

National Current Affairs

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates World Information Technology Congress 2018

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated World Information Technology Congress (WITC) 2018 in Hyderabad, Telangana via video conference. The theme of this edition of conference was 'Future Enterprises.'

- It was hosted by Telangana Government, in association with country's top IT body, National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) and global IT organization World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA).
- This is for first time India is hosting WITC. It will second time that the event will be taking place in Asia after it was hosted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 2008.
- Around 2500 delegates and top IT honchos from across the world participated in the mega IT event.
- Representatives from IT industries from around 80 countries took part in the conference.
- Moreover, at least 20 CEOs from Fortune 500 companies and 100 other top executives attended the conference.
- WITC is a biennial event. It aims provide single platform to IT experts, policy and decision makers and Government officials from all over the world together to discuss various challenges and possible solutions to them.

PM Narendra Modi inaugurates Fourth Container Terminal of JNPT in Mumbai

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Fourth Container Terminal (FCT) of Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) in Mumbai, Maharashtra. With this, JNPT doubled its container handling capacity.

- The new FCT will add capacity of 24 lakh containers per year in Phase-I and after completion of Phase-II in 2022, the capacity of JNPT will be 100 lakh containers per year.
- The new FCT of JNPT has been developed on Design, Built, Fund, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis for a concession period of 30 years at estimated cost of Rs. 7915 crore. The project was implemented in two Phases. i.e. Phase I and Phase II.
- The terminal has deepest berths to handle "Mother Ships. It can handle biggest container ships from quay length of 1 km and cranes that can reach 22 rows wide or greater. It can also handle three container ships at one go with sufficient yard space.
- The new FCT is also linked to dedicated rail freight corridor and can receive about 350 containers per rake.

- The rail facilities will be largest in India with only on-dock Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) compliant facility in India.
- It is capable of handling 1.5km long, 360 Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit (TEU) container trains on completion of DFC. It also has provision for storing 1.
- 1,600 reefer (refrigerated) containers to handle agricultural and horticulture produce.

Home Ministry organises Watan Ko Jano programme

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had recently organized Youth Exchange Programme- Watan Ko Jano programme.

- Under it, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh met youth of Jammu and Kashmir in New Delhi. Around 200 youth from state visited different places of country as part of the programme.
- The programme is sponsored jointly by Ministry of Home Affairs, Central Government (Kashmir Cell) and J&K State Rehabilitation Council Social Welfare Department.
- It aims to give exposure to youth and children of J&K about the cultural and socio-economic development taking place in other parts of country. Youth and children hit by militancy and from weaker sections from J&K are selected for the programme.

Maharashtra inks deal with Virgin Group for World's First Hyperloop between Mumbai and Pune

The Virgin Group led by Richard Branson has signed an intent agreement with Maharashtra Government to build world's first hyperloop transportation system between Mumbai and Pune.

- The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on first day of Magnetic Maharashtra investor summit held in Mumbai.
- The proposed hyperloop transportation system will link central Pune with megapolis as well as Navi Mumbai international airport. It aims to reduce travel time between two mega cities to 20 minutes from three hours at present. Details of project cost and time-line are yet to be announced.
- The proposed loop will be a fully electric system and will have the capability travel up to 1,000 km per hour. It will be able to ferry 150 million passengers every year.
- It will transform transportation system and make Maharashtra global pioneer in this space.
- The project will create thousands of jobs and has numerous socioeconomic benefits.

Atal Bhujal Yojana: Government formulates ambitious water conservation scheme

The Union Government has formulated ambitious water conservation scheme Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY) to tackle ever-deepening crisis of depleting groundwater level.

- The Rs 6,000-crore will be piloted under the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation. It is awaiting cabinet's clearance.
- The objective of scheme is to recharge ground water and create sufficient water storage for agricultural purposes.
- It also focuses on revival of surface water bodies so that ground water level can be increased, especially in the rural areas.
- It will give emphasis to recharging ground water sources and ensure efficient use of water by involving people at local level.
- The scheme after Cabinet's clearance will soon be launched in water-stressed states: Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. It will cover 78 districts, 193 blocks and more than 8,300 gram panchayats across these states.
- Centre will support half of the total project cost and rest of the budgetary cost will be shared by the World Bank.
- This scheme will help those who are in need for constant ground water supply especially farmers who have been hard impacted by acute shortage of ground water for past several years.
- Its focus is primarily on involvement of communities and convergence with different water schemes.
- Its major component is making society responsible and bringing about behaviour change to manage groundwater resource. It will help improve overall outlook towards water resource.

