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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 06-02-2025

NATIONAL NEWS

India's First White Tiger Breeding Centre Approved in Madhya Pradesh

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has given final approval for India's first white tiger breeding centre, to be established in Govindgarh, Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh.

This project is a landmark step in wildlife conservation, as Rewa holds historical significance for being home to the last known wild white tiger.

Final approval was granted by CZA for the breeding centre.

The Maharaja initiated a breeding and conservation program, leading to the global spread of white tigers in captivity.

The project is part of the revised master plan for the Maharaja Martand Singh Judeo White Tiger Safari and Zoo in Mukundpur.

The initiative is expected to boost wildlife tourism and generate employment opportunities for locals.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger Officially Leave West Africa's ECOWAS Bloc

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has formally recognized the withdrawal of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso after prolonged tensions.

The bloc urged its 12 remaining members to continue recognizing passports and trade agreements with the departing nations.

ECOWAS President Omar Touray emphasized regional solidarity and invited the three nations to a technical meeting for discussions.

The fallout began after Niger's July 2023 coup, leading to ECOWAS threatening military intervention and demanding the reinstatement of Mohamed Bazoum.

The three nations accused ECOWAS of failing to protect member states and aligning with foreign powers.

They formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) and strengthened ties with Russia, Turkey, and Iran for security and strategic interests.

ECOWAS granted a six-month grace period for reconsideration, but public rallies in Niger and Burkina Faso supported the exit.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Maharashtra To Launch India's First Artificial Intelligence University

Maharashtra to establish India's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) university, announced by IT Minister Ashish Shelar with an aim to position Maharashtra as a hub for AI education, research, and innovation.

A task force formed, including experts from academia, industry, and government.

The university will serve as a centre of excellence for AI research, skill development, and policy formulation.

Key stakeholders include IIT Mumbai, IIM Mumbai, Google India, Mahindra Group, L&T, and government bodies.

The focus areas include AI applications in healthcare, agriculture, finance, manufacturing, and bridging the AI skill gap.

Two meetings were held, discussing curriculum, industry partnerships, funding, and location.

The initiative aligns with Maharashtra's digital infrastructure and innovation

It is expected to boost India's role in global AI advancements and support economic growth.

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and IIT Indore

In collaboration with IIT Indore, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched AgriHub, an AI-driven Center of Excellence (CoE) to revolutionise Indian agriculture.

The initiative will leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Deep Learning (DL) to address key agricultural challenges such as drought, floods, and low productivity.

The objective is to utilize AI, ML, and DL for addressing agricultural challenges like droughts, floods, and low crop productivity.

It Provides farmers, researchers, and agribusinesses with cutting-edge agritech solutions.

It will also establish partnerships across farmers, NGOs, and agribusinesses to streamline research and technology deployment.

BANKING

NPCI Recommends Higher Automatic Teller Machine Fees

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) recommends increasing ATM cash transaction fees from ₹21 to ₹22 per transaction beyond the free limit.

ATM interchange fee hike proposed: ₹17 to ₹19 for cash transactions and ₹6 to ₹7 for non-cash transactions.

Banks pay interchange fees when their customers use another bank's ATM.

For non-metro areas, industry players recommend ₹21 per cash transaction and ₹7 for non-cash transactions.

Current RBI rules allow 5 free ATM transactions per month in non-metro areas and 3 free transactions in metro cities (Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi).

RBI's ATM Interchange Committee, including IBA CEO, SBI, and HDFC Bank officials, submitted recommendations in September 2023.

Rising ATM operation costs due to inflation, borrowing costs, cash replenishment, and compliance expenses.

RBI Releases Latest Data on ₹2000 Denomination Banknote Withdrawal

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced withdrawal of ₹2000 banknotes on May 19, 2023; latest update published on January 1, 2025.

Deposit or exchange facility at bank branches was available until October 7, 2023.

RBI's 19 Issue Offices continue to exchange ₹2000 notes since May 19, 2023, and accept deposits from October 9, 2023.

The public can send ₹2000 banknotes through India Post to RBI Issue Offices for deposit.

