

National Current Affairs

Government launches Central Project Monitoring Unit for e-Vidhan project at Parliament

The Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs inaugurated new office of Central Project Monitoring Unit for e-Vidhan project of Government at Parliament House Annexe.

- It was launched by Union Minister of State (MoS) for Parliamentary Affairs, Statistics and Programme Implementation Vijay Goel.
- e-Vidhan is mission mode project to digitize and make functioning of State Legislatures in India to make them paperless.
- It is a part of broader Digital India Programme of Central Government. It is likely to contribute to cleanliness and environment by reducing the use of papers to a great extent.
- It will also make functioning of State Legislatures participative, responsive, transparent, productive and more accountable and efficient to public.
- The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is nodal ministry for the project.

Government to roll out Integrated Initiative for Prevention & Control of Viral Hepatitis

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has decided to roll out 'Integrated initiative for prevention & control of viral hepatitis' under National Health Mission (NHM) for prevention and control of viral hepatitis.

- The initiative will have budgetary support of more than Rs. 517 crore for three years. India is committed to eliminating the viral hepatitis by 2030.
- Under this initiative, the ministry will scale up to 100 treatment and 665 testing centres over period of next three years in all states.
- It will address components such as surveillance, awareness generation, immunisation, safe blood, injection safety infection control, diagnosis of viral hepatitis, capacity building, research and monitoring.
- It is also proposed to establish 15 model treatment centres, which will function as referral centres for diagnosis and treatment of hepatitis C and assist in capacity building.

SJVN signs MoU with Ministry of Power to achieve 9200 Million Units in FY 2018-19

Hydro power major Sutlej Jal Vidut Nigam (SJVN) Limited has signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Ministry of Power for generating 9200 million units for the year 2018-19.

- The MoU was signed in New Delhi by Power Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and SJVN Chairman & Managing Director (CMD) Nand Lal Sharma.
- As per set targets in the MoU, SJVN will achieve 9200 Million Units generation during FY 2018-19 under 'Excellent' category.
- Further, SJVN will have Capital Expenditure (CAPEX) target of Rs. 900 crore and Turnover target of Rs. 2175 crore along with other targets related to operational efficiency and project monitoring.
- SJVN Limited is a Mini Ratna and Schedule 'A' Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU) under Ministry of Power.

GoM recommends uniform road tax structure for vehicles across country

The Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted by Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has proposed One Nation One Tax policy for seamless movement of commercial vehicles across the country.

- The two day meeting of GoM held in Guwahati, Assam was attended by transport ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Kerala, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya and Jharkhand.
The GoM is headed by Rajasthan transport minister Yoonus Khan.
- Recommendations of GoM:
 - Uniform road tax for vehicles across states: It will allow transfer of vehicles from one state to another without levying road tax. It will put check on people registering their vehicles in low tax states and running them in other states. It will also bring necessary relief to genuine cases requiring transfer of vehicles.
 - Tax Structure: The uniform tax should be based on invoice price of vehicles in three slabs. 8% tax on vehicles below 10 lakhs, 10% for vehicles costing between 10 -20 lakh, and 12% for vehicles above 20 lakh. Diesel vehicles may have to pay 2% extra taxes, while electric vehicles will be given 2% discount.
 - National passenger vehicles permit for passenger cars: There should be national bus and taxi permit on lines of such permit for goods transport.

Major electrification scheme launched in Nagaland

Nagaland launched major energy programme which targets to electrify over 90,000 household in 738 villages throughout the state by March 31 next year.

- The "Saubhagya, Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana" which aims to cover 66,766 rural households and 24,566 urban households throughout the State was formally launched by Advisor for Power Department, MLA H Tovihoto Ayemi
- The main aim of the scheme is to provide electricity to all the un-electrified households in both urban and rural areas.
- Entire project will be monitored by Rural Electrification Corporation (REC).
- In remote areas where electricity connection is not possible, the department would make efforts to provide electricity through Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) system.

