

National Current Affairs

Centre grants ₹1,269 crore for Andhra Pradesh projects

The Centre has released a sum of ₹1,269 crore to Andhra Pradesh under different heads in the past few days, amid a strain in ties between the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and its ally, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), over allocation given to the State in the Union Budget.

- The gross grant included ₹417.44 crore for the Polavaram multipurpose project, one of the issues of contention between the allies, the TDP and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
- The Centre, through the Polavaram Project Authority, has so far released ₹4,329 crore for the project, while the State government said it spent over ₹7,200 crore after it was declared a national project.
- The Centre, meanwhile, also released ₹369.16 crore under post-devolution revenue deficit grant, as per the recommendation of the 14th Finance Commission, to Andhra Pradesh.

Defence ministry approves sanction of Rs 1,487 crore for Indian Army

The defence ministry has sanctioned Rs 1,487 crore to the army to fortify its bases in Jammu and Kashmir, North East and several other places to plug their security gaps and protect them from any terror attacks.

- A deadline of 10 months has been set for the army to carry it out. The army headquarters has been told to monitor implementation of the project.
- The sanction to the project comes amid heightened hostilities between Indian and Pakistani armies along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and several terror attack targeting military installations.
- Perimeter security will be strengthened at army bases under six commands.

International Conference on Unani Medicine held in New Delhi

The International Conference on Unani Medicine was held in New Delhi. It was organised by Central Council for Research in Unani Medicine (CCRUM), under Ministry of AYUSH is organizing as part of celebration of Unani Day (February 11).

- The theme of the conference was Integration of Unani System of Medicine in main stream healthcare.

- Various national level eminent personalities and stakeholders from academia, industry, regulators, and researchers in field of Unani Medicine participated in deliberations of conference. Besides delegates from countries like South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, UK, China, US, Portugal, UAE, Slovenia, Israel, Hungary, Bahrain, Tajikistan, etc also participated in the conference.
- The conference deliberated on issues related to globalization, research, standardization, quality control, safety assessment, and industry perspective.
- It also provided platform to academia, researchers, regulators, industry and students to develop visions, linkages and initiate projects that will help in promoting Unani system of medicine as one of the preferred systems of medicine across the globe.

12th International Conference on corporate social responsibility held in Bengaluru

The Institute Of Directors organised its 12th International Conference on corporate social responsibility (CSR) on February 9 and 10 at Hotel Lalit Ashok, Bengaluru (India).

- CSR in India is at a nascent stage. There is unanimity about desirability, but few organizations have developed any overall strategy to actualise it. The best approaches to CSR are still fragmented and disconnected from overall business.
- The CSR mandate promulgated through the Companies Act, 2013 requires over 16,000 companies to spend 2 percent of their net profit on specified CSR activities.
- The Act has asked these companies to have CSR policies, CSR committees and work on their Board's direction. It has moved from backroom to boardroom.
- CSR has become the new game changer, needing an actionable business agenda. That is the theme of the forthcoming International Conference, where India is the first country in the world to mandate CSR under law.

Rajnath Singh inaugurates first of its kind spoken Sanskrit centre

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh launched Gujarat University's Centre for Spoken Sanskrit which will offer a six-month course for people on how to speak the language.

- It is a first such course to be launched by a university in India
- For the course, no prior knowledge of Sanskrit is required.
- The first batch would hopefully begin in 10 days as the university looks for a minimum class strength of 30 students.
- The fees have been fixed at Rs 500.
- An advanced course, with focus on grammar, would also be offered to students who are inclined to learn more about Sanskrit, enabling them to read ancient scriptures.

International Current Affairs

India ranks second in global phosphorus pollution

As per a report published in Water Resources Research, India ranks second in global phosphorus pollution by human activity.

- The report warns that Phosphorus levels in our freshwater bodies are escalating and this could pose a serious threat to the ecosystem.
- Calculating the total global anthropogenic (caused by human activity) phosphorus pollution, China contributed the most with 30%, followed by India (8%), and the USA (7%).
- The researchers analysed the pollution from point sources first. i.e., the pollution from a single identifiable source like sewage pipes.
- The domestic sector was the largest contributor of phosphorus accounting for 54%, followed by agriculture (38%) and industry (8%).

4th Nepal Buildcon and Wood International Expo 2018 kicked off at Kathmandu

The 4th Nepal Buildcon and Wood International Expo 2018 kicked off at Kathmandu on 9th Feb 2018.

- The 3 day expo is aimed to provide a single platform to architects, engineers, builders, construction material suppliers, interior decorators, furniture, lighting, heavy machine and equipment manufacturers and other stake holders.
- Over 200 brands and products are being displayed through more than 150 stalls. More than 80 companies from India are also participating in the expo through an Indian Pavilion, which has been set up jointly by Ministry of Commerce, CII and Commerce Wing of Indian Embassy.

Banking & Finance

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) to enable Digital Payments in Post Offices by April 2018

India Post Payments Bank will start pan-India roll out of its network from April this year.

