

National Current Affairs

Government extends anti-narcotics scheme for 3 more years

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has extended the Anti-Narcotics Scheme for 3 more years to combat illicit trafficking in drugs and psychotropic substances.

- The scheme was first launched in October 2004 for period of five years. It was later extended twice in subsequent years.
- It aims to assist states and Union Territories financially which are contributing in controlling inter-state and cross-border drug trafficking.
- The main strategy under the scheme includes reduction of both supply and demand of drugs and psychotropic substances.
- The supply reduction will include enforcement activities and demand reduction will involve rehabilitation and de-addiction measures.
- The financial assistance for narcotics control has been extended, with an estimated budget of Rs. 21 crore.
- It will be provided to all anti-narcotics agencies for strengthening their enforcement capabilities to combat illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. It is also proposed to be provided for all capacity building activities, including training of personnel.

West Bengal becomes first state to opt out of National Health Protection Scheme

The West Bengal became the first state to opt out of Centre's National Health Protection Scheme (NHPS) announced in Union Budget 2018-19.

- According to State Government, it has already made hospitalisation and medical treatment free for its citizens and has already enrolled 50 lakh people under its Swasthya Sathi programme.
- NHPS (Ayushman Bharat Scheme) dubbed 'Modicare' seeks to provide health insurance of Rs 5 Lakh to 10 crore poor and vulnerable households. Under it, up to Rs 5 lakh insurance cover will be provided to each family per year in secondary and tertiary care institutions.
- NHPS will have 50 crore beneficiaries, making it world's largest government-funded healthcare programme to provide quality health cover to population larger than combined citizenry of US, UK, Germany and France.
- The Centre had drawn up health plan for the scheme in which 40% of fund for the scheme has to come from state.

- Under it, the central government will contribute Rs 2,000 crore to scheme out of a total cost of Rs 5,500-6,000 crore – the remaining amount is to be paid by the state governments.

Paschim Lehar: Tri-service maritime exercise held off western coast

Tri-service maritime exercise 'Paschim Lehar' was held off India's western coast with an aim to build interoperability between Indian Navy, Indian Army, Indian Air Force and Coast Guard.

- This exercise includes participation of large number of ships, submarines and aircraft from Western Naval Command of Indian Navy and units from Eastern Naval Command, Indian Army, Air Force and Coast Guard.
- Over 40 ships and submarines and similar number of maritime surveillance, fighter aircraft, helicopters and Remotely Piloted Aircraft of Indian Navy and IAF are participating in the exercise. It will test operational tasking and amphibious capabilities of armed forces, along with elements of Army Amphibious Brigade.
- The exercise also includes number of weapon firings, including missile, gun and torpedo firings during initial phase.
- The second phase of the exercise is structured to validate and refine the operational plans of Western Naval Command.

India's first radio festival held in Delhi

India's first radio festival was held at the UNESCO House in New Delhi to mark World Radio Day (February 13).

- It was organised by International Association of Women in Radio and Television (IAWRT) in partnership with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- The festival aimed to bring together radio professionals, podcasters and other digital audio programmers.
- It included discussions of expert panels, exhibition and live performances.
- Its discussions were based on the theme for World Radio Day 2018 – Radio and Sports.
- It examined potential of sports as a platform for social change, ways to make it more creative and trace journey of music on radio.

Centre to develop Karnataka's Hampi to be developed as iconic tourism site

The Hampi monuments which are part of Karnataka's cultural heritage, will be one of the 10 tourist destinations across India to be developed as 'Iconic Tourism Site' by the central government.

- The government proposes to develop ten prominent tourist sites as Iconic Tourism destinations through holistic infrastructure and skill development. In addition, tourist amenities will be upgraded at 100 Adarsh Monuments of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- As part of the initiative, the Centre will take up 100 Adarsh Smaraks such as toilet blocks, drinking water facilities, pathways and ramps (for the differently abled), seating benches, dustbins, improved parking facilities, ticket counters, landscaping and more.
- Located in Hosapete taluk of Ballari district, there are 57 major monuments in Hampi, most of which come under the core zone of Hampi, which includes four villages spread across 41.8 sq. km.
- Hampi was declared as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations for its architectural splendour.
- The monuments in Hampi are maintained by the Central Archaeology Department.

Government nod to long-term visas for Afghan minorities seeking refuge

With The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, stuck in Parliament, the government recently cleared the proposal for granting long-term visa (LTV) to minorities from Afghanistan seeking refuge in India.

- The Home Ministry has also liberalised norms for visa and residential permits for other nationals from Afghanistan, signalling further strengthening of ties between the two neighbours.
- After the NDA came to power, visa rules for minorities from Pakistan, who fled the country owing to religious persecution, were relaxed and cases, including those of "extreme compassion", were approved for LTV, which means visa (with conditions) for five years.
- In 2015, the Centre further relaxed the rules and this time, non-Muslims from Bangladesh were included in the scheme.

President inaugurates international conference 'Agricon 2018' & 'Agriexpo 2018'

The President of India, Mr Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the international conference 'Agricon 2018' and 'Agriexpo 2018' at Chandrashekhar Azad University of Agriculture & Technology (CSAUT), Kanpur on 14th February.