Delhi hosts third annual 5G India Congress

The third edition of the Annual 5G India Congress 2018 was held on April 20, 2018 in Le Meridien, New Delhi.

- It was organised by NexGen Conferences, one of India's leading conferences and B2B event organisers.
- 5G India Congress aims to bring together network operators, government and technology providers to discuss about the 5G development for next generation communications in India.
- More than 30 C-Level speakers, solutions providers and over 300 participants are expected at the event.
- The event served as a platform for all stakeholders, including network operators, Government & technology providers to come together and discuss about the 5G development for next generation communications in India.

First International SME Convention 2018 to be held in New Delhi

The first International SME (Small, Medium Enterprises) convention will be held in New Delhi from 22nd to 24th April, 2018. It has been organised by Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises.

- It aims to provide platform to allow Entrepreneur to Entrepreneur (E2E) exchange of ideas, free and fair business discussions, mutual sizing of opportunities and ways to address them.
- The four day International SME convention will see participation of 150 participants from 31 countries and 400 entrepreneurs from India.
- It has specific focus on inclusion of MSMEs in Make in India program and empowering women entrepreneurs.
- The Ministry of MSME has engaged with over 35 International Trade Development organisations to attract and invite able and willing entrepreneurs and encourage people to people (P2P) contact with select Indian Entrepreneurs from key sectors of the International counterparts.

International Current Affairs

Commonwealth Cyber Declaration adopted by Commonwealth countries

The Commonwealth countries at the end of Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London have adopted Commonwealth Cyber Declaration to take action on cybersecurity by 2020. The declaration is considered as world's largest and most geographically diverse inter-governmental commitment on cybersecurity cooperation.

- Under this declaration leaders of 53 commonwealth countries agreed to work closely to evaluate and strengthen their cybersecurity frameworks and response mechanisms. It also aims to tackle criminal groups and hostile state actors who pose a global threat to cybersecurity.
- The declaration sets out common vision for ensuring internet remains free and open across Commonwealth.
- It commits members to raise national levels of cyber security and increased cooperation to counter those who seek to undermine our values, security, even integrity of elections.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in London

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018 (CHOGM 2018) was held in London, United Kingdom. It was overall 25th meeting of the heads of government of the Commonwealth of Nations.

- It was also first CHOGM held following United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from European Union.
- This decision has resulted for Britain to strengthen its economic ties with and play greater role in Commonwealth.
- The theme CHOGM 2018 was "Towards a Common Future". The British hosts had set out four main goals for summit viz prosperity: boosting intra-Commonwealth trade and investment; security: increasing cooperation across security challenges including global terrorism, organised crime and cyberattacks; fairness: promoting democracy, fundamental freedoms and good governance across Commonwealth and sustainability: building resilience of small and vulnerable states to deal with effects of climate change and other global crises.

India, Finland settle Nokia tax dispute under MAP

India and Finland have reached an agreement on the tax dispute with Nokia under Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) system.

- The resolution covers disputes pertaining to Nokia India as well as Nokia Corp.
- This involves payment of Rs 1,600 crore, a sum that was deposited with government by Nokia in March 2018.
- This paves way for the sale of Nokia's Chennai (Sriperumbudu) plant, which has been shuttered since November 2014.
- Software giant Microsoft had kept Sriperumbudur factory out of the deal when it acquired Nokia's mobile device business in 2014 due to Income Tax notice and asset freeze imposed on the factory.

India, Eritrea to sign MoU on Foreign Office Consultations

Aiming to facilitate a structured dialogue for strengthening bilateral corporation among themselves, India and Eritrea will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Foreign Office Consultations on April 20.

- India and Eritrea enjoy warm and cordial relations in political, commercial, education and other areas.
- Over the years, India has provided Eritrea with capacity building assistance in several fields such as legislative drafting, technical scholarships (agriculture, education, health) and food aid.

