

National Current Affairs

POSHAN Abhiyaan: 1st meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges held in New Delhi

The first meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyaan was held in New Delhi.

- It saw participation of NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Dr Rajiv Kumar, CEO Amitabh Kant and representatives of various ministries of Central and State Governments.
- Its mandate is to provide policy directions to address countries nutritional challenges through coordinated inter-sectoral action.
- It is also mandated to coordinate and review convergence between Ministries and review programmes for nutrition on a quarterly basis.
- It will submit its report to the Prime Minister every 6 months.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.

MSME Ministry Sets UP four Technology Centres for North East: Giriraj Singh

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) organised UdyamSamvad Workshop in which eleven sessions were held with different ministries and financial organizations like Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), SIDBI, ASSOCHAM, CII, FICCI, FISME, PHD Chamber of Commerce and MSME Foundation.

- Various issues facing entrepreneurs and Startups in North East States of India like accessing credit, handholding for setting up businesses, accessing markets in India and abroad and R&D for refinement of art based products manufactured in the North East were discussed.
- Micro industries will be given more support in this region. For this technology centres are being established in Imphal, Dimapur, Tinsukia and Agartala.

Study in India website launched

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj launched the Study in India website, marking the setting in motion of an ambitious scheme to attract foreign students to study in good Indian higher educational institutions.

- The scheme will entail the admission of foreign students from 30 countries — with a focus on South Asia, South East Asia, West Asia and Africa — to study in 160 quality higher educational institutions of India as per NIRF ranks and NAAC grades.

- Once students register on it, they can apply for 160 institutions and get seats as per merit. It also has a provision for online counselling and a helpline number.
- The goal of the ambitious scheme is to increase the number of foreign students in India to 2 lakh by 2023.
- The programme will provide meritorious foreign students fee waiver and scholarship.
- Objectives:
 - Encourage more foreign students to choose India as destination for higher education.
 - Double India's market share of global education exports from less than 1% to 2%.
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e-SANAD portal and National Academic Depository integrated

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has launched integration of e-SANAD portal and NAD – National Academic Depository in a bid to make education system in India more transparent.

- e-Sanad is project aimed at online submission and verification of documents with ultimate object to extend contact less, cashless, faceless and paperless document attestation service.
- Using it, any type of document viz personal, educational or commercial can be authenticated and apostilled.
- The project was designed and being implemented by National Information Centre (NIC) in coordination with CBSE, States/UTs and Ministry of External Affairs in a phased manner.
- NAD is 24X7 online store house of all academic awards viz. diplomas certificates,, degrees, mark-sheets etc. duly digitised and lodged by academic boards, institutions, eligibility assessment bodies.
- It ensures easy access to and retrieval of academic award and validates and guarantees its authenticity and safe storage.

IIIDEM organizes 2-Day Consultative Workshop for the Delegation from the Central Election Commission of Kazakhstan

The India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) organized a 2-day Consultative Workshop for the Delegation from the Central Election Commission (CEC) of Kazakhstan from April 16-17, 2018 at Nirvachan Sadan, Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

- The six-member delegation comprised of the Vice-Chairman of CEC, Kazakhstan and other Senior Officials.
- The workshop aimed to hold interactive discussions on the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) & Role of IT and Conduct of Training Programme.

- The key topics of the programme included challenges in electoral technologies, online voter registration, transmission of results, apps and electoral services, electoral capacity building, training of trainers and facilitators, among others.

Chhattisgarh CM to distribute smartphones to over 50 lakh people

Chhattisgarh chief minister Raman Singh will start his “Vikas Yatra” from May 1, six months before the state assembly elections, and distribute 5 million mobile phones to women and college going students under the Sanchar Kranti Yojana (SKY) scheme, a dream project of the three-time CM.

- The first phase of the yatra, Singh will tour some of the important constituencies and inform people about his government’s welfare schemes. The second phase of the yatra will be launched in August based on the response of the first phase.
- The first phase will also see the launch of the scheme in which mobile phones will be distributed. According to the government’s plan, 4.06 million smartphones will be given to women heading rural households, 5.60 lakh to women heads of urban poor households, and about four lakh to college students — both boys and girls.
- The Chhattisgarh government plans to initiate smartphone distribution in May 2018 and complete it by the end of March 2019.

