

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India, Rwanda sign MoUs in innovation, aviation and visa requirements

- India and Rwanda have inked three agreements in the fields of innovation, aviation and visa requirements to boost bilateral relations.
- The important agreements signed are:
 - Bilateral air service agreement between two countries.
 - Agreement for exemption of visa requirements for diplomatic and service passports.
 - Agreement for establishment of an Entrepreneurship Development Centre in Rwanda duly financed by India.

Government launches SAATHIYA Resource Kit and SAATHIYA SALAH mobile app for adolescents

- Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched SAATHIYA Resource Kit and SAATHIYA SALAH mobile app for adolescents as part of the Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) program.
- The kit and app will help Peer Educators (Saathiyas) who are introduced under the RKSK program.
- The Saathiyas act as catalyst for generating demand for adolescent health services and also impart age appropriate knowledge on key adolescent health issues to their peer groups.
- The Resource Kit has been developed by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Population Foundation of India (PFI).
- It has been designed to present the Peer Educators with key information on adolescent health, which would then enable them to communicate the same and help the adolescents at the grass root/village level.

Government announces expansion of rotavirus vaccine in 5 states

- The government has announced the expansion of rotavirus vaccine in five additional states under Universal Immunization Program (UIP). They are Assam, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu.
- The rotavirus is one of the most common causes of severe diarrhea in children less than 2 years of age. It is one of the biggest killers in children in India.
- It is responsible for nearly 78,000 deaths, 32 lakh out-patient visits and nearly 9 lakh hospitalizations every year.
- The vaccine will prevent Rotavirus diarrhea in children which accounts for approximately 40% of hospitalizations from diarrhea in India.

Government releases new format for recording, reporting road accident data

- The uniform accident-recording format has been drawn on the lines of developed countries. It has been forwarded to all state police and transport departments for adaptation and to furnish annual road accident data.

- Police, transport department and other agencies rather merely putting blame on driver, should consider factor in circumstances such as road conditions, visibility, signage and weather that led to an accident first.
- The concerned authorities will have to furnish five-point information regarding every accident, which will be monitored centrally.
- These five points include the site of accident, details of vehicles involved, weather condition, victims' details and nature of mishap.

Gujarat Assembly passes Aadhaar Bill, 2017

- Gujarat Assembly has passed Gujarat Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Bill, 2017.
- The bill seeks to empower the state government to use Aadhaar number as the sole identifier for the delivery of various subsidies and benefits in an effective and targeted manner.
- As of now, Gujarat government provides various subsidies and financial assistance to the citizens under 119 schemes using RTGS or through cheques.
- By linking the Aadhaar number with various schemes will help the state government create a credible system to authenticate the identity of actual beneficiaries.
- This bill will ensure more accurate, targeted and efficient delivery of such disbursements using Aadhaar number.

MoU signed for welfare of Handicraft Artisans belonging to Scheduled Castes

- Union Ministry of Textiles and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment have signed MoU to step up interventions for the welfare and economic development of scheduled caste artisans.
- Aims:
 - Continuous and extensive collaboration between NSFDC and Office of DC (Handicrafts). Assessment and gap id
 - Assessment and gap identification through popularising various schemes by holding awareness camps.
 - Extensive skill upgradation in the identified clusters having dominant presence of SC artisans, in the field of innovative and market-friendly designs and adoption of modern tools and techniques
 - Enhancing participation of SC artisans and their producer groups in domestic and international marketing events.
 - Providing working capital credit for SC artisans at concessional rates, by combining benefits provided by both ministries.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Scientists claim discovery of Zealandia a submerged continent in Pacific Ocean

- Geologists have claimed discovery of new geological continent named Zealandia submerged beneath the south-west Pacific Ocean

- Zealandia is around 4.5-million square km land mass and is 94% under water. Only its highest points — New Zealand and New Caledonia are visible.
- Zealandia is two-thirds the size of Australia and spreads out over 4.9-million-square kilometres of continental crust. It was once a part of Australia.
- It is believed that it had broken off from Antarctica about 100 million years ago, and then from Australia about 80 million years ago as part of the breakup of super-continent Gondwanaland and sank beneath sea.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Barren Island: India's only live volcano active again

- After lying dormant for 150 years, Barren Island volcano had erupted in 1991 and since then it is showing sporadic activity. Now it is erupting in small episodes of five to 10 minutes.
- It is claimed that volcanoes is erupting the rising magma formed deep in the mantle due to the melting of the subducted Indian Ocean crust.
- The volcanic island is part of Andaman islands. Its northern part is barren and is uninhabited. It is also devoid of vegetation.
- Scientists have sampled sediments and water and also have recovered coal-like black pyroclastic material of volcanic ejecta. These samples will help in deciphering nature of present and past volcanic activity in region.