India contributing to global growth in financial inclusion: World Bank

The Global Findex Report, 2017 released by the World Bank notes the rapid increase in financial inclusion that has taken place in the country.

- The report lists how the number of account holders in the country has risen from 35 per cent of the adults in 2011 and 53 per cent in 2014 to 80 per cent in 2017.
- This, as per the report, is comparable to 80 per cent of adults in China who have an account.
- It also attributes the progress being driven by the Jan Dhan Yojana policy which has used biometric ID to expand access to financial services.
- Further, it may be pertinent to note that the report sources its data largely from surveys that were conducted in the summer of 2017.
- According to the government data sourced from the banks, the total number of Jan Dhan account holders has risen from 28.17 crore in March 2017 to 31.44 crore in March 2018.
- The total number of current and savings accounts in banks has risen from 122.3 crore in March 2015 to 157.1 crore in March 2017.

- The report states that about 51.4 crore accounts have been opened globally from 2014 to 2017.

Swaziland king renames country Kingdom of eSwatini

The king of Swaziland, Africa's last absolute monarchy, has announced that his country has changed its name to the Kingdom of eSwatini to mark 50 years since independence from British rule.

- Meaning "place of the Swazi", eSwatini is the Swazi language name for the tiny state landlocked between South Africa and Mozambique. Unlike some countries, Swaziland did not change its name when it gained independence in 1968 after being a British protectorate for more than 60 years.
- King Mswati III declared the name change during independence day celebrations at a packed sports stadium in the second city of Manzini.
- The name change could mean the country's constitution is rewritten, as well as changes for the royal Swaziland police force, the Swaziland defence force and the University of Swaziland.

Kyrgyzstan forms new government headed by president ally

Kyrgyzstan's parliament voted overwhelmingly to confirm a new government led by the country's 30th prime minister in less than three decades, who is an ally of new President Sooronbai Jeenbekov.

- Mukhamedkali Abylgazyev's installment is the latest indicator that Jeenbekov has consolidated power in the ex-Soviet country following a struggle with former president and one-time ally Almazbek Atambayev.
- Abylgazyev, 50, was parachuted into the prime minister's post after serving as Jeenbekov's chief of staff since March.
- Of 115 lawmakers present, 114 voted to approve Abylgazyev's cabinet after a no-confidence vote felled the government of former prime minister Sapar Isakov, who was close to Atambayev.

Appointments & Resigns

Ravi Thapar appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Nicaragua

- Shri Ravi Thapar, presently Ambassador of India to Panama, has been concurrently accredited as the next Ambassador of India to Nicaragua.

Republican congressman Jim Bridenstine confirmed as new NASA Chief

The US Senate has confirmed Jim Bridenstine to head up the space agency.

- Bridenstine currently serves as a Republican US Representative from Oklahoma, making him the first politician to take the reins at NASA.

Leaders approve Prince Charles to succeed queen as Commonwealth head

Britain's Prince Charles was approved as the successor to Queen Elizabeth as head of the Commonwealth at a meeting of the group's heads of government.

- There have been calls for the role to be rotated around the 53 member-states, most of which are former British territories, but in recent days the queen, 91, the British government and other leaders have backed Charles, 69.
- The Commonwealth evolved out of the British empire in the mid-20th century, and the queen has been its head since her reign began in 1952. Charles had long been expected to take on the role even though it is not strictly hereditary.

Cuba selects first non-Castro president since Fidel

The Cuban government has selected the country's 57-year-old first vice-president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, as the sole candidate to succeed President Raúl Castro in a transition aimed at ensuring the country's single-party system outlasts the ageing revolutionaries who created it.

- The 86-year-old Castro will remain head of the Communist party, designated by the constitution as "the superior guiding force of society and the state".
- As a result, Castro will remain the most powerful person in Cuba for the time being. His departure from the presidency is nonetheless a symbolically charged moment for a country accustomed to 60 years of absolute rule first by revolutionary leader Fidel Castro and, for the last decade, his younger brother.

