

National Current Affairs

Government launches Start-up-India ranking framework

Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) under Commerce Ministry has unveiled Start-up-India ranking framework to rank states/UTs based on measures regions that have taken to foster entrepreneurship.

- The framework aims to foster competitiveness and propel states/UTS to act proactively in startup matters.
- This ranking will help states to bring progress made in their startup ecosystem and also make different states learn and replicate good practices.
- Its objective is to encourage States/UTs to take proactive steps towards strengthening Startup ecosystems at local level.
- It will also measure impact of each step initiated at local level for building strong Startup ecosystem.
- It will also enable continuous learning through the dissemination of good practices.
- It is based on feedback collected from Startup ecosystem stakeholders, which include startups, mentors, investors, accelerators, incubators and government bodies.
- The parameters of this feedback focus on all actions and initiatives undertaken by states on or before March 2018.

Google launches '#SecurityCheckKiya' campaign

Search engine giant Google has launched '#SecurityCheckKiya' campaign in India to create awareness around Internet safety. It was launched on the occasion of Safer Internet Day (6 February).

- The campaign aims to protect first-time web users from account hijacking, safeguard Android devices from malicious apps and secure all their personal data if they lose their device.
- Under campaign, Google has recommended three simple steps for Internet safety.
- It includes reviewing security settings and Google account activity with one click for all Android devices and Gmail users.
- The campaign is targeted at young and first-time users to protect themselves from account hijacking. It is also aimed at shielding Android mobile devices from malicious apps.
- Google Security check helps users to automatically scan for any vulnerability and guides them to keep their account safe in a few minutes.
- Moreover 'Google Play Protect' service scans and checks Android devices for any harmful apps.

- Find My Device app from Google helps a user to easily locate a lost Android device and keeps the device and information secure, according the firm.

Government launches 3 tools to rank states, UTs on startup ecosystem

The Commerce and Industry Ministry (DIPP) has launched three tools to rank states and union territories on the basis of measures taken by them to promote budding entrepreneurs.

- These tools are the start-up-India ranking framework, compendium of good practices for promoting startups in India and Startup India Kit. They will help promote the start-up drive.
- It aims at promoting Startups in India and focuses on enriching startup ecosystem through ethical behaviours. It is currently followed by 18 States/UTs.
- It covers 95 good practises across 7 areas of intervention for evaluating the performance of startup ecosystem in states/UTs.
- These are distilled into 38 action points including Incubation Support, Seed Funding, Angel & Venture Funding, Startup Policy & Implementation, Simplified Regulations, Easing Public Procurement, Awareness & Outreach.
- Startup India Kit is primarily a one-stop guide on all Startup India offerings. It offers vital information, advice and assistance through website links, statistics, tools, templates, events, competitions and a glossary on startup terms.

5th South Asia Region Public Procurement Conference held in New Delhi

The Fifth edition of South Asia Region Public Procurement Conference was held in New Delhi. It was hosted by Public Procurement Division (PPD) of Ministry of Finance and All India Management Association (AIMA).

- It was held under auspices of South Asia Region Public Procurement Network (SARPPN), which is sponsored and facilitated by the World Bank, Asian development Bank and Islamic Development Bank.
- The theme this edition of conference was “Public Procurement and Service Delivery”
- It aims to strive to improve public procurement of member countries to ensure timely and quality delivery of public services.
- Its objective was to enable heads of Public Procurement and other key stakeholders in 8 South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan) to meet and learn from one another and from experts in field of public procurement.
- It will help South Asian Governments to consider enhancements and innovations in their public procurement systems, enable efficient utilization of public resources, ensure quality and timeliness in delivery of services.

Government sets up mechanism in CSIR for transfer of technology

Ministry of Science & Technology has set up Mechanism in Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) to interact with Small-Scale Industry (SSI) for transfer of Technology from CSIR Labs.

- Nodal officer in CSIR will coordinate with the SSIs and CSIR labs for appropriate technology required by them.
- SSI sector is largest employment provider in country, next to agriculture.
- It contributes almost 40% of gross industrial value added in Indian economy.
- CSIR covers wide spectrum of S&T—from radio and space physics, oceanography, geophysics, earth sciences, chemicals, drugs, genomics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, mining, materials, aeronautics, instrumentation, environmental engineering and information technology.
- CSIR laboratories have patented over 1,000 technologies and processes, which are available for commercial exploitation. Some of these technologies have been commercialised.

