

National Current Affairs

Government approves construction of over 1.86 lakh more houses under PMAY-Urban

The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has approved the construction of 1,86,777 more affordable houses under its flagship Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). The approval was given at the 30th meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee.

- The approval was given at the 30th meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee.
- It is entailed investment of Rs 11,169 crore with central assistance of Rs 2,797 crore.
- Haryana has been sanctioned maximum number of 53,290 houses in this round of approval, followed by Tamil Nadu (40,623 houses), Karnataka (32,656), Gujarat (15,584), Maharashtra (12,123), Kerala (9,461), Uttarakhand (6,226) and Orissa (5,133).

President inaugurates 88th Mahamastakabhisheka at Shravanabelagola

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated 88th Mahamastakabhisheka of Lord Gomateshwara by unveiling an idol of Bahubali at Shravanabelagola in Hassan district, Karnataka. President also lighted lamp to mark inauguration of the mega event which is held once in 12 years.

- Mahamastakabhisheka is the head anointing ceremony is performed once in 12 years of 57 feet tall monolithic statue of Lord Bahubali Gommateshwara at Shravanabelagola.
- It is one of biggest festivals for Jain community and it honors Lord Bahubali, a revered Jain icon. According to Jain texts, Bahubali had attained liberation from cycle of births and deaths (moksha) at Mount Kailash and is revered as a liberated soul (Siddha) by Jains.
- Bahubali is also called Gommateshwara because of Gommateshwara statue dedicated to him and as lord Kammateswara from an inscription.
- Gommateshwara statue was built by Ganga dynasty minister and commander Chavundaraya in around 981 AD. It is a 57-foot monolith, making it one of largest free-standing statues in world.

CCI fines Google Rs.136 crore for search bias

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has imposed Rs.136 crore fine on world's most popular search engine Google for unfair business practices in Indian market for online search. The penalty was imposed on Google for infringing anti-trust conduct.

- CCI held that Google was found to be indulged in practices of search bias and by doing so it has caused harm to its competitors as well as to users.
- It also held that Google was leveraging its dominance in market for online general web search, to strengthen its position in market for online syndicate search service.
- The penalty amount imposed translates to 5% of company's average total revenue generated from India operations from its different business segments for financial years 2013, 2014 and 2015.

India ranks 44 in US Chamber's Intellectual Property Index

India was ranked 44th out of 50 countries in the Intellectual Property (IP) Index released by US Chamber of Commerce.

- Last year, India was ranked 43rd out of 45 countries in index, with an overall score of 8.4 points.
- The index was released as part of annual report prepared by the Global Innovation Policy Center (GIPC) of the US Chambers of Commerce.
- The report analyses IP climate in 50 world economies based on 40 unique indicators that benchmark activity critical to innovation development surrounding patent, copyright, trademark and trade secrets protection.
- The US topped this edition of list with total 37.98 points, followed by United Kingdom (37.97) and Sweden (37.03).
- India has increased substantially its score this year. Its overall score has increased substantially from 25% (8.75 out of 35) in previous year to 30% (12.03 out of 40) in latest edition.
- Despite improvement in score, India continues to remain towards bottom of ladder.
- India's score continues to suggest that additional, meaningful reforms are needed to complement the policy.

National Meet on Grassroot Informatics

National Informatics Centre (NIC) is organizing a three-day National Meet on Grassroot Informatics- VIVID 2018 from Thursday, 08th February to Saturday, 10th February, 2018 at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

- VIVID this year would be an extensive platform for knowledge sharing which would empower 240 NIC District officials from across the country to interact and leverage on each other's experience and best practices.

- During the three days, DIOs would give presentations on their portals, showcase their applications, their District initiatives and their immense contribution towards implementation of the Digital India initiative of the Government.
- The Theme for VIVID 2018 is “Cyber Security and Innovation”.
- The National Meet will also cover a wide range of relevant topics including Emerging Technologies (Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Big Data Analytics), Cyber Threats & Counter Measures (Changing Digitisation Paradigm & its impact on Security, Cyber Security Threats & Cyber Crimes), Critical Information Infrastructure protection (NIC-CERT), Enterprise Level Applications, and many more topics for DIOs.

