

National Current Affairs

UP Government launches Prakash Hai to Vikas Hai Scheme

The Uttar Pradesh Government launched 'Prakash hai to vikas hai' Scheme, a free household power connection scheme for the poor in the state.

- It was launched to mark former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday i.e. on the occasion of Good Governance Day (25 December).
- Initially, two village Lohban and Gausana of Mathura district have been covered under this scheme for 100% electrification.
- UP government has also launched Kisan Uday Yojana, a scheme for farmers in which existing 5 HP (Horse Power)/7.5 HP submersible and coupling sets of farmers will be replaced free of cost.
- The scheme will cover 10 lakh farmers by 2022 and will lead to 35% saving on power consumption.

SDMC launches Atal Jan Aahar Yojana to provide meal at Rs 10

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) launched a new scheme for the poor that will allow them to buy meal for Rs 10 from the civic body's kiosks during the day.

- The Atal Jan Aahar Yojana has been started to make a nutritious full meal accessible to the needy, in a phased manner.
- The scheme was started at kiosks in five different locations of south Delhi.
- The meal will be available for sale at Rs 10 daily from 11 am to 2 pm.
- The scheme is being implemented in a phased manner. It will be expanded, in terms of more centres and distribution timings to including dinner as well

UP inks MoU with South Korea in field of tourism, skill development, culture and farming

The Uttar Pradesh government has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with South Korea on to enhance cooperation in the field of tourism, skill development, culture and farming.

- It was signed after a delegation from South Korea's Gimhae city met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow and discussed ways to improve cooperation between the two countries.

- The MoU will go a long way in cementing the bond especially cultural and historical relations between Uttar Pradesh and South Korea.
- Earlier, in 2000, an agreement was signed to develop Ayodhya and Gimhae as sister cities, following which memorial was constructed in Ayodhya which is visited by large number of tourists from South Korea every year.

Blue Flag pilot project launched for beach clean-up and development

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has launched pilot project 'Blue Flag' to develop and enhance standards of cleanliness on beaches.

- This information was given by Minister of State (MoS) in MoEFCC, Dr. Mahesh Sharma, in reply to a written question in Lok Sabha.
- The 'Blue Flag' is a certification by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) that a beach, Marina or sustainable boating tourism operator, meets its stringent standards. Its purpose is to enhance standards of cleanliness, upkeep and basic amenities at beaches.
- Under the pilot project, each of coastal state/UT was requested to identify and nominate a beach, which is to be funded through ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme (ICMP).
- The FEE is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation promoting sustainable development through environmental education.

Narendra Modi to be first PM to attend World Economic Forum in 20 years

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will make his maiden appearance at Davos, the Alpine ski resort where the world's top CEOs and a large number of heads of government gather for the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in January.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the first Indian Prime Minister in past 20 years to attend the annual meeting of World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos, Switzerland. The meeting is scheduled to be held in January 2018.
- The India theme will be in focus at the conference with several sessions around India.

PM Modi inaugurates Delhi Metro's Magenta line

On December 25, 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Botanical Garden-Kalkaji section (of Magenta Line) of Delhi Metro.

- This 12.64-km route of Magenta Line will be Delhi Metro's first line to get driverless trains.

- On this line, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) will be using Communication Based Train Control (CBTC) signalling technology which would facilitate the movement of trains at a higher frequency as compared to other lines.
- All stations of this line will have platform screen doors (PSDs) while the coaches running on this line will have electronic information display, power charging facility through USB ports and seats in different colour shades.
- Besides, the new trains will be energy-efficient and would consume 20 per cent less energy as compared to older trains.

Government to roll out Condonation of delay scheme

The Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) is going to roll out Condonation of Delay Scheme to provide a three-month window for defaulting companies and their director to submit their annual filings.

- It will be operational from January 1 to March 31, 2018. It is expected to come as a relief for disqualified directors and only bona fide directors will benefit from the proposed scheme.
- The scheme will be operational for period of three months only. During this period, DIN (Director Identification Number) of disqualified directors will be re-activated temporarily to facilitate Directors of defaulting companies to file all overdue annual returns.
- If Director of defaulting company fails to utilise scheme and regularise compliance after the end of the three month window period, his DIN will be deactivated and he will be disqualified for period of 5 years.

Government launches e-HRMS

The Union Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions launched the electronic-Human Resource Management System (e-HRMS) on the occasion of Good Governance Day (25 December).

- The e-HRMS was launched as a step towards the ease of governance and is in lines with Government's goal of minimum government, maximum governance.
- 25 applications of five modules of the system were also launched.
- e-HRMS is an online platform for central government employees to apply for leave and access their service-related information.
- It will enable these employees to see all their details with respect to service book, leave, salary, GPF, etc. and also apply for different kind of claims and reimbursements, loan and advances, leave, leave encashment, LTC advances, tour etc. on a single platform.

