

National Current Affairs

Skill India partners with Ministry of Power for implementation of Saubhagya Scheme

The Ministry of Power has partnered with Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship to train the manpower in six states for speedy implementation of its Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna (Saubhagya Scheme).

- These six states are Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.
- Under this partnership, around 47,000 Distribution Lineman-Multi Skills and 8,500 Technical Helpers will be trained to meet the requirement of power sector projects under Saubhagya scheme.
- The training infrastructures will be available with ITI's at district level as well as infrastructures available with State Power Distribution Utilities will be utilized for skill training of candidates ensuring successful implementation of scheme.

Atal Innovation Mission ink SOI with SAP Global to foster innovation

NITI Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) has signed Statement of Intent (SOI) with German tech company SAP to promote culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across 100 Atal Tinkering Labs across India.

- As part of SOI, SAP will adopt 100 Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATL) in 2018 for five years to nurture science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning among secondary school children across India.
- SAP will select secondary schools from Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- The collaboration will allow SAP to further ignite innovation in India's large student population by providing right guidance, knowledge and infrastructure.
- SAP employee volunteers will coach and mentor students in advanced technology topics.
- Design lab of SAP Labs India, will provide trainings and allow students to gain hands-on experience with technology gadgets.

Delhi govt passes 'green' budget 2018-19

The Delhi Assembly passed the Rs 53,000 crore budget for 2018-19, with a major thrust on green initiatives to combat rising air pollution levels in the national capital.

- Under the budget, the AAP-led city government has announced installation of CCTV cameras in schools and providing self-defence training for girl students, besides allocating Rs 100 crore for free Wi-Fi and installation of 1.2 lakh CCTV cameras in the city by June next year.
- The budget was passed with voice vote in the House.
- It also promised implementation of doorstep delivery of government services by June 15. An amount of Rs 1,500 crore was sanctioned for infrastructure development in unauthorised colonies.
- Talking about the budget, Sisodia had on March 22 termed it a "green budget" for effective containment of pollution in the city.

Department of Posts launches Cool EMS Service between India and Japan

Ministry of Communications has launched the Cool EMS Service which will come into force from 29.03.2018.

- Cool EMS service is one-way service from Japan to India which allows customers in India to import Japanese food items for personal use which is allowed under Indian regulations.
- Initially, Cool EMS Service will be available in Delhi only.
- Food items will be carried by Japan Post in special cool boxes containing refrigerant to preserve the quality of the food items and addressee will collect them from Foreign Post office, Kotla Road, New Delhi in-person or through a messenger in the prescribed time frame.
- All other features like track and trace, etc of Express Mail Service (EMS) will be available for Cool EMS service as well.

15th Meeting of India-US Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism

The 15th meeting of the India-US Counterterrorism Joint Working Group was held in New Delhi on March 27, 2018.

- Led by Ministry of External Affairs Joint Secretary Shri Mahaveer Singhvi and the State Department's Principal Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Alina L. Romanowski, the Indian and the U.S. delegations achieved important progress on counterterrorism cooperation between the two countries.
- The Working Group reviewed threats posed by terrorist groups worldwide and in their respective regions including cross border terrorism in the South Asian region.
- Both sides committed to strengthening information sharing on some of the world's most dangerous terrorist groups and individuals and exchanged views on efforts to counter the financing and operations of regional and global terrorist organizations.

- The two sides discussed international efforts to counter threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters.
- The working group also discussed international and bilateral cooperation on justice, law enforcement and capacity building efforts to counter terrorism and UN Security Council Resolution 2396.
- Following up on the inaugural U.S.-India Counterterrorism Designations Dialogue in December 2017, the delegations discussed ongoing efforts to ensure the effective implementation of domestic and international terrorist designations. The United States will host the next meeting of the Joint Working Group in 2019.

Banking & Finance

SBI Card launches exclusive credit card for doctors

SBI Card has partnered with IMA to launch 'Doctor's SBI Card' which among other things offers professional indemnity insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh to protect doctors against professional risks and liabilities.

- The product has been designed in close association with Indian Medical Association (IMA) and is based on research and insights into the distinct requirements and lifestyles of doctors.
- Doctor's SBI Card offers industry-first feature of professional indemnity insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh to protect doctors against professional risks and liabilities.
- The card offers cover for legal and defense costs as well as out of court settlements and court awards.

