

National Current Affairs

MeITY launches Stree Swabhiman Initiative for Women Health and Hygiene

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY) has launched Stree Swabhiman Initiative.

- Its aim is to create sustainable model for providing adolescent girls and women an access to affordable sanitary products by leveraging Common Service Centres (CSCs).
- Under this initiative, Common Service Centres (CSC) will provide access to affordable, reliable and modern (eco-friendly) sanitary napkins (menstrual pads) to adolescent girls and women in rural areas.
Its purpose is to improve awareness on menstrual health and hygiene of women, thus help to protect dignity and rights of women.
- Under this initiative, semi-automatic and manual sanitary napkin manufacturing units will be set up at CSC for producing affordable and eco-friendly sanitary napkins.
- These micro manufacturing units will be operated by women entrepreneurs and generate employment for 8-10 women.

President Ram Nath Kovind launches Pulse Polio programme for 2018

President Ram Nath Kovind has launched Pulse Polio Immunization (PPI) Programme for year 2018 by administering polio drops to children at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The event was organised on the eve of the National Immunisation Day (NID), observed on 28 January.

- More than 17 crore children of less than 5 years across the country will be given polio drops as part of Government's drive to eradicate polio.
- PPI Programme is massive immunization programme of Government to sustain polio eradication from the country.
- It was launched by Central Government in co-operation with international agencies, state governments and non-government/voluntary organizations in 1995 as result of World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Polio Erad.
- PPI Programme was initiated with objective of achieving 100% coverage under OPV.
- It aims to reach unreached children through improved social mobilization, plan mop-up operations in areas where poliovirus has almost disappeared and maintain high level of morale among the public. Under this programme, all children under 5 years are given 2 doses of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) in month of December and January every year until polio is eradicated.

Assam to Introduce Digital Budget on March 12

The Assam Assembly will introduce digital budget in its next session, doing away with the traditional printed booklet form practice

- Apart from digital budget, the Assembly session will also see exclusive 'Members Hour', a year-long calendar, 'Best Legislator Award', setting up of a Pay Commission for MLAs' salary and fellowships for research work on history of the Assembly.
- For the legislators to highlight major problems in their constituencies, there will be a 'Member Hour' every Tuesday with the Minister of the concerned department replying to the MLAs' questions.
- The Speaker also mooted the idea of a 'Best Assembly Reporter Award' for the encouragement of the journalists to report well on the House proceedings.

PM Narendra Modi to visit to Palestine, UAE, Oman in February 2018

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on four-day official state visit to Palestine, Oman and UAE in February 2018.

- This will be the first ever visit by Indian Prime Minister to Palestine and PM Modi's second visit to UAE and first to Oman.
- During the visit, PM Modi will hold talks with the leadership in the countries on "matters of mutual interest with their leaders, apart from participating in other events.
- Palestine visit: PM Modi will hold meeting with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, who had visited India last May 2017 when India had reassured unwavering support towards Palestinian cause.
- UAE visit: PM Modi will hold talks with the leadership on key issues of defence, security and trade.
- Oman visit: During the visit, PM Modi's focus will be on intensifying cooperation in key sectors such as trade and defence.

Modi government to set up social media communication hubs in districts

The ministry of information and broadcasting is in the process of setting up a social media communication (SMC) hub in every district across the country that will be the eyes and ears of the government and report back with real-time updates from ground zero.

- The finance committee has sanctioned Rs 17 crore for this fiscal year for setting up 707 SMC hubs, hiring personnel, development of software and other infrastructure related expenses.
- Around 20 social media analytics executives per hub will provide 'reports on sentiment, reach, details relating to trending topics and hashtags and compile six reports per day' to begin with.

- As part of the project, new software is being developed for the hubs that will enable two-way communication and help disseminate information.
- The platform is expected to use predictive analytics in a bid to study how "public perception (can) be moulded in a positive manner for the country, how could nationalistic feelings be inculcated in the masses, how can the perception management of India be improved at the world

2018 International Bird Festival

The 2018 International Bird Festival will be held at the Dudhwa National Park in Lakhimpur Kheri, Uttar Pradesh from February 9 to 11 with nearly 200 leading ornithologists expected to attend.

