

National Current Affairs

Niti Aayog plans National Data & Analytics Platform

The government is planning to build an advanced technology platform to host and interpret huge amount of data that will integrate and help better understand of citizens' data, spend patterns of the government, consumption trends and the success of various government policies.

- All data would be aggregate data on government functioning, with no individual or personal identifiable data collected on the portal.
- The aim is to increase transparency in government functioning by giving citizens access to this data.
- The technology tool, which will pool data from central ministries and state governments, is aimed to aid more informed policy making.

Madhubani railway station in Bihar gets makeover with Mithila paintings

Madhubani railway station got complete makeover with Mithila paintings. The makeover project was unique initiative of Indian Railways to experiment with local artists voluntarily painting works in short span of two months.

- More than 225 artists, 80% of them women, volunteered to paint station free of cost.
- The total wall area of railway station covering area more than 14,000 sq ft has been fully painted with various themes under traditional Mithila painting style.
- Mithila painting is folk painting practiced in Mithila region of India (especially Bihar) and Nepal.
- It is also known as Madhubani paintings which mean 'forest of honey'. It has been mentioned in ancient Indian texts like Ramayana.

Tripura CM Biplab Kumar Deb launches state component of PMKVY in Agartala

Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb launched state component of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) in Agartala.

- PMKVY is a skill development initiative of Government of India aimed at encouraging aptitude towards employable skills and increasing working efficiency of probable and existing daily wage earners, by providing quality training to them.

- Tripura has thereby become the first North East Indian state to implement state component of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) through Directorate of Skill Development (DSD).
- As a part of the implementation process, DSD has already launched 13 accredited training centres across five districts of Tripura.

Patna tops in 4G connectivity among 20 largest cities: Report

Patna tops in 4G connectivity among 20 of India's largest cities. It has emerged ahead of the likes of Bengaluru, Mumbai and Delhi, said a report from OpenSignal, a wireless coverage mapping company.

- 4G user experience in the 20 cities was monitored for 90 days from 1 December 2017.
- Four cities from India's central and eastern regions—Patna, Kanpur, Allahabad, Kolkata, Bhopal and Lucknow—made it to the top 10 while popular tech hubs like Bengaluru are at 10, followed by Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi.

Tamil Nadu Government launches Uzhavan app for farmers

Tamil Nadu Government launched bi-lingual 'Uzhavan' (farmer) mobile application in a bid to use technology for benefit of farmers. It was launched by Chief Minister K Palaniswami in state capital Chennai.

- The app available in Tamil and English language will allow ryots to have access to nine types of services, including details about their crop insurance.
- The app can be downloaded from Google Playstore. It can be used by farmers to get information on farm subsidies, book farm equipment and related infrastructure.
- It will also help them to get details on their crop insurance, besides receiving weather forecast for next four days.
- It will also provide information on available stocks of seeds and fertilisers in local government and private stores.

UP Government launches Ganga Hariteema Yojana

Uttar Pradesh Government has launched Ganga Hariteema Yojana (also known as Ganga Greenery scheme) in 27 districts of the state located on the bank of river Ganga. It was launched by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in a function organised on bank of Sangam the confluence of rivers of Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati.

- The scheme aims at enhancing green cover in catchment areas of river Ganga and control land erosion.

- Under it tree plantation will be carried out in 1 Km areas from banks of river.
- General people will also be encouraged for tree plantation on their private lands under 'One Person One Tree' slogan.
- Department of Forest has been nominated as nodal department for the scheme.

Assam Spring Festival organised at Manas National Park

The two-day Assam Spring Festival was held at Manas National Park. It was organised by Indian Weavers' Association and Swankar Mithinga Onsai Afat, an association of reformed poachers in Manas who are now engaged in wildlife conservation and preservation.

- The aim of the festival was to promote local food and culture of fringe villagers.
- It also attempted to create model of alternative livelihood through food, handloom and culture.
- The itinerary of festival included village tours, exposition of local handicraft and handloom, cultural showcase, local folk music and tasting of local cuisines and delicacies.
- It saw participation of over 300 domestic and foreign tourists.

India to build strategic railway link between Kathmandu and Raxaul in Bihar

India has agreed to build strategic railway link between Raxaul in Bihar and Kathmandu in Nepal to facilitate people-to-people (P2P) contact and bulk movement of goods.