RBI releases limited edition coins to mark 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Ji

Post the revival of Rs 10 coin, the RBI is set to roll out a coin of Rs 350 denomination to mark the 350th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

- The circumference of the coin will be 44 millimetres, and a coin will be made up of Quaternary Alloy- Silver (50 per cent), Copper (40 per cent), Nickel (05 per cent), and Zinc (05 per cent).
- The front face of the coin will have 'Ashoka Pillar' engraved on it.
- The reverse face of the coin will have a picture of 'Takht Shri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib'.

Business

India and China agree roadmap for addressing Trade Imbalance

The eleventh session of the China-India joint-group on Economic Relations, Trade, Science & Technology was held in New Delhi.

- Both countries reaffirmed and reiterated their commitments to promote balanced and sustainable bilateral trade.
- They agreed to continue to take forward initiatives identified in Five Year Development Programme for Economic and Trade Cooperation (DPETC) signed between both countries in September 2014.
- China reaffirmed its commitment to accelerate provision of market access for Indian agricultural products pertaining to non-basmati rice, soya-meals, rape-seed meals, pomegranate and pomegranate arils, okra, banana and other fruits and vegetables and bovine meat expeditiously.
- Both countries reaffirmed their aim to promote bilateral trade in field of pharmaceuticals including resolution of issues of Indian pharma products exports to Chinese markets.
- They agreed to draw-up medium and long term roadmap with action points and timelines to increase bilateral trade between in balanced and sustainable manner.
- They also agreed to strengthen cooperation within WTO and other multilateral and regional frameworks and to maintain their common interest. Both sides reiterated their commitment to rules based multilateral global trade.

Acquisitions & Mergers

Google buys GIF platform Tenor

Google has acquired GIF platform Tenor, adding a library of animated images to its vast internet search engine.

- Google plans to integrate GIFs into Google Images and Gboard, the company's virtual keyboard.
- GIFs have gained popularity on Android and iOS as well as on desktops.
- Tenor had more than 300 million users as of last year and topped 12 billion monthly search requests in February.

- The company also has a growing advertising business, creating sponsored GIFs for companies like Dunkin' Donuts, Nissan and AT&T.
- Tenor previously raised over \$30 million in venture funding. Google said it plans to keep Tenor as a separate unit.

Awards & Recognition

President of India Presents Gallantry Awards

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, presented Gallantry Awards and Distinguished Service Decorations at the Defence Investiture Ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on March 27, 2018).

- This year, three Kirti Chakras and 17 Shaurya Chakras were conferred, among which one Kirti Chakra and five Shaurya Chakras were given posthumously.
- Mr Kovind among others honoured Major David Manlun of the Naga Regiment with Kirti Chakra posthumously. Major Manlun was martyred during an encounter with militants in Mon district of Nagaland.
- The President awarded Shaurya Chakra to Naik Chandra Singh of Kumaon Scouts and Shaurya Chakra to Major Satish Dahiya of 13 Rashtriya Rifles both posthumously.
- The distinguished service awards included fourteen Param Vishisht Seva Medals, one Uttam Yudh Seva Medal and twenty-two Ati Vishisht Seva Medals. They were conferred to senior officers of the armed forces for distinguished service of an exceptional order.

2 Indian activists shortlisted for Commonwealth Youth Awards

Two Indian activists have been named among 20 finalists from across 53 member-countries for the Commonwealth Youth Awards 2018 for their work in the field of gender equality.

- Mirnalini Dayal has been recognised for her work as a campaign leader for 'Health Over Stigma' and Yogesh Kumar as the founder of social enterprise 'Even Cargo'.
- Both Delhi-based Indian finalists were singled out for their work in the field of achieving United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 on gender equality.
- The awards recognise outstanding young people aged 15 to 29 whose innovative projects and programmes have had a significant impact on their communities.

Anushka only Bollywood actor to feature in Forbes Asia 30 Under 30 list

Anushka Sharma has become the only Bollywood star to feature in the Forbes Aisa 30 Under 30 list.

- In its third year, the annual 30 Under 30 Asia list features 300 young innovators and disruptors across 10 categories who are re-inventing their industries and driving change across this diverse region.
- Representing 24 countries across Asia-Pacific - including Azerbaijan and North Korea for the first time - the finalists were selected from thousands of online nominations.
- Indian badminton star PV Sindhu also features in the list.

