

National Current Affairs

Government to establish National Women Entrepreneurship Council

The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development is considering to establish National Women Entrepreneurship Council (NWEC).

- It will be umbrella organization for socio-economic gender parity, financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women in India and to promote entrepreneurship among women.
- It will give advice to government on issues related to entrepreneurship in women as current business chambers are largely “male-dominated.”

NITI Aayog releases “Healthy States, Progressive India” Report

NITI Aayog released a comprehensive Health Index report titled, “Healthy States, Progressive India” at a function in the capital.

- The report ranks states and Union territories innovatively on their year-on-year incremental change in health outcomes, as well as, their overall performance with respect to each other.
- It is the first attempt to establish an annual systematic tool to measure and understand the heterogeneity and complexity of the nation’s performance in Health.
- The report has been developed by NITI Aayog, with technical assistance from the World Bank, and in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), States and UTs have been ranked in three categories namely, Larger States, Smaller States, and Union Territories (UTs), to ensure comparison among similar entities.
- Among the Larger States, Kerala, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu ranked on top in terms of overall performance, while Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Uttar Pradesh are the top three ranking States in terms of annual incremental performance.
- Among Smaller States, Mizoram ranked first followed by Manipur on overall performance, while Manipur followed by Goa were the top ranked States in terms of annual incremental performance.
- Among UTs, Lakshadweep showed both the best overall performance as well as the highest annual incremental performance.

Swachh Bharat Sanitation Park” inaugurated in Delhi

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in collaboration with the Environmental Sanitation Institute and Tata Trusts, has developed a Sanitation Park which was inaugurated in the Capital.

- The Sanitation Park was developed at CGO Complex in New Delhi with an objective to create awareness on various safe technological options.
- The Park demonstrates various options pertaining to toilet technologies and solid and liquid waste management technologies, with a brief description of these technologies.
- The Park also displays information regarding various interventions undertaken under the Swachh Bharat Mission, capturing the success stories and impact created under the Mission across the country.
- The park presents the opportunity for the visitors to understand the various components and initiatives of SBM and familiarize themselves with different technologies.

India Health Fund to boost research on TB, malaria

The India Health Fund (IHF) launched by Tata Trusts in collaboration with Global Fund in August 2016 has come forward to financially support innovations and technologies designed to combat tuberculosis (TB) and malaria.

- The initiative aims to support new products and strategies that impact entire lifecycle of malaria and TB, from prevention to post-cure recovery. It has recently invited project proposals.
- The IHF initiative will support individuals and organisations with already germinated innovative strategies, services, products, such that they become sustainable and scalable solutions in addressing TB and malaria.
- The initiative is not a fellowship programme to do research from scratch.
- It is long-term exercise aligned with country's goal of eliminating TB by 2025 and malaria by 2030.
- It will promote innovative solutions such that they are widely accessible and are affordable.

Government launches National Deworming initiative

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) launched National Deworming Initiative on the occasion of National Deworming Day (observed on 10 February).

- It aims to reach more than 32.2 crore children aged between 1 to 19 years to combat parasitic worm infections.
- This year it is fourth edition of National Deworming Day after it was launched in 2015.

- The National Deworming Day is a single fixed-day approach to treating intestinal worm infections in all children aged 1- 19 years and is held on 10 February and 10 August each year.
- It aims to conduct mass deworming program to mobilize health personnel, state governments and other stakeholders to prioritize investment in control of Soil Transmitted Helminth (STH) infections—one of the most common infections.
- Goal of the day is to deworm all preschool and school-age children between the ages of 1-19 years in order to improve their overall health, cognitive development, nutritional status and quality of life. On this day, Albendazole tablets are given to all targeted children.
- Dosage of half tablet to 1-2 years children and one full tablet for 2-19 years is given.
- It also spreads behaviour change practices in terms of cleanliness, hygiene, use of toilets, wearing shoes/chappals, washing hands etc. is also important to reduce incidents of re-infection.
- Implementation of deworming programmes is led by the Union MoHFW.

International Current Affairs

India, Palestine ink six agreements in different areas

India and Palestine have signed six Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in different areas including health and education.

- The MoUs were signed after bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas at Ramallah.
- PM Modi had reached Ramallah, capital of Palestine via helicopter from Jordanian capital Amman becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Palestine. He was conferred Grand Collar of the state of Palestine, the highest order given to foreign dignitaries.
- Signed agreements are:
 - MoU for setting up of India-Palestine Super-specialty hospital at Beit Sahour in Bethelhem Governorate.
 - MoU for construction of Turathi: India Palestine Centre for Empowering women.
 - MoU for setting up of new National Printing Press at Ramallah.
 - MoU for Construction of school in Muthalth Al Shuhada Village.
 - MOU for construction of school in Tamoon village in Tubas Governorate.
 - MoU for providing assistance for construction of additional floor to Jawahar Lal Nehru for Boys at Abu Dees.