- The announcement was made after delegation-level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart K P Sharma Oli who was on three-day visit to India.
- The new electrified rail line between Kathmandu and Raxaul will be financed by India.
- Its objective will be to expand connectivity between two neighbours and enhance P2P linkages and promote economic growth and development.
- As first step towards building railway connectivity, India in consultation with Nepal will carry out preparatory survey work within one year.
- This will be followed by finalization of implementation and funding modalities of project based on detailed project report.
- There are three other railway projects in pipeline between both countries viz. Nautanwa-Bhairahawa, New Jalpaiguri-Kakarbhitta and Nepalgunj Road-Nepalgunj.

Walmiki and Malhar: 2 unknown languages discovered

Linguist from University of Hyderabad have discovered two endangered languages Walmiki and Malhar predominantly spoken in remote regions of Odisha.

- They were discovered by Prof Panchanan Mohanty as part of activity of Centre for Endangered Languages and Mother Tongue Studies.
- The professor had collected some data and did preliminary analysis of these languages and published paper in proceedings of XX Annual Conference of Foundation for Endangered Languages, UK.
- Walmiki: It is spoken in district of Koraput of Odisha and on bordering districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- Malhar: It is spoken in a remote and isolated hamlet about 165 km away from Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

International Current Affairs

President Ram Nath Kovind embarks on 3-nation Africa tour

President Ram Nath Kovind embarked on three-nation official state visit to African countries of Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland and Zambia from April 7 to 12, 2018.

- It will be first-ever visit by any head of state of India to Equatorial Guinea and Swaziland. Indian President's visit to Zambia will be taking place after 29 years.
- The visit will help to further deepen relations between three African countries.
- It will be overall President Kovind's third visit to African continent since he took office.
- Earlier in March 2018, President had undertaken two-nation visit to Madagascar and Mauritius.

Desert Tiger 5: UAE and Malaysia conclude joint military exercise

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Malaysia concluded joint military exercise "Desert Tiger 5" aimed at sharing expertise and enhancing joint military actions in Dubai, UAE.

- The military exercise was implemented within framework of UAE leadership's continued desire to support and create unique partnerships between both countries in all areas.
- The military exercise was aimed at raising level of performance and combat efficiency and working together between both countries based on strategy to improve the overall ability and combat readiness of ground forces.

- It highlighted the success of plans to build their skills and capacities of armies of both countries.
- It also aimed at sharing experience and increased military action between two countries.
- Its objective was to reach general level and combat readiness of ground forces and professionalization in dealing with modern weapons and weapons in different environments of operational areas.

Soft Drinks Sugar tax in UK to combat obesity and sugar related diseases

The Soft Drinks Industry Levy also known as soft drinks sugar tax or sin tax or sugar tax came into force in United Kingdom as part of government's plan to combat obesity and sugar related disease.

- With introduction of sugar levy, UK joins few countries, including Mexico, France and Norway that have introduced similar fat taxes.
- The Soft Drinks Industry Levy was announced in 2016. It is based on levels of sugar in drinks, with most sugary drinks paying highest tax.
- Drinks containing 5 grams of sugar per 100ml taxed are taxed at 18 pence per litre, and those with more than 5 grams per 100ml taxed at 24 pence per litre, and those with more than 5 grams per 100ml taxed at 24 pence per litre.
- The levy will be applied to manufacturers in Britain and whether they pass it on to consumers or not will be up to them.
- It will be not applicable to fruit juices as they don't contain added sugar and neither to drinks that have high milk content.
- The levy is expected to raise 240 million pounds every year for Treasury.
- Proceeds from it will be used to directly fund new sports facilities in schools as well as healthy breakfast clubs, ensuring children in UK lead healthier lives.

India, Nepal to develop inland waterways for cargo movement

- India and Nepal have agreed to boost cooperation in connectivity sector as they decided to develop inland waterways for cargo movement within Protocol to Treaty of Transit between India and Nepal. It was decided during delegation-level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart K P Sharma Oli.
- Both countries recognised untapped potential of inland waterways to contribute towards overall economic development of the region.
- They took cognisance of their geographies and held that development of inland waterways in both countries for movement of cargo, within framework of trade and transit arrangements, will provide additional access to sea for landlocked Nepal.

