

National Current Affairs

Government launches e-FRRO scheme to facilitate hassle-free travel for foreigners

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has launched web-based application e-FRRO (e-Foreigners Regional Registration Office) to allow foreign tourists and travellers to avail of paperless and cashless visa-related services.

- e-FRRO eliminates need for any human interface and using it foreigners touring India will be no longer need to physically visit office of Foreigners Registration Office or Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRO/FRRO) for visa-related services including registration and visa extension.
- Objectives
 - Build centralized, transparent online platform for foreigners to avail visa related services.
 - Provide faceless, cashless and paperless services to foreigners with user friendly experience.

Conditions normal for 2018 monsoon season: Weather scientists

Weather scientists have predicted normal monsoon in June-September 2018 monsoon season as prevailing conditions as well as neutral ENSO were favourable for good monsoon rainfall.

- India receives 89 cm of rainfall during four-month monsoon season, which is almost 75% of its annual rainfall.
- In 2017 monsoon season, country as whole had received rainfall that was 95% of its long-period average.
- The most important favourable condition for good monsoon is near-neutral to neutral ENSO (El Nino Southern Oscillation) in equatorial Pacific Ocean, off coast of South America.
- Global climate models are showing near-neutral conditions prevailing in Pacific Ocean and it will remain this way through most of the year.

NPCIL & NSDC signed a MoU

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) to provide skill training to 500 youth and women at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu.

- The skill development project will be executed by NSDC through its approved training partners near Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP), the single

largest nuclear power station in India, situated in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

- Under this agreement NSDC will conduct a baseline survey in 19 villages in Tirunelveli district to examine nature and extent of talent gap and will accordingly identify job roles for the training.
- NPCIL has committed Rs 1.74 crore under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) contributions towards this project, which is estimated to be complete in 15 months.
- Upon successful completion of the training, the trainee will receive a certificate which conforms to National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), a competency-based framework for skills.
- NPCIL will monitor the progress of the implementation of the project to ensure that the objective of the project is met effectively.

Maharashtra Govt. launches Tribal development centre

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis launched 'QUEST', a centre to evaluate and quantify special development budget allocations and their impact on tribal development.

- Abbreviation 'QUEST' stands for Quality Evaluation for Sustainable Transformation.
- 'QUEST' has been initiated by Maharashtra State Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Tribal Welfare, with an objective to bring greater accountability in spending and management of dedicated funds allocated for tribal welfare.
- Maharashtra has become the first among all Indian states to kick start such initiative.
- In context of this news, it is important to note that in Maharashtra State Budget 2018-19, Rs 8233.12 crore has been allocated for development of Scheduled Tribes

Andhra transforming its capital into world class city

The state of Andhra Pradesh is constructing a world-class city in its capital Amaravati.

- Approximately 3840 apartments in 61 towers are being built in the Amaravati capital region. Three companies - Shapurji Pallonji, Larsen & Toubro and Nagarjuna Construction Company are building these towers.
- Out of 61 towers, 21 towers having 1440 apartments are being built by Shapurji Palonji. These apartments will be for Type 1, Type 2 government officers and Group D employees.
- Nagarjuna Construction Company is building up 18 towers having 432 apartments for MLAs, MLCs and All India Services Officers at Rayapudi village.
- The Department of Municipal Administration and Urban Development led by minister P Narayana is looking after this urbanization project.

25 MW waste-to-power plant to be constructed in Gurugram

A power plant worth Rs 502 crore will be set up in Bandhwari village of Gurugram district, Haryana, to produce electricity from waste under the Integrated Solid Waste Management Scheme.

- The plant will generate 25 MW of electricity. Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar laid the foundation stone of the plant in Bandhwari village on 13th April 2018.
- The plant will be set up as per the conditions of the National Green Tribunal.
- It will be installed in Gurugram and Sonipat clusters to generate electricity from waste. It will be set up by August 2019.

Tripura Govt sanctions Rs 50 crore for IIIT at Bodhjungnagar

Tripura State Government approved Rs 50.67 crore to set up an Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) at Bodhjungnagar, located 15 km away from Agartala.

- Decision to set up IIIT at Bodhjungnagar in Public Private Partnership (PPP) mode was taken in 2012. However, the project could not take off due to non clearance of funds from the previous Left Front government.
- The institute would be set up on 52.08 acres land and the total project cost would be Rs 128 crore.
- Out of Rs. 128 crore, Rs 73.60 crore will be provided by Central Government. Part of funding will also be procured from industrial partners.
- North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) and ONGC have come forward to extend financial cooperation for this project.

