

National Current Affairs

Delhi government, MoEF jointly launch 'Clean Air Campaign'

The Delhi government and the MoEF jointly launched the Clean Air Campaign, which will continue for 2 weeks till February 23.

- As part of the Campaign, 70 teams have already been constituted. These comprise one senior officer of MoEF & CC and another from Delhi government, who will be the co-leaders of the team.
- The team will also include one member from CPCB, Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and one member from the concerned municipal corporation.
- The Campaign will also include interactions with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), civil society citizens, academic and R&D institutions
- A workshop on vehicular pollution and traffic management will also be held and that teams will also encourage Resident Welfare Associations to plant saplings in open areas and also encourage schools and colleges to increase the green cover in the campus.
- A mobile app was jointly launched by Vardhan and Kejriwal.

Independent debt management office must be set up: NITI Aayog

NITI Aayog has made strong case for setting up independent Debt Management Office for better servicing of loans that will lead to substantial reduction in India's interest payment.

- At present, government debt, including market borrowing, is managed by Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Setting up independent Debt Management Office will help to resolve issues relating to conflict of interest as RBI decides on key interest rates as well as undertakes buying and selling of government bonds.
- The setting up of Debt Management Office has been one of the top priorities of government for bringing reforms in financial sector.
- It will divest RBI of its dual and often conflicting roles as banker and manager of Central Government's borrowing.
- It will also facilitate in better planning and management of domestic and foreign market borrowings of Central Government.
- It will also help in strengthen bond market and help to promote investment.
- It will be in pursuance global practice of shifting public debt management from central bank to a debt management office.

Bihar Government bans sale of loose cigarettes

Bihar Government has banned sale of loose cigarettes in the state. This decision aims to be deterrent to kids and youngsters who start smoking by buying loose cigarettes.

- In this regard, state health department has issued notification under Section 20 of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003.
- Bihar is the 12th state in the country to bring such a ban into effect after Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Punjab, Delhi and others.
- Section 20 of COTPA, 2003 makes sale, distribution, purchase, display and advertisement of tobacco products without essential pictorial warnings a punishable offence. As the loose cigarettes don't have pictorial warnings, thus its sale, distribution, purchase, display and advertisement is banned under COTPA, 2003.
- As per Global Adults Tobacco Survey (GATS), 53.5% adults consume tobacco in one or other form in Bihar while 9% of this 53.5% are addicted to cigarette.
- The decision of banning sale of loose cigarettes will save children from cigarette consumption as kids and teenagers are not able to buy the whole packet but go for loose cigarettes.

UP Government launches DASTAK campaign to eradicate Japanese Encephalitis

Uttar Pradesh Government has launched massive door to door "DASTAK campaign against Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) and Japanese Encephalitis (JE)" to eradicate deadly diseases from the state. It was launched in association with UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund).

- DASTAK campaign is part of the comprehensive Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) strategy embraced by state government to beat encephalitis.
- In DASTAK campaign, the whole state machinery with help of UNICEF will go door to door in 38 JES and AE affected districts, mostly falling in the Tarai region of state which contributes to about 60% of total AES cases all over the country.
- The war cry of DASTAK is Darwaja khatkhatao, AES aur JE ko bhagao.
- In this massive campaign, most of the state departments including health, rural development, primary education will work together to spread awareness about the diseases through mass media communication, provide clean drinking water, initiate sanitation drive, ensure vaccination and early treatment to eradicate disease.
- Children of 600 schools in the affected areas will also be part of this campaign.

Mumbai 12th richest city globally: Report

India's financial capital Mumbai, with a total wealth of US \$950 billion was ranked 12th richest city globally in the report published by New World Wealth.

- In the report, total wealth, refers to private wealth held by all individuals living in each city.
- It includes all their assets (cash, equities, property, business interests etc.) less any liabilities. Government funds are excluded from it.
- The list of 15 wealthiest cities was topped by New York with total wealth of US \$3 trillion.
- New York is home the two largest stock exchanges in the world.
- London was ranked second (\$2.7 trillion) followed by Tokyo (3rd, \$2.5 trillion).
- Among the 15 richest cities listed, San Francisco, Beijing, Shanghai, Mumbai and Sydney are fastest growing in terms of wealth growth over the past 10 years.
- According to report, Mumbai is economic hub of India. It is home to Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), the 12th largest stock exchange in the world.
- It is expected to be the fastest growing city (in terms of wealth growth over the next 10 years).
- Mumbai also features among top 10 cities in terms of billionaire population.
- The city is home to 28 billionaires, individuals with US \$1 billion or more in net assets.

Jharkhand to set up 'Dada-Dadi' park in every city

Jharkhand Chief Minister Raghubar Das said that a “Dada-Dadi Park” for senior citizens would be established in every city of the state soon to provide relief to people from hot summer.

