

National Current Affairs

UIDAI launches Blue coloured Bal Aadhaar

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), the nodal authority for issuing Aadhaar cards has rollout 'Bal Aadhaar', meant for kids under 5 years of age.

- Bal Aadhaar literally means Kid's Aadhaar. It will have blue colour to differentiate it with regular Aadhaar.
- It will be linked with one of parent's Aadhaar card. No biometric details will be captured.
- Biometrics are not developed for children before 5 years of age. Hence, during Aadhaar enrolment child's Aadhaar data does not include biometric info like fingerprints and Iris scan.
- Once the kid crosses 5 years of age, then regular Aadhaar will be issued, which will have the biometric details.

Indian Navy to host MILAN in March 2018

The Indian Navy is going to host 16 countries for multi-national 2018 MILAN exercise at Port Blair in Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) islands from March 6 to 1, 2018.

- The eight-day mega naval exercise will be held under aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command with theme of 'Friendship Across the Seas'.
- Milan 2018 will witness diverse mix of professional exercises and seminars, social events and sporting fixtures.
- The interactions at event encompass sharing of views and ideas on maritime good-order and enhancing regional cooperation for combating unlawful activities at sea.
- The social interactions planned in Milan 2018 include display by bands of the Indian Navy and Indian Army, ship visits and colorful cultural evenings.
- Milan 2018 aims to showcase the rich heritage and pristine natural beauty of A&N Islands to foreign visitors.

Govt ropes in IIFT, ICAI to improve ease of doing business ranking

Commerce and industry ministry has appointed four institutes, including IIFT and ICAI, to interact with stakeholders and suggest measures to push India's ranking in ease of doing business index.

- The National Institute of Construction Management and Research (NICMAR), the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), the Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) are the four institutes that have been roped in for the exercise.
- As per the latest World bank's Doing Business ranking, India's position improved by 30 places to 100th. The government wants India to figure within top 50 in the coming years.
- The parameters include - starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

Government to launch GOBAR-Dhan Yojana

The Union Government is going to roll out Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan (GOBAR-DHAN) scheme. It was first announced by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley during his 2018-19 budget speech.

- The scheme focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG.
- It will also help in keeping the village clean while increasing income of farmers and cattle herders.
- The scheme will be hugely beneficial for country as India is home to highest cattle population in world (around 300 million in number) which produces around 3 million tonnes of dung. It will encourage farmers to consider dung and other waste not just as waste but as source of income.
- The scheme will provide many benefits to rural people by keeping villages clean and sanitized, improving livestock health and increasing farm yields.
- Under it, biogas generation will help to increase self-reliance in energy utilized for cooking and lighting.
- The scheme will augment income of farmers and cattle herders.
- It will create new opportunities for jobs linked to waste collection, transportation, biogas sales etc.
- It will also provide stable fuel supply in market for oil companies and accessible credit in market through government schemes and banks for entrepreneurs.
- Under it, villagers will be mobilized to create self-help groups (SHGs) and creative societies that will help in clean energy and green jobs initiative.

PM Modi flags off 'Run for New India' Marathon in Surat

Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the 'Run for New India' marathon in Surat, Gujarat. Chief Minister of Gujarat, Vijay Rupani was also present on the occasion.

- Objective behind this Marathon is to create awareness about social causes and call upon youth to resolve to build a New India.
- 'Run for New India' marathon was organized by the Surat Nagrik Samiti. It is divided into 4 categories which included 41 KM full marathon.
- Around 1.50 lakh runners, across all age groups, participated in this marathon.

21st National Conference on e-Governance held in Hyderabad

On 26th and 27th February 2018, the 21st National Conference on e-Governance will be held in Hyderabad, Telangana.

- The 21st National Conference on e-Governance is organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), jointly with the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology along with Telangana Government.
- The theme for this year's Conference is: 'Technology for accelerating Development'.
- The conference features plenary sessions based on the following themes: Building User Experience, Universalization and Replication and Governing e-Governance, e-Governance Good/ Best Practices, Emerging Technologies.
- The last session of the conference will be on the theme: Synergising Role of National and State Government.
- This conference acts as a platform for Secretaries of Administrative Reforms and Information Technology of State Governments, IT Managers of the Central Government, and software solution providers to discuss and analyse various issues and solution frameworks.