Third Global Procurement Summit in national capital

The Union Minister of State for Finance & Shipping, Shri Pon. Radhakrishnan inaugurated the two day Third Global Procurement Summit in national capital. The two day Summit is being organized by All India Management Association (AIMA), World Bank and the Government of India.

- The theme of the two-day Summit is ‘New Frontiers faced in the Transformation process of Procurement Today’ and the discussions are aimed at addressing the changes in the nature and environment of the procurement function.
- The sessions at the Summit will cover application of digital technologies in procurement, achieving sustainability and inclusion, prevention contractual disputes and project delays and the latest global innovations in public procurement.
- The public private partnership (PPP) is also a key focus area at the event.
- The peer-to-peer dialogue at the Summit hopes to achieve greater cooperation across nations and sectors in sharing procurement knowledge and skills.
- It hopes to make the participants more aware of the changes required in procurement management and to provide guidance for upgrading approaches, skills and tools to suit the digital economy and decentralized resource management.

Inter-Ministerial Committee constituted under the Chairmanship of Secretary

An Inter- ministerial Committee (IMC) with concerned stake holders, Ministries/ departments of Government of India along with representatives of some State/UT Governments and CSOs under the Chairpersonship of Secretary, Women and Child Development.

- As per Ministry of Home Affairs, National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) the total number of cases of ‘Procuration of minor girls’ has risen from 231 in the year 2006 to 2465 in the year 2016.
- The Government is seized of the problem as trafficking in human beings is one of the largest organized crime violating basic human rights.

- Trafficking in human beings may be for sexual exploitation and many other forms including forced labor etc.
- As per NCRB report 2015 there is an increase of 25.8% in cases of human trafficking (6,877 cases in 2015 compared to 5,466 cases in 2014) during 2015 over 2014.

International Current Affairs

Janadriyah: Sushma Swaraj inaugurates Saudi Arabia's National Heritage Festival

King Salman bin Abdulaziz in presence of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj inaugurated 32nd edition of Saudi Arabia's National Heritage Festival in Janadriyah village, Riyadh. This year India is guest of honor country.

- Janadriyah is cultural and heritage festival of Saudi Arabia. It is held annually at Janadriyah village near Riyadh.
- It is organised every year by National Guard. It was held for first time in 1985.
- The festival normally falls during the month of February or March. The activities in festivals include camel race, horse race, sports, dance, arts, history, falconry, and traditional arts and crafts.
- The India Pavilion at festival was based on the theme 'Saudi ka dost Bharat'.
- It showcased traditional and modern aspects of India and its culture.

Prince Charles launches education impact bond for India

Britain's Prince Charles has launched a new 10-million-dollar Development Impact Bond (DIB) to help improve education for over 200,000 children in India.

- The DIB is the largest bond of its type in South Asia. It is the latest fundraising initiative by British Asian Trust (BAT) set up by royal 10 years ago to fight poverty in South Asia.
- The DIB was announced on occasion of celebration of 10th anniversary of BAT.
- It was launched by trust with support of UK government's Department for International Development (DfID), Comic Relief, Mittal Foundation and UBS Optimus Foundation.
- Under the initiative, DIB will provide funding to local not-for-profit delivery partners in India over 4 years period to deliver range of operational models including principal and teacher training, direct school management, and supplementary programmes.

Saudi Arabia temporarily bans import of birds, eggs, chickens from India after report of avian flu

Saudi Arabia's Agriculture Ministry had temporarily banned imports of live birds, hatching eggs and chickens from India, after a form of bird flu that is lethal for poultry animals was found in the country.

- The country's Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture banned the imports after a report by the World Organization for Animal Health, or OIE, said there had been an outbreak of the highly contagious H5N8 bird flu in Bengaluru's Dasarahalli locality in India's Karnataka state.
- The January 15 report said the outbreak was first detected on December 26.
- The H5N8 virus had killed nine out of 951 birds in Dasarahalli, the other birds were culled.

Banking & Finance

Forbes releases first cryptocurrency rich list

Forbes has released its first ever list of richest people in cryptocurrency, which is topped by Ripple co-founder Chris Larsen, with an estimated crypto net worth of USD 7.5-8 billion.

- Forbes has categorised the crypto rich list into five groups: Idealists, builders, opportunists, infrastructure players and establishment investors and said "many fit into more than one category".
- The minimum amount needed to make it to the list of cryptocurrency's wealthiest people is USD 350 million.
- Interestingly, the average age of the cryptocurrency's richest people is 42 while for the Forbes 400 list of the wealthiest Americans it is as high as 67.

