

National Current Affairs

Maharashtra Government bans use of plastic

Maharashtra Government has banned use of plastic in time-bound manner, citing environmental and public health concerns.

- The ban will include plastic bags, thermocol, disposable cups and plates, cutlery, non-woven polypropylene bags, plastic pouches and packaging.
- The ban exempts plastic used to cover medicines, forest and horticulture products, solid waste, tree saplings and use of plastic in special economic zones (SEZ) for export purposes.
- Similarly, plastic covers and wrappers used for manufactured and processed products would also be exempted.
- The decision will be enforced across rural and urban Maharashtra.
- Government will also provide some incentives to those who strictly adhere to ban decision.
- There is also proposal to slap penalty such as non-renewing of licences for shops and industries which violate decision.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi opens Indian Science Congress in Manipur

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the five-day Indian Science Congress at the Manipur University

- The focal theme of 5-day ISC is “Reaching the Unreached Through Science & Technology”.
- This was the second Science Congress in the northeast in the last 100 years. Over 5,000 invitees are taking part, including 2,000 research scholars and scientists.
- Under the mentioned theme, scientists from across world will look at bridging social gaps through innovations.
- Its thrust will be on science disciplines which impact society and sustainable development.

1st meeting of the Working Group to make India USD 5 Trillion Economy

The 1st meeting of the Working Group on USD 5 Trillion Indian Economy was held on 15th March in New Delhi.

- The objective of constituting the Working Group was to chart out this timeline, along with suitable strategies to achieve the same.
- The USD 5 trillion economy could be achieved in the next seven to eight years with the services, industrial and agricultural sectors contributing USD 3, 1 and 1 trillion each approximately.
- It was decided to set up smaller groups to work out the sectoral targets and the roadmap ahead.

NITI Aayog to release SATH-E Roadmaps

NITI Aayog will release comprehensive roadmaps and detailed timelines for its initiative 'Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital in Education (SATH-E)' project at NITI Aayog on Saturday, March 17.

- These roadmaps, which operate between 2018 to 2020, lay out detailed interventions which will be taken by the three participating States- Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha – aiming to become 'Role Model States' in school education.
- These roadmaps present the first-of-its-kind, customized, action-oriented programmes, outlining interventions at the individual, district and State level.
- The roadmaps were jointly prepared by NITI Aayog, the three States and the knowledge partners of the SATH Initiatives, the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) and Piramal Foundation For Education Leadership (PFEL).

News18's Rising India Summit

The Rising India Summit will be held on March 16 and 17 in New Delhi. Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman will be the guest of honour.

- Rising India Summit focuses on strategic affairs, defence, sports and entertainment.
- Many significant announcements are also expected at the two-day Summit that begins on March 16.
- During the summit, the Prime Minister will share his vision for India and the government's expectations from India Inc.
- Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman is the guest of honour at the two-day event.
- Helmed by India's largest news network which spans across 26 states, in 15 languages, the summit aims to bring together thinkers, scholars and achievers from around the world.

Krishi Unnati Mela begins in Delhi

A 3-day Krishi Unnati Mela began in the national capital on March 16 with the aim of bringing the latest farming technology to the fields.

- PM Modi will address the farmers and lay the foundation stone for 25 Krishi Vigyan Kendras and unveil a portal on organic farming.
- The Krishi Mela this year will be significant owing to the interests of farmers and those involved in allied sectors. More than 900 stalls have been set up.
- PM Modi will confer Krishi Karman Award and Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhaya Krishi Vigyan Protsahan Puruskar to progressive farmers and states on the occasion.

M.P.: Nitin Gadkari inaugurates 5th 'Nadi Mahotsava' in Hoshangabad

Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the 5th 'Nadi Mahotsava' in Hoshangabad District of Madhya Pradesh.

- Addressing the gathering, the minister said that the pioneering event like 'Nadi Mahotsava' will not only revive rivers, but also improve the condition of people living on their banks.
- He also said that the pioneering event like Nadi Mahotsava started by late Union Minister Anil Madhav Dave will not only revive rivers, but also improve the condition of people living on their banks.
- The 'Nadi Mahotsava' event was also addressed by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, who listed out various steps taken by the govt for preservation of water.

Jaipur to witness 8th Theatre Olympics

Jaipur will co-host 8th Theatre Olympics, the largest international theatre festival being held for the first time in India.