Business

Paisabazaar.com partners with Microsoft

Paisabazaar.com, the country's largest digital lending platform, has entered into partnership with Microsoft to deliver innovative and unique customer experience on its platform using artificial intelligence and machine learning.

- With this partnership, Paisabazaar.com will move its entire technology infrastructure to Microsoft Azure (cloud based platform).
- Using Microsoft cloud, Paisabazaar.com intends to offer customised and secure solutions for its 7 million consumers coming to the platform. It would also take care of scalability issues and help provide smoother customer experiences using AI and machine learning.

Appointments & Resigns

Abhilasha Kumari sworn in as first women Chief Justice of Manipur HC

Abhilasha Kumari was sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court.

- With this, she became first women and third full-time Chief Justice of Manipur High Court.
- She was earlier the Chief Justice of Gujarat High Court. She is the daughter of the former Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh.
- She is alumnus of Delhi University and had obtained law degree from Himachal Pradesh University.
- She was designated as additional advocate general for Himachal Pradesh before being elevated as Gujarat High Court judge in December 2005.

Antony Dominic sworn in as Chief Justice of Kerala

Acting Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court, Antony Dominic, was sworn in as the Chief Justice of Kerala.

- Justice Dominic is the first Keralite to occupy the top post in 17 years. Justice K.K.Usha occupied the chair in 2001.

- Justice Dominic became an additional judge of the Kerala High Court in 2007. Within a year, he was elevated as permanent judge of the High Court, Kerala.

ICC appoints Indra Nooyi as Independent Director

The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced that PepsiCo Chairman and CEO Indra Nooyi has been appointed to the ICC Board as the organization's first independent female director.

- Mrs. Nooyi will join the Board in June 2018 to align with the term of the ICC Independent Chairman, following the unanimous confirmation of her appointment.
- Mrs. Nooyi is a global business leader, consistently ranked by Fortune Magazine among the World's Most Powerful Women.

Rakesh Singh appointed private banking head at HDFC Bank

Rakesh Singh has been appointed as head of private banking at HDFC Bank

- He will continue to head the bank's investment banking, capital markets and financial institutions businesses.
- Prior to joining HDFC Bank, Singh was managing director and co-head, financing advisory at Rothschild. Earlier, he had held key positions at Morgan Stanley, DSP Merrill Lynch, Standard Chartered Bank and ANZ Investment Bank, among others.

Grand Master Vidit Gujrathi appointed as brand ambassador

Grand Master Vidit Gujrathi has been appointed as the brand ambassador of All India Chess Federation for the Blind (AICFB).

- Twenty-three-year-old Gujrathi had broken the 2,700 rating barrier and has a current rating of 2,718, thereby becoming the fourth Indian to achieve the feat after legend Viswanathan Anand, Sasikiran and P Harikrishna.
- He recently won the Tata Steel Chess Challengers 2018 in Wijk aan Zee and has made the cut for the Tata Steel Chess Masters next year.

Amitabh Bachchan to be brand ambassador for The Muthoot Group

- The Muthoot Group has roped in Amitabh Bachchan as brand ambassador to represent them in their national campaigns.

Awards & Recognition

8-year-old Indian-origin girl cracks UK's Math Hall of Fame

An eight-year-old Indian-origin schoolgirl has entered the UK's Mathletics Hall of Fame, an online mathematics-based competitive tool aimed at primary school pupils.

- Sohini Roy Chowdhury competed with pupils from across Britain and other countries to also make it into the top 100 World Hall of Fame after solving mathematical puzzles with speed and accuracy.
- New Delhi born Sohini joined in the competition this year as a student of Nelson Primary School in Birmingham.

Reliance Industries Limited wins Golden Peacock Award for Corporate Social Responsibility for 2017

Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has won the Golden Peacock Award 2017 for the success of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and, in particular for the transformative work done by Reliance Foundation, the CSR arm of the company.

- RIL was recognised by the awards jury under the Chairmanship of Justice (Dr) Arijit Pasayat, former judge of the Supreme Court.
- One of RIL's key social projects, recognised by the Golden Peacock jury, aims at impacting the livelihood of farmers through water and food security interventions.
- Under its rural transformation initiative, Reliance has been implementing a programme called "Bharat-India Jodo (BIJ)" that works closely with marginal and small farmers for improving their lives and making agriculture a first choice profession.

Science & Technology

Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems inaugurated at INS Garuda

The Indian Navy has unveiled the Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological System (IAAMS) at INS Garuda, naval air station located in Kochi, Kerala. It is overall fourth air station installed with this integrated system.

