

National Current Affairs

Dharmendra Pradhan launches PMUY scheme in Delhi

Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister, Dharmendra Pradhan launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) scheme in Delhi.

- During the launch event, Mr. Pradhan distributed about 400 LPG connections to families belonging to below poverty line category.
- PMUY was launched in May 2016. The objective of this scheme is to provide deposit-free LPG connections with monetary assistance to women from below poverty line (BPL) households, thereby preventing health hazards emanating from usage of unclean cooking fuel and fossil fuel for domestic cooking purpose.
- PMUY is administered by Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- PMUY has so far transformed the lives of more than 3.5 crore women. Target under this scheme has been increased from the existing 5 crore connections to 8 crore connections by 2020.

Kerala Govt to launch 'community radio' to update farmers

Kerala government is getting ready to start a 'community radio' to update them of the latest developments in the sector.

- Significantly, it will be the first such community radio to get connected with the farming community under a government initiative in the country.
- The first farm radio of the state is expected to start broadcast from Kuttanad in Alappuzha district, once popularly known as the rice bowl of Kerala, from next month, marking the second year anniversary celebrations of the LDF government.
- The radio platform is envisaged to provide information to farmers on a host of subjects, including climate change and environment issues, agrarian crisis and alerts, tips and information on various aspects of agriculture.
- The community radio would be launched under the Farm Information Bureau (FIB) of the state Agriculture Department.

Kerala issues norms to decide brain dead cases

The Kerala government issued a set of guidelines to confirm brain death cases, thereby becoming perhaps the first state in India to put in place a standard operating procedure (SOP) in this regard.

- The guidelines will be applicable to all government and private hospitals in the state.
- The guidelines have been issued in the backdrop of prevailing concerns among the public about brain death and organ donation.
- As per the guidelines, a medical board comprising four doctors, including one in government service, will be the competent authority to declare a patient brain-dead. T
- The guidelines, modelled on international recommendations, have been divided into three stages - precautions to be taken before tests to determine brain death, analysis of reflective actions of brain and apnea test (known as sleep test).
- The guidelines also distinguish between brain death and state of coma.

Health Ministry bans over-the-counter sale of 14 steroid creams

The Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry has banned over-the-counter sale of 14 steroid creams to prevent indiscriminate sale of ointments containing steroids and antibiotics without prescription.

- These 14 preparations were included under Schedule H of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 to impose the ban.
- The decision was taken following consultation with Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), which had recommended ban on sale of such creams without prescription.
- It also had submitted their recommendations to Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- The move comes after dermatologists complained that pharmaceutical companies were selling steroid-based creams to patients, who use them without medical guidance.
- Some banned ointments are beclomethasone, desonide, alclometasone and fluocinonide among others.

Maharashtra to start free chemotherapy units in 10 district hospitals

The government of Maharashtra announced that cancer patients would be provided free chemotherapy treatment at district hospitals with the first phase of the plan starting in June

- The move was to alleviate travelling and lodging problems of cancer patients who have to come to Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital in Parel, one of the country's premier cancer treatment facilities, for a six week chemotherapy course as part of treatment.
- The initiative would help patients save in lodging and travelling expenses.
- The plan will start with hospitals in Nagpur, Gadchiroli, Pune, Amravati, Jalgaon, Nashik, Wardha, Satara, Bhandara and Akola.

Odisha Public e-library opens in Berhampur

Odisha Public e-library set up by Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) and Odisha Society of America (OSA) has started functioning from the Town Hall.

- The e-library will give a boost to the library movement of the state and help computer literate students.
- Equipped with 12 computers, two servers and a projector, the e-library was opened for the public last week.
- The OSA -- an association of Odia people living in the US -- provided Rs 20 lakh for the e-library through the chief minister's relief fund.

8th Theatre Olympics concludes in Mumbai

The eight edition of Theatre Olympics concluded in Mumbai, Maharashtra after glorious run of 51 days across 17 cities of India and showcasing rich heritage and culture across length and breadth of the country. It was inaugurated by Vice President Venkaiah Naidu in February 2018 at the majestic Red Fort in New Delhi.

- The 8th Theatre Olympics was organised by National School of Drama (NSD) under Ministry of Culture. The theme of the festival was – “Flag of Friendshi.
- The 51-day event had brought together around 25,000 artists from India and across the world.
- It witnessed 450 shows from more than 30 countries performed across 17 cities such as across Indian during festival.
- The 8th Theatre Olympics was biggest international theatre festival held in India for first time.
- It staged more than 400 plays and hosted 78 allied events including 34 Living Legend series, 29 Master Classes, seven Interfaces, six national and international seminars and two workshops across 17 cities.
- Besides, about 600 ambience performances and 250 youth forum shows were also held during the nationwide event.

International Current Affairs

India, South Korea to ink pact for seafarers, boost bilateral ties

India and South Korea signed mutual recognition of certificate of competency of seafarers to provide Indian seafarers employment on over 500 Korean ships. It was signed during four-day visit of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari to South Korea.

- The agreement will boost bilateral ties between both countries in ports and shipping space as they are eyeing partnerships in shipbuilding, waterways and smart transportation, among others.
- It will be beneficial to both countries as South Korea is large ship owning nation, while India is large seafaring nation with over 1.5 lakh seafarers.
- The pact will help in creating job opportunities for Indian seafarers and also pave way for recognition of maritime education and training through various certificates issued for seafarers by governments of both countries.

Japan activated its first marine unit since World War Two

On April 8, 2018, Japan activated its Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade (ARDB), its first marine unit since World War Two.