- The purpose of the bird fest is to promote eco-tourism in Dudhwa and to give it a distinct international identity besides highlighting its traditional Tharu arts, culture, and heritage.
- Eminent documentary maker Mike Pandey will be the brand ambassador of the festival. During the three-day event, the bird experts would visit various parts of Dudhwa to gather information about the 450 bird species existing there.

India, Seychelles sign revised agreement for development of Assomption

India and Seychelles on Saturday signed a revised agreement for the development of facilities on Assomption and held productive bilateral cooperation meetings.

- Foreign Secretary of India Jaishankar and Secretary of State of Seychelles Faure signed the Agreement between India and Seychelles for the Development, Management, Operation and Maintenance of Facilities on Assomption Island.
- India and Seychelles have drawn up a cooperation agenda that covers within its purview joint efforts in anti-piracy operations, and enhanced exclusive economic zone surveillance and monitoring to prevent intrusions by potential economic offenders indulging in illegal fishing, poaching, drug and human trafficking.
- The cooperation is further exemplified by the operationalisation of the Coastal Surveillance Radar System in March 2016.

19th India International Watch & Clock Fair Samaya Bharati 2018

Over 100 brands (with 20 trend setting brands) & 50,000 styles to choose for the visitors

- The 19th India International Watch & Clock Fair “Samaya Bharati 2018” was inaugurated by Smt. Amruta Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Vice President of Axis Bank on Thursday 25th January 2018 at Nehru Centre, Worli, Mumbai.
- The Fair, a grand horological event, was organized by India’s leading watch & clock magazine “Trade Post” under the auspices of Watch Trade Federation and supported by other trade bodies.
- This was a B2B and B2C exhibition which was open from January 25, 2018 to January 28, 2018.
- The Fair displayed latest products and innovations of over 100 brands from India, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Japan, France, China, USA, Korea, Belgium, Middle east, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Singapore etc. Over 20 new brands were displayed for first time in the fair. There were over 50,000 styles to choose for the visitors.

International Current Affairs

Aadhar is first-ever Oxford Dictionaries Hindi Word of the Year

The Oxford Dictionaries has announced 'Aadhar' as the Hindi Word of the Year for 2017.

- The Word of the Year was formally announced at the Jaipur Literature Festival.
- Oxford Dictionaries had called on Hindi speakers across the country to help choose the word which should reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the year.
- After reviewing the hundreds of public suggestions received, and consulting the opinions of an advisory panel of language experts, Oxford Dictionaries has chosen its first ever Hindi Word of the Year: Aadhaar.

India, Cambodia ink 4 pacts

India and Cambodia have signed four agreements to boost bilateral cooperation between both countries. The agreements were signed after comprehensive talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Cambodian counterpart Samdech Hun Sen in New Delhi.

- Defence, security and counter-terrorism: Both leaders held talks to boost ties in key areas of defence, security and counter-terrorism and called for concerted global efforts to eliminate terrorism, including blocking terror financing and dismantling terrorist bases.
- Enhance bilateral defence ties: They agreed to further enhance bilateral defence ties, including through exchanges of senior-level defence personnel and capacity building projects.

- Maritime Security: They also expressed keen interest in enhancing cooperation in maritime domain, including preservation of coastal and marine environment, anti-piracy cooperation, security of sea lanes of communication to maintain peace and ensure safety and security of navigation in Indo-Pacific Region.
- Agreements signed are:
 - Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP): It seeks to promote cultural exchange and strengthen the friendly relations between both countries.
 - Credit Line Agreement: It was signed between India's EXIM Bank Government of Cambodia for Line of Credit (LoC) to finance Stung Sva Hab Water Resource Development Project for US\$ 36.92 million.
 - Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters: It seeks to improve effectiveness of both countries in prevention, investigation and prosecution of s through cooperation and legal assistance in criminal matters.
 - MoU on Cooperation for Prevention of Human Trafficking: It seeks to increase bilateral cooperation on issues of prevention, rescue and repatriation related to human trafficking.