- The conference has been organised under the joint auspices of The Society of Agricultural Professionals, Kanpur and Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture & Technology, Kanpur.
- During this four day event, discussions will be held on various themes including Sustainable Farming Systems, Conservation and Utilisation of Genetic Resources and Managing Change in Agriculture.
- The President emphasised the need to see grain production, dairy farming, animal husbandry and fisheries, poultry, horticulture and sericulture as part of a composite approach to modern agriculture.

Chhattisgarh village gets electricity for first time

The residents of Chhattisgarh's Bhalupani village in Balrampur finally got electricity connection for the first time after the district administration installed solar panels for every family.

- Being a Naxal prone area, the initiatives taken by the government failed to reach the village, as a result, the residents had to spend their lives in darkness for a very long time.
- As the dominance of Naxals from the areas has vanished the village is finally availing the benefits of the schemes of the government.
- The village with a population of about 150 people, the locals saw the lights in the house for the first time.
- Apart from the electrification, the village will soon have a proper road facility and Anganwadi centre for the people.

Medical Council of India (MCI) proposal to amend the Screening Test Regulations 2002, approved by Health Ministry

A common National Entrance Exam viz. National Eligibility cum Entrance Test has been made mandatory for admission to all medical courses in the country. Indian students can also pursue medical education abroad and have to qualify a Screening Test called Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE), for registration to practice in India after obtaining primary medical qualification (MBBS) overseas.

- The proposal of Medical Council of India (MCI) to amend the Screening Test Regulations, 2002, making it mandatory to qualify NEET to pursue foreign medical course has been approved by this Ministry.
- Thus, the Indian Citizens / Overseas Citizen of India intending to obtain primary medical qualification from any medical institution outside India, on or after May 2018, shall have to mandatorily qualify the NEET for admission to MBBS course abroad.

- The result of NEET shall be deemed to be treated as the Eligibility Certificate for such persons, provided that such persons fulfils the eligibility criteria for admission to the MBBS course prescribed in the Regulations on Graduate Medical Education, 1997.

Indian, Chinese armies celebrate Chinese spring festival in Ladak

A ceremonial Border Personnel Meeting (BPM) between Indian and Chinese army on the occasion of Chinese spring festival was held on Tuesday in Chushul sector of Ladakh region.

- The BPM was marked by saluting the national flag of China by both the delegation members. This was followed by the ceremonial address by both delegation leaders covering exchange of greetings, wishes and vote of thanks which reflected the mutual desire of maintaining and improving relations at functional level at the border.
- Thereafter, a cultural programme showcasing vibrant Chinese culture and traditional grandeur was organised, followed by lunch.
- Both sides sought to build on the mutual feeling to uphold the treaties and agreements signed between the governments of the two sides to maintain peace and tranquillity along the LAC.

International Current Affairs

China to host 2018 SCO Summit at Qingdao in June

China will host 2018 Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit at Qingdao, eastern Shandong Province in June 2018.

- China had taken over rotating chair of SCO after 17th SCO summit concluded in Astana, capital of Kazakhstan in June 2017.
- SCO is a Eurasian economic, political and security organisation headquartered in Beijing, China. It was founded in 2001.
- The full members of the organization are China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, India and Pakistan. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia have observer status at present.
- China had founded this grouping in 1996 and then it was called as Shanghai Five.
- It comprised of Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.
- In 2001, Uzbekistan was invited to join it and SCO was officially born.
- After Astana Summit Declaration in 2005, SCO has emerged as a regional security organization.

- The groupings main objective is military cooperation between members....
- It also works towards intelligence-sharing, counter-terrorism operations in Central Asia.
- It is primarily centred on its member nations' Central Asian security-related concerns, often describing main threats it confronts as being terrorism, separatism and extremism.

Venezuela, Libya Lose UNGA Vote for third time in 3 Years

Venezuela and Libya were suspended from voting in United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2018-19 session for not paying dues to 193-member world body. It was for third time in three years these countries have been suspended from voting for unpaid dues.

- Overall, 14 countries including Venezuela and Libya were in arrears for paying to global organization.
- Venezuela was suspended for not paying minimum of \$25,200,296 and Libya must pay at least \$6,594,842 to restore its voting rights.
- Venezuela is engulfed in economic and political crisis and Libya has two rival governments, each backed by an array of militias.
- The other countries that also lost their voting rights are Central African Republic (CAR), Dominican Republic, Dominica, Marshall Islands, Grenada, Surinam and Yemen. Equatorial Guinea also lost voting rights in UN Security Council.
- But UNGA through resolution has allowed Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia to vote despite being in arrears.

Banking & Finance

Yes Bank lists \$600 million MTN bond on India INX

India's fifth largest private sector lender Yes Bank has listed \$600 million bond issued under its maiden \$1 billion MTN programme on Global Securities Market (GSM) of India INX.