- The activation ceremony was held at a military base near Sasebo on the southwest island of Kyushu, wherein about 1500 ARDB members conducted a 20-minute mock public exercise recapturing a remote island from invaders.
- The unit is the latest component of Japan's growing marine force that includes helicopter carriers, amphibious ships, Osprey tilt-rotor troop carriers and amphibious assault vehicles.
- In context of this news, it is important to note that in Japan's Constitution that was formed after World War Two, it renounced the right to wage war.
- The marine unit has been activated to counter invaders who attempt to occupy Japanese islands along the edge of the East China Sea. Japan fears that those islands are vulnerable to attack by China.

Singapore, China sign MOU on third-party markets along Belt and Road

Singapore and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Beijing to promote greater collaboration between Singapore and Chinese companies in third-party markets along the Belt and Road.

- The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a mega project initiated by China to connect countries across Europe, Africa and Asia together via ancient land and sea trade routes.
- Under the MOU, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), NDRC (China's lead agency for BRI) and Enterprise Singapore will form a working group to identify sectors and markets of mutual interest, and organise business matching activities and forums to facilitate third-party market cooperation between Singapore and Chinese companies along the Belt and Road.

- Singapore and China will also work with commercial and policy banks, insurers and financial institutions to support the financing and project structuring needs of third-party market ventures by companies from both sides.

Banking & Finance

11 public sector banks placed under RBI's PCA Framework

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has placed 11 public sector banks (PSBs) out of 21 State-owned banks under its Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework because of deteriorating performance. Three-four more PSBs are expected to be brought under PCA framework.

- The 11 banks already under PCA framework are IDBI Bank, UCO Bank, Bank of India (BoI), Central Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Dena Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC), Bank of Maharashtra (BoM), United Bank of India, Corporation Bank and Allahabad Bank.
- Since PCA framework restricts amount of loans banks can extend, placing 11 PSBs under it will put pressure on credit being made available to companies especially MSMEs.
- Large companies have access to corporate bond market so they may not be impacted immediately. These banks may take at least another 6-9 months before they report any noticeable improvement in key regulatory indicators, which will help them come out of PCA.

SBI to invest Rs 80 bn in hydropower project of Nepal

The State Bank of India (SBI) will be investing a total of Rs 80 billion in the Arun III hydropower project of Nepal, which has 900 megawatts (MW) electricity production capacities.

- The SJVN, which has been awarded with the construction of the mega power project of Nepal, has made an informal agreement with the SBI to acquire the investment as a loan and soon will make the formal agreement, sources informed ANI.
- The 1.4 trillion rupees over the project will be expended for the construction of the structures and additional 11 billion rupees for the transmission lines," the source briefed.
- With the completion of the project, Nepal will get 21.9 percent of the total electricity produced in a year i.e., 197 MW electricity with 86 crore unit for free in a year.

- Along with this, the Punjab National Bank will lend the loan for the construction of the 268 km long 400 KV transmission line via the Everest Bank which is the joint venture bank of the PNB.

Appointments & Resigns

Ashok Gehlot appointed member of Congress central election panel

Congress general secretary Ashok Gehlot has been appointed a member of the party's central election committee.

- Gehlot, a former chief minister of Rajasthan, was recently appointed the AICC general secretary in charge of organisation and training of party cadres.

Awards & Recognition

The Dadasaheb Phalke Excellence Award for 2018 is being awarded to Bollywood actor Anushka Sharma

Dadasaheb Phalke Foundation has decided to honour Bollywood actor Anushka Sharma with the Dadasaheb Phalke Excellence Award for 2018.

- Anushka Sharma has been promoting content-driven or experimental cinema, and encouraging fresh talents, through her production company Clean Slate Films.
- Dadasaheb Phalke Foundation honours her contributions with the Dadasaheb Phalke Excellence Award for 2018.

Environment

4 kingfisher species sighted in Krishna sanctuary

Four kingfisher bird species thriving in Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh were recently sighted. The species have been identified are Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), White-

throated Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*), Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileate*) and Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*).

- In India, 12 species of kingfisher bird can be sighted. The four sighted in sanctuary are wetland dependents.
- The wetland ecosystem is prime attraction for them.
- The conservation status of four sighted species is “least concern”. These birds are thriving as sanctuary is ideal habitation for prey.
- Kingfisher belongs to family of small to medium-sized, brightly colored birds in order Coraciiformes.

Science & Technology

Odilorhabdins: New class of antibiotics to fight drug resistance discovered

Researchers have discovered new class of antibiotics called odilorhabdins or ODLs that fights drug resistance.

- It was produced by symbiotic bacteria found in soil-dwelling nematode worms that colonise insects for food.
- The bacterium helps to kill insect and secrete antibiotic to keep competing bacteria away.
- Researchers had screened 80 cultured strains of ODL bacteria for antimicrobial activity.
- They had isolated active ODL compounds and studied their chemical structures and engineered more potent derivatives.
- During research it was found that ODL act on ribosome (molecular machine that makes proteins cells needed to function) of bacterial cells.
- ODLs has unconventional source and has distinct way of killing bacteria, making it effective at treating drug-resistant or hard-to-treat infections.

Obituary

Former BSF DG Rammohan passes away

Former BSF (Border Security Force) director general (DG) E N Rammohan died on 8th April 2018.

- E N Rammohan was an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the 1965 batch of Assam-Meghalaya cadre. He was the director general (DG) of Border Security Force (BSF) in the 1997 to 2000 period.
- He had also worked in Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the National Security Guard (NSG) and the ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police).

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