- The Jaipur chapter of Theatre Olympics 2018 is organised by National School of Drama (NSD) under the aegis of Ministry of Culture in collaboration with Ravindra Manch Society and Art & Culture Department, Rajasthan Government.
- The theme of festival is – “Flag of Friendship“.
- The 51-day long nationwide theatre extravaganza will cover 17 cities in India with more than 25,000 artists performing 450 shows, 600 ambience performances and 250 youth show. 30 countries participated in the festival from across the globe.
- As a co-host, it will provide great opportunity to highlight the cultural heritage of Rajasthan.
- It will provide platform to number of folk art forms and theatre performers from state have.

International Current Affairs

Bhutan among four nations recommended for graduation from UN's least developed country

According to a UN committee, Bhutan, Kiribati, Sao Tome and Principe and Solomon Islands are set to move up from the ranks of poorest nations due to their increasing national earning power as well as access to better health care and education.

- The four countries will be recommended for graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category.
- Two more countries, Vanuatu and Angola, are scheduled for graduation in 2020 and 2021 respectively.
- While Nepal and Timor-Leste also met the criteria for graduation, they were not recommended for graduation at this time due to economic and political challenges.
- Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar met the graduation criteria for the first time but would need to meet the criteria for a second time at the next triennial review in 2021 to become eligible to be considered for graduation.

Philippines informs UN secretary general of withdrawal from ICC

The Philippine ambassador to the United Nations formally informed the UN Secretary General of the government's decision to withdraw from the International Criminal Court.

- President Rodrigo Duterte earlier said the Philippines is withdrawing from the ICC's founding treaty, the Rome Statute, because of "baseless, unprecedented and outrageous attacks" by U.N. officials, and ICC actions that he said failed to follow due process and presumption of innocence.
- This, after the ICC said it will start a preliminary examination on a complaint against Duterte and other officials over alleged extrajudicial killings in the Philippines.

Banking & Finance

Muthoot Finance ties up with Global IME Bank

Muthoot Finance, the flagship company of Muthoot Group has tied up with Global IME Bank to expand its money remittance services between Indo Nepal Corridor. Muthoot Finance is the only NBFC to extend the money transfer services from India to Nepal.

- In FY16, Muthoot Finance had collaborated with Nepal based Prabhu Bank for money transfer business wherein the company completed 2.2 lakh transactions worth Rs 4.69 billion. With Global IME Bank, this is the company's second tie-up in the region.
- Global IME Bank through its 193 branches and more than 7000 pay out centers in Nepal will facilitate the smooth process of money transfer instantly.
- With a very minimal amount of Rs 200, a Nepali migrant can now transfer money instantly from any of the 4600 branches of Muthoot Finance to their families in Nepal without opening any bank account in India.
- RBL Bank, India and Global IME Bank, Nepal are the banking partners to facilitate Indo-Nepal remittance service.

Business

Sushil Modi inaugurates Bihar's first 'Startup hub' in Patna

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi inaugurated Bihar's first 'Startup hub' in Patna.

- Work station and office space equipped with free of cost "plug and play" facility would be made available for 31 startup companies in the newly inaugurated startup hub.
- The startup hub would instil a sense of entrepreneurship among youths of the state. Policy and structural reforms have been initiated recently in order to promote IT enable services and ESDM (Electronics System Design and Manufacturing) in the state.
- The work on IT tower, which would come up at Dakbungalow, the heart of the capital under PPP mode, has been started while an IT Park in Bihta (in Patna district) and IT city at Rajgir (in Nalanda district) have been proposed to be set up

Appointments & Resigns

Air Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan designated new chief of air staff

Air Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan was designated as the new chief of air staff of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) by the federal government.

- Air Marshal Mujahid Khan will take command on March 19, when incumbent Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman retires from his post.
- Air Marshal Khan was first commissioned in the GD (P) Branch of the PAF in December 1983.
- Presently, he holds two appointments as deputy chief of air staff (Support) and the director general of the Air Force Strategic Command at Air Headquarters, Islamabad.

Science & Technology

Railways introduces innovative analytical approach to locomotive scheduling to enhance productivity

Indian Railways has introduced an innovative analytical approach to optimize the deployment of electric and diesel locomotives run passenger trains. This involves use of a software based mathematical decision support system to increase the productivity of locomotives.

- Ministry of Railways, with the help of experts, has evolved and implemented the software based decision support system to optimize the deployment of locomotives to run passenger trains at an all India level.
- The decision support system utilizes a mathematical model to work out the minimum number of locomotives required to run all the passenger trains as per time table while meeting the maintenance and operations requirements.
- Ministry of Railways in Budget 2018-19 have sanctioned a project to be implemented by CRIS to institutionalize this process of locomotive link optimization using decision support system software across Indian Railways.

