National Current Affairs

MeitY launches Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched Cyber Surakshit Bharat initiative to strengthen cyber security ecosystem in India in line Government's vision for a 'Digital India'.

- It was launched in association with National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and industry partners.
- Cyber Surakshit Bharat is first public-private partnership of its kind.
- It will leverage the expertise of the IT industry in cybersecurity.
- The founding partners include leading IT companies such as Microsoft, Intel, WIPRO, Redhat and Dimension Data.
- Its knowledge partners include Cert-In, NIC, NASSCOM and FIDO Alliance and premier consultancy firms Deloitte and EY.
- Objective: Spread awareness about cybercrime and building capacity for safety measures for Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs) and frontline IT staff across all government departments.
- Operations: It will be operated on three principles of awareness, education and enablement. It will include an awareness program on importance of cybersecurity. It will also include a series of workshops on the best practices and enablement of the officials with cybersecurity health tool kits to manage and mitigate cyber threats.
- Training programmes: It will conduct series of training programmes across country in the next six months. It will be attended by CISOs and technical officials from central government, state governments and UTs, PSBs, PSUs and defence forces, defence PSUs and technical arms of Air Force, Army and Navy.

Government launches Liveability Index to rate 116 Indian cities

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban affairs (MoHUA) launched the Liveability index to rate 116 Indian cities.

- Liveability index is tool that aims to measure quality of life in 99 smart cities, capital cities and those with a population of over one million.
- It will be funded by the World Bank and ranking of these cities is expected to be ready by June 2018.
- The index is set of indicators to assess the liveability standards in cities. It will measure the quality of life in 116 major cities including capital cities and those with population over one million. It will assess cities on comprehensive set of 79 parameters.

- Marks scored will decide the quantum of incentive.
- These 79 parameters (57 core indicators and 22 supporting indicators) are based on four broad pillars: physical (weightage 45%), institutional (25%), social (25%) and economic (5%).
- IPSOS Research Private Limited in alliance with Athena Infonomics India Private Limited and Economist Group Limited were selected for assessing the liveability indices in 116 cities.
- The rating will help cities attain a liveable city status, get them more investments and improve tourism.
- It will also serve as a knowledge base for taking policy decisions and for planning.
- The index marks shift to data driven approach to urbanisation and promote competitive spirit among cities.

Government launches National CSR Data Portal & Corporate Data Portal

The Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has launched National CSR Data Portal & Corporate Data Portal for bringing accountability and transparency for corporate India.

- The portals aim to provide easy accessibility to general public and also ensure high level of compliance.
- It will also help in institutionalising and consolidating the CSR activities.
- The portal will capture information on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities carried out by eligible companies, filed on MCA21 registry in their financial statements.
- It will contain all filed information that can help to generate pre-defined reports with respect to expenditure across states, districts and development sectors.
- It will also provide feedback on projects to be given by registered users.
- Moreover, the open access to data will help researchers and also improve quality of data filed by companies, as well as involve intended beneficiaries in giving valuable feedback to companies.
- Corporate Data Portal aims at making all financial and non-financial information of companies available in user-friendly format to general public.
- It will also have facility to generate pre-defined reports and also customised reports.
- The portal will enable greater transparency and creation of tools for stronger Corporate Governance.
- These portals are expected to bring 100% transparency in corporate governance by making public over 4-crore filings of nearly 1.2 million companies.
- They will also promote corporate transparency and accountability to public at large.
- They are also expected to become platforms for learning and sharing of ideas and information.

- They will also facilitate social audit of CSR projects and bring together CSR contributors, implementers and beneficiaries and align CSR activities with national development goals.

Government announces 9 new Smart Cities

Union Minister of Housing and Urban affairs Hardeep Singh Puri has announced a new batch of 9 smart cities under Smart City Mission.

- With the addition of these 9 smart cities in the fourth round, the total cities picked up under Smart City Mission have reached 99.
- The nine cities include three from Uttar Pradesh –Moradabad, Bareilly and Saharanpur, Bihar Sharif (Bihar), Silvassa (Dadra and Nagar Havelli), Erode (Tamil Nadu), Daman and Diu, Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh) and Kavaratti (Lakshadweep). The selected nine cities have proposed an investment of Rs 12,824 crore. This will impact 35.3 lakh persons living in these areas.
- The total proposed investment in 99 cities will be to the tune of Rs 2.03 lakh crore.
- As on January 2018, 189 projects worth Rs. 2237 crore were completed and another 2,948 projects worth Rs. 1.38 lakh crore are in various stages of implementation.

