

National Current Affairs

Government may relax protected area permit rules

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is planning to relax the protected area permit (PAP) regime to enable foreign tourists to access border areas.

- The move is being initiated to promote tourism, create job opportunities for the locals and generate revenue for the states.
- The proposal of relaxation of permit regime is being taken into consideration following several requests by states falling under protected areas regime and Ministry of Tourism.
- MHA will coordinate with other agencies and state governments to identify possible locations for which protected area permit (PAP) regime provisions may be relaxed. However, citizens from Pakistan and China are unlikely to be given these relaxations.

World's oldest city goes 'wireless'

In a step towards modernisation, world's oldest city Varanasi is all set to get wireless.

- One of the most populous cities of Uttar Pradesh achieved this mark 86 years after getting electricity. The project which was started two years back has been finally completed under Integrated Power and Development Scheme (IDPS).
- Now you can't see overhead power cables in Eastern UP city because they are being pulled down. Powergrid, a state-owned electric utility company, successfully manages to lay down cables for 50,000 consumers through the serpentine lines and congested markets.

Ministry of Culture organises Madhavpur Mela in Gujarat

The Union Ministry of Culture for the first time had organised Madhavpur Mela in Madhavpur Ghed in Porbandar District of Gujarat under the banner of Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat. The four-day mela is being organised from March 25 to 28.

- Its purpose is to bring various parts of country especially the North-East, close to each other.
- The four day cultural extravaganza saw vibrant cultural trail of art, dance, music, poetry, story-telling and folk drama from Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and other north-eastern states with an aim to integrate the rich cultures of two regions.
- It also witnessed for first time the magnificent performances from north-east, especially Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.

- Locals have been organising Madhavpur fair for many decades. But this year, Union Ministry of Culture and Gujarat government has upgraded it by making it a national event.

Irdai extends Aadhaar linking deadline for insurance policies

Insurance regulator Irdai has extended the deadline for linking 12-digit unique identity number Aadhaar with various insurance policies until the Supreme Court decides on the matter.

- The Supreme Court of India in Writ Petition (vide order dated March 13) extended the deadline of linking Aadhaar till the matter is finally heard and the judgement is pronounced.
- In case of new insurance policies, the regulator said the policy buyer is allowed six months from the date of commencement of account based relationship to submit the Aadhaar number and PAN/Form 60 to the insurer.
- For existing insurance policies, the date of linking Aadhaar is extended till the matter is finally heard and the judgement is pronounced by Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

Gujarat Government to set up 100 MLD Sea water Desalination Plant

Gujarat government will set up a seawater desalination plant of 100 million litre per day (mld) capacity near Jodiya town in coastal Jamnagar district.

- Jamnagar in Saurashtra region of Gujarat faces acute water crisis especially in summer season.
- Urging people to use every drop of water carefully, Rupani said the state government has decided to set up the plant to reduce water scarcity during summer.

Print Biennale India 2018: First International Exhibition of Graphic Prints held in New Delhi

The first-ever International Print Biennale, an International Exhibition of Graphic Prints was held in New Delhi. It was organised by Lalit Kala Akademi.

- The event comprised displaying of total 200 original prints are created by Indian and international artists of impeccable competence.
- An exhibition Eminent Printmakers of India showcasing master Indian printmakers was also held on sidelines of it.

- The international participants from USA, UK, Sri Lanka, Italy, Mexico, China, Israel, Sweden, Lithuania, Poland, Argentina, Greece, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Mauritius also had participated in the event.
- Total 988 entries at the national level were received of which 127 were chosen for display.

11th Rashtriya Rifles biennial conference at Nagrota on 26-27 March 2018

The 11th Rashtriya Rifles Biennial Conference is being conducted at Nagrota in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) from 26 to 27 March 18.

- The event chaired by Chief of the Army Staff has been attended by Army Commander Northern Command, Director General Rashtriya Rifles, Corps Commander 15 and 16 Corps and all General Officers Commanding Counter Insurgency Forces.
- The Rashtriya Rifles (RR) is a branch of the Indian Army under the authority of the Indian Ministry of Defence.
- The RR is a counter-insurgency force made up of soldiers deputed from other parts of the Indian Army. The force is currently deployed in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It has assisted the locals from inaccessible and far flung areas of the state by providing assistance in diverse fields and has given an impetus to development, growth, education, women empowerment, skill development and communal harmony through its multifarious enabling civil action programs.

Asia's largest tulip garden in Srinagar thrown open to visitors

Srinagar's Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden was opened for visitors on March 25.

- Deemed as Asia's largest tulip garden, it is situated on the foothills of the Zabarwan mountain range by the banks of the Dal Lake.
- 1.25 million tulip bulbs were sown in the garden this year.
- Forty eight varieties of different hues present a mesmerizing spectacle to the visitors.
- Tulip is a very short-lived flower that comes to bloom in spring and lasts for barely a fortnight.

SARAS Aajeevika Mela 2018

SARAS Aajeevika Mela 2018 has been organised in New Delhi under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

- It is one of the flagship programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development to alleviate rural poverty.