Business

India retains top spot as source market for Dubai in 2017

Dubai witnessed 15 per cent growth in tourist arrivals from India in 2017, hosting 2.1 million visitors, retaining top spot as the source market.

- It also became the first country to cross the 2 million mark in a single year, according to the latest data published by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism).
- The growth is mainly due to the success of Dubai Tourism's ongoing collaboration with Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan in the 'BeMyGuest' campaign.
- Overall, Dubai recorded 6.2 per cent year-on-year increase in international overnight visitation in 2017, propelling the emirate's momentum towards its 2020 goal of welcoming 20 million visitors per year by the start of the next decade. A total of 15.79 million tourists visited Dubai last year.
- India was followed by Saudi Arabia (KSA) in the second place, contributing a total of 1.53 million tourists last year. UK at number three delivered 1.27 million travellers, rising 2 per cent over 2016.
- China was at fifth-place with 7,64,000 tourists, up 41 per cent, while Russia with 530,000 visitors was at eighth place, recording a stellar 121 per cent increase over the previous year.

Appointments & Resigns

NPCI appoints Biswamohan Mahapatra as non-executive chairman

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has appointed Biswamohan Mahapatra as non-executive chairman of the board for a period of two years, with effect from February 8, 2018. Mahapatra succeeds B Sambamurthy, who has been the interim chairman.

Smriti Mandhana appointed brand ambassador of Bata's POWER

- The opening batsman of Indian Women's Cricket Team has been roped in as the brand ambassador of the European footwear brand Bata's vertical Power. In her last knock, she cruised India to victory against South Africa slamming a quickfire ton.

Pradeep Kumar Rawat accredited as the next Ambassador of India to the Timor-Leste

- Shri Pradeep Kumar Rawat, presently Ambassador of India to Jakarta, has been concurrently accredited as the next Ambassador of India to Timor-Leste, with residence in Jakarta.

Sports

Khelo India School Games: Haryana tops in medal tally

The first (inaugural) edition of Khelo India School Games (KISG) was held from from 31st January to 8th February, 2018 at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. It was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

- It was held under the Khelo India Programme and aimed at providing an excellent launchpad to the country's young and promising athletes to showcase their talent at the national level.
- 2018 KISG was held across 16 disciplines in Under-17 age category. 5,000 school children from 29 states and seven union territories participated in mega sporting event. Total of 199 gold medals, 199 silver medals and 275 bronze medals were awarded at first KISG.
- Haryana had emerged as overall champions, finishing with 102 medals, which included 38 gold, 26 silver and 38 bronze medals.
- Maharashtra finished second with 111 medals, which included 36 gold, 32 silver and 43 bronze medals.
- Delhi finished third with 94 medals, which included 25 gold, 29 silver and 40 bronze.

Obituary

Champion Australian javelin thrower Jarrod Bannister dies

Australia's champion javelin thrower Jarrod Bannister has died suddenly overnight in the Netherlands.

- Bannister, who won gold in the javelin at the Delhi Commonwealth Games and was the national record holder, had been training and living in Holland with his girlfriend.
- Bannister won javelin gold at the 2010 Commonwealth Games and finished sixth in the final at the 2008 Olympic Games. His personal best of 89.02 metres, set in Brisbane in 2008, remains the current Australian record.

Books & Authors

Sachin Tendulkar, his wife launch book on child health care

Legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar and his wife Anjali Tendulkar launched a book on child health care titled 'Even When There Is A Doctor'.

- Penned down by Dr Yashwant Amdekar along with Dr Rajesh Chokhani and Krishnan Sivaramakrishnan, the book describes the role of an individual or parents in improving their child's health.

Rajnath launches book on best interviews of Vajpayee

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh released a book on best interviews of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

- Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh launched the book "Mere Sapno Ka Bharat" - a collection of best interviews of the former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in New Delhi on Feb 8, 2018.
- The interviews have been compiled in a book form "Mere Sapno Ka Bharat" by Tarun Vijay, former BJP MP and Editor of Panchjanya, an RSS published journal.
- The dignitaries present fondly remembered Mr Vajpayee as 'Ajaatshatru' (who has no enemies) and their interactions with him.