- Once the proposed expansion is completed, IPPB will be providing the largest financial inclusion network in the country, covering both urban as well as rural hinterland with ability to provide digital payment services at the doorstep with the help of Postmen and GraminDakSewaks (GDS).
- IPPB will also enable more than 17 crore active account-holders of Post Office Savings Bank to make interoperable digital payments including the benefit of NEFT, RTGS, UPI and bill payment services.
- Additionally, the IPPB will enable acceptance of digital payments across post offices in the country in line with the digital payments initiative of the government.

PNB signs pact with National e-Gov Services

- Punjab National Bank has signed an agreement for information utility with National e-Governance Services Limited. The objective of the agreement is to augment the information infrastructure in India. The agreement will enable storing of financial information that will help substantiate defaults and verify claims expeditiously.
- This will in turn facilitate resolution in the National Company Law Tribunal in a time bound manner.

Business

India signs first concessional agreement with UAE in oil sector

India signed the first concessional agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the oil sector.

- This is the first time ever that the Indian Consortium has received concession in the Gulf.
- As per Indian Ambassador to the UAE Navdeep Singh Suri, the single most important agreement that was signed and reflects a change in India's energy relationship with the UAE was the one signed between a consortium of the Indian oil companies and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) for the acquisition of 10% participating interest in the offshore Lower Zakum Concession

- In a bid to consolidate the financial architecture, India and the UAE will sign two more agreements in upcoming days.
- The currency agreement, according to which the businesses between the two countries will be executed directly in the Indian rupee and Emirati dirham (AED).

Appointments & Resigns

Rear Admiral Philipose George Pynumootil, NM Takes Over as Flag Officer Naval Aviation (FONA)

Rear Admiral Philipose G Pynumootil, an alumnus of the Lawrence School, Lovedale and the National Defence Academy (67th course), was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 01 Jan 1986.

- A helicopter pilot, qualified on the Sea King 42 B/C and Alouette, he has commanded INAS 330, the Carrier borne ASW Sea King Squadron and was the commissioning Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Station, INS Shikra.
- He has commanded the 1241 RE corvette, INS Nashak, the Missile Corvette INS Kirpan and the Guided Missile Frigate INS Brahmaputra, besides doing a tenure as Executive Officer of the Guided Missile Destroyer INS Delhi.
- The officer was awarded the Nao Sena Medal for his tenure in command of INS Brahmaputra.

Science & Technology

Indian Railways launches 'Voluntary Safety Reporting' website

Indian Railways launched the "Voluntary Safety Reporting" website for its 13 lakh employees who can now report internal lapses in safety operations and hazards anonymously.

- The system, now live, gives employees two features.
 - One, they can report lapses without disclosing their identities.
 - Secondly, they can also choose to provide their contact details for feedback confidentially, in which case their identities will never be revealed.

Sports

Sharmila Nicollet first Indian to qualify for China LPGA Tour

Sharmila Nicollet has become the first Indian golfer to qualify for the China Ladies PGA Tour. The 26-year-old Bengaluru golfer fought her way back into the tournament in the last two rounds to earn a card for the Tour, which had Women's World rankings points also.

- Sharmila, who played on the Ladies European Tour before losing her full card, played her three rounds in the CLPGA Tour Qualifying School in 77-73-72 to finish in tied 21st and pick one of the 30 cards available in the 88-player field.
- Sharmila's qualification is a continuation of the growth story of Indian golf as the country's top woman golfer Aditi Ashok straddles between US LPGA and Ladies European Tour and is ranked 78th in the world.
- Besides Aditi and Sharmila, Vani Kapoor has a full card on LET, while Amandeep Drall, Gaurika Bishnoi and Saaniya Sharma have limited status on the Ladies European Tour.

Obituary

Former New Zealand test cricket captain Bevan Congdon dies

Former New Zealand test cricket captain Bevan Congdon died 10th Feb, one day short of his 80th birthday, after a long illness.

- Congdon led New Zealand to its first test win over Australia at Christchurch in 1974.
- He was one of New Zealand's finest all-rounders, scoring seven centuries in 61 tests and taking 59 wickets over a 13-year test career.
- As well as captaining New Zealand to its first test win, he also played a crucial role in the first victory against England 40 years ago, scoring 44 in New Zealand's first innings.

Obituary

Theory of Everything composer Jóhann Jóhannsson dies at 48

The Theory of Everything composer Jóhann Jóhannsson has died aged 48.

- The Icelandic musician and producer, who won a Golden Globe for his score to the 2014 Stephen Hawking biopic starring Eddie Redmayne, was found dead in Berlin.
- Known for blending electronic with classical orchestrations, Jóhannsson was nominated for an Oscar and Bafta for his soundtrack to Denis Villeneuve's 2015 film, Sicario, and collaborated again with the director on 2016's sci-fi film Arrival.

Important Days

International Day of Women and Girls in Science

The United Nations have proclaimed February 11 the International Day of Women and Girls in Science aiming to ensure full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls.

- The resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 22, 2015.
- It's an opportunity to take a stand for women and girls in science and to break the stereotypes that hold them back.
- Bridging the gender gap in science is vital for achieving sustainable development and fulfilling the promise of the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind".