

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

PM Modi Lays the Foundation Stone of Char Dham Highway Development Project

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the **Char Dham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna** in Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- The Chardham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna, or the Chardham Highway Development Project, is an ambitious initiative to improve connectivity to the Char Dham
 - Gangotri,
 - Yamunotri,
 - Kedarnath and
 - Badrinathpilgrimage centres in the Himalayas.

Karnataka Flags Off 25 Bio-Diesel Buses

- The Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) launched 25 bio-diesel buses to reduce pollution level emitted by diesel buses.
- The 25 new buses will be deployed on the Bengaluru-Kundapur, Bengaluru-Bidar, Bengaluru-Tirupati and Bengaluru-Chennai routes, with no changes in the prices.
- Bio-diesel bus is cheaper as well as eco-friendly than diesel ones. The emission levels of bio-diesel buses are 60 to 70% less than diesel buses, with mileage and engine efficiency being unaffected.
- The bus has been manufactured by Scania while a company from Telangana will supply bio-diesel for the buses.

Gujarat Government Announces Biotechnology Policy

- Gujarat government introduced the 'Biotechnology Policy-2016' to establish Gujarat as a preferred destination for manufacturing of biotechnology products.

About Biotechnology Policy 2016 :

- Under this policy, state government would provide capital subsidy up to Rs 25 crore on the total investment for developing a Biotechnology (BT) Park.
- The developer of such park will be eligible for 100 per cent **reimbursement of stamp duty** paid on sale or lease of the land for setting such park.
- BT Park developer will be given 100 per cent **reimbursement for electricity duty paid for a period of five years.**

- For individual BT manufacturing units having gross fixed capital investment(GFCI) up to Rs 50 crore, government would give **capital subsidy** up to Rs 10 per cent of the GFCI with a ceiling of Rs 5 crore.
- BT units with borrowings up to Rs 50 crore shall be entitled to an **interest subsidy** at the rate of 5 per cent with a ceiling of 2.5 crore per annum

Haryana Organises Country's First Digi Dhan Mela to spread digital literacy

- In order to promote cashless economy, the state government of Haryana organized the country's first **Digi Dhan Mela** in the Gurugram, Haryana post demonitization.
- The centre has planned to organise as many as 100 such melas throughout the country up to April 14, 2017 for educating the people.
- The mela inspired the people to go for digital and cashless transactions. Everything in the mela was cashless, ranging from food courts, E-Thelas, cultural events among others.
- During the mela, banking accounts of more than 3,000 people were opened and about 7,000 persons were imparted training about digital payments.
- **Lucky Grahak Yojana** Awards were also announced in the mela.
- Government of India has launched two schemes namely – **Lucky Grahak Yojana & Digi Dhan Vyapar Yojana for consumers and merchants respectively** wef from December 25th, 2016 to promote digital payments in the country.

Nagar Uday Abhiyan launched in Madhya Pradesh

- The three-phase campaign **Nagar Uday Abhiyan** has been launched in all 378 urban bodies of Madhya Pradesh.
- Aim :To assess services being provided to citizens and bring them at standard live

Ministry of Shipping Inaugurates Sagarmala Development Company's office in New Delhi

- The Union Minister for Road Transport and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, inaugurated the Sagarmala Development Company's office in New Delhi to promote port-led development.
- The SDC has been incorporated under the Companies Act, 2013. The Cabinet in July had Sagarmala Development Company approved the formation of the SDC under the administrative control of the Ministry of Shipping.
- The main objective of the company is to **identify port-led development projects under the Sagarmala programme and provide equity support for the project Special Purpose Vehicles** set up by the Ports, State, Central Ministries and funding window.

- It will be responsible to fund only those residual projects which cannot be funded by any other means mode.
- The Sagarmala Development Company will be provided financial assistance of Rs 50,000 crore at 2 percent interest rate. The project would boost export by about 50 per cent and generate two crore jobs.

