

National Current Affairs

PM inaugurates two-day National Legislators Conference on 'We For Development'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a two-day National Legislators Conference at the Central Hall of Parliament House.

- The motive of the conference is to bring MPs and MLAs on a single platform where ideas and plans for development can be exchanged. Role of public representatives in development and optimum use of resources will be the subjects on agenda for discussions.
- The conference will hold discussions on how women help in the development work being done for the country where ideas on projects and plans can be debated.

GST Council meeting held

The 26th GST Council meeting failed to come up with any conclusive simplification process after deliberating on two models and has now postponed the decision for next Council meeting, but E-way bill will be implemented from April 1.

- The government has clearly realized it needs more time to work on return simplification and therefore the existing structure will continue till June.
- In addition, the reverse charge mechanism has been suspended till June 30, the TDS/TCS mechanism has also been postponed till June 30.
- Existing system of filing returns 3B has been extended for another 3 months and meanwhile Group of Ministers on the Income Tax will look into it & consult tax experts among others.
- Tax exemptions for exporters has been extended for six months while e-Wallet scheme has been deferred till October.

International Current Affairs

India, France ink 14 agreements

India and France signed 14 key agreements in strategic areas of security, nuclear energy, protection of classified information and also in field of education, environment, urban development and railways.

- These agreements were signed after extensive bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron in New Delhi.
- French President Macron was in India on four-day official state visit.
- His visit was aimed at strengthening bilateral economic, political and strategic dimension of engagement between India and France.
- Signed Agreement are:
 - MoU on cooperation in the field of Environment.
 - MoU on technical cooperation in the field of Railways.
 - India-France Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement.
 - Agreement to facilitate Mutual Recognition of Academic Qualifications.
 - Letter of Intent for creation of permanent Indo-French Railways Forum.
 - Agreement on cooperation in the field of Sustainable Urban Development.
 - MoU for co-operation in projects in ISA member countries in areas of solar energy.
 - Implementing Arrangement for pre-formulation studies of a Maritime Awareness Mission.
 - Agreement regarding provision of reciprocal logistics support between their Armed Forces.
 - Bilateral Arrangement on cooperation in matter of Hydrography and Maritime Cartography.
 - Agreement regarding exchange and reciprocal protection of classified or protected information.
 - Credit Facility Agreement of Euros 100 million for funding of Smart City Projects through a Challenge Process.
 - Industrial Way Forward Agreement between NPCL and EDF, France for construction of six nuclear reactors at Jaitapur, Maharashtra.
 - Agreement on Prevention of Illicit Consumption and Reduction of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Chemical Precursors and Related Offences.

Indian, French companies ink pacts worth 13 billion euros

Indian and French companies have exchanged 19 contracts and agreements worth over 13 billion euros in sectors including new and renewable energy, smart grid, nuclear energy, aviation, cement, telecom among others.

- The agreements were formalised at Indo-French Economic Partnership (IFEP) signing ceremony held in New Delhi in the context of French President Emmanuel Macron's official state visit to India.
- Aviation Sector: The biggest deals signed in terms of value were from civil aviation sector. Low-cost carrier SpiceJet signed \$12.5-billion agreement with French aviation major Safran Group to supply 155 CFM LEAP-1B engines for airline's Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, along with spare engines to support fleet.
 - Safran also announced its eighth facility in India at Hyderabad, Telangana.

- Airports Authority of India (AAI) signed agreement with French engineering company Egis for conducting study of three airports in the country — Lucknow, Pune and Trichy.
- Electric Mobility Sector: Four French companies — EdF International Networks, Citelum, G2M and Solstye — signed an agreement to work together for developing charging infrastructure in India to support electric mobility.
- Renewable energy sector: Bharat Light & Power and EDF renewed their contract pertaining to data acquisition to optimise wind and solar energy production.
- General collaboration agreement was also signed between French Commission for Atomic and Alternative Energy (CEA) and Vikram Solar to increase production capacity of high performance solar cells and modules.
- Cement Sector: French cement maker Vicat announced investment of Rs 1,200 crore in Karnataka to double its production capacity and investment of Rs. 510 crore in cement-grinding unit in Andhra Pradesh.

India, France sign strategic pact on use of each other's military bases

India and France have inked strategic pact providing for use of each other's military facilities including opening naval bases to warships.

