

National Current Affairs

Government launches Swachh Bharat Summer Internship

Government is going to launch Swachh Bharat Summer Internship (SBSI) 2018 aimed at engaging college youth with Swachhata work in villages in coming Summer vacation.

- The initiative will be launched by Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the convening and coordinating Ministry of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in association with Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- SBSI 2018 aims to engage lakhs of educated youth across country, develop their skills and orientation for sanitation sector, amplify mass awareness and cement people's movement (Jan andolan) aspect of SBM.
- Under it, candidates will undertake 100 hours of activities including shramdaan, creation of sanitation infrastructure, system building, behaviour change campaigns and other IEC initiatives in and around nearby villages.

NITI Aayog launches ranking of 'aspirational' 101 districts in India

NITI Aayog has come up with a mechanism under which 101 most underdeveloped districts of the country termed as 'aspirational' would be competing with each other in terms of performance and they will be ranked on 49 indicators based on various data points.

- The 49 indicators on 81 data points will cover five development areas of health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development and basic infrastructure.
- From the beginning of next fiscal year from April 1, this real-time data collection and monitoring will be open for public viewing.
- The ranking of districts follows the launch of 'Transformation of Aspirational Districts' by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January with an aim to quickly and effectively transform some of the most underdeveloped districts in the country.
- This will converge the central and state schemes, collaborate central, state and district collectors to strengthen these districts by identifying the low-hanging fruits for immediate improvement, measure progress and then rank the district by getting the data on a real-time basis.
- All the states -- except West Bengal and Kerala -- are on board in this ranking initiative; however, these states are expected to join soon,
- As per the baseline ranking, Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh is ranked highest with score of 48.13 per cent while Mewat in Haryana tails at the end with 26.02 per cent.

93% rural households with access to toilets using them: NARSS 2017-18

According to National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) 2017-18, over 93% households in villages who have access to toilets are using them and about 77% homes in rural areas have got toilets.

- The survey was conducted by Independent Verification Agency (IVA) under World Bank support project to Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G).
- Key findings of NARSS 2017-18:
 - 77% of households were found to have access to toilets.
 - 4% of people who had access to toilets used them.
 - 6% of villages which were previously declared and verified as ODF were confirmed to be ODF. The remaining 4.4% villages also had sanitation coverage of over 95%.
 - 70% of villages surveyed found to have minimal litter and minimal stagnant water.

Rajasthan's first mega food park inaugurated at Ajmer

Rajasthan's first mega food park-Greentech Mega Food Park Private Ltd was inaugurated at Roopangarh Village in Ajmer district. It was inaugurated by Union Minister for Food Processing Industry Harsimrat Kaur Badal.

- The park was set up under Central Government's flagship Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana and 'Make in India' initiative.
- It has central processing centre as well as four Primary Processing Centres (PPCs) at Jaipur, Nagaur, Tonk and Churu. It also has facilities for primary processing and storage near farms.
- It will not only benefit around 25,000 farmers of Ajmer but also those of nearby districts of Jaipur, Tonk, Nagaur and Churu as well.
- It will also provide direct and indirect employment to 5,000 persons.
- The modern infrastructure for food processing created at Park will benefit farmers, growers, processors and consumers of Rajasthan and adjoining areas immensely.

Assam launches toll-free helpline number

Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched a toll-free helpline number 189 for women in distress in Guwahati, amid a spurt in crimes against women in the state.

- The toll free helpline will initially work from 9am to 5.30pm, but will soon be a 24x7 service.
- The helpline is part of a scheme under the Union ministry of women and child development to provide 24 hours response to women affected by violence.

- Superintendents of police of all the districts have been asked to ensure swift and correct filing of chargesheet in all crimes against women so that justice can be given to the victims

Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of 55770 tribal habitations

Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of 55770 fully covered tribal habitations with the safe drinking water in the country followed by Odisha 52427, Jharkhand 53476 numbers of habitations.

- Under the Scheme 'National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP), 10% of the total allocation of funds is earmarked to be used for the supply of drinking water to Scheduled Tribe (ST) dominated habitations.
- As on 21.03.2018, there are 365050 Scheduled Tribe (ST) dominated habitations in the country, out of which 301858 (82.69%) habitations are fully covered with provision of safe drinking water supply and 53090 (14.54%) habitations are partially covered.