₹2000 banknotes in circulation dropped from ₹3.56 lakh crore (May 19, 2023) to ₹6,577 crore (January 31, 2025)—98.15% returned.

₹2000 banknotes remain legal tender.

AWARDS & PRIZES

University of Sussex Confers Honorary Doctorate on Noel Tata

The University of Sussex has awarded an honorary doctorate to Noel Tata, a prominent business leader within the Tata Group, in recognition of his contributions to global business leadership, ethical practices, and corporate social responsibility.

A proud alumnus of Sussex University, Tata has played a pivotal role in the expansion of the Tata Group, particularly in retail, steel, and investment sectors.

The award was presented by Professor Sasha Roseneil, Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Sussex.

He was instrumental in the growth of Trent, Tata’s fashion retail division and expanded retail brands such as Westside, Star Bazaar, and Zudio.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Gopal Vittal CEO of Bharti Airtel Appointed as Acting Chair of GSMA Board

Gopal Vittal, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Bharti Airtel, has been appointed as the acting chair of the GSMA board.

He was previously serving as the Deputy Chair of the GSMA.

The position became vacant after José Maria Álvares-Pallete, Chairman and CEO of Telefónica, resigned from the GSMA, making him ineligible to continue as Chair.

The GSMA is a global non-profit telecom association representing over 1,100 companies from the telecom ecosystem worldwide.

Its members include telecom service providers, device manufacturers, software companies, equipment providers, internet companies, and organizations from adjacent industries.

This appointment highlights Airtel's growing influence in the global telecom sector.

OBITUARY

Former Chief Election Commissioner Navin Chawla

Navin Chawla, former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)of India, passed away at the age of 79.

Chawla served as Election Commissioner (EC) from 2005 to 2009 and as CEC from April 2009 to July 2010.

His tenure was controversial, with the BJP accusing him of partisan functioning.

In 2009, then CEC Gopalaswami recommended his removal, but the government did not act on it.

In 2006, LK Advani and 204 MPs petitioned then President APJ Abdul Kalam to remove Chawla, citing alleged bias.

Chawla was a former bureaucrat and oversaw the 2009 Lok Sabha elections.

He advocated for constitutional amendments to protect election commissioners and pushed for the inclusion of third-gender votersunder the 'others'

He was also known as the biographer of Mother Teresa, having written the book 'Mother Teresa'(1992) and co-authored 'Faith and Compassion: The Life and Work of Mother Teresa' with photographer Raghu Rai (1997)

MISCELANEOUS

IBCA Becomes a Full-Fledged Treaty-Based Organization

International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Framework Agreement comes into force from January 23, 2025 as a treaty-based international organization.

5 countries ratified the agreement: India, Nicaragua, Eswatini, Somalia, and Liberia.

27 countries, including India, have consented to join IBCA, along with multiple international/national wildlife organizations.

It was launched by PM Narendra Modi on April 9, 2023, during the 50 Years of Project Tiger event.

Focus on conservation of 7 big cats: Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.

It was established by the Government of India through NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority) under MoEFCC on March 12, 2024.

It aims to promote collaboration, share best conservation practices, strengthen intergovernmental efforts, and secure ecological sustainability

Indian-Origin Astronaut Sunita Williams Breaks Spacewalking Record

Astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore conducted a 5-hour and 26-minute spacewalk on the ISS.

They removed degraded radio communications hardware and collected samples to check for microorganisms on the ISS exterior.

Sunita Williams, an Indian-origin astronaut, broke the record for the longest total spacewalking time by a woman, with 62 hours and 6 minutes.

She surpassed Peggy Whitson's previous record of 60 hours and 21 minutes.

Williams and Wilmore have been stranded on the ISS since June 2024 due to technical issues with Boeing's Starliner spacecraft, including helium leaks and thruster malfunctions.

NASA plans to bring them back to Earth in late March 2025 using SpaceX's spacecraft.

This was Williams' 9th spacewalk and Wilmore's 5th.

Williams previously made history in 2012 by completing a triathlon in space.

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