Karaikal gets post-office passport seva kendra

The residents of the port city of Karaikal will no longer have to undertake a three-hour-long drive to

- Anew post-office passport seva kendra (POPSK) was inaugurated in the port city of Karaikal.
- Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Chief Minister Puducherry V Narayanaswamy presided over the ceremony to inaugurate the Karaikal kendra.
- The Ministry of External Affairs has collaborated with the Department of Posts to set up these post-office passport seva kendra in head post-offices across the country in order to provide passport related services on a larger scale.
- A total of 236 passport kendras have been announced, of which 60 such centres have been set up so far.
- The passport kendra at Karaikal will aim to serve 50 applicants everyday, which could be scaled up subsequently.

Odisha government launches OeHMIS project

The Odisha government has launched Odisha e-Hospital Management Information System (OeHMIS) to provide a computerized platform for online recording of clinical parameters of patients and reporting of performance criteria of hospitals.

- According to the system, patients can be registered online and can view and download their individual electronic health records at their doorstep through web portal or mobile application.
- The project was launched by the state government with the technical support of Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), Noida.
- This system will be piloted at Capital Hospital at Bhubaneswar and SCB Medical College Hospital at Cuttack. Later it will be extended to other health institutions.
- It will improve efficiency and reduce paper work through automation of processes such as diagnostic reports, prescription details and advice given by different specialists.

Telangana inks MoU with ISE Foods, Clean Authority of Tokyo

Telangana has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Clean Authority of Tokyo for solid waste management. The two sides will exchange expertise and build technical cooperation in waste management.

- The Telangana delegation headed by Industries and IT Minister KT Rama Rao also signed a Letter of Intent with ISE Foods Inc.
- ISE Foods will set up a pilot project for egg production using advanced technologies.
- The firm will also set up a solar park to support the egg production facility, including the development of storage devices.

IIT-Bhubaneswar to have incubation centre

An incubator "Centre of Excellence for Virtual and Augmented Reality" (VARCoE) will be set up on the IIT-Bhubaneswar, campus.

- The MSME Department of Odisha government, along with Software Technology Park of India (STPI) and Susmita Bagchi, a noted Odia writer and philanthropist, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with IIT-Bhubaneswar.
- The centre would be one of its kind in the country, being set up with a unique collaborative partnership between the state government, union government through STPI, a philanthropist and an IIT.
- The incubator on Virtual Augmented Reality at IIT-Bhubaneswar would be a landmark initiative for promoting research, technology incubation and product development in the country.

- The centre will cater to the startups and new generation entrepreneurs working in the area of Virtual Augmented Reality for immersive visualisation and allied areas.
- It will undertake state-of-the-art research, develop testing facility/laboratories for advanced algorithms, applications and methods in aid of Virtual and Augmented Reality for Immersive Visualization and allied areas.
- It will help in developing application platforms for specific skill development programs based on the industry need and relevance.

Website Accessibility Project launched to make 100 websites accessible to persons with disabilities

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched Website Accessibility Project to make 100 websites various State Governments/UTs accessible to persons with disabilities (Divyangjans) under Accessible India Campaign.

- It was launched by Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot on the occasion of 'National Conference on Improving Accessibility.
- The Department of Divyangjan had initiated 'Website Accessibility Project' for State Governments/UTs under Accessible India Campaign through ERNET India, an autonomous scientific society under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) to make total 917 websites accessible.
- The accessible websites are those into which Persons with Disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate and interact with web and also contribute to web.

Mercedes-Benz first to launch locally-made BS-VI-compliant car

German auto major Mercedes-Benz has unveiled India's first BS-VI-compliant S Class car produced at its Pune facility.

