

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Cabinet Approvals

- The Cabinet approved promulgation of an ordinance to make possession of a large number of scrapped banknotes a penal offence beyond March 31, imposing a penalty and a possible jail term.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved a Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely “**Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Areas**” to improve the rural road connectivity in the worst LWE affected districts from security angle.
- Union Cabinet gave its ex post facto approval to the proposal of Ministry of New & Renewable Energy for ratification of the International Solar Alliance’s (ISA) Framework Agreement by India.
- The Centre has approved the re-designation of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project Implementation Trust Fund as National Industrial Corridor Development & Implementation Trust (NICDIT).
- The Ministry of Urban Development has approved the Annual Action Plan of Delhi for 2016-17 under Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) scheme. It has approved an investment of Rs 266 crore for improving water supply and sewerage networks.

Haryana Government to set up country’s first Caterpillar Train

- Haryana Government has decided to set up a pilot corridor for an innovative concept of “Caterpillar Train” that will fly over city’s traffic, in Gurgaon city.
- The concept of Caterpillar Train, also known as C-Train, was co-developed by an Indian Railways engineer Ashwani Kumar Upadhyaya along with Emil Jacob, both PhD Caterpillar Train scholars at MIT, for which they won a global award at the MIT in the United States earlier in 2016 for this innovative idea.

Maharashtra Approves Proposal to Create New Ministry for VJNT OBCs & Special Backward classes

- The State Government of Maharashtra decided to create a new ministry for welfare of Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT) OBCs and Special Backward classes.
- The proposal to create the new ministry was approved by the cabinet which was presided over by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The separate ministry would be headed by an independent minister.
- In another decision, the cabinet sanctioned dissolution of the Nagpur Improvement Trust. The cabinet also approved hike in the grant provided for Ramai and Shabri Awaas Gharkul Yojana.
- Besides, it was also decided that State Agriculture Corporation land will be available for allocation to those affected by notified projects as compensation.
- Government would provide financial assistance to Ramdas Athavale backward cotton producers' co-operative cotton mill in Digras.

Kerala Government Seeks Centre's approval to Use Antlers for Ayurveda Medicine

- The Kerala State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) under chairmanship of CM Pinarayi Vijayan held a meeting to decide over a proposal of using antlers of spotted deer and sambar for Ayurveda medicines.
- The State Government decided to approach the Union Government to get the proposal approved as it requires clearance by the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and Ministry of Environment and Forests.
- SBWL seeks to get the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 amended to get the permission for using the antlers for medicinal purposes.
- The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, includes antler in the definition of wildlife trophy. A wildlife trophy is defined as the "whole or any part of any captive animal or wild animal".
- The Section 39 of the Act states that "no person shall, without the previous permission in writing of the Chief Wildlife Warden or the authorized officer acquire or keep in his possession, custody or control or transfer to any person, whether by way of gift, sale or otherwise or destroy or damage such property."
- Wildlife and wildlife trophies are considered as owned by the government. The Act also prescribes imprisonment up to three years and fine of Rs. 25,000 for offence involving wildlife trophies.

- Antlers are the extensions of the skull of the deer. The three kinds of deer varieties found in Kerala, including spotted deer, sambar, and barking deer, shed their antlers annually. It helps in strengthening bones/muscles and boosting blood flow.

24th National Children's Science Congress inaugurated in Pune by Harsh Vardhan

- The Union Science and Technology Minister Harsh Vardhan inaugurated the 24th National Children's Science Congress (NCSC) at Vidyaprastishan's Institute of Information Technology in Baramati, Pune.
- The five-day congress was jointly organised by Vidyaprastishan and Environmental Forum of India. It is organised every year.
- The focal theme for 2016 NCSC is 'Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development, with special emphasis on Accessibility for Persons with Disability.
- The five-day Science Congress was participated by over 700 child scientists of India, ASEAN & GULF showcase their talents.
- The Congress would conclude by shortlisting the top 25 projects and respective students will be provided with training support. The Centre would provide all necessary support to the growth of science and technology in the country.
- NCSC is a flagship programme of department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology. Though the congress is for Indian school students aged between 10 to 17 years but it has also been seeing good participation from Asian countries.

India Signs Agreement with Bhutan for green and sustainable construction

- India and Bhutan has signed an agreement for bilateral technical cooperation in infrastructure engineering.
- The MoU was signed between Central Public Works Department (CPWD), under India's Ministry of Urban Development and the Department of Engineering Services, under Bhutan's Ministry of Works and Human Settlements.
- Under the MoU, CPWD will assist Bhutan in green and sustainable construction of infrastructure in Thimpu.
- It would also help in promoting sustainability and capacity building through training of India & Bhutanese manpower along with bench-marking in building and road sectors besides deputing engineering experts to Bhutan.