- The system is designed in such a way to obtain all management-related inputs and reports through its dashboard.
- It will enable senior authorities to check all pendency of data updating as well as claims, which will in turn instil more responsibility and accountability among all government servants.
- The launch of e-HRMS is in the direction of fully automated human resource management system with target to bring all government employees on employee portal.

Government frame action plans for backward district programme

The Union Government has drawn up action plans for backward district programme to improve socio-economic profiles of 115 identified “most-backward” districts including 35 affected by left-wing extremism.

- The action plans aims at providing these districts basic services like healthcare, sanitation and education as well as basic physical infrastructure like roads and drinking water supply in a time-bound manner.
- The government’s focus under this programme is to work with states to bring transformative change in these selected backward areas through rapid government-anchored programmes and interventions by 2022 i.e. till 75th year of India’s independence.
- At least one district has been included from each state under backward district programme.
- Jharkhand with 19 has highest number of districts under this programme, followed by Bihar (13) Chattisgarh (10) and 8 each in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.

International Current Affairs

Chinese consortium constructs Bangladesh's first eco-friendly power plant

A Chinese consortium has been constructing Bangladesh's first eco-friendly power plant with ultra modern clean coal technology at Payra in Patuakhali district, some 204 km south of capital Dhaka, near a maritime port.

- The 1320 MW Thermal Power Plant Project (1st phase will be eco-friendly with clean coal technology and have two units which are expected to be commissioned in April and October, 2019 respectively.

- The consortium of the Chinese firms is assigned for the plant's engineering, procurement and construction while BCPCL is its executing agency.
- The plant which is to be built on a 397-hectare land is a part of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina government's plan to set up a series of coal-fired power projects to generate 40,000 MW electricity by 2030.

Guatemala to move embassy to Jerusalem

Guatemala plans to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

- Guatemala, the United States, Israel and six smaller nations voted against a United Nations resolution to condemn US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Trump Signs \$1.5 Trillion Tax Cut

President Donald Trump signed the Republican tax-overhaul bill to little fanfare on Friday, delivering a major tax cut to U.S. corporations along with a package of temporary cuts for other businesses and most individuals.

- The bill slashes the corporate tax rate to 21 percent from 35 percent and cuts individual tax rates across the board -- though analyses have shown that most of the benefit would go to those at the top of the income scale.
- It also imposes new limits on deductions used heavily in high-tax states with high home values, meaning some people in those areas will see higher tax bills.
- Overall, the bill is projected to decrease federal revenue by almost \$1.5 trillion over the next decade

Typhoon Tembin in Philippines leaves more than 120 dead, 160 missing

A typhoon in the southern Philippines unleashed flash floods that swept away people and houses and set off landslides, reportedly leaving more than 120 people dead and 160 others missing.

- Most of the deaths from Typhoon Tembin were in the hard-hit Mindanao provinces of Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur and on the Zamboanga Peninsula.
- It's the latest disaster to hit the Philippines, which is battered by about 20 typhoons and storms each year, making the archipelago that lies on the Pacific typhoon belt one of the world's most disaster-prone countries.
- In 2003, Super Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest typhoons ever recorded, ravaged large parts of the central Philippines and left more than 6,300 people dead.

UNESCO recognizes Panama's hats

Cultural authorities at UNESCO have recognized the artisans of Panama for their distinctive woven hats.

- Panama's real contribution to the world's hat heritage is the pintao, or painted hat, handmade from five different plants and a dose of swamp mud.
- Production of the circular-brimmed hats is still a family affair carried out on a household scale. The industry's center is La Pintada, a district about 170 kilometers (105 miles) west of Panama City.
- The widely known "Panama hat" is a brimmed hat traditionally made in Ecuador from the straw of the South American toquilla palm plant.

Banking & Finance

MHA directs NGOs to open account in designated banks integrated with PMFS

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has directed all NGOs, individuals and business entities receiving foreign funds to open accounts in any of 32 designated banks, including one foreign, within a month.

- The MHA order comes in exercise of the powers conferred under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010.
- These accounts opened in 32 designated banks will be integrated with central government's Public Financial Management System (PFMS).
- Its purpose is to provide higher level of transparency and hassle-free reporting compliance.
- The PFMS is an end-to-end solution for processing payments, tracking, monitoring, accounting, reconciliation and reporting.

Only 1.7% Indians paid income tax in AY 2015-16

According to data released by the I-T department, just over 2 crore Indians, or 1.7 per cent of the total population, paid income tax in the assessment year (AY) 2015-16.

- The number of income-tax return filers increased to 4.07 crore in assessment year 2015-16 (FY 2014-2015) from 3.65 crore in the previous year but only 2.06 crore actually paid tax as the others claimed income below taxable limits.
- The data, released last week, indicates just over 3 per cent of the 120 crore population filed returns. Of these, 2.01 crore paid nil income tax, 9,690 paid tax of over Rs. 1

crore. Only one individual paid over Rs. 100 crore in taxes (Rs 238 crore to be precise).