Defence Planning Committee to formulate military, security strategy, supervise foreign deals

The Union Government has formed Defence Planning Committee (DPC), a new integrated institutional mechanism that will drive country’s military and strategy and guide defence equipment acquisitions. It will be under the chairmanship of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

- The committee will be a permanent body and it will prepare draft national security strategy besides undertaking strategic defence review and formulating international defence engagement strategy.
- The committee will operate through four sub-committees: on Policy and Strategy, Defence Diplomacy, Plans and Capability Development and Defence Manufacturing Ecosystem.
- The membership and the terms of reference of the sub-committees will be finalized separately. Foreign Secretary and Expenditure Secretary being member of DPC will help to overcome problems of coordination between various ministries on matters of national security.
- DPC has been tasked to undertake external security risk assessment and define national defence and security priorities.

- It will formulate national military strategy, draft national security strategy and strategic defence review.
- It will identify means and ways across ministries, obtain Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approval for capability development plan and provide guidance for budgetary support.
- The DPC will also prepare roadmap to build defence manufacturing ecosystem, strategy to boost defence exports and prioritized capability plans for armed forces in consonance with overall priorities, strategies and likely resource flows. It will submit all its reports to defence minister.

Naidu launches Assam govt's cashless health scheme

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu launched a health scheme of the Assam government that offers free medical care of up to Rs 2 lakh for every individual from Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) families.

- The cashless scheme, 'Atal Amrit Abhiyan', will cover 92 per cent of the state's population with annual income below Rs 5 lakh.
- The state government has earmarked Rs 400 crore for the scheme in the financial year 2018-19.
- If the scheme is implemented in its letter and spirit, it will help the poor to a great extent.

President Ram Nath Kovind arrives on two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir

President Ram Nath Kovind arrived in Jammu in his maiden visit to Jammu.

- He is slated to attend the convocation of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University (SMVDU).
- The President will be chief guest at 6th convocation of SMVDU where he will address the students besides presenting Gold medals and PhD degrees to them.
- The President is also likely to visit Hari Niwas Palace and Mubarak Mandi Heritage Complex in the city.

International Current Affairs

India claims top spot for 2018 growth among major economies: Poll

India will claim the top spot among the world's fastest-growing major economies this year, but rising trade tensions between the United States and China may restrain that growth, a Reuters poll of economists showed.

- The recent tit-for-tat import tariffs imposed by the US and China have raised concerns about a full-fledged global trade war which could throw an otherwise-strong world economy off-course.
- The latest poll, taken April 11-18, predicted India's economy will expand 7.4 percent in the fiscal year that began this month. That is in line with the International Monetary Fund's projection, and is a slight upgrade from the January poll.
- For the next fiscal year, growth is expected to average 7.5 percent, a touch lower than the IMF's forecast of 7.8 percent.
- After growth slowed sharply for much of last year, India regained its status as the world's fastest-growing major economy in the quarter ending December 2017.

UK-India Tech Alliance launched by Nasscom, TechUK

The NASSCOM (National Association of Software & Services Companies) and TechUK launched new UK-India Tech Alliance.

- The leading technology trade bodies of India and UK inked memorandum of understanding (MoU) in this regard during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the UK.
- The alliance is aimed at increasing collaboration on skills and new technologies, assisting policy development and encouraging innovation and lay groundwork for roadmap which will be jointly presented in June 2018.
- It will promote growth of skills needed for world where artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, big data analytics and cybersecurity have become major technology growth areas.
- It will be key partner for government – providing sounding board and expert advice for policy development to ensure that both governments nurture growth in this sector and beyond.
- The MoU commits two organisations to exchange knowledge and learn lessons from FutureSkills initiative launched by NASSCOM, explore expansion of FutureSkills platform, work together to strengthen people-to-people (P2P) and business-to-business (B2B) links between India and UK.
- It calls for exploring wider partnership to develop digital skills in both countries and encourage Indian companies active in UK to deliver digital skills in both countries and encourage Indian companies active in UK to deliver digital skills training opportunities as part of cross-sector Digital Skills Partnership convened by UK government.