Uttar Pradesh CM lays the Foundation Stone of Film Television and Liberal Arts Institute

- Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Akhilesh Yadav, laid the foundation stone for Film Television and Liberal Arts Institute in Lucknow.
- A token amount of Rs 10 crore has been allotted by the state government for the institute and 14 acres has been allotted for the institute under Awadh Vihar Yojna near Lucknow Haat on Shaheed Path.

HRD Ministry Sets up a new Regional Institute of Education at Nellore

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development is setting up a new Regional Institute of Education (NIE) at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh.
- The State Government has allotted 50 acres of land free of cost on the National Highway at Kanupuru Bit-II, near NH-16 Venkatachalm Mandal, Nellore, Andhra Pradesh for the institute.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Report finds India as second largest arms purchaser after Saudi Arabia

- As per the report of 'Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations 2008-2015' released by Congressional Research Service (CRS), India has emerged as the second largest purchaser of arms among developing nations after Saudi Arabia.
- According to the report, between 2008 and 2015, India purchased defence equipment worth \$34 billion while in the same period, Saudi Arabia's purchase was worth \$93.5 billion.
- The report highlights the recent Indian efforts to diversify its procurement of arms, of which the US has been a major beneficiary. India is planning for continuous modernisation plan for its defence forces.

China operationalizes world's longest bullet train line

- China has started the operations of the longest east-west high-speed railway, which connects eastern coast to the less-developed southwestern part of the country. It is one of the world's longest high-speed railways.

- The Shanghai-Kunming line is 2,252 km in length with the maximum speed of 330 kmph and traverses the five provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guizhou and Yunnan and cuts travel time from Shanghai to Kunming from 34 to 11 hours.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY CURRENT AFFAIRS

Center cancels licences of 20,000 NGOs for violating FCRA

- Home Minister Rajnath Singh announced that the Centre has cancelled the licences of nearly 20,000 NGOs since 2015 for violating various provisions of Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).
- These NGOs have been barred from receiving any foreign funds. Of the 33,000 such registered organisations in the country, only 13,000 NGOs are now legally valid to receive foreign funds.
- The Home Ministry took this decision after an inquiry was conducted into the functioning of the NGOs whose FCRA licenses had recently been renewed. This inquiry into the functioning of the NGOs started about a year ago and the process is still continuing.
- FCRA licence is given for five years.
- As per FCRA, if an NGO is put under prior permission category, it is barred to receive foreign funding from abroad without taking permission from the home ministry.

Twitter partners with ICICI Bank for advanced customer care

- Social Networking Service Twitter and Mumbai based ICICI Bank announced a partnership to enable customers with direct online response to their queries and feedback in real-time.
- With this ICICI Bank becomes the first bank in India to implement the Twitter based customer services @ICICIBank_Care.
- Last year ICICI bank introduced money transfer services on Twitter for the first time in Asia.

Kerala's Nedumkayam tribal colony becomes country's first digital colony

- The Nedumkayam tribal colony in Malappuram district of Kerala has become the first fully-digital tribal colony in the country. The district collector, Amit Meena officially declared the colony as the first digital and cashless colony at a function held in the colony.
- In an attempt to go completely cashless, Malappuram district had launched a digital initiative to train the people of the village on digital transaction.
- Adequate training was imparted to the entire tribal people of the colony in cashless transaction and digital literacy. The training was completed with the support of National Service Scheme, volunteers of an Arts and Science College at Kondotty and Jan Sikshan Sansthan, of Malappuram district.
- The community centre of the colony was made WI-FI enabled with the assistance of NGO Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) to help residents carry out cashless transaction without difficulty.
- As part of formal launch of the project, every member of the colony sent Rs 5 to the account of district collector using smart phones and the collector returned Rs 25 to each of them through online transaction.

AU Financiers (India) gets RBI's final approval to start Small Finance Bank

- Jaipur-based Non-Banking Finance Company (NBFC), Au Financiers (India), received final approval of the Reserve Bank of India to start operations as Small Finance Bank in India.
- The company was among the 10 entities that received in-principle approval of RBI in September 2015 to set up small finance banks.
- Unlike payments banks, small finance banks can lend, besides taking deposits. These entities are expected to strengthen the banking network in the rural areas, which are mostly serviced by regional rural banks, co-operative banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs).
- Au Financiers(India) has operations in 10 states with 300 branches and finances commercial and personal vehicle loans, as well as caters to micro, small and medium enterprises.