- Of the 4.07 crore tax returns filed in AY 2015-16, close to 82 lakh showed zero or income less than Rs. 2.5 lakh. Currently, no income tax is for income up to Rs. 2.5 lakh.

Sports

Galym Zharylgapov Boxing Tournament: Indian boxers clinch three gold

India's elite boxers K Shyam Kumar (49-kg), Naman Tanwar (91-kg) and Satish Kumar (+91-kg) starred in the Galym Zharylgapov Boxing Tournament here on Sunday, clinching gold medals in their respective categories.

- Manish (60-kg) and Mandeep (75-kg) also put up stellar shows to pocket a silver and a bronze medal each to give the country another rich haul of five medals in an international tournament.
- The team's first gold came through Shyam Kumar, against the local boy, Turkbay. Kumar punched his way to glory to set the ball rolling for India. Asian Games bronze medallist Satish Kumar (+91-kg) then steamrolled past Baeshev to bring home the team's second gold.
- 19-year-old Naman (91-kg), however, towered over everybody as he not only won the gold, but also earned himself the accolade of being the 'best boxer' of the tournament.
- Manish Kaushik (60-kg), who beat the highly decorated Shiva Thapa in his final bout to seize the gold, lost to Rahimov of Uzbekistan to settle for silver.
- In the semifinals of the prestigious tournament, Commonwealth games silver medalist Mandeep Jangra's gallant fight against Manashev in his maiden international tournament couldn't help him emerge victorious as he lost out on points and ended his campaign with a bronze.
- The Indian team finished the competitive tournament, which had 154 boxers in fray including five international teams and 15 local teams, with three gold, silver and a bronze apiece.

Saudi Arabia hosts world chess games, testing reform limits

Saudi Arabia is hosting a world chess tournament for the first time on Tuesday nearly two years after the country's top cleric issued a religious edict against playing the board game.

- Israelis say Saudi Arabia ignored requests by Israeli players to obtain visas to participate in the tournament.
- Meanwhile, players from Qatar and Iran, which have strained ties with Saudi Arabia, have been granted visas to participate in the tournament. However, Qatari players will not compete in the championship because Qatar's chess federation said organizers demanded that the players not display the Qatari flag during the competition.
- The tournament, called the King Salman World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships, runs until Saturday. It includes around 240 players — both men and women — from 70 countries. There are 16 players from Saudi Arabia.
- The world's top three chess players from Norway, Armenia and Azerbaijan are participating in the tournament. There is also a women's chess tournament taking place alongside the open championship

Appointments & Resigns

Vijay Rupani sworn in as Chief Minister of Gujarat

Vijay Rupani (61) was sworn in as the 16th Chief Minister of Gujarat. Besides him, Deputy Chief Minister Nitin Patel and 18 other ministers (9 in cabinet rank and 10 MoS) also took oath.

- Vijay Rupani has been an active worker of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the BJP since its inception. He had made his political debut as Rajkot Mayor in 1987.
- He was inducted as minister in first cabinet expansion by Chief Minister Anandiben Patel in November 2014.
- He had held portfolios of Ministry of transport, water supply, labour and employment in Anandiben Patel Government.
- He was appointed as Chief Minister in August 2016 after Anandiben Patel was removed from the post.
- Earlier, he had served as MP of Rajya Sabha for Gujarat from 2006 to 2012.

Awards & Recognition

Mayanka Patel and Poonam Gaur Take the Mrs India Crown

Mayanka Patel from Mumbai and Poonam Gaur from Gurugram were crowned Mrs India-Pride of Nation in two different categories at the grand finale.

- Mayanka was announced winner in Group A category that had a participation of girls in the age bracket of 21 years to 34 years while Group B (34-45 years) saw Poonam taking the crown at the event that was organised by Glamour Gurgaon.
- With an aim to showcase the beauty and talent of these enthusiastic ladies, Mrs India-Pride of Nation 2017 said it also strives to empower them to be better contributors to the society.

Obituary

Bengali film actor Partha Mukhopadhyay passes away

On 25th December 2017, Bengali actor Partha Mukhopadhyay died due to cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Kolkata.

- Partha Mukhopadhyay had acted in films made by great directors like Tapan Sinha, Tarun Majumdar and Goutam Ghosh.
- His important movies are Balika Bodhu, Dhonyi Meye, Agnishwar, Amar Prithivi, Baag Bandi Khela.

Legendary SA musician Robbie Malinga passes away

On 25th December 2017, legendary South African musician Robbie Malinga passed away.

- His career spanned over 20 years.
- He retired as a solo artist in 2016.