Odisha Government to collaborate with RIMES for disaster management

The Odisha government will collaborate with Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for strengthening its early warning services and enhancing preparedness for management of hazards in state.

- The partnership will be forged between Odisha State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) and RIMES in field of drought monitoring and early warning for different

natural disasters. RIMES is already working with the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority.

- Both entities will ink Memorandum of understanding (MoU) for collaboration and evolve institutional mechanism between them for better coordination.
- The partnership will help OSDMA to strengthen its quality, prediction ability and response capacity.
- RIMES will provide technical support to OSDMA regarding analysis of data to be generated through automatic weather stations being installed in all gram panchayats, validation of forecast, early warning and preparedness for lightening, heat wave, flood, draught and Tsunami.
- It will help OSDMA to engage integrated multi-hazard early warning system to strengthen its prediction and response capability. The collaboration will also strengthen OSDMA for more effective management of natural disasters.
- It will also help in transfer of best practices among different countries of world in handling natural disasters.
- It will also enhance warning response capacities of OSDMA by imparting specialized expert training.
- It will also help to develop one-stop risk management system for all OSDMA needs- integration of multiple data database/servers.

CISF launches lost and found app for 59 airports

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) launched its lost and found mobile app for passengers at 59 airports across India.

- The app, named UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance), offers three facilities – lost and found items at airports, tracking complaints or request status and technical consultancy in security, and fire services.
- The CISF had in 2015 launched a lost and found section on its website for articles left behind by commuters at airports across India.
- The app allows passengers to upload information on the lost articles along with their travel details. The passengers will receive an alert on the app when the lost article is found.
- The web version of the app does not have facility to raise complaints or requests by users. Instead, they have to wait for airports to upload the list of items found on their premises on the web application.

Environment

New species of water strider found in Nagaland

Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have discovered a new species of water strider from Nagaland. The species, named *Ptilomera nagalanda* Jehamalar and Chandra, was found in the river Intanki, Peren district.

- Water striders are a group of insects adapted to life on the surface of water, using surface tension to their advantage.
- Scientists working on the water striders say that their presence serves as an indicator water of water quality and they are found on water surface.
- So far, only five species of water striders under the subgenus *Ptilomera* were known in India.
- Other than being a good indicator of water quality, water striders also play an important role in the food chain by feeding on mosquito larvae.

Sports

Nepal gain one-day international status for the first time

Nepal became the latest nation to join the One-Day International (ODI) club, securing their 50-overs status for the first time at the ongoing ICC World Cup Qualifiers in Zimbabwe.

- The Paras Khadka-led team beat Papua New Guinea on Thursday and then watched the Netherlands defeat Hong Kong to secure Nepal's elevation to the group of four teams with temporary ODI status until 2022.
- Scotland, the Netherlands and United Arab Emirates are the other three teams in that bracket, one below the 12 sides that enjoy permanent status.

FIFA lifts three-decade ban on Iraq hosting international matches

- FIFA has lifted its three-decade ban on Iraq hosting international football with the cities of Arbil, Basra and Karbala given the go-ahead to stage matches.
- The three cities had been allowed to organise friendlies in the last year provided the security situation was "stable".
- Iraq will host Qatar and Syria for a friendly tournament starting on March 21 in Basra.
- FIFA has given the green light for the resumption but the organisers of the championship must take the final decision.
- The ban, covering all but domestic matches, stayed in place after the US-led invasion of 2003 toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

- It was briefly lifted in 2012, but a power outage during an Iraq-Jordan match in the Iraqi Kurdish capital Arbil led FIFA to promptly reinstate it

Books & Authors

Sri Lanka Cricket pays tribute to Jagmohan Dalmiya

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), on the occasion of the 70th independence of the island nation, paid a glowing tribute to former BCCI President Jagmohan Dalmiya by releasing a book, titled 'A Tribute to Jagu'.

- SLC President Thilanga Sumathipala lauded Dalmiya's role in strengthening the Asian Bloc.
- Thilanga termed Dalmiya as a 'hero' who had the guts to stand up for what was right and carry on in the face of unmatched adversity. They felicitated him posthumously as the greatest non-Sri Lankan contributor to their country's cricket.

Obituary

Malayalam writer M Sukumaran passes away

Well known Malayalam writer M Sukumaran passed away on 16th March.

- Sukumaran was the recipient of the Kendra Sahitya Akademi and Keral Sahitya awards in 2006 and 1976.
- His short stories 'Sangaganam' and 'Unarthupattu' have been made into films.
- 'Pithrutharpan' and 'Sheshakriya' are his other well-known short stories.