Indian Railways adopts General Conditions of Contract for Services

Indian Railways have introduced new General Conditions or Contracts (GCC) for Services to define the terms & conditions for contractors engaged in service contracts for non-operational areas such as Housekeeping, Facilities Management, Consultancy etc., as distinct from Works.

- The new policy of General Conditions of Contract for Services introduces for first time the concepts of Digital Labour Management System, stepped Performance Guarantee in place of Security Deposit, access to liquidity as a qualifying criteria and specific provisions violation of which will lead to disqualification of bidders.
- The digital management labour system mandates contractor to maintain a data base of all workers including their attendance data and salary details. It also states that a contractor bidding for a service will be disqualified if penalty has been levied three times in last two years for violation of labour laws.
- Apart from labour laws, non-performance in previous contracts will also lead to bidders being disqualified in future. This is expected to put a premium on good performance.

Assam government, Ola sign MOU for river taxi service in Guwahati

India's ride-hailing major, Ola has signed a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with Government of Assam for a pilot project of river taxi services in Guwahati.

- A localised mode of commute on an app platform will enable convenient transportation for citizens and tourists alike.
- The river taxi will be a machine-operated boat, a faster and safer mode of travel than its conventional alternatives.

Pelican Bird Festival-2018 held in Kolleru lake

The 'Pelican Bird Festival-2018' was held for first in Atapaka Bird Sanctuary on at Kolleru lake in Andhra Pradesh.

- It was jointly organised by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority (APTA) and Krishna district administration.
- Kolleru Lake is one of the largest freshwater lakes in India located in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is located between Krishna and Godavari deltas. It spans into two districts of Andhra Pradesh- Krishna and West Godavari.
- It was declared as wildlife sanctuary in November 1999 under Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, and designated wetland of international importance in November 2002 under Ramsar Convention.
- It is important habitat for resident and migratory birds, including the grey or spot-billed pelican *Pelecanus philippensis*). Many birds migrate here in winter, such as Siberian crane, ibis, and painted storks.

International Current Affairs

Dubai remains the busiest airport in 2017

Dubai airport was the world's busiest for international passengers in 2017 for the fourth year running, with 88.2 million travellers.

- International traffic at the UAE airport increased by 4.6 million passengers compared to the previous year.
- A major transit hub situated on transcontinental air routes, Dubai is one of several Gulf-based airports to have experienced prodigious growth in recent years.
- Dubai airport, the base for UAE carrier Emirates, surpassed London's Heathrow airport in terms of international passengers in 2014 and has maintained its lead since.

Nepali tea receives international trademark

Nepalese tea has finally received an international trademark, over a century-and-a-half after cultivation began in the country.

- According to the National Tea and Coffee Development Board under the Ministry of Agricultural Development, the brand logo developed and registered by the Department of Industry has been endorsed.
- The trademark comprises an image of mountains with "Nepal Tea: Quality from the Himalayas" written below it.
- According to the National Tea and Coffee Development Board, Nepal produces tea in over 27,688 hectares of land in 44 districts, mainly in eastern districts like Ilam, Jhapa, Dhankuta, Terhathum and Panchthar.
- Nepal has been exporting tea to eight countries, including India, Canada, Germany, the US and China.

Banking & Finance

Government to ban cryptocurrencies from its payments system

The Union Finance Ministry is planning to ban cryptocurrencies from payments system and at the same time appoint regulator to oversee unregulated exchanges that trade in crypto assets.

- The Dinesh Sharma committee constituted by the Government to look into issues relating to cryptocurrencies will finalise its recommendations by submitting its report in current fiscal year, ending on March 2018.
- Government does not consider cryptocurrencies legal tender and it will take all measures to eliminate use of crypto assets in financing illegitimate activities or as part of payment system.
- Crypto Currencies or Virtual Currencies are type of unregulated digital money.

Acquisitions & Mergers

Capgemini to buy LiquidHub for about 400 million euros

Capgemini is set to buy digital IT firm LiquidHub for about 400 million euros to boost its digital consulting capabilities in North America.

- The Paris-headquartered IT services company had paid two times revenue for Liquidhub, which expects to report revenue of about 200 million euros for 2017.
- LiquidHub has about 2000 employees globally.
- LiquidHub was up for sale since the middle of last year, and private firm Apax Partners, Cognizant, Accenture and Capgemini were in the running

Awards & Recognition

CSE ranked top environment policy think tanks in India

The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has been ranked the top environment policy think tanks in India while it has secured the 16th position in global rankings, climbing up two positions from the last year.