NBWL gives Green signal for the Ken-Betwa Inter-Linking of Rivers Project

- The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) gave its approval for the **Ken-Betwa inter-linking of rivers (ILR) project** which will benefit Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in terms of meeting irrigation, drinking water and electricity needs of people across six districts in the two states.
- The project had got the Union Cabinet clearance in July 2014 but work could not begin since it required clearance from the NBWL who were opposing the project citing its impact on tiger reserve and wildlife sanctuaries.
- The NBWL, however, has also imposed certain conditions which includes :
 - **integration of nearby sanctuaries including Rani Durgavati and Ranipur with the Panna Tiger Reserve** to compensate loss of tiger habitat, and
 - complete **ban of fresh mining lease** in the area.
- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)** has been directed to take care of the landscape plan for the area with the help of state forest department and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- The Ken-Betwa ILR project will transfer surplus water from the Ken river to the Betwa basin through a 221-km canal. The concrete canal will pass through Jhansi, Banda and Mahoba districts of UP and Chhatarpur, Panna and Tikamgarh districts of MP.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Bank of Maharashtra Adopts Village in Sangli for Digital Transactions

- Pune based public sector lender Bank of Maharashtra, has adopted the village of Malangaon, in Sangli district, Maharashtra, with the help of District Collector and several government officials to make it a completely cashless village.
- The bank Business Correspondents did door to door campaigns across the village to enroll the people through Aadhaar linked bank accounts to enable them to make payments digitally instead of cash.

- The bank also conducted various educational initiatives in the village to ensure that people got more aware of the various channels of digital payments.

15,000 Lucky Winners of Digital Payment Announced

- With an aim of launching a cashless economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had unveiled two schemes, **Lucky Grahak Yojana** and **Digi Dhan Vyapaar Yojana**, for customers and traders to promote mobile banking and e-payments.
- The Government of India announced the first set of Lucky Grahak Yojana and Digi-Dhan Vyapar Yojana awards at the Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi.
- A total of 15000 winners were selected under 4 broad categories (USSD, UPI, AEPS, RuPay) from the 8 crore digital transactions that took place between 9th November 2016 to 21st December 2016.
- NPCI announced that the winners of lucky draw will receive a message from their banks and the reward money will be credited into their bank accounts over the next 24 hours. Citizens may also check if they have received the reward by logging on to: www.digidhanlucky.mygov.in.
- Each winner would get Rs. 1000 credited in their account.

Indian Army partners with IIT Gandhinagar for critical technology requirements

- Indian Army has inked an agreement with IIT Gandhinagar to set up a research and development (R&D) cell at the IIT campus to identify problems and possible solutions for the Indian Army.
- The agreement also enable the IIT and Indian Army to collaborate in areas including critical technology requirements of Indian Army, sharing of professional and technical knowledge.
- This is an initiative which would result in meaningful realization and efficient transfer of research into customized solutions for the Indian Army.

Paytm Announces 100 Member Merchant Helpdesk

- Digital payments platform, Paytm, has launched a 100 member Merchant Helpdesk to educate merchants across India on digital literacy.
- The E-Commerce Company has also announced that it will invest Rs 50 crore towards educating merchants.

- The main objective of the initiative is to work closely with the merchants by seeking feedback and helping them understand digital payments.
- The initiative will be implemented with multi-channel outreach program involving mass media, on-ground initiative and strengthening the in-house merchant support team.
- The company has also launched a toll-free number 1800 1800 1234 to help the non-smartphone and non-internet users to pay or receive money using Paytm.

AWARDS

Shah Rukh Khan Conferred with Honorary Doctorate for promoting Urdu Language

- Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, conferred the Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan with the honorary doctorate on December 26, 2016, for his contribution towards promotion of Urdu culture.
- Shahrukh Khan was awarded the 'honorius causa' (doctor of letters) at the 6th Convocation of the University by the Chancellor, Zafar Sareshwala.
- Besides, Shah Rukh Khan, Sanjiv Saraf founder of Rekhta Foundation was also conferred the honorary doctorate for the contribution in the promotion of Urdu language and culture.

Rajasthani writer Satya Narayan chosen for Bihari Puraskar

- Eminent Rajasthani writer Satya Narayan has been chosen for the 26th Bihari Puraskar, 2016 by the K K Birla Foundation.
- Narayan selected for his Hindi book titled 'Yeh Ek Dunia' which was published in 2010. The book is a meticulous depiction of various circumstances of life in the contemporary world.
- Books: Phati Jeb Se Ek Din, Ret Ki Kokh Mein, Yahin Kahin Neend Thi and Yeh Ek Dunia.
- Awards: Kanhaiyaa Laal Sahal Award and Acharya Niranjannath Samman'

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Tata Motors roped Akshay Kumar As Brand Ambassador For Commercial Vehicles