- The agreement reflects growing depth between both countries in defence ties and comes amid China's growing military expansionism in Indo-Pacific region.
- The agreement will facilitate reciprocal provision of logistic support, supplies and services between armed forces of India and France during authorised port visits, joint exercises and joint training among others.
- It will be crucial in order to maintain the safety of international sea lanes for unimpeded commerce and communications in Indo-Pacific region.
- The deal is similar to logistical support pact (LEMOA) with US on use of each other's land, air and naval bases and is indicator of strategic depth and maturity reached in India-France defence ties.
- Both countries have decided to create an annual defence dialogue at the ministerial level to explore ways to further deepen defence and strategic ties.
- They also signed pact on exchange and reciprocal protection of classified or protected information.
- Space agencies of both countries will also have joint monitoring mechanism for developments in maritime sphere, while their navies will share intelligence and call their respective military bases for any requirement.
- Both sides also emphasised the importance of the joint military exercises and affirmed their intention to enhance the level of the exercises.

Banking & Finance

ISA-ADB, NDB, GCF, AfDB and AIIB sign joint declarations of financial Partnership

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) and African Development Bank (AfDb), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Green climate fund (GCF), and New Development Bank (NDB) signed Joint financial partnership Declarations.

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) also signed Joint partnership Declaration with ISA.
- The objective of these agreements is to deepen their cooperation in support of renewable energy.
- ISA had earlier signed three partnerships with World Bank, European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

IREDA & European Investment Bank ink Loan Agreement for Renewable Energy Financing in India

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and European Investment Bank (EIB) have signed loan agreement for second line of credit (LoC) of Euro 150 million on non-sovereign basis for renewable energy financing in India.

- The LoC has tenure of 15 years including grace period of 3 years.
- It will be used for financing Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency projects in India.
- It will benefit more than 1.1 million households especially from clean energy produced with these funds.

Passport details must for loans of Rs 50 cr and above

Passport details of borrowers taking loans of Rs 50 crore and more have been made mandatory to ensure a swift action in case of fraud and prevent fraudsters from fleeing the country.

- Passport details will help banks to take timely action and inform the relevant authorities to prevent fraudsters from fleeing the country.
- This is a preventive step to avoid flight of economic offenders and banks to collect passport details of all new borrowers of loans in excess of Rs 50 crore.
- For all existing loans of over Rs 50 crore, banks have been asked to collect passport details of borrowers within 45 days, he added.

- In the absence of passport details, banks were hamstrung in taking timely action to prevent defaulters especially wilful one from fleeing the country.
- Several big defaulters like Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi, Vijay Mallya and Jatin Mehta have fled the country putting the recovery mechanism in quandary.

Business

SpiceJet flight from Kolkata becomes the first passenger plane to land in Sikkim

Air connectivity with rest of India was opened for landlocked Himalayan state Sikkim when a SpiceJet plane from Kolkata became the first flight to land on its soil.

- Built at a cost of Rs 650 crores, it took nearly nine years to start operations at the airport. Regular flights to Delhi, Kolkata, and Guwahati are likely to commence soon.
- Majority of the Sikkimese were till now dependent on Bagdogra airport at Siliguri, some four hours drive from Gangtok, for commuting to and from major cities of the country.

Telangana govt MoU with Safran Electrical and Power SAS

The Telangana government entered into an MoU with Safran Electrical and Power SAS for setting up an aerospace unit in the state.

- Under the agreement, Safran Electrical and Power India would set up a unit in the state at a cost of Rs 52 crore.
- The project is expected to create more than 250 employment opportunities.

Appointments & Resigns

Suresh Prabhu gets additional charge of Civil Aviation Ministry

Commerce and industries minister Suresh Prabhu was given additional charge of the civil aviation ministry, a day after the resignation of TDP's Ashok Gajapathi Raju was accepted by President Ram Nath Kovind.

- The President, as advised by the Prime Minister, has directed that Suresh Prabhu, Cabinet Minister, shall be assigned the charge of the Ministry of Civil Aviation, in addition to his existing portfolio.

Sitanshu Kar new PIB chief

The Press Information Bureau (PIB), the central government's publicity wing, will get a new chief from All India Radio's News Services Division (NSD) director general Sitanshu Kar will be the next head of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) after superannuation of Frank Noronha on April 30.

- Kar, a senior Indian Information Service (IIS) officer, will take charge as PIB head on May 1.
- Kar was serving as director general, news services division, at All India Radio.
- Kar was spokesperson of the defence ministry from 2005 to 2015 and worked with four defence ministers – Pranab Mukherjee, AK Antony, Arun Jaitley and Manohar Parrikar. During his stint in all India radio, Kar stated the social media unit of the broadcaster.