Madhya Pradesh's Kadaknath chicken gets Geographical Indication tag

Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry and Intellectual Property India has awarded Geographical Indication (GI) Tag to Madhya Pradesh's Kadaknath chicken.

- The GI tag will ensure that no one else can use name Kadaknath Chicken while selling any other black chicken.
- It will also translate into higher prices for producers.
- Kadaknath chicken breed is unique for its black colour due to its black-feathers.
- Its black colour stems from the deposition of melanin pigment.
- This breed of chicken is popular for its adaptability and flavourful good-tasting black meat, which is believed to have medicinal properties.
- It is native tribal districts of Jhabua, Alirajpur and parts of Dhar in Madhya Pradesh.

Girls School in Haryana Renamed as Shaheed Vikas Yadav Girls School

Haryana State Education Department renamed the Govt Senior Secondary Girls School, Kosli in Rewari district as Shaheed Major Vikas Yadav Senior Secondary School.

- The initiative has been driven by District Education Board with the support of the family of Late Major Vikas Yadav.

- The renaming was to pay respect to Major Vikas Yadav of 7 Jat Regiment who had laid his life fighting militants in Jammu and Kashmir. The renaming coincides with his birth anniversary.
- The event also saw unveiling of statue of the valiant officer by Lt Gen SK Saini, Colonel of the Jat Regiment.
- To mark the occasion large number of veterans including course mates of the brave officer were also present on this occasion.

Smart India Hackathon-2018

Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI) is participating in the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) – 2018 organized by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) under the aegis of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD).

- In 2017, MHRD, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Inter Institutional Inclusive Innovation Center (i4C), and Persistent Systems had organized Smart India Hackathon 2017, a unique initiative to identify new and disruptive digital technology innovations for solving the challenges faced by our country.
- SIH- 2018 harnesses creativity and expertise of students, builds funnel for ‘Startup India, Standup India’ campaign, crowdsources solutions for improving governance and quality of life, and provides opportunity to Students to provide innovative solutions to India’s daunting problems.
- SIH- 2018 would be the second massive scale hackathon initiative in India following Smart India Hackathon 2017.

International Current Affairs

New Jersey declares April as Sikh Awareness Month

The US state of New Jersey has declared April as ‘Sikh Awareness and Appreciation Month’ as part of its effort to promote awareness of the faith, recognise the important contributions of the Sikh community, and combat anti-Sikh bigotry.

- New Jersey’s State Assembly made the declaration in a joint resolution this week, saying it was an effort to combat the “increasing and unacceptable levels of anti-Sikh bigotry”.
- The resolution was adopted unanimously by both the New Jersey House of Representative and the Senate.

Banking & Finances

RBI fines ICICI Bank Rs 58.9 crore for treasury violations

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has fined ICICI Bank Rs 58.9 crore for violating norms relating to sale of government securities from the held-to-maturity category of its bonds portfolio. This is the highest penalty imposed by RBI on a bank for a single incident.

- Shares of ICICI Bank were down nearly 2 per cent to Rs 278 in early morning trade in the Bombay Stock Exchange.
- RBI said that it has imposed a penalty on ICICI Bank Limited for “non-compliance with directions issued by RBI on direct sale of securities from its HTM portfolio and specified disclosure in this regard”.

Jana Small Finance Bank commences operations

Jana Small Finance Bank (formerly Janalakshmi Financial Services, India's leading micro-finance company), today announced the commencement of its banking operations.

- To cover its extensive customer base, Jana Bank will initially open 19 branches across 18 states and expand to 200 banking outlets including the 25% unbanked rural branches by June 2018.
- Jana Bank, which is digitally enabled across majority of its offerings with expanded customer base, will continue to keep its fundamental focus on financial inclusion as its core strategy.
- Jana Bank will also convert majority of its MFI branches into full-fledged bank branches and will have over 500 banking outlets by end of 2019.

SEBI doubles investment limit of angel funds to ₹10 crore

Looking to provide an impetus to early-stage start-ups, markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Wednesday decided to double the investment limit by angel funds in venture capital undertakings to ₹10 crore.

- In this fast changing ecosystem, where angels are investing much higher amounts, the increase is expected provide more opportunities to angel funds.
- The SEBI board has approved amendments to Alternative Investment Funds (AIF) regulations with respect to ‘Angel Funds.’
- The decision is based on the recommendations of its working group.