- The BS-VI-compliant S Class car was unveiled more than two years ahead of Government's deadline of April 2020 for switching to new BS-VI emission norms.
- BS-VI-compliant S Class can run on BS-IV fuel, which will bring down NOx emissions by 68% and PM by 82%.
- This will lower the CO_2 burden by 13% and fuel demand by 10%.
- This will pave way for other car manufacturers to introduce their vehicles which are compliant with new emission regulation.
- Bharat stage (BS) emission standards are emission standards instituted by Central Government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.

2018 to be observed as National Year of Millets

Government has approved 2018 as National Year of Millets to boost production of the nutrient-rich millets and the sunrise agri industry involved in it.

- Earlier in November 2017, India had forwarded proposal to United Nations (UN) for declaring year 2018 as 'International Year of Millets'.
- Observation of Year of Millets will help in promotion of production and consumption of millets will substantially contribute in fight against targeted hunger and mitigate effect of climate change in long run.
- Popularizing millets will also benefit future generations of farmers as well as consumers.
- Millets are smart food and good for consumers, farmers and planet multiple and has untapped uses such as food, feed, biofuels and brewing.

TRAI recommends allowing mobile services during air travel

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has recommended allowing mobile telephony and Internet services for passengers during air travel in country through both satellite and terrestrial network.

- TRAI's recommendation comes on request of Department of Telecom over proposal to introduce voice, data and video services over Indian airspace for domestic, international and overflying flights in Indian air space.
- Both Internet and Mobile Communication on Aircraft (MCA) service should be permitted as In-Flight Connectivity (IFC) in the Indian airspace.
- The MCA services should be permitted with minimum 3000 meters height restriction in Indian airspace for its compatibility with terrestrial mobile networks.

WhatsApp Business app launched

WhatsApp Business app, which is meant for small businesses, has been launched.

- Released on Android, the app is aimed at helping small enterprises connect better with their customers.
- However, WhatsApp for Business is not yet available in India and will launch for the rest of the world later, which would most likely include India given that this is the biggest market for the app.
- Currently, WhatsApp's Business app has been rolled out in Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, the UK and the US.

Chennai to host DefExpo in April

For the first time, Tamil Nadu will host DefExpo 2018, an international exhibition on Defence, in April, showcasing some of the latest technologies and products manufactured by both Indian and foreign companies.

- It will also give an opportunity for the State to showcase its strength as one the largest manufacturing hubs for defence production.
- The event, which is the largest in the defence sector in India, will attract visitors from over 80 countries.
- DefExpo 2018 will be held between April 11 and 14 at a temporary expo centre on East Coast Road near Mahabalipuram.
- DefExpo India —— Land, Naval & Internal Homeland Security Systems Exhibition is held once in two years. The last edition was held in Goa, and the one before that in Delhi.

International Current Affairs

Maitre-2 bus services to connect India and Bangladesh

Maitre-2 a second passenger bus to Kolkata via Dhaka is started from Agartala, Tripura, to give a boost to the trans-border relationship between India and Bangladesh.

- Recently, the Maitre-2 buses were flagged off by Tripura Road Transport Corporation Chairman Rajendra Reang and MLA Ratan Das in Agartala.
- The bus service is expected to improve the relationship between India and Bangladesh through people-to-people connectivity.
- The bus service between the nations will be fruitful for the locals as it will be time-saving and economical as the bus is scheduled to ply twice a week with a fare of Rupees 2200 and will take about 20 hours for reaching the destinations.
- The first Maitre bus service was launched in the year 2015. The Kolkata-Dhaka bus link began in June 1999. And a separate Agartala-Dhaka service started in September 2003.

Banking & Finance

Mauritius was largest source of FDI in India in 2016-2017: RBI

According to Census on Foreign Liabilities and Assets of Indian Direct Investment Companies 2016-17 released by Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Mauritius was largest source of foreign investment (FDI) in India.

- The census yields carry comprehensive information on market value of foreign liabilities and assets of Indian companies arising on account of FDI, ODI and other investments.
- Mauritius was largest source of FDI in India (21.8% share at market value) followed by USA, UK, Singapore and Japan. Singapore (19.7%) was major ODI destination, followed by Netherlands, Mauritius, and US.
- 18,667 companies had participated in census, of them 17,020 had FDI/overseas direct investment (ODI) in their balance sheets in March 2017. 96% of responding companies were unlisted in March 2017 and most of them had received only inward FDI.
- Unlisted companies had higher share of FDI equity capital vis-a-vis listed companies.
- Further, over 80% of 15,169 companies that reported inward FDI were subsidiaries of foreign companies (single foreign investor holding over 50% of total equity).
- The manufacturing sector accounted for nearly half of total FDI at market prices, information and communication services (ICTS) and financial and insurance activities were other major sectors that attracted FDI. Total sales, including exports, of foreign subsidiaries in India increased by 18.7% during 2016-17 whereas their purchases, including imports, increased by 20.1%.