Banking & Finance

CRISIL upgrades outlook on 18 PSBs from negative to stable

Rating agency CRISIL has revised its outlook on 18 public sector banks (PSBs) from “negative” to “stable” after the government announced bank-wise capital infusion and reform plans.

- It has reaffirmed ratings on various financial instruments issued by public sector banks.
- The revision in outlook is primarily driven by the government's PSB recapitalisation programme for this fiscal (2017-18). This will improve the financial risk profile of these banks and help them meet Basel-III regulatory capital norms.
- It also provides a cushion against an expected rise in provisioning for non-performing assets (NPAs), CRISIL said in a statement.

Business

India, Lao PDR sign civil aviation cooperation agreement

India and Lao PDR have signed civil aviation cooperation agreement for providing SkyRev360, a comprehensive e-data gathering, invoicing and collection system.

- The agreement was signed between Airports Authority of India (AAI) and Lao Air Traffic Management, Department of Civil Aviation.
- SkyRev360 is fully automated and comprehensive data gathering invoicing and collection service system.
- It has been developed by AAI in collaboration with International Air Transport Association (IATA) under the Government's Make in India initiative.
- It helps to eliminate inaccuracies errors and delays for better revenue management with less manual processing.
- It helps airport operators world-wide in avoiding revenue leakages, reducing redundancies, disputes and easy integration with all external systems.
- It also helps in curtailing the debt collection period to the minimum.

Awards & Recognition

Asha Bhosle selected for fifth Yash Chopra Memorial Award

Legendary playback singer Asha Bhosle (84) was chosen for fifth edition of Yash Chopra Memorial Award for her outstanding contribution to the Hindi film industry.

- She will be presented with award in February 2018 by Maharashtra Governor C Vidyasagar Rao.
- She was selected by jury members comprising Chopra's wife Pamela Chopra, filmmakers Boney Kapoor, Madhur Bhandarkar, singer Alka Yagnik, actor Padmini Kohlapure, scriptwriter Honey Irani, Anu and Shashi Ranjan.
- The award has been instituted by MP T Subbarami Reddy in the memory of renowned filmmaker Yash Chopra.

Sports

Sandeep Lamichhane becomes first Nepalese to be part of IPL

Sandeep Lamichhane scripted history as he became the first Nepalese player to be part of any IPL franchise.

- Lamichhane was bagged by the Delhi Daredevils for Rs 20 Lakh. The 17-year-old has played 9 matches and is a leg-break googly bowler.
- Lamichhane is highly rated by former Australian skipper Michael Clarke and even trained under him in Australia.
- Lamichhane was the second-highest wicket-taker at the Under-19 World Cup in Bangladesh in 2016, with 14 wickets and a best of 5 for 27 against Ireland. His performance also earned him praise from former Aussie great Shane Warne.

Obituary

India's Green Revolution pioneer Dr Gurcharan Singh Kalkat passes away

Noted agricultural scientist and pioneer of India's Green Revolution, Gurcharan Singh Kalkat (92), passed away in Chandigarh after a brief illness.

- He was known for his role in bringing Green Revolution and several exemplary agricultural reforms in Punjab.
- His contribution had ensured overall development and a phenomenal growth in the agriculture sector.
- Kalkat was awarded Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan for his work.
- He was honoured with the "Distinguished International Student Award" of Ohio State University in January 1957.
- He also worked as a senior agriculturist with the World Bank.

Important Days

28 January 2018: World Leprosy Day

The World Leprosy Day is observed internationally every year on last Sunday of January month to raise global awareness of Leprosy.

- This year it was observed on 28 January. Observance of the day focuses on target of zero cases of leprosy-related disabilities in children.
- The day was initiated by French philanthropist and writer, Raoul Follereau in 1954 as way to raise global awareness of this deadly ancient disease and call attention to the fact that it can be prevented, treated and cured.