- The SARAS Aajeevika Mela 2018 in New Delhi is an endeavour of DAY-NRLM to provide to the rural women producers a national platform and an opportunity to showcase their products and seek buyers, either individuals or bulk buyers for sale nationally/internationally.

International Current Affairs

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier's 4-day visit

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will visit India from March 22 to 25 to strengthen bilateral ties. This will be his first visit to India as the President of Germany after the Angela Merkel government took charge in Berlin on March 14.

- He was accorded a traditional welcome at the airport with a Bharatnatyam performance.
- Steinmeier's wife, Elke Budenbende, visited the office of an NGO, working in the area of children's rights, and interacted with children, young men and women there.
- She also held discussions with UNICEF India representative Yasmin A Haque there.
- Budenbende also visited the Sri Kapaleeshwarar temple in the city and offered prayers.
- Steinmeier held wide-ranging talks with the Indian leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu.

Banking & Finance

Metro Plus card for IndusInd Bank customers launched

The Delhi Metro, in association with IndusInd Bank, launched a dual purpose Metro Plus' debit card that will enable customers of the bank to use it for metro train rides, besides other transactions.

- The card was jointly launched by managing director of Delhi Metro Mangu Singh and IndusInd Bank executive vice president Ritesh Raj Saxena.
- The dual purpose Metro Plus' card' will enable the IndusInd Bank debit card holders to use it as a Delhi Metro Smart Card, in addition to using it for all other regular debit card transactions.

- This initiative is in line with the DMRC's commitment towards supporting the digital drive to promote cashless transactions among the Delhi Metro commuters.
- The card users can also get their smart cards auto topped up at AFC Gates across the network which will help them to have seamless travel without worrying about top-up from time to time, he said. The card, developed by IndusInd bank, has a Delhi Metro Transit chip embedded within, along with the secured Debit Card Chip.
- The customers can choose from the multiple modes to top-up their cards via IndusInd Bank ATMs, IndusMobile app, net banking, SMS, auto top-up and other methods.

Appointments & Resigns

JS Rajput nominated as India's representative to Executive Board of UNESCO

The Ministry of Human Resource Development has nominated former NCERT director JS Rajput as India's representative to Executive Board (EXB) of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

- Professor JS Rajput is known for his contributions in reforms in school education and teacher education.
- He had proposed valuable changes in school education curriculum as Director, NCERT popularly known as five Sai values: Truth, Peace, Nonviolence, Righteous Conduct (Dharma) and Love. He has published research papers in several specialized areas in education, guided doctoral level researches and has authored several books.
- UNESCO acknowledged his contributions by selecting him for Prestigious Jan Amos Comenius Medal for outstanding contributions in research and innovations in 2004.
- He was awarded Maharishi Ved Vyas national Award by MP Government for lifelong contributions in Education. He was awarded Padma Shri in 2009.

Sports

India U-16 beat Hong Kong to win Jockey Youth Cup

India U-16 were crowned champions of the Jockey Cup International Youth Invitational Football Tournament after defeating hosts Hong Kong 4-2 in the final.

- The team coached by Bibiano Fernandes is presently unbeaten in 22 matches which includes friendly matches against National Youth Teams and International Club and Academy sides.
- The youth tournament was a part of a series of International exposure tours planned by the All India Football Federation (AIFF) along with the Sports Authority of India (SAI) to provide the best preparation for the squad in their quest to qualify to the next edition of the FIFA U-17 World Cup.

Punjab crowned National hockey champion

Punjab won its first National title in five years, registering a 2-1 win against Petroleum Sports Promotion Board (PSPB) in the final of the 8th men's National hockey championships.

- Punjab relied on the pace of its youngsters and the experience of its senior players to constantly create chances upfront. Barring the opening goal in the third minute by PSPB — courtesy a penalty corner conversion by Gurjinder Singh — the debutant in the competition struggled to find opportunities, staying largely defensive.
- In fact, it was all about Punjab in the second half as the former champion, which last won the title in 2012, kept finding gaps in the PSPB defence but was unlucky to see the balls rolling away.

Obituary

K-Pop singer Seo Minwoo dead

Korean pop star Seo Minwoo died on March 25 in Seoul.

- 100%, the five-member boy band, debuted in 2012, then took a break in 2014 after Minwoo joined the Korean military. The group rejoined to release their third EP in October 2016.
- Their most recent single was released on Feb. 14.

Linda Brown: US civil rights icon dies aged 75

Linda Brown, whose father won a famous 1954 Brown vs Board of Education racial discrimination case against an all-white school in Kansas, has died at the age of 75.

- She was a major figure in the civil rights movement and central to efforts to end segregation in US schools 60 years ago.

Important Days

Ambedkar Jayanti to be celebrated as 'Social Justice Day'

14th April - The birth anniversary of India's Dalit social reformer Dr BR Ambedkar will be celebrated as 'Social Justice Day'.

- Born into a poor Dalit family, on 14 April 1891, Ambedkar became independent India's first law minister, the principal architect of the Constitution of India and a founding father of the Republic of India.
- He also campaigned against the social discrimination of Dalits and inspired the Dalit Buddhist Movement in 1956.
- Ambedkar was awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1990.