MobiKwik gets in-principle approval of RBI to set up Payment System

- Mobiwiki launched mobile app 'MobiKwik Lite '
- MobiKwik, a mobile wallet firm has received an in-principle approval from the RBI to set up a Bharat Bill Payments Operating Unit (BBPOU).
- The company will now be integrated in Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), a bill payment system by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), to offer interoperable and accessible bill payment service to customers through a network of agents.

RBI allows FPIs to invest directly in NCDs/bonds issued by Indian companies

- Reserve Bank of India allowed foreign portfolio investors to transact in non-convertible debentures/bonds issued by Indian companies either directly or in any manner as per the prevalent/approved market practice.
- **Aim:** To provide flexibility in regard to the manner in which such instruments issued by Indian companies can be acquired by FPIs.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Iconic 'Star Wars' Actress Carrie Fisher Dies at 60

- Carrie Fisher, the actress best known as Star Wars 'Princess Leia Organa', has died after suffering a heart attack. She was 60.
- She had recently been undertaking a book tour for her autobiography, "The Princess Diarist", making headlines with her mischievous confessions about her youthful affair with Harrison Ford.

BJP Leader and Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Sunderlal Patwa Dies at 92

- Veteran Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and two-times Madhya Pradesh chief minister passed away at Bansal Private Hospital in Bhopal after suffering a severe heart attack. He was 92.

Viral V. Acharya Appointed as the Fourth Deputy Governor of RBI

- Government has appointed Viral V. Acharya, a professor of economics at New York University, as one of the Reserve Bank of India's four deputy governors for a term of three years.
- The RBI had a vacancy for deputy governor after Urjit Patel was made RBI Governor to succeed Rajan with effect from September 4. The existing three Deputy Governors of RBI are S S Mundra, N S Vishwanathan and R Gandhi.

Soli Sorabjee re-elected IIC president

- Former attorney general Soli J Sorabjee was elected president of the India International Centre (IIC) for a second consecutive term by the board of directors of IIC.
- Sorabjee has been working for IIC for the last two decades. He is well known to have given up cases in the Supreme Court and Delhi High Court to be able to devote time for IIC affairs.

SPORTS CURRENT AFFAIRS

Meghalaya to host National Games 2022

- Meghalaya CM Mukul Sangma handed over the documents to the Meghalaya State Olympic Association (MSOA) to begin the bidding process for hosting the National Games 2022.
- Mr. Sangma also handed over a cheque of Rs 50 lakh on behalf of the state government and letters of support to the MSOA.
- Only two states in North East have hosted the National Games, Manipur in 1999 and Assam in 2007.

Azhar Ali rewrites record books with historic double ton vs Australia

- Azhar Ali. Azhar Ali became the first Pakistan batsman to score a double century in a Test in Australia and also became the fourth batsman to score a double ton at the MCG.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Centre launches IVRS platform to address the problem of call drops

- Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has launched an Integrated Voice Response System (IVRS) system in Delhi, Mumbai, Punjab, UP, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra and Goa. It will be extended to others states.
- **Aim:** To obtain direct feedback from subscribers and use that feedback to solve the problem of call drops.
- Subscribers will receive an IVRS call from the short code 1955. They will be asked a few questions on the subject of call drops. The feedback of the subscribers will be shared with the Telecom Service Providers.

2 high-resolution remote sensing satellites successfully launched by China

- China successfully launched two High-Resolution Remote Sensing Satellites from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Centre in Shanxi Province to get commercial images.
- The paper said that China plans to form a BeiDou network consisting of 35 satellites for global navigation services by 2020. It is expected to compete with America's Global Positioning system.

ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

Study finds Birds with larger brain cope better in climate change than less brainy ones.

- According to a study published in the journal Nature Communications, birds with larger brain better adjust in the fluctuating and harsh climate for finding food, shelter and protection from predators than the ones with smaller brains.
- As per a study conducted by Researchers from the University of Bath in the UK, over 1,200 bird species sample was surveyed to find whether large brains relative to body size are more prevalent in a harsh and unpredictable climate than smaller ones.
- The study found that birds living in highly seasonal environments such as in polar regions, have significantly larger brains than those at the equator.

- It also showed that birds living in habitats with an unpredictable climate, such as places where there are extreme fluctuations in weather from one year to the next, also had larger brains relative to their body size.

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