India-UK free trade agreement to boost economic ties: UKIBC

A free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the UK will help boost two-way commerce and investments between the countries.

- The UK India Business Council (UKIBC) said the joint trade review being undertaken by both the sides is an important initiative, which will secure quicker wins.
- In a FTA, two trading partners cut or eliminate duties on most number of goods traded between them besides liberalise norms to promote services trade and boost investments.
- The report suggested for a tighter alignment of the bilateral economic architecture, including the UK-India CEO Forum and Joint Economic and Trade Committee.
- It also called for a focused outreach campaigns in both the countries, informing trade associations about the opportunities in each other markets and ways to access them.
- It recommended that like the UK's Department for International Trade's Export Opportunities programme, which identifies opportunities in India for UK exporters, Indian government should also consider introducing a similar programme.
- Further, it stated that huge potential exists for businesses of both the countries to increase trade and investments.

34 global technology firms sign Cybersecurity Tech Accord

34 leading global technology firms including Facebook, Microsoft, HP, ARM, Cisco, and Oracle have signed Cybersecurity Tech Accord to work together on cybersecurity issues.

- Under it, signatory companies have agreed to collaborate on stronger defence systems, no offensive cyberattacks, and protect against tampering of their products, capacity building and collective action. The participant companies view Tech Accord as Digital Geneva Convention.
- Four Principles of Cybersecurity Tech Accord:
 - Protect users and customers everywhere.
 - Oppose cyberattacks on innocent citizens and enterprises.
 - Empower users, customers and developers to strengthen cybersecurity.
 - Partner with each other and like-minded groups to enhance cybersecurity.
- The four principles of Cybersecurity Tech Accord aimed at advancing online security and resiliency across globe.

China moots India-Nepal-China economic corridor through Himalayas

China has proposed construction of India-Nepal-China economic corridor with multi-dimensional connectivity through the Himalayas as it seeks to expand its influence over the

new Nepalese government headed by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli, widely regarded as pro-Beijing.

- China's proposal came after visiting Nepalese foreign minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali held talks with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi.
- Gyawali is on his maiden visit to Beijing after the Oli-led government came to power in recent elections.
- China and Nepal have already signed a MoU on the China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which includes connectivity cooperation.
- It included a long-term vision such as connectivity network and covering the links between the two countries through ports, railways, highways, aviation, power and communications.

Business

Airtel tops 4G download speed, Jio in coverage area: OpenSignal

Bharti Airtel has topped the chart of 4G service providers with 9.31 mbps download speed on its network, a report by broadband parameters research firm OpenSignal said.

- Idea Cellular and Vodafone followed Airtel with 7.27 mbps and 6.98 mbps download speed respectively while Jio network was found to be the slowest compared to the three operators with a download speed of 5.13 mbps, according to tests conducted by OpenSignal between December 2017 to February 2018.
- In overall speed, Airtel registered 6 mbps download speed while Jio recorded 5.1 mbps download speed.
- Idea, Vodafone and state-run BSNL followed Jio in terms of overall download speed.
- In overall speed test, OpenSignal considered download speed across 4G, 3G and 2G network of individual operators.
- Airtel also lead the chart for 3G download speed with 2.73 mbps average top speed
- Jio, however, found top spot in terms of 4G network coverage. Jio was followed by Vodafone in 4G coverage.

Appointments & Resigns

TK Rajalakshmi elected IWPC president

Senior journalist T K Rajalakshmi was elected the new president of the Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC), while Jyoti Malhotra and Shobhna Jain were declared vice-presidents of the media body.

- Shalini Bhardwaj was elected joint secretary and Preeti Mehra, its treasurer.
- A fresh election would be held for the post of the general secretary since there was a tie between the two contestants in the April 14 poll.

Awards & Recognition

KJo to be first Indian filmmaker in Madame Tussauds collection

Karan Johar has become the first-ever Bollywood filmmaker to get a place at the famous Madame Tussauds.

