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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 17-02-2026

NATIONAL NEWS

NSSTA Celebrates 18th Foundation Day with Focus on Viksit Bharat@2047

National Statistical Systems Training Academy (NSSTA), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), celebrated its 18th Foundation Day at Mahalanobis Auditorium, Knowledge Park-II, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Theme: "Reimagining Capacity Building for Official Statistics to Achieve Vision of Viksit Bharat@2047."

NSSTA functions as a premier Central Training Institute for strengthening India's official statistical system through skill development, ethics, and technological advancement.

Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI, described data as the "fifth factor of production", alongside land, labour, capital, and technology.

Key reforms highlighted:
– Restructuring of Indian Statistical Service (ISS)
– Deployment of ISS officers across 60 ministries
– Focus on district-level granular data dissemination

The Union Minister inaugurated the Digital Data Lab to promote digital skilling, AI-enabled statistical systems, and Mission Karmayogi strengthening.

Mr. Stefan Priesner, UN Resident Coordinator, termed statistics as the "grammar of development", crucial for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and India's Vision 2047.

Journals "AAROHAN" and "PRATIBIMB" were released by ISS probationers.

A panel discussion was held on "Communicating Statistics to Policymakers and the Public."

Certificates were awarded to top performers in iGOT Karmayogi courses.

The event reaffirmed NSSTA's commitment to data-driven governance, AI integration, advanced analytics, and building a future-ready statistical workforce aligned with Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

BANKING

NPCI International Signs Pact with PayNet Malaysia

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of NPCI, signed an agreement with Payments Network Malaysia Sdn Bhd (PayNet) to enable QR-based merchant payments between India and Malaysia.

The initiative will be rolled out in a phase-wise manner to ensure smooth implementation.

In the first phase, Indian travellers in Malaysia can use their UPI apps to make payments at DuitNow QR merchant locations.

In a later phase, Malaysian visitors to India will be able to make payments by scanning UPI QR codes using their DuitNow apps.

Indian tourists will have access to millions of DuitNow QR acceptance points across Malaysia, including restaurants, retail stores, tourist attractions, and other establishments.

This collaboration strengthens cross-border payment connectivity by enabling interoperable QR payment infrastructure that supports secure, efficient, and seamless merchant payments for travellers in both countries.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman Launches Bharat-VISTAAR

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the launch of Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources), a multilingual AI tool integrating AgriStack portals and ICAR agricultural practice packages with AI systems.

AgriStack was launched in 2024 under the Centre’s Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) Mission to consolidate agriculture data on a single platform.

AgriStack is a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the farm sector under the Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM), approved by the Union Cabinet in September 2024.

AgriStack comprises three foundational registries: Farmer Registry, Geo-referenced Village Maps, and Crop Sown Registry, maintained by State Governments/UTs.

Each farmer receives a Unique Digital Identity (similar to Aadhaar), known as Kisan Pehchaan Patra, containing landholding details and crop information.

The Centre targets completion of the Farmer Registry with dynamic Records of Rights (RoR) synchronisation by March 2027; North Eastern States target: March 2028.

The Crop Sown Registry records season-wise crop data through mobile-based Digital Crop Surveys.

The Geo-referenced Village Map Registry contains land record geographic data linked with latitude-longitude coordinates.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) packages provide scientific agricultural practice data

integrated into the AI platform.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

Rajasthan Leads India’s Wool Production in FY24

India ranks 2nd in sheep population globally and 9th in wool production.

Total sheep population in India stands at 77.4 million.

India’s total wool production in FY24: 33.69 million kg.

Rajasthan emerged as the largest wool-producing state with 16,013.50 thousand kg, accounting for 47.53% share of national output.

Rajasthan’s dominance is supported by its arid climate and extensive grazing lands.

Major sheep breeds in Rajasthan include Marwari and Chokla, producing mainly coarse wool used in carpets and blankets.

Jammu and Kashmir produced 7,770 thousand kg (23.06%), known for fine wool from Changthangi and Merino sheep, used in shawls and handicrafts.

Karnataka produced 6,472 thousand kg, mainly medium to coarse wool for rugs and textiles.

Telangana recorded 4,422 thousand kg, supported by state-backed sheep rearing schemes.

Gujarat produced 2,083 thousand kg, contributing coarse wool for carpet industries.

Maharashtra recorded 1,601.28 thousand kg, mainly from drought-prone regions.

Himachal Pradesh produced 1,422.69 thousand kg, known for wool used in warm garments and handicrafts.

DEFENCE

Indian Air Force to Showcase Combat Strength at Exercise Vayushakti-26

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will conduct Exercise Vayushakti-26 on 27 February 2026 at Pokhran Air-to-Ground Range, Jaisalmer, showcasing its combat readiness and firepower capability.

Vayushakti-26 is a large-scale operational exercise aimed at demonstrating the IAF’s role as the nation’s “first, fastest and fiercest responder.”

The exercise will highlight the IAF's ability to rapidly punish adversaries, dominate the operational environment and convert tactical actions into strategic outcomes.

It will exhibit rapid response capability, precision strike power and full-spectrum aerial warfare operations in high-intensity combat scenarios.

Frontline fighter aircraft participating include Tejas, Rafale, Jaguar, Mirage-2000, Sukhoi-30MKI, MiG-29 and Hawk executing coordinated strike missions.

Strategic and tactical airlift platforms such as C-130J, C-295 and C-17 will demonstrate rapid troop deployment and logistics mobility.

Rotary-wing platforms including Chetak, ALH MK-IV, Mi-17 IV, Light Combat Helicopter (LCH), Apache and Chinook will perform assault, support and rescue operations.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) will undertake surveillance, reconnaissance and strike roles during the exercise.

The drill will feature advanced weapon systems such as Short Range Loitering Munitions (SRLM) for precision targeting.

Akash Surface-to-Air Missile Systems will demonstrate indigenous air defence capability.

SpyDer Air Defence Systems will showcase quick-reaction aerial threat interception.

Counter Unmanned Aerial Systems (CUAS) will highlight anti-drone warfare preparedness.

Operations will be conducted in day, dusk and night conditions to simulate realistic combat environments.

The exercise reflects the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat in strengthening self-reliant defence capabilities.

Guided by the core values "Achook, Abhedya aur Sateek," the drill emphasises precision, invincibility and accuracy in air operations.

Vayushakti-26 will also demonstrate the IAF's role in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Management (HADR) missions.

AWARDS & PRIZES

First Major Port to Receive IGBC Platinum and Shunya Certifications

V.O. Chidambaranar (VOC) Port Authority became the first Major Port in India to receive the Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) Platinum Rating.

The certification was awarded to the Administration Building for excellence in sustainability, energy efficiency and eco-friendly infrastructure.

The Administration Building operates under a Green Policy and structured waste management plan.

It is equipped with rooftop solar panels and a high Solar Reflectance Index roof coating, reducing the Urban Heat Island effect and improving energy efficiency.

Resource conservation measures include:

Internet of Things-enabled water meters

Indoor Air Quality monitoring systems

Rainwater harvesting systems

Water