- The bank will use proceeds from this bond to fund the bank's IFSC Banking Unit (IBU) in Gift City and expand IBU's rapidly growing business opportunities.
- Yes Bank's MTN (medium term note) bonds issuance has received overwhelming response from international investors.
- It has been already listed on London Stock Exchange International Securities Market (LSE ISM) and Singapore Exchange Securities Trading Limited (SGX).

- Indai-INX is India's first international exchange at IFSC Gujarat International Financial Tech (GIFT) City, Gandhinagar (Gujarat).

Equitas Small Finance launches interactive digital savings a/c

Equitas Small Finance Bank has launched an interactive digital savings account - selfeSavings. Through the web-based interactive video from the bank's website www.equitasbank.com, a selfeSavings account can be opened.

- Customers by using details of Aadhaar, PAN card, can also set up a mobile banking facility and start operating the account in five minutes.
- The digital savings account would have "no minimum balance requirement" and would be offered with an interest rate of six per cent per year for balances of upto Rs 10 lakh.
- Customers can also make online money transfers for free through digital savings account. It also comes with a Virtual Visa Debit card facility allowing customers to make online-payments.

Business

BHEL bags order from NTPC for flue gas desulphurisation system

The state owned Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has bagged major order worth Rs. 560 crore from the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) for setting up flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) system at National Capital Power Station (capacity 2×490 MW) at Dadri in Uttar Pradesh.

- The order involves installation of an indigenously developed FGD system in NTPC power station.
- The system is aimed at controlling various harmful emissions, as per stringent emission norms declared by the Union Ministry for Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC).
- It will be the 13th order for desulphurization unit being executed by BHEL as part of Make in India programme and Intended Nationally Determined Contributions scheme to reduce carbon footprint.

Appointments & Resigns

Jacob Zuma resigns as South Africa's President

South Africa's embattled President Jacob Zuma (75) has resigned for the office.

- He announced the decision after ruling African National Congress (ANC) party threatened to eject him from office via parliamentary vote of no confidence.
- Zuma was South Africa's President for the last 9 years since 2009. His resignation followed weeks of intense public pressure to step down amid long-standing corruption allegations.
- His tenure as President was marred by economic decline and multiple charges of graft that have undermined image and legitimacy of ANC party that led South Africans to freedom in 1994.
- In October 2017, South African Supreme Court of Appeal had ruled that he must face 18 counts of corruption, fraud, racketeering and money laundering.

Awards & Recognition

India's Aadhaar and Umang App win awards at world Government Summit 2018

India's Aadhaar and Umang App have won awards at recently concluded 6th World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai.

- Umang App won in Best m-Government Service Award for Accessible Government Category and Aadhaar won in the Best Government Emerging Technologies Award.
- The awards were presented by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of UAE Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- Aadhaar: The award for it recognized India's efforts of invention and innovation in field of technology and making the country completely digitalized. It was recognised as the world's largest biometric enabled identification programme, which provides access to service, bank accounts, social services benefits, income tax, passport services by providing 1.2 billion citizens unique identification card with fingerprint, eye-print and other vital data.
- Umang App: The award acknowledged India's efforts to provide convenient services to its citizens. Umang stands for Unified Mobile Application for New-age

Governance. It provides users unified platform that combines government departments and services, facilitating transactions for citizens.

Sports

Tamil Nadu win maiden senior national football championship

Tamil Nadu, which was playing its first-ever final, defeated Manipur, 2-1 at the Barabati Stadium in Cuttack yesterday. Skipper Indumathi and Indrani found the net for Tamil Nadu, while Ratanbala scored Manipur's only goal.

- Indumathi has also adjudged the player of the final as well as the tournament for her superlative performances.

Cristiano Ronaldo first to reach 100 UCL goals with one team

Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 100th Champions League goal for Real Madrid with the first of his two scores in Wednesday's 3-1 victory over Paris Saint-Germain, making him the first player to score a century of UCL goals with one team.

- Ronaldo, who scored 15 Champions League goals for United, has netted 46 on the road, 52 at home, and three at neutral sites in a Real shirt.
- The goal also marked eight straight UCL games with a goal for Ronaldo, who has now scored 20 over his last 12 matches in the competition.

Obituary

Former Union minister Bolla Bulliramaiah dies

Former Union minister and veteran TDP leader Bolla Bulliramaiah died on Feb 14.

- Bulliramaiah, who was known as a genial person, joined the TDP during its inception and became an MP in 1984.
- He was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Eluru constituency in 1991, 1996 and 1999 and served as the Union minister of state for commerce during 1996-98 in the United Front government.

Former MLA Dhature dies

Congress leader and former Maharashtra MLA Hafizbhai Dhature passed away.

- The veteran Congress leader represented Miraj in this western Maharashtra district in the Assembly for one term.

Longest-serving Dutch premier, Ruud Lubbers, dies at 78

Ruud Lubbers, who as the Netherlands' longest serving prime minister led his country through economic turmoil to prosperity and helped shape the foundations of the European Union, died on 14th Feb.

- He served as economic minister from 1973 to 1977.
- He served as the prime minister of Netherlands from 1982 to 1994.
- He also served as United Nations high commissioner for refugees from 2001 to 2005.