AU Small Finance Bank inks MoU with LIC to offer PMJJBY scheme

Banking finance company AU Small Finance Bank has signed an MoU with LIC to offer Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY).

- Under the MoU, LIC will give a life cover of ₹2 lakh in case of death to the customer at a nominal premium of ₹330 per annum.
- The aim is to provide best services to the customers under one roof, MD and CEO of the company.
- The company will also offer loans under government's affordable housing and subsidy schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.
- The customers can avail loans up to ₹1 crore.
- The product will be targeted for both salaried and self- employed (professional and non-professional) customers in urban, semi-urban and rural areas which is the bank's core market segment.

Pension regulator PFRDA relaxes norms, allows partial withdrawal under NPS

Relaxing norms, PFRDA has permitted partial withdrawal under the National Pension System (NPS) for purchase of residential premises, treatment of critical illness, higher education and marriage of children.

- NPS subscribers who have contributed for three years can now withdraw up to 25 per cent of the corpus for meeting specified expenses
- A subscriber on the date of submission of the withdrawal form, shall be permitted to withdraw not exceeding 25 per cent of the contributions made by such subscriber to his individual pension account" for specified purposes.
- The withdrawal will be permitted only three times during the tenure of the subscription.
- The specified purposes for which funds could be withdrawn from the NPS account, include higher education of children or their marriage.
- The withdrawal will be also permitted for purchase/ construction of residential house or flat.
- In case the subscriber already owns either individually or in the joint name a residential house or a flat, other than ancestral property", no withdrawal will be permitted.
- Funds can also be withdrawan for treatment of illnesses like cancer, kidney failure, coronary artery bypass graft, heart valve surgery and paralysis.

Sports

Jammu and Kashmir to host international martial arts event

Jammu and Kashmir will host its maiden international martial arts games event in October this year, in which over a dozen countries are expected to participate.

- J-K will host first ever international martial arts games, in which over 15 countries are expected to participate, in the first week of October this year in the summer capital Srinagar,
- The aim behind hosting the international event in Kashmir is to present a platform for people to people interaction between the people of the valley and rest of Asian countriea.
- The event would also help in tourism promotion.
- The National Martial Arts Committee (NMAC) of India has received consent from 12 countries so far.
- Over 1,000 players, including over 200 foreigners, are expected to participate in the international event.

Obituary

Ex-Proteas all-rounder Sulaiman 'Dik' Abed passes away

Former South Africa all-rounder Sulaiman 'Dik' Abed passed away in The Netherlands.

- Known as a capable batsman and a fast bowler with a fine leg cutter, Dik had enjoyed an outstanding career at home, playing for Western Province in the late 60s.
- Subsequently, he took up a contract with Enfield in the Lancashire Leagues in England and went on to amass more than 5,000 runs beside also bagging more than 800 wickets over a 10-year period from 1967 to 1976.
- Abed later settled in Holland and led The Netherlands to the ICC Trophy Competition in England in 1982.

Former MP Assembly Speaker Sriniwas Tiwari no more

- Senior Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh Assembly Speaker Sriniwas Tiwari passed away in a hospital in Delhi. Tiwari, popularly known as "White Tiger".

Books & Authors

The Heartfulness Way' launched in India

On January 19, the President of India, Ram Nath Kovind, in the presence of Union Commerce and Industries Minister Suresh Prabhu, unveiled the book by Daaji.

- The book promises to be a treat for those who are curious about what Heartfulness is and how it can change our day to day lives.
- The Heartfulness Way encapsulates a seeker's journey while examining the nature of spiritual search within and around us.
- The books reflect the essence of prayer and yogic transmission aimed at deconstructing and demystifying the act of meditation based on meditation tips.