Business

Govt to divest 76% stake in Air India, Air India Express

The government has decided to retain a 24 per cent stake in Air India and Air India Express, as part of its divestment in the state-owned airline.

- The government is also proposing divesting 50 per cent of its stake in Air India Sats Airport Services. The divestment is to be carried out through an open competitive bidding process.
- The divestment process is expected to get under way in the next few days when the global invitation for Expression of Interest (EoI) is uploaded on the government's websites.
- The government is proposing a strategic divestment of the airline by transferring management control and sale of 76 per cent of its equity share capital in Air India. Ernst and Young is the transaction advisor to the government on the divestment process.

Appointments & Resigns

Shuttler Kidambi Srikanth appointed as Deputy Collector in Andhra

Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth was appointed as a Deputy Collector in the Andhra State government.

- The appointment letter was handed over to him by Naidu in the state's upcoming capital of Amaravati, in the presence of badminton coach Pullela Gopichand.
- Besides this, the Cabinet also announced a reward of Rs 2 crore for the shuttler, who originally hails from Guntur district in the state.
- Kidambi Srikanth became the first Indian to win four Superseries titles in a calendar year after winning the French Open earlier in 2017.

NBCC CMD Anoop Kumar Mittal gets one year extension

Anoop Kumar Mittal was today given one year extension as the Chairman and Managing Director of state-run NBCC with effect from April 1.

- He took over as the CMD of the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC), a public sector undertaking, in 2013 for a period of five years.

Shekhar Kapur has been appointed chairman of the central panel of the 65th National Film Awards

Filmmaker Shekhar Kapur has been appointed chairman of the central panel of the 65th National Film Awards, informed sources in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

- The panel comprises a chairperson and 10 members, including five regional chairpersons who head the respective regional panels.

Abiye Ahmed approved as Ethiopia's new prime minister

- Ethiopia's ruling party has chosen Abiye Ahmed as its new leader, making him the country's prime minister -- amid the worst anti-government protests in three years.

US diplomat DiCarlo becomes first female UN political chief

Long-serving American diplomat Rosemary DiCarlo was today appointed to become the first woman to head UN political affairs, one of the most high-profile positions at the world body.

- DiCarlo will replace Jeffrey Feltman, another American who held the post of under-secretary-general for political affairs since 2012, overseeing UN efforts to end conflicts worldwide.

Awards & Recognition

J.C. Daniel Award for Sreekumaran Thampi

Lyricist and director Sreekumaran Thampi has been selected for the J.C. Daniel Award, the Kerala government's highest honour for lifetime contribution to Malayalam cinema.

- Thampi made his debut in 1966 with Kattumallika and has written over 1,000-odd melodies.
- Thampi has also been a successful director, scriptwriter and producer.

Science & Technology

ISRO successfully launches GSAT-6A satellite

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched GSAT 6A communication satellite on board of GSLV-F08 rocket from Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

- This was overall 12th GSLV flight (and fifth successful) and sixth flight with indigenously built cryogenic upper stage engine.
- GSAT-6A is high power S-band communication satellite with a mission life of about 10 years.
- It was placed in Geosynchronous orbit of Earth. It weighs 2066 kg and is most powerful home-made communication satellite till date.
- The S-band's antenna of GSAT-6A was developed by ISRO's Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad.
- It will provide mobile communication to India through multi beam coverage facility.
- It will also provide platform for developing technologies such as demonstration of S-Band Unfurlable Antenna, handheld ground terminals and network management techniques that could be useful in satellite based mobile communication applications.
- It will be also designated for military use especially in remotest areas of the country

Sports

17th Sub-junior National Wushu Championship began in Jammu

The four-day 17th Sub-junior National Wushu Championship began in Jammu.

- The national level sports event is being organised in the winter capital city of Jammu by the the Wushu Association of India in collaboration with J&K State Sports Council at MA Stadium.
- About 37 teams comprising of over one thousand boys and girls from across the country and 12 boys from Army are participating in the national championship.

Darren Lehmann quits as coach of the Australian cricket team

- Darren Lehmann has quit as coach of the Australian cricket team. The fourth Test against South Africa would be his last in charge.