- The process has begun in London and it will take about six months for the wax figurine to be ready.
- Apart from Johar, other Indian dignitaries who have been graced with the honour are Shah Rukh Khan, Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Salman Khan, Kareena Kapoor Khan, Anil Kapoor, Sachin Tendulkar, Katrina Kaif, PM Narendra Modi, Hrithik Roshan, Madhuri Dixit, Prabhas, and Varun Dhawan.
- The 45-year-old filmmaker often referred as KJo, is a celebrated Indian film director, producer, screenwriter, costume designer, actor, and television personality.

BCCL chairman gets lifetime contribution to media award

Indu Jain, chairman of Bennett, Coleman & Co, India's largest media house, which publishes newspapers and magazines, including The Times of India was awarded the All India Management Association's (AIMA's) annual award for lifetime contribution to media.

- AIMA, which recognises achievers who have made a fundamental difference to society through its annual Managing India Awards, conferred on Jain the award for managing the Times Group, apart from establishing the Times Foundation, an institution working towards social causes.
- A philanthropist, she launched the Times Foundation in 2000 to run community services, research foundation, and relief funds.
- She received the Padma Bhushan in 2016.

Science & Technology

Chandrayaan-2 launch postponed to October-November 2018

The Indian Space and Research Organisation (ISRO) has postponed launch of India's second lunar mission 'Chandrayaan-2' from April 2018 to October-November 2018. The launch was postponed for additional tests suggested by national level committee to review Chandrayaan-2.

- Chandrayaan 2 is India's second mission to Moon and is advanced version of previous Chandrayaan-1 mission (launched in 2008).
- It has been developed indigenously by ISRO. It consists of Orbiter, Lander and Rover configuration.
- In this mission, ISRO will for first time attempt to land a rover on moon's south-pole.
- It will be launched on board of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III (GSLV-F10).

NASA's exoplanet-hunting spacecraft launched from Cape Canaveral

A NASA spacecraft has been launched on a two-year mission to find faraway planets and about half a million stars.

- A SpaceX Falcon rocket blasted off on Wednesday evening from Cape Canaveral in Florida, carrying the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), after a delay from Monday.
- TESS is the next generation of exoplanet-hunting tools, with the ultimate goal of finding worlds out among the stars.
- Monday's launch was scrubbed just two hours before liftoff due to issues with the guidance
- Just minutes after the launch, the main-stage rocket booster returned to Earth, landing on a floating platform in the Atlantic, just off the Florida coast.
- SpaceX plans to use the recovered booster for NASA's next grocery run to the International Space Station. It is the 24th booster landing for SpaceX, which aims to reduce launch costs by reusing rocket parts.

Sports

Make BCCI public body and bring under RTI: Law Commission

The Law Commission of India (LCI) has recommended to declare Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as a public body.

- It also recommended BCCI and its all member cricket associations to be brought under Right to Information (RTI) law regime.
- Recommendations of LCI:
 - Private Citizen should be able to move highest court against BCCI for any violation of his fundamental rights.
 - BCCI should be held accountable, under all circumstances, for any violations of basic human rights of stakeholders.
 - BCCI virtually acts as National Sports Federation (NSF) and Sports Ministry website should explicitly mention BCCI in list of NSFs. This will automatically bring it within the purview of the RTI Act.

Obituary

Former PIO Shakuntala Mahawal passes away

Former Principal Information Officer (PIO), Shakuntala Mahawal has died in Brussels after a brief illness.

- Mahawal held senior positions in All India Radio, Doordarshan, Press Information Bureau and Department of Field Publicity (DFP) in Jaipur and Delhi during her illustrious career as the officer of the Indian Information Service (IIS).

Important Days

April 19: World Liver Day

The World Liver Day (WLD) is observed every year on April 19 to build awareness and understanding importance of liver in human body and how liver ailments can be treated.

- The 2018 theme for WLD is 'Riding New Waves in Liver Diagnosis, Staging & Treatment'. As per World Health Organisation (WHO), liver diseases are 10th most common cause of death in India.