Awards & Recognition

Amol Palekar receives 'Godavari Gaurav' award

Noted actor Amol Palekar was honoured with the 'Godavari Gaurav' award at an event in Nashik.

- The 73-year-old actor, known for his performance in films like "Gol Maal", "Choti Si Baat", "Chitchor" among others, was presented with the award, which has been instituted by city-based 'Kusumagraj Prathishthan'
- The award was given by noted Marathi writer Madhu Mangesh Karnik, who is the chairperson the Prathishthan.
- Classical singer Pandit Satyasheel Deshpande also received the 'Godavari Gaurav' award.

Environment

A new species of butterfly discovered

A new species of Himalayan moth (*Eucyclodes gavissima*) has been discovered in Papikonda National Park.

- This was announced by Anant Shankar, Divisional Forest Officer (wildlife), during the valedictory of a three-day workshop on butterflies by AP Forest Department, Wildlife Management, Rajamahendravaram.
- He underlined the need for proper identification and documentation followed by awareness among various stakeholders and common public for conservation of wildlife.
- India has 1,318 known variety of butterflies and most of them still need to be studied further.

Sports

India B wins Deodhar Trophy 2018

India B won 45th edition of the Deodhar Trophy 2018 by defeating Karnataka in final match by 6 wickets at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamsala.

- Karnataka 279-8 in 50 overs (Ravikumar Samarth 107, CM Gautam 76) lost to India B 281-4 in 48.2 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 69, Ruturaj Gaikwad 58, Shreyas Iyer 61, Manoj Tiwary 59 not out) by 6 wickets.
- Player of the match: Ravikumar Samarth (Karnataka).

Azlan Shah Cup: Australia beats England to win title

World champions Australian Men's Hockey Team beat defending champions England by 2-1 in the final of the six-nation Sultan Azlan Shah Cup tournament in Malaysia and lifted the title for the 10th time.

- Argentina finished third, after beating Malaysia 3-2 in the classification match for the third place, and the hosts ended at the fourth spot.
- Indian team ended their campaign in the fifth position, after defeating Ireland 4-1 in the classification match for the fifth and sixth places.
- India had bowed out of the medal race, as they lost 2-3 against the same opponents in their last league match.

- Azlan Shah Hockey Tournament is an annual international men's field hockey tournament held in Malaysia.
It was established in 1983 as biennial sporting event.
- It was converted into annual event after 1998, following its growth and popularity.

Obituary

Senior journalist Ranjan Roy passes away at 57

Senior journalist Ranjan Roy passed away on March 10 after battling cancer for several years.

- Roy, chief of the Times News Network (TNN) and a member of the paper's national editorial board,
- Roy started his journalistic career in the Press Trust of India (PTI) in New Delhi as a trainee in 1982. He then moved to the Associated Press in Kuala Lumpur and New York before returning to India in 2004 to head TNN.

Important Days

NCRB celebrates its 33rd Inception Day & releases "Citizen Services" Mobile APP

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) celebrated its 33rd Inception Day, on March 11, 2018 in their newly constructed Complex at Mahipalpur, New Delhi and released "Citizen Services" Mobile APP.

- An exhibition showcasing various in-house developed applications by NCRB under CCTNS Project, Finger Prints Science, 'Vahan-Samanvay', 'Talash' Mobile APPs Citizen Complaint, View FIR, Police Station Locator, NCRB Publications of 'Crime in India', 'Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India' and 'Prison Statistics India' was also organised.
- On the occasion Chief Guest Mobile App called "Citizen Services" developed in-house by NCRB. This single App is a bouquet of various essential police related services to the citizen. The App can be used by citizen for various services such as Complaint Registration & Status Check, View FIR Detail, SOS – Stay Safe, Locate Police Stations, Vahan-Samanvay, Emergency Contact List, Police Stations Telephone Directory etc.

Less Traffic Day - 11th March

Less Traffic Day will be observed all over the city on 11th March for the second time after the initiative to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion took off on February 11, the second Sunday of February, as planned by Transport Minister HM Revanna.

- The initiative seeks citizens to voluntarily keep their private vehicles in preference for public transport or cycles, or just walk so that air pollution as well as traffic congestion significantly comes down.
- To encourage people to take public transport, daily passes for ₹70 will be issued at a discounted rate of ₹65. Also, electric vehicles will be on display and free rides within Cubbon Park will be available for the public.