International Current Affairs

Sushma Swaraj meets Afghan Defence Minister

Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met the Afghan Defence Minister Lieutenant-General Tariq Shah Bahramee in New Delhi and agreed to make efforts in combating terrorism in the

- During the meeting, Ms. Sushma Swaraj and Lieutenant-General Tariq Shah Bahramee pushed for efforts to combat the menace of opium cultivation and drugs trafficking which is the main source of funding terrorism against the people of Afghanistan.

- Ms. Swaraj assured India's support to Afghan government and the people of Afghanistan for building a peaceful, stable, united and prosperous nation.
- Lieutenant-General Tariq Shah Bahramee was in India to attend 10th edition of Defence Expo 2018 in Tamil Nadu. During the course of this visit, he also met Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

United Nations launches UN Road Safety Trust Fund

United Nations has launched UN Road Safety Trust Fund to improve road safety worldwide to save lives and prevent the loss of opportunity associated with road accidents. UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is secretariat for the trust fund.

- The fund has potential to galvanise global efforts to address road safety situation, building on progress made and experience gained over Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020.
- The fund aims to accelerate progress in improving global road safety by bridging gaps in mobilization of resources for effective action at all levels.
- It will mobilize resources from governments, intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private sector, philanthropic organizations and individuals.
- It will support efforts along five pillars of Global Plan for Decade of Action for Road Safety (2011-20), which include improved safety of road infrastructure and broader transport networks; strengthened road safety management capacities; enhanced safety of vehicles; improved behaviour of road users and improved post-crash care.
- The fund will serve as catalyst for much-needed progress towards road safety targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

USFDA approves world's first contact lens that automatically darkens when exposed to bright light

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved use of Acuvue Oasys Contact Lenses with Transitions Light Intelligent Technology, world's first contact lens that automatically darkens when exposed to bright light.

- It is first of its kind contact lens to incorporate same technology that is used in eyeglasses that automatically darken in the sun.
- These contact lens are soft contact lenses indicated for daily use to correct vision of people with non-diseased eyes who are nearsighted (myopic) or farsighted (hyperopic).
- They can be used by people with certain degrees of astigmatism, an abnormal curvature of the eye.
- These contact lenses contain photochromic additive that adapts amount of visible light filtered to eye based on amount of ultra-violet (UV) light to which they are exposed.

- This additive slightly darkens lenses in bright sunlight that automatically return to regular tint when exposed to normal or dark lighting conditions.

Pakistan bars former PM Sharif from holding office for life

On 13th April 2018, Pakistan's Supreme Court disqualified former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from holding office for life.

- Nawaz Sharif resigned in July 2017 after the Supreme Court disqualified him from holding office on an issue over undeclared source of income.
- But he is still associated with the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party.
- The Supreme Court verdict has stated that, under Pakistan's Constitution, no person once disqualified from office by the Supreme court can hold public office again.

India, Russia sign seven MoU at Defence expo

Indian companies and Russian Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) signed 7 MoUs at the DefExpo 2018 held in Thiruvandanthai, Chennai. The 7 MoUs that were signed are:

- Larsen & Toubro Ltd and joint stock company Rosoboronexport: for underwater platforms of Indian Navy and Heavy Weight Torpedo and future-ready combat vehicles.
- Ananth Technologies and JSC Concern Radio-Electronic Technologies (KRE): for product support for defence systems and upgrade of opto-electric sighting and navigation complex for Su-30MKI aircraft).
- Ananth Technologies and Research and Production Corporation: to set up technical and logistic support in India for T90 S&T72 tanks in service with the Indian Army.
- Space Era and KRET: to set up technical and logistics support in India.
- OSKROSOMARINE and Russian company JSC AGAT: for post-sale support for Fregat radar installed onboard naval frontline warships.
- Krasnet Defence Technologies and JSC Concern AGAT: for co-operation in the field of after-sales support of equipment manufactured by JSC AGAT and installed on board Indian ships.
- Aviatech Enterprises and JSC AGAT: for co-operation in after-sales support of equipment manufactured by JSCAGAT and installed on board Indian naval ships.

US, Britain and France launch military operation against Syria

On 13th April 2018, US President Donald Trump launched air strikes on Syria in a combined operation with France and Britain.

- US, Britain and France have targeted Damascus (capital of Syria) and surrounding areas in response to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's chemical attack that killed over 60 people last week.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia will call an emergency session of UN Security Council regarding the airstrike on Syria.

Banking & Finance

Indian Army inks MoU with Axis Bank on Defence Salary Package

Indian Army has signed Memorandum of Undertaking (MoU) with Axis Bank on Defence Salary Package.