- IAAMS is ambitious project of Indian Navy to modernise Meteorological infrastructure of 9 Naval Air Stations (NAS).
- It is expected to bring accuracy in weather monitoring mechanism in the Indian Navy.
- IAAMS is equipped with state-of-the-art meteorological sensors viz., Radar Vertical Wind Profiler, Ceilometer, Transmissometer and Automatic Weather Observation System. It undertakes automatic and continuous recording of relevant weather parameters that are vital for accurate weather forecasting.
- It has a special alarm feature that alerts the duty staff during abnormal change of weather parameters that may affect safe flying operations.
- It can also provide automatic dissemination of routine weather reports as per standards of World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to other air stations and Air Traffic Controller towers without human intervention.

Government launches ASH TRACK mobile app for Fly Ash management

Ministry of Power has launched Web based monitoring System and Fly Ash mobile application named ASH TRACK.

- It was launched by Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy R.K Singh in New Delhi.
- These platforms will enable better management of fly ash produced by thermal power plants by providing interface between ash producers (thermal power plants) and potential ash users such as –cement plants, road contractors etc.
- The app shows coal based power plants situated within radius of 100 km and 300 km from a given location.
- It will allow user to select power station from where he wants to take fly ash.
- It will also show ash availability, distance from user's location.
- It will help power plants to see location of prospective fly ash users surrounding it like – cement plants, NHAI, contractors of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) projects, brick producers, etc. The app will give plant wise, utility wise and state wise fly ash utilization status in the country and also details of ash generation and utilization in real time.
- It will allow effective monitoring and reviewing for increasing fly ash utilization.
- It will help in protecting environment in terms of reduction in fugitive emissions, saving of precious top soil and conservation of land for sustainable development.

J-20: China puts stealth fighter into combat service

China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) has commissioned its new generation J-20 fourth-generation stealth fighter into combat service.

- With this, China became second country in world to commissioned domestically developed stealth aircraft after United States.
- J-20 is China's fourth-generation medium and long-range fighter jet. It is single-seat, twinjet, all-weather, and stealth fighter aircraft.
- It has been developed by China's Chengdu Aerospace Corporation for PLAAF.
- It had made its maiden flight in 2011 and was first shown to public at 11th Airshow China in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province in November 2016.
- It is currently equipped with Russian Saturn AL-31 engines and in future will be fitted with domestic Chinese Taihang engines.
- It has two large internal weapon bays for long-range air-to-air missiles and two small sidebays for short-range air-to-air missiles. It has large fuel tanks for long-range missions.

Scientists for first time grow human eggs to full maturity in laboratory

Scientists from Britain and United States for first time have succeeded in growing human eggs in laboratory from earliest stages in ovarian tissue all way to full maturity. This is the first time human eggs have been developed outside the human body from their earliest stage to full maturity.

- Using this technique in previous studies, scientists had developed mouse eggs in laboratory to stage where they produced live offspring, and also matured human eggs from a relatively late stage of development.
- The technology remains at early stage, and much more work is needed to make sure that it is safe and optimised before these eggs remain normal during process, and can be fertilised to form embryos that could lead to birth of healthy babies.
- This technique widens scope of available fertility treatments. It can help in developing regenerative medicine therapies and new infertility treatments.
- It can help cancer patients wishing to preserve their fertility while undergoing chemotherapy treatment, improve fertility treatments, and deepen scientific understanding of the biology of the earliest stages of human life.

Sports

Winter Olympics 2018

The 2018 Winter Olympics gets underway in South Korea on February 9, where 2,500 athletes from 90 nations will compete for supremacy over ice and snow.

- There have been plenty of distractions in the buildup to the Games, including North Korea's participation and neighbourly tensions, the Russian doping scandal, potential protests against Donald Trump's presidency and the NHL withholding its players.
- However, South Korea has declared its venues complete and ready to welcome the world's best winter sports athletes for the country's first Winter Games.

Obituary

Chandrasekhar Rath, doyen of Odia literature, passes away

The doyen of Odia literature Chandrasekhar Rath passed away at a private hospital.

- The writer was nominated for the prestigious Padma Shri award this year.
- Rath was conferred with several awards, including Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award and Atibadi Jagannath Das Samman, for his contribution in the field of literature.

Psycho and Spartacus actor John Gavin dead

Hollywood actor John Gavin, who starred in horror movie Psycho, has died at the age of 86.

- He had served as President Ronald Reagan's ambassador to Mexico in the 1980s.
- Gavin played Janet Leigh's divorced lover, Sam Loomis, in the 1960 Alfred Hitchcock classic Psycho.
- He also starred in other hit Sixties movies, including the role of Julius Caesar in Spartacus.