Haryana government implements project to promote micro irrigation

The Haryana government is implementing a special project of Rs 435.23 crore in 36 over exploited and critical blocks in 13 districts to encourage micro irrigation and recharge ground water in the state.

- Various activities by different departments such as agriculture, horticulture, rural development, irrigation and water resources and forest, and the Canal Area Development Authority were being implemented under the project.
- Subsidies under micro irrigation under these blocks have already been enhanced to 85 per cent and the cap of five hectares of land has already been removed.
- A special campaign would be organised to reach out small and marginal farmers in uncovered villages of these 36 blocks.

Rajasthan to get international educational institution for minorities

Union minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said that an international educational institution for minorities will be built in Rajasthan's Alwar city as part of the Centre's ambitious plan to set up five such institutes across the country.

- The plan for building these institutes was initially prepared in 2016 and an 11-member committee was formed under former bureaucrat Afzal Amanullah to oversee it.
- The committee submitted its report to the minority affairs ministry and after March 2017 the work on this ambitious project started.
- For setting up a world-class educational institution for minorities, 100 acres of land has been allotted for an institute in Alwar, Rajasthan.
- The government is mulling to proffer 40 per cent reservation for girls at these institutes.
- According to information received from the ministry, work is underway in Greater Noida to create a "skill development hub" for minorities.
- Meanwhile, the ministry is also going to open more than 100 schools on the lines of Navodaya Vidyalaya for the students belonging to minority communities.
- By the end of this year, 32 of these schools will be functional. Special attention will be given to girls.

India's first AI research institute opened in Mumbai

Wadhvani AI, India's first research institute dedicated to developing artificial intelligence solutions for social good was inaugurated in Mumbai.

- The institute will focus on researching ways to harness the power of AI to solve deep rooted problems in healthcare, education, agriculture, and infrastructure to accelerate social development.
- Based in Mumbai, the Wadhvani Institute for Artificial Intelligence (Wadhvani AI) is partnering with the government of Maharashtra for its mission to create AI solutions for social impact.
- The Maharashtra government will help the institute identify problems, and test and scale the solutions.
- Through its partnership with Mumbai University and other institutions, Wadhvani AI aims to create a talent ecosystem in AI and Data Science.
- Founded by Indian-American tech entrepreneurs Dr. Romesh Wadhvani and Mr. Sunil Wadhvani, the institute will be led by AI pioneer and founding MD of Microsoft Research India, Dr. P. Anandan.

PM Modi lays foundation stone for Navi Mumbai international airport

Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the Rs 16,700 crore-Navi Mumbai international airport, which is expected to ease flight operations at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport.

- The Navi Mumbai International Airport will be the second international aviation hub for the financial capital, presently served by the Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport that has almost reached saturation point.
- Mumbai has been in dire need of a secondary airport. For, domestic passenger traffic has been registering a double digit growth for the past three years, but Mumbai airport has few slots for domestic flights.

Over 40 Indian languages, dialects heading to extinction

More than 40 languages or dialects in India are considered to be endangered and are believed to be heading towards extinction as only a few thousand people speak them.

- According to a report of the Census Directorate, there are 22 scheduled languages and 100 non-scheduled languages in the country, which are spoken by a large number of people — one lakh or more.
- However, there are 42 languages which are spoken by less than 10,000 people. These are considered endangered and may be heading towards extinction.
- The languages or dialects which are considered endangered, include 11 from Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Great Andamanese, Jarawa, Lamongse, Luro, Muot, Onge, Pu, Sanenyo, Sentilese, Shompen and Takahanyilang), seven from Manipur (Aimol, Aka, Koiren, Langang, Langrong, Purum and Tarao) and four from Himachal Pradesh (Baghati, Handuri, Pangvali and Sirmaudi).

