT forms will now be issued online.**
8. Industrial plots vacant in Industrial Area will be allotted as per the policy of the Administration
9. Under the policy, the administration will set up a Centre of Excellence for fasteners/nut screws/tractor parts and bath fitting enterprises.
10. Certain additional activities such as IT/Electronics Hardware/Software/ITES units are allowed in Industrial areas.

17) National Level Sikh Museum To Be Constructed In Lakhnaur Sahib Village Of Punjab

- ✓ A national level museum of Sikh heritage will be setup in Lakhnaur Sahib village close to Ambala City, Punjab.
- ✓ This announcement was made by Ratan Lal Kataria, MP from Ambala .

About Lakhnaur Sahib

- ✓ Lakhnaur Sahib is a historical village as the mother of tenth Sikh guru Guru Gobind Singh, **Mata Gujari** belonged to the place.
- ✓ Guru Gobind Singh had also spent a few years of his childhood in the village.
- ✓ Around **17 acres** of land belonging to Maharaja Ranjit Singh had been lying vacant in the village, which would now be utilized for the museum.
- ✓ Some articles belonging to Guru Gobind Singh and his mother Mata Gujari will also be kept in the museum and it would be developed on the lines of Anandpur Sahib Museum.

Kataria also announced a contribution of 11 lakh rupees for the gurudwara from Member of Parliament Local Area Development (**MPLAD**) funds.