- This development of inland waterways will enable cost-effective and efficient movement of cargo.
- It will have enormous impact on the growth of business and economy of Nepal as it will provide additional connectivity to it.
- Both countries will formulate and mutually agree upon requisite procedures and modalities for including inland waterways as additional means of transport the Protocol to Treaty of Transit between India and Nepal.

Banking & Finance

Indian Overseas Bank launches IoT-based customer service app

Leading public sector bank, Indian Overseas Bank (IOB) as part of their 'Customer First' initiative launched Internet of Things (IoT)-based customer feedback application on a pilot basis at its Cathedral branch

- To increase customer satisfaction at the branch, three initiatives with IoT have been introduced.
- A sound pressure level meter has been placed at the branch service counter with a configured average decibel level. When there is an increase in the decibel measured at this counter, the system sends an alert to the branch manager as well as the designated official at the regional office, on a real-time basis.
- As part of the second initiative, when a customer visits the bank they will be provided a tablet containing a web responsive application in which they can submit their feedback. 'Happy' and 'Unhappy' emoticons will be displayed on the customer service application. A team of dedicated customer service will monitor the feedback and redress it.
- Thirdly, as a part of redressing the grievances and to improve the customer service at the branch, IOB has already implemented a 'Missed Call Feedback' system for its customers, to give a missed call on their dedicated mobile numbers.

Appointments & Resigns

Rakesh Kumar Vats given additional charge of NPPA Chairman

Rakesh Kumar Vats has been given the additional charge of chairman of NPPA (National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority) with immediate effect.

- Rakesh Kumar Vats replaces Bhupendra Singh as Chairman of NPPA. Bhupendra Singh has been appointed as chairperson of National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention under the Cabinet Secretariat.
- Rakesh Kumar Vats is an Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- The NPPA fixes and revises prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations. It enforces prices and availability of the medicines in India.
- It also overlooks the prices of decontrolled drugs to prevent them from hitting high levels. It also recovers the amount overcharged by manufacturers for controlled drugs from customers.

Awards & Recognition

Goafest 2018: Pratap Bose's Social Street bags Creative Agency of the Year

Goafest 2018 was held at Grand Hyatt Hotel, in Bambolim, Goa on 5th to 7th April 2018,.

- This is the 13th edition of Goafest. Goafest is organised by the Advertising Club along with the Advertising Agencies Association of India.
- Social Street won the Creative Agency of the Year award, with three gold, seven silver and seven bronze metals and a score of 94.
- Social Street was started by Pratap Bose three years ago. Early Man Film won the Grand Prix in Creative Abby Awards.

Sports

Indian tennis ace Leander Paes won Davis Cup which is his 43rd win

Leander Paes won Davis Cup and secured his 43rd doubles win of his career in the competition, in Tianjin, China.

- India's Leander Paes and Rohan Bopanna pair defeated China's Gong Mao Xin and Zhang Ze 5-7, 7-6, 7-6 in the second round of the zonal Davis Cup tie.
- Leander Paes has won his 43rd Davis Cup doubles match. He has broken the 46-year-old record of Italian player Nicola Pietrangeli and become the Davis Cup's most successful doubles player.

Obituary

Niranjan Thomas Alva passes away

Niranjan Thomas Alva, the husband of former Rajasthan governor Margaret Alva, passed away on 7th April 2018,

- He was a Supreme Court lawyer.
- He was the son of the first parliamentary couple, Joachim Alva and Violet Alva.

Noted Assamese film-maker Munin Barua passes away

Assamese film-maker Munin Barua died in Guwahati, Assam on 7th April 2018.

- He was popularly known as Bhaimon da.
- He had received National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Assamese in 2005. He had also received the state award for best director for the year 2001-02 and the Lifetime Achievement Award 2017 from Prag Cine Awards.
- He had also scripted several plays for mobile theatre. He had also directed a few TV serials.

Important Days

International Romani Day – 8 April

International Romani Day 2018 was celebrated all over the world on 8th April 2018,

- The International Romani Day also known as International Roma Day celebrates Romani culture and creates awareness on issues faced by Romani people.
- It is celebrated every year on 8th April. International Romani Day was officially declared at the fourth World Romani Congress of the International Romani Union (IRU) in Serock, Poland, in 1990.
- This day remembers the first major international meeting of Romani representatives held between 7th and 12th April 1971 in Chelsfield, England.