Awards & Recognition

Time magazine's 100 most influential people of 2018

Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern have made Time's list of 2018's 100 most influential people alongside an eclectic group including US President Donald Trump, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, soon-to-be member of the British royal family Meghan Markle and Black Panther's Chadwick Boseman.

- Time describes its list as not a measure of power or past achievements but a gauge of "individuals whose time, in our estimation, is now".
- Six of the top 100 will be featured on covers of the magazine's special issue, and include: Tarana Burke, who founded Me Too; tennis champion Roger Federer; comedian Tiffany Haddish; actor Nicole Kidman; singer Jennifer Lopez; and Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella. Jackman's Les Miserables co-star Anne Hathaway described the Australian actor as "deeply egoless".
- Markle and Prince Harry, who also made the list, will wed next month.

Sports

Mumbai Football Arena to host Intercontinental Cup

The Mumbai Football Arena, the new hub of Indian football will play host to the inaugural edition of the four-nation Intercontinental Cup from June 1 to 10.

- The tournament will see the Indian team competing with the likes of South Africa, New Zealand and Chinese Taipei.
- The Intercontinental Cup, to be broadcasted live on Star Sports, will be an annual event and will thus have representation from the CAF region in the form of South Africa, New Zealand from the Oceania, and Chinese Taipei from the AFC.
- The tournament is being organised to strengthen India's preparation for the AFC Asian Cup in UAE in 2019, its second qualification to the Continental Championship in eight years and fourth overall, the last being in Doha 2011.

Para-athlete Shrimant Jha bags bronze at Asian Armwrestling C'ship

Differently-abled Indian arm wrestler Shrimant Jha made the country proud by picking up a bronze medal at the Asian Armwrestling Championship, which is being held from April 16 to April 22 in Kazakhstan.

- The 25-year-old, resident of Naxal-hit Chhattisgarh finished behind Tajikistan's Firuz and Magolia's Munkhbold to settle for the bronze in the 80kg senior category.
- Jha, who was born with four fingers in both his hands, has been doing arm-wrestling since 2010 and started representing India since 2013.

- Jha, who has five world championship medals, now aims for the upcoming Para Olympics.
- He also secured a silver medal in Para-Arm Wrestling World Cup in Poland under 80 kg category.

Obituary

Kerala Kaumudi chief editor M.S. Ravi dead

Chief Editor of Kerala Kaumudi M.S. Ravi, 68, died on 20th April.

- Mr. Ravi was an energetic presence in the State's social and cultural circuit. He was also a recipient of several awards.
- Mr. Ravi always upheld the high standards of journalistic conduct.

Important Days

Civil Service Day - April 21

The Civil Service Day is celebrated on 21 April every year. It is observed by all Civil Services.

- The purpose for this day is to rededicate and recommit themselves to the cause of the people.
- This year observance of the day focussed on 'Evolving Strategies for Transforming Aspirational Districts'.
- On this day, "PM Awards for Excellence in Public administration" have been instituted with a view to acknowledge, recognize and reward the extraordinary and innovative work done by officers of the Central and State Governments for the welfare of common citizen.
- This day coincides with the date on which Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel had addressed the first batch of probationers at the All India Administrative Service Training School at Metcalfe House, New Delhi in 1947.

World Creativity and Innovation Day - 21 April

- On April 21, 2018, the first official World Creativity and Innovation Day (#WCID) was celebrated. Observed six days after Leonardo da Vinci's birthday and one day before International Mother Earth Day, #WCID is well positioned to encourage creative multidisciplinary thinking to help us achieve the sustainable future we want.

National Secretaries Day

National Administrative Professionals' Day, also known as Secretaries Day or Admin Day, is observed on the Wednesday of the last full week in April of each year.

- It is a day to recognize the work of secretaries, administrative assistants, receptionists and other administrative support professionals.
- The event is celebrated worldwide through community events, social gatherings, and individual corporate activities recognizing support staff with gifts

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