Appointments & Resigns

Supreme Court appoints Justice Jawad Rahim as Acting Chairperson of NGT

The Supreme Court appointed former Karnataka High Court judge, Justice Jawad Rahim as acting Chairperson of National Green Tribunal (NGT).

- The order was passed by a Bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices AM Khanwilkar and DY Chandrachud in a petition filed by NGT Bar Association.

Pradosh Kumar Rath to be new chairman cum managing director of RINL

Pradosh Kumar Rath has been shortlisted as the new chairman cum managing director of RINL. Rath, who is currently Director (Operations) at RINL, emerged as the top choice of the Public Enterprises Selection Board.

- Rath's appointment to the post is subject to clearance by the Central Vigilance Commission and the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.
- In case he is cleared by the CVC and gets the ACC nod, he is likely to have a three-year tenure at the helm of affairs at RINL, which operates the Vizag Steel Plant.

Indu Bhushan appointed CEO of 'Ayushman Bharat' mission

Indu Bhushan was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Centre's ambitious Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission (ABNHPM).

- Bhushan, the Director General of East Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila, Philippines, has been appointed to the post for a period of two years.

Science & Technology

TESS: NASA, SpaceX collaborate to search for exoplanets March 27, 2018

NASA has partnered with private space launching company SpaceX to launch Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) to search for exoplanets using the transit method.

- TESS is designed to carry out first spaceborne all-sky transiting exoplanet survey.
- It is equipped with four wide-angle telescopes and associated charge-coupled device (CCD) detectors.
- It is planned to be launched in April 2018 on board of SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.
- The primary mission objective of TESS is to survey brightest stars near Earth for transiting exoplanets over two-year period. It will use array of wide-field cameras to perform all-sky survey.
- With TESS, it will be possible to study mass, size, density and orbit of large cohort of small planets, including sample of rocky worlds in habitable zones (goldilocks zone) of their host stars. This will reveal whether planets are rocky (like Earth), gas or jovian giants (like Jupiter) or something even more unusual.

NASA to launch GRACE-FO mission to observe Earth's frozen regions

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced that it would be launching two new satellite missions and conduct an array of field research in 2018 to enhance the understanding of Earth's ice sheets, glaciers, sea ice, snow cover and permafrost.

- These missions come at a time when decades of observations from the ground, air and space have revealed signs of change in the frozen regions of Earth, called the 'cryosphere'.
- The mission called the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On (GRACE-FO) mission would be launched by NASA along with the German Research Centre for Geosciences.
- Under it, twin satellites will be launched to continue the original GRACE mission's legacy of tracking fluctuations in Earth's gravity field in order to detect changes in mass, including the mass of ice sheets and aquifers.

- Following this, NASA would be launching the Ice, Cloud, and land Elevation Satellite-2 (ICESat-2), which will use a highly advanced laser instrument to measure the changing elevation of ice around the world, providing a view of the height of Earth's ice with greater detail than previously possible.
- Together, the two missions will make critical, complementary measurements of Earth's glaciers and ice sheets.
- The missions will also make other key observations such as, the GRACE-FO will measure groundwater reserves and deep ocean currents and ICESat-2 will measure sea ice thickness and vegetation height.

AIFF launches scouting App to unearth talent

Encouraged by the success of the overseas online scouting portal which helped it discover players for the FIFA U-17 World Cup, the All India Football Federation took it a step further becoming the first National Sports Federation to launch a mobile based scouting application to unearth future talent.

- AIFF's new mobile scouting application Scout-Me will further ease out the scouting process.
- The AIFF Scouting Application ScoutMe has been developed by a 17-year football enthusiast Kush Pandey who is pursuing his International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at Jayshree Periwal International School, Jaipur and incidentally has represented Delhi at the National Championships and also leads his school football team.
- It was through their overseas online scouting portal that AIFF had earlier unearthed Namit Deshpande and Sunny Dhaliwal for the Indian U17 squad which represented the country in their maiden appearance at the quadrennial event.

Obituary

Veteran journalist V. Sriharsha passes away

Veteran journalist Veturi Sriharsha passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest. He was 62.

- He was the younger brother of V. Srivatsa, a former Sports Editor of the Times of India and IANS.
- Sriharsha was working as a media consultant with the GMR Group after retiring as Bureau Chief of ETV (Delhi).
- He had previously worked with The Indian Express, Pioneer and Deccan Chronicle.