International Current Affairs

Saudi Arabia allows women to open their own businesses without male consent

Saudi Arabia has allowed women to open their own businesses and benefit from government eservices without having to prove consent from husband or male guardian. This move marks major step away from country's strict guardianship system that has ruled it for decades.

- The expansion of female employment is under Saudi Arabia's new reform plan for a post-oil era.
- Earlier, under guardianship system, women were required to present proof of permission from husband, male guardian, father or brother, to do any government paperwork, travel or enrol in classes.

- Waiver of this requirement is a significant move on part of Saudi government's initiative to create gender-neutral society.
- The development is also in line with Saudi Arabia's effort to expand its fast-growing private sector.
- It is also in line with its move to expand its private sector in order to reduce long dependent on crude oil production for economic revenue.

Cyclone Kelvin lashes West Australia

Tropical Cyclone Kelvin hit the resource-rich north coast of Western Australia on 18th Feb, lashing it with strong winds and causing floods that could cut the main highway for up to two weeks.

- The storm crossed the coast 165 km (100 miles) south-southwest of Broome early on Sunday morning with destructive winds that gusted up to 150 km per hour, but the Bureau of Meteorology said it expects the winds to weaken as the system moves inland.
- Flooding is the main issue for industry and remote communities as Kelvin inundates a poorly drained area, parts of which are still waterlogged from rains a fortnight ago.
- The cyclone is forecast to move south through the East Pilbara district, which produces an estimated \$15 billion worth of mining exports each year.

Appointments & Resigns

Shoaib Akhtar Appointed Brand Ambassador of PCB

Pakistan Cricket Board has appointed Shoaib Akhtar as the brand ambassador of the PCB. He will be working closely with chairman Najam Sethi.

- The 'Rawalpindi Express' as Akhtar is fondly called, represented Pakistan in 46 Test matches, 163 ODIs and 15 Twenty20Is.
- He played in the 1999, 2003 and 2011 World Cup for Pakistan. He picked 178 wickets in Tests, 247 wickets in ODIs and 19 wickets in T20Is.

Sports

Roger Federer beats Grigor Dimitrov to win Rotterdam Open title

On 18th February 2018, Roger Federer won his third Rotterdam Open title by defeating Grigor Dimitrov, in Rotterdam, Netherlands.

- Switzerland's Roger Federer defeated Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov 6-2, 6-2 in the finals of the ABN AMRO tournament in Rotterdam and won the Rotterdam Open title for the third time.
- This is the 97th title in his overall career. In this count, he is only behind America's Jimmy Connors who has won 109 titles.

Christian Coleman smashes 20-year-old 60m sprint indoor world record

On 18th February 2018, Christian Coleman of US broke the 20 year old world record in 60 metre sprint with 6.34 seconds timing, at the US Indoor National Championships in Albuquerque.

- Christian Coleman has broken American Maurice Greene's record of 6.39 seconds, made in Madrid in 1998. Christian Coleman is 21 years old.
- Now, Christian Coleman will lead the American team to IAAF world indoor championships in Birmingham, England, that will be conducted next month

Obituary

Ex-Mathura MLA Ram Swarup Sharma passes away

Former MLA and Padma Shri awardee Ram Swarup Sharma passed away.

- Sharma represented the Mathura-Vrindavan constituency twice in the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly.
- He was also a popular exponent of the 'Rasa Lila', a popular form of folk theatre in the regions of Mathura and Vrindavan devoted to lord Krishna.
- The skill earned him the Padma honour from the Indian government besides the title of 'Raasacharya'.

French jazz violinist Didier Lockwood passes away

Didier Lockwood, a jazz violinist from France, died on 18th February 2018. He was a disciple of the late Stephane Grappelli.

- He joined a famous French rock band called Magma when he was 17 years old. Later he did a lot of collaborations and experimentations with jazz style.
- He was very interested in music education. He founded the Didier Lockwood Music Centre in Paris in 2001, to teach improvisation as per a jazz violin method he had developed.

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