- The first MoU between Axis Bank and Indian Army was signed in 2011 and was renewed in March 2015.
- The current MoU is tailor-made to suit the requirements of serving soldiers, pensioners and families. Recently, Indian Army had also signed similar MoU with HDFC bank.
- Under the current MoU, Indian Army personnel will get free personal accident death cover and free permanent total disability cover of Rs 30 lakh apart from benefits. Moreover their children will get free educational cover of up to Rs 2 Lakh for children between the age of 12 and 20 years.
- Indian Army is hoping that this MoU will benefit large number of serving and retired Army personnel who are having their accounts with Axis bank and also provide them opportunity to access modern banking facilities.

India's forex reserves at record high of \$424.864 billion: RBI

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), India's forex (foreign exchange) reserves have touched record high of \$424.864 billion in April 2018.

- The surge was due to massive spike in foreign currency assets (FCAs), a key component of the reserves.
- The forex reserve had crossed \$400-billion mark for the first time in September 2017, but has since been fluctuating.
- The forex are reserve assets held by a central bank in foreign currencies.
- It acts as buffer to be used in challenging times and used to back liabilities on their own issued currency as well as to influence monetary policy.

PNB launched new products such as pre-approved credit card and UPI solution to mark its 124th foundation day

On 13th April 2018, Punjab National Bank (PNB) launched new products like pre-approved credit card and UPI solution to mark its 124th foundation day.

- PNB also announced its UPI partnership with WALNUT, an expense management app that has features like bill reminders, bill-split and instant paperless loans.
- PNB conducted blood donation camps in 200 blood donation centres in 76 circle offices covering more than 6,500 branches in all states and union territories.
- The camp was inaugurated at PNB head office in New Delhi by Sunil Mehta, MD and CEO of PNB.

Business

L&T, BEL ink MoU for defence products

Larsen & Toubro (L&T), India's multinational engineering conglomerate, and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), a government-owned aerospace and defence company signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to cater to the needs of evolving domestic and export markets for defence products and systems.

- The MoU envisages collaboration between L&T and BEL to fulfil growing requirements of the Indian Armed Forces.
- Besides, the MoU will also leverage expertise, experience and well-developed supply chain of BEL and L&T to enhance exports in the defence sector.
- In the past, both organisations have collaborated and partnered on co-development and production of major sub-systems such as Akash Missile launchers and other radar platforms for Indian Ministry of Defence orders.

Awards & Recognition

Vinod Khanna posthumously honoured with Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2017

Late veteran actor and politician Vinod Khanna was posthumously honoured with prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2017.

- He is the 49th recipient of the award, considered as the highest honour in Indian cinema given by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Khanna has featured in as many as 146 films in his film career spanning over four decades.
- He was known for his suave style and composed demeanour.

Science & Technology

Indian mosquitoes susceptible to Zika virus: NIV study

Recent National Institute of Virology (NIV) study has found that Indian Aedes aegypti mosquito that transmits dengue and chikungunya viruses is easily susceptible to zika virus. During the study it was found that Indian Aedes aegypti mosquito infected with African strain MR-766 of zika virus (ZIKV) can easily transmit infection.

- This study shows that Indian mosquitoes pick up ZIKV in natural way. They were experimentally infected with zika virus through oral-feeding route, which is natural mode by which mosquitoes get virus. These infected mosquitoes, harbour the virus in their salivary glands were allowed to bite on infant and suckling mice.
- The results of tests showed clinical symptoms of ZIKV such as trembling, solitary behaviour, nervous signs, no movement, and lethargy in mice after 4-5 days after being bitten by the infected mosquitoes.
- This study will help to explore suitable model for understanding Zika virus's natural transmission and disease progression.

Sports

Kohli and Mithali voted world's best cricketers: Wisden's leading cricketers of the year

Virat Kohli and Mithali Raj, captains of Indian men and women's cricket team respectively found a place in the Wisden's leading cricketers of the year.

- Five cricketers were chosen for the 'Cricketers of the Year Award'. Three of them were women cricketers.
- England's women cricketers Heather Knight, Natalie Sciver and Anya Shrubsole have been selected for Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year.

- West Indies batsman Shai Hope and Essex bowler Jamie Porter were also chosen for Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year.
- Stu Forster of Getty Images took a picture of English fast bowler Katherine Brunt taking a selfie at the cricket world cup final at Lord's stadium. This has been selected as the Cricket Photograph of the Year.

Important Days

B.R.Ambedkar Remembrance Day or Ambedkar Jayanti – 14 April

On 14th April 2018, B.R.Ambedkar Remembrance Day also known as Ambedkar Jayanti was observed all over India and in few neighbouring regions also.

- Ambedkar Jayanti is observed every year on 14th April to commemorate the birth anniversary of B.R.Ambedkar who was born on 14 April 1891.
- He was the architect of Indian Constitution. He is known as the “Father of Indian Constitution.”
- He had dedicated his life for uplifting the deprived section of the society. He had also played a major role in India's freedom struggle. He had received Bharat Ratna award in 1990.