International Current Affairs

China elected as vice chair of FATF

China was elected as vice chair of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global body mandated to combat terror financing and money laundering.

- In its plenary meeting in Paris, FATF had placed Pakistan under "grey list" subject to direct monitoring and intense scrutiny by International Cooperation Review Group till June 2018 for compliance of Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Finance of Terrorism regulations. Pakistan was on the same list from 2012 to 2015.
- FATF is an inter-governmental policy making body that aims to establish international standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing.

- It was established in 1989 during the G7 Summit in Paris (France) to combat the growing problem of money laundering.

7th meeting of EPG on Nepal-India relations held in Kathmandu

On 24th and 25th February 2018, the seventh meeting of Eminent Persons Group (EPG) on Nepal-India relations was held in Kathmandu.

- Issues like the 1950 Peace and Friendship treaty, trade, environment, border and hydropower were discussed in the meeting.
- Nepal coordinator of EPG Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa said that, a positive report on the issues discussed in the meeting will be submitted in a few months.
- EPG's next meeting will be conducted in New Delhi.
- After the meeting, Dr Bhekh Bahadur Thapa and India coordinator of EPG Bhagat Singh Koshiyari said that, a report is being prepared to take bilateral relations to the next level.

Banking & Finance

State Bank of India in UK set for major restructuring

The State Bank of India (SBI) will undertake a major restructuring of its business in the UK from April and ensure greater protection for depositors.

- SBI's UK operations will transform into a subsidiary named State Bank of India UK Limited from April 1, in compliance with wider ring-fencing of capital requirements by the Bank of England.
- The move will mean that all retail branches of SBI in the UK will fall under a new UK-incorporated banking entity instead of their previous status as overseas branches of the Indian entity.
- While customers would be able to carry on using their debit cards and other banking facilities as before, the move marks a strategic shift for the bank with a greater focus on the UK market.
- The move follows Bank of England's Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) directing foreign banks a few years ago to move from their retail status as overseas branches to independent entities in order to protect depositors in the UK from fluctuations in foreign markets.

Science & Technology

First flight test of Rustom-2 UAV successfully conducted in user configuration with higher power engine

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has carried out first successful test-flight of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) Rustom-2 in user configuration with higher power engine.

- The flight was conducted at its Aeronautical Test Range at Chitradurga in Karnataka and all its parameter were normal.
- Rustom-2 belongs to family of UAVs under development, including Rustom-1 and Rustom-H.
- It is medium-altitude long-endurance drone (MALE).
- It can fly up to an altitude of 22,000 feet and has endurance of over 20 hours.
- It is capable of carrying payloads for electronic and signal intelligence missions.
- Rustom 2's onboard way-point navigation system allows drone to conduct missions autonomously.
- It will be used by all three services of Indian armed forces, primarily for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) operations.

Indian Railways inducts first digitally enabled High Horse Power Locomotives

Indian Railways in collaboration with General Electric (GE) has inducted two Digitally Enabled Locomotives based on state of art insulated-gate bipolar transistor (IGBT) technology.

- The two HHP prototypes locomotives were wholly designed in India under Make in India program and manufactured under Public Private partnership (PPP) through MoU with GE.
- IGBT Technology has three-terminal power semiconductor device primarily used as electronic switch.
- It gives combined advantages of high efficiency and fast switching.
- It offers greater power gain than standard bipolar type transistor combined with the higher voltage operation and lower input losses.

Moon's water may be widely distributed: Study

According to new study based on data from India's Chandrayaan-1 mission and NASA's Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO), Moon's water may be widely distributed across its surface and not confined to particular region or type of terrain.

- The results contradict some earlier studies, which had suggested that more water was detected at Moon's polar latitudes and that strength of water signal waxes and wanes according to the lunar day (29.5 Earth days).
- The new finding suggests that water may be present primarily as OH, a more reactive form of normal water (H₂O).
- OH also called hydroxyl does not stay in its form for long, and attaches itself chemically.
- This OH molecule needs to be extracted from minerals in order to be used as water.
- The results indicate that OH or H₂O on moon is created by solar wind hitting lunar surface.
- It is also believed that OH or H₂O may have come from Moon itself, after it is slowly released from deep inside minerals locked since Moon was formed.
- The new findings can help researchers to understand origin of Moon's water and how easy it would be to use as resource.