- Bollywood star Akshay Kumar is appointed as brand ambassador for Tata Motor's commercial vehicle (CV) business unit.
- Akshay will start his role as ambassador for commercial vehicles will be supported by a multi-media campaign which will begin from January 2017.
- He will also involved in the Tata Motor's marketing and customer experience initiatives

Sri Lankan Politician and Two Time Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake Passes Away

- Veteran Sri Lankan politician Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, who served twice as Prime Minister, passed away after a brief illness on December 27, 2016. The 83-year-old leader was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of a leading private hospital on December 21.
- He was elected to the legislature in 1960, from Horana for the Lanka Sama Samaja Party. Wickremanayake joined the SLFP in 1962. In 1965, he was re-elected to the legislature for Horana from the SLFP.

American Astronomer Vera Rubin Dies at 88

- Vera Rubin, a U.S. astronomer who pioneered work on invisible dark matter in the universe died on December 25, 2016 in Princeton, New Jersey at the age of 88.
- She had been suffering from dementia for several years
- Her studies earned her numerous honours, including being the second female astronomer to be elected to the US National Academy of Sciences.

SPORTS CURRENT AFFAIRS

Virat Kohli named captain of Cricket Australia's ODI team of the year

- Indian Test cricket captain Virat Kohli has been named as the captain of Cricket Australia's ODI team of the year. He was preferred over Australian captain Steve Smith. Recently he was also named the captain of ICC's ODI team of the year
- Out of 10 ODI matches played by Virat Kohli in 2016, he scored a score of 45+ in 8 matches and has an average of greater than 90 in successful run chase for India.
- Another Indian cricketer who got place in the Cricket Australia's ODI team is Jasprit Bumrah. The unorthodox pace bowler had a great first year in international cricket.
- Cricket Australia's ODI Team of Year: Virat Kohli (India, captain), David Warner (Australia), Quinton de Kock (wk) (South Africa), Steve Smith (Australia), Babar Azam (Pakistan), Mitchell Marsh (Australia), Jos Buttler (England), Jasprit Bumrah (India), Imran Tahir (South Africa).

Gujarat's Samit Gohel Creates World Record Score of 359

- Gujarat's opening batsman Samit Gohel made history on December 27 by scoring 359 runs not out during his team's Ranji Trophy quarter-final against Odisha and thus taking his team's total to 641.
- It is the highest unbeaten score by an opening batsman in first-class cricket. The 26-year-old player broke a 117-year-old record by achieving the feat in 723 balls and smashed 45 fours and one six on the way.
- Gohel is also the first opener to remain unbeaten after crossing the 300-run-mark in 81 years in first class cricket. He is also the fifth batsman to score a triple-century in 2016 Ranji.
- To win the match, Odisha now requires 706 runs in its second innings against Gujarat on the 5th day of the match.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Team of Astronomers Discover Universe's Biggest Galaxy Supercluster Vela near the Milky Way

- A research team of astronomers from Australia, South Africa, and Europe has discovered one of the universe's biggest super clusters of galaxies, **Vela supercluster**, near the Milky Way. It was undetected for long as it was hidden by stars and dust in the Milky Way.
- The Vela is massive and is at a distance of 840 million light-years from Earth. It is estimated to carry 100,000 galaxies with trillions of stars.
- The researchers stated that the Milky Way which is a part of the Laniakea supercluster appeared very small and weak when compared to the massive Vela.
- They used the Anglo-Australian Telescope to measure distances for many galaxies to confirm earlier predictions that Vela was a supercluster.

China Successfully Tests Fifth Generation Stealth Fighter FC-31 Gyrfalcon

- China successfully tested the Fifth Generation twin-engine radar-evading stealth fighter, FC-31 Gyrfalcon.
- FC-31 Gyrfalcon, an upgraded version of the J-31 stealth fighter, made its maiden flight in the northeastern city of Shenyang.
- It can easily carry 8 tons of weapons, holding six missiles in its internal weapons bay along with another six under its wings.
- It also has a maximum take-off weight of 28 metric tons, a flight radius of 1,250km, and a top speed of Mach 1.8 (or 1.8 times the speed of sound) and has been equipped with an electro-optical targeting system and helmet-mounted display.
- The "fifth-generation" twin-engine jet FC-31 is China's move to compete with the US F-35, FC - 31 the world's most technically advanced fighter and put an end to nations' monopolies on the fifth-generation fighter jet.