- The rank was given by The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.
- TTCSP conducts a research on the role policy institutes play in governments and civil societies around the world.
- It has also been named in the worlds first comprehensive list of leading food and water security research and advocacy organisations.
- In the Energy and Resource Policy Think Tanks category, CSE has been ranked the second in India and 38th in the world.
- In the Best Independent Think Tanks category, the green body has been ranked 6th and 123rd in the world.

Appointments & Resigns

Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant gets extension till June 30, 2019

Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant was given an extension till June 30 next year.

- He was appointed the Chief Executive Officer of the government think tank on February 17, 2016 for a two-year term.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved extension of Kant's tenure till June 30, 2019.
- Before taking over as the CEO of National Institution for Transforming India (Niti Aayog), he was Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion.

Murugappa Group appoints MM Murugappan as executive chairman

MM Murugappan, Vice-Chairman, Murugappa Group took charge as the Executive Chairman of the business conglomerate worth Rs 300 billion.

- Since November 2009, Murugappan has served as the Group's Vice-Chairman, spearheading technology, innovation and Environment, Health & Safety (EHS) initiatives.

Jerome H. Powell sworn in as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

Jerome H. Powell on Monday took the oath of office as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, succeeding Janet L. Yellen.

- Prior to his appointment as Chairman, Mr. Powell served as a member of the Board of Governors.
- Mr. Powell's term as Chairman is four years; his term as a member of the Board ends January 31, 2028.

Science & Technology

Nuclear Capable Agni-1 Missile successfully test-fired

Indigenously developed short-range nuclear capable ballistic Agni-1 was successfully test-fired from mobile launcher located at Integrated Test Range of Dr Abdul Kalam Island (Wheeler Island) off the Odisha.

- The missile was tested as part of a periodic training activity by the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) of the Indian Army to consolidate operational readiness. It is claimed to be part of India's minimum credible deterrence under No first to use policy.
- Agni-1 is indigenously developed intermediate range surface-to-surface, single-stage missile.
- It has strike range of over 700 km. It is equipped with specialised navigation system that ensures it reaches target with high degree of precision.

Sports

Shubhankar Sharma jumps to number 72 in world

Shubhankar Sharma emerged as the best Indian golfer in the world, grabbing the 72nd position in the Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) after his recent title triumph at Maybank Championship.

- Sharma has enjoyed a golden run over the past few months on the international stage, clinching his first European Tour win at the Joburg Open in December last year.
- Sharma has broken into the top-100 for the first time in his career and also emerged as the highest ranked Indian in the world surpassing PGA Tour regular Anirban Lahiri, who is currently placed 76th in the OWGR.
- The 21-year-old Indian now also has the rare distinction of leading both the European Tour Race to Dubai and the Asian Tour Order of Merit.
- His latest success also helped him join the exclusive club of Indians who have achieved two wins in the same European Tour season, the others being Jeev Milkha Singh (2006) and Anirban Lahiri (2015).

London to host new World Cup

London will host a new World Cup event this summer featuring eight top nations including the United States and Jamaica.

- Britain, the United States, Poland, China, Germany, France, Jamaica and South Africa will compete at the London Stadium on July 14-15.
- The tournament follows last year's world athletics championships in the British capital, which also hosted the Olympics in 2012.
- The competition format will feature all field events and track events up to and including the 1500m, with just one man and one woman from each nation in each event.
- Each nation will be competing for a \$2 million prize pot over two evening sessions of athletics under the lights.

Important Days

International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

February 6 marks the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C). The United States stands in solidarity with governments and communities around the world working to end this human rights abuse.

- The United States partners with a broad range of stakeholders—from policymakers and health practitioners to religious leaders and youth activists—to work against FGM/C and to raise awareness of the harm it causes to societies.
- U.S. Department of State officials continue to engage diplomatically with host governments and through bilateral and multilateral partners to end this practice.
- In 2017, the Department contributed \$5,000,000 to UN efforts combatting FGM/C, and its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices include country-by-country information on the prevalence of the practice and international efforts taken to combat it.

Obituary

Sudha Karmarkar, the veteran theatre artist passed away

Sudha Karmarkar, the veteran theatre artist, director, and pioneer of Children's Theatre in Maharashtra, has passed away in Mumbai on February 5, 2018.

- Karmarkar founded the children's theatre in Mumbai which is known as 'Bal Rangbhumi- Little Theatre' and directed various plays for children.
- She not only directed the plays but also acted in the plays.
- She initiated the movement of Little Theatre in 1959 with Madhu Manjiri the first ever children's drama and since then the children in more than three decades enjoyed the plays which were truly meant for them.