Sports

Parupalli Kashyap wins Austrian Open International Challenge (badminton)

India's Parupalli Kashyap won the men's singles title of the Austrian Open International Challenge, in Vienna, Austria.

- Parupalli Kashyap defeated Malaysia's June Wei Cheam 23-21 21-14 in the men's singles final and won the Austrian Open International Challenge.
- This is Parupalli Kashyap's first international title in more than three years. He is a former National badminton champion.

Strandja Memorial tournament: Vikas Krishan strikes gold, Mary Kom settles for silver

Vikas Krishan (75kg) and Amit Panghal (49kg) claimed gold medals while M C Mary Kom (48kg) had to be content with silver in the 69th Strandja Memorial boxing tournament for men and women.

- India ended the tournament with a whopping 11 medals — five from men and six from women boxers. In all, the contingent clinched two gold, three silver and six bronze medals.
- Amit, who fetched the top honours at last month's India Open, defeated Morocco's Said Mordaji to fetch the yellow metal.
- Vikas, on the other hand, eased past American Troy Isley.
- Mary Kom lost to Bulgaria's Sevda Asenova in a rather shocking verdict.

Gopi Thonakal and Monika Athare retain New Delhi Marathon titles

On 25th February 2018, Gopi Thonakal and Monika Athare won titles in the men's and women's category respectively, at the IDBI Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon and retained the titles they won last year.

- Gopi Thonakal finished in 2 hours, 15 minutes and 16 seconds and won the title in men's category. But he missed qualification for the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, for which the Athletics Federation of India has set a 2:12:50 qualification standard.
- Nitendra Singh Rawat finished second in 2:24:55 and Bahadur Singh Dhoni finished third in 2:24:56 among men.
- In the women's category, Monika Athare won the title with a timing of 2:43:46. She was followed by Jyoti Gawte in second position with 2:50:12 and Monica Raut in the third position with 2:55:02.
- The marathon was flagged off at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium by Sachin Tendulkar. Nearly 65 elite Indian athletes participated in the full marathon of 42.195km.

Obituary

Best-selling British novelist Penny Vincenzi dead at 78

Penny Vincenzi, a popular British novelist passed away on 25th February 2018.

- Penny Vincenzi started her career as a journalist.
- In 1989, she published her first novel "Old Sins".
- She has published nearly 17 novels and two story collections. In 2017, she published her last book "A Question of Trust".

Uttarakhand BJP MLA Manganlal Shah passes away

Manganlal Shah, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA, died on 25th February 2018. Manganlal Shah was a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLA from Tharali.

Important Days

Assam will mark September 22 as Rhino Day

The Assam government will be observing September 22 as Rhino Day to generate public awareness on protection of one-horned rhinoceros (pachyderm) — the pride of the state.

- The day will be dedicated to approximately 2,500 rhino population in state.
- State government is also launch State Rhino Project in line with National Rhino Project for protecting them from threats of poaching.

Books & Authors

New book reveals how Sikh warrior Hari Singh Nalwa got his name

Dr Vanit Nalwa presented her book 'Hari Singh Nalwa: Champion of the Khalsaji (1791-1837)' at National Archives of India, in Delhi.

- During the presentation of her book, Dr Vanit Nalwa, said that, Hari Singh Nalwa, a Sikh warrior who lived in the 19th century, got his surname after Maharaja Ranjit Singh said “wah mere Raja Nal, wah”.
- Maharaja Ranjit Singh said those words, as he compared Hari Singh's bravery as a child with that of King Nal of Mahabharat.
- Other information related to Hari Singh Nalwa were also shared at the presentation. Dr Vanit Nalwa is a seventh generation descendant of Hari Singh.
- Hari Singh was born in 1791. He became a leader when he was 13 years. He led an army of 800 men. Dr Vanit Nalwa has written this book after 7 years of research.