- He made this announcement while laying the foundation of three projects worth over Rs 300 crore at Jaiprakash Udyan, Adityapur, about half a km from here, in adjoining Seraikela-Kharswan district.
- The projects include Adityapur Sewerage Yojna worth Rs 255.15 crore, Urban Water Project worth Rs 49.30 crore in Chakradharpur, West Singhbhum district and Multi-purpose Convention Hall in Jamshedpur here at a cost of Rs 9.81 crore.

International Current Affairs

Tanzania withdraws from UN refugee programme

Tanzania has announced its withdrawal of United Nation’s “Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework” citing security reasons and lack of funds.

- Tanzania has long been considered as safe haven for refugees, particularly from conflict hit Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi.
- New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (also known as New York Declaration) calls upon UNHCR to develop and initiate the application of CRRF in particular situations, in close coordination with relevant States, other UN agencies and stakeholders.
- The CRRF specifies key elements for a comprehensive response to any large movement of refugees.
- These include rapid and well-supported reception and admissions; assistance for local and national institutions and communities receiving refugees; support for immediate and on-going needs (e.g. protection, health, education) and expanded opportunities for solutions.
- The CRRF provides lasting solutions for refugees, including integration into host communities.
- Its approach is based on the idea that refugees should be included in their host communities.
- According to framework, once refugees get access to education and right to work legally, they can develop their own skills and be more self-reliant, contributing to local economy.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone-laying ceremony for construction of first traditional Hindu temple in Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi, the capital city of United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE government had allocated land for the temple during PM Modi's first visit to the gulf country in 2015.

- It will be the first traditional Hindu stone temple in the Middle East.
- The temple design and structure is along the lines of the Akshardham temple in Delhi and other places.
- It will come up on 55,000 square metres of land. It will include idols of Lord Krishna, Lord Maheshwara, Lord Ayyappa and more.
- It will incorporate all aspects and features of a traditional Hindu temple as part of fully functional, social, cultural and spiritual complex.
- It will be hand-carved by Indian temple artisans and assembled in UAE.
- It will also feature a garden and a water-front. It will be completed by 2020 and open to people of all religious backgrounds.

India, Oman sign 8 MoUs including in defence, health and tourism sectors

India and Oman have signed eight Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) in different areas including defence, health and tourism. The MoUs were inked during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's maiden visit to Oman.

- They were signed after delegation-level talks between PM Modi and Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said in Muscat.
- They held wide-ranging discussions on measures to strengthen co-operation in trade and investment, energy, defence, security, food security and regional issues. Oman was last leg PM Modi's visit to three west Asian countries viz. Palestine, UAE and Oman.
- Signed MoUs are:
 - MoU on Cooperation in the field of health
 - Annexure to the MoU on Military Cooperation
 - MoU on Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space
 - MoU in the field of Tourism cooperation between India and Oman
 - Agreement on Legal and Judicial Cooperation in Civil and Commercial matter
 - Agreement on mutual visa exemption for holders of diplomatic, Special, service and official passports
 - MoU on Cooperation between Foreign Service Institute, Ministry of External Affairs, India and Oman Diplomatic Institute
 - MoU on Academic and Scholarly cooperation sectors between National Defence College Sultanate of Oman and the Institute for Defence Studies and the Analyses

Banking & Finance

RBI to have additional tool for liquidity management

The Reserve Bank will soon have greater flexibility in terms of managing its liquidity operations with the addition of one more tool 'Standing Deposit Facility Scheme' to its kit.

- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in his Budget has proposed to amend the RBI Act to empower the central bank to come up with an additional instrument for liquidity management.
- The proposal forms part of the Finance Bill 2018 which is scheduled to be approved by Parliament by March 31.
- The Reserve Bank proposed in November 2015 the introduction of the SDF by suitably amending the RBI Act.
- This will provide the RBI a new tool for liquidity management, particularly in times when the money market liquidity is in excess to deal with post-demonetisation like scenario.

- The standing deposit facility could also be used for sterilisation operations with the advantage that it will not require the provision of collateral for liquidity absorption.

Business

ONGC acquires 10 per cent stake in UAE's Zakum oilfield

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)-led consortium of Indian state oil firms have acquired 10% stake in Abu Dhabi's offshore Lower Zakum Concession for \$600 million.

- The acquisition is part of deal inked between company executives and UAE officials in presence of visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Abu Dhabi crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi.
- The Lower Zakum Oil Field is located 84 km north-west of Abu Dhabi Islands.
- It was discovered in 1963 and is owned and developed by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.
- The total proven reserves of it are around 17.2 billion barrels and production is centred on 425,000 barrels per day (67,600 m³/d).
- With this deal, Indian oil and gas companies for first time have acquired stake in development of Abu Dhabi's hydrocarbon resources.
- The deal gives consortium of Indian oil companies comprising of Indian Oil Corp. Ltd and Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd's overseas arm Bharat PetroResources Ltd, access to about 2 million tonnes of annual share from field.
- The deal has term of 40 years. It will help India to meet its growing demand for future energy and refined products.

Environment

Three new eel species discovered in Bay of Bengal

Scientists from Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered three new species of eel along northern Bay of Bengal coast.

- They are *Gymnothorax pseudotile*, *Gymnothorax visakhaensis* and *Enchelycore propinqua*.
- *Gymnothorax pseudotile*: It was discovered at the Digha coast of the Bay of Bengal. It has dark brown and white dots on the dorsal side. It is about 1 feet to 1.5 feet long.

- Gymnothorax visakhaensis: It was discovered from the Visakhapatnam coast of the Bay of Bengal. It is uniformly brown. It is about a foot long.
- Enchelycore propinqua: It was also discovered from Visakhapatnam coast. It is reddish brown body mottled with irregular creamy white spots. It is the smallest of three measuring less than a foot.

Science & Technology

World's first autonomous pods unveiled in Dubai

Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) launched the first tests of the world's first autonomous pods at the World Government Summit.

- The autonomous pods – launched in cooperation with Next Future Transportation – are designed to travel short and medium distances in dedicated lanes. They can be coupled together in as little 15 seconds or detached – depending on the riders' destination – in five seconds.
- Each pod is fitted with cameras and electromechanical technologies to carry out the coupling and detaching, which can be activated while the pod is in motion.
- Each pod has an average speed 20 kilometres per hour, and measures 2.87 metres in length, 2.24 metres in width and 2.82 metres in height, and weighs about 1,500 kilograms – enough to carry 10 riders.
- The autonomous pod is fitted with a battery that supports three hours of operation, and can be charged in just six hours.

Sports

Rohan More from Pune becomes youngest in the World to swim across Ocean seven

Pune-based swimmer, Rohan More became the first Asian as well as the first Indian to swim across the Ocean Seven. Rohan is the youngest person in the world to swim across the Ocean Seven.

- The Ocean's Seven marathon consists of seven long-distance open-water swims, which includes the North Channel, the Cook Strait, the Molokai Channel, the English Channel, the Catalina Channel, the Tsugaru Strait and the Strait of Gibraltar.

- The swimming marathon is widely considered equivalent to the Seven Summits mountaineering challenge.
- With this, More becomes only the ninth person in the world to complete it
- More completed his first marathon swim at the age of 11.
- He is a national figure and has received the Tenzing Norgay Award from the Indian Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- The award, also known as the National Adventure Award, was presented by President Ram Nath Kovind.

Gangolli claims 5th straight national chess title for blind

Defending champion Kishan Gangolli from Karnataka has won the 13th edition of the National 'A' Chess Championship for the blind in Mumbai on February 12, 2018.

- The championship was organised by All India Chess Federation for the Blind (AICFB).
- With this feat, Gangolli became the champion for the fifth consecutive time with 10.5 points.
- Gujarat's Ashvin Makwana stood second with 9.5 points, Soundarya Kumar Pradhan of Orissa with 9 points came third, Aryan Joshi of Maharashtra with 8.5 points, came fourth and Odisha's Subhendu Kumar Patra with 7.5 points was at fifth position in the National 'A' Chess Championship for blind.
- These top five players in the championship will form the Indian team for the forthcoming 'World Team Championship' for the blind to be held in Bulgaria in July 2018.

Obituary

Pakistan's iron lady Asma Jehangir passes away

Pakistan's top lawyer and human rights activist Asma Jehangir passed away on due to a cardiac arrest in Lahore.

- Known for her bold stance, Asma was the country's symbol of resistance and a human rights activist who spoke against military dictators and abusers of law for the past five decades.
- She headed the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and remained the Supreme Court Bar Association chairperson.
- She was also appointed as UN Rapporteur in the region during the 1990s.

- She remained in jail during the dictatorial rule of General Zia-ul Haq in 1983 for raising her voice for the democrats.
- She won numerous national and international awards for her struggle for the oppressed.

Important Days

February 12: National Productivity Day

The National Productivity Day is observed every year in India on February 12.

- Besides, February 12-18 is observed as National Productivity week throughout the country with the theme 'Industry 4.0 Leapfrog Opportunity for India'.
- The main observance of day is organised by National Productivity Council (NPC) for encouraging all stakeholders in implementation of productivity tools and techniques with contemporary relevant themes.
This year it is 60th Anniversary of the NPC and is being celebrated as Diamond Jubilee Year.
- Industry 4.0 is also called as fourth industrial revolution. It is emerging globally as powerful force and is being called as next industrial revolution. It is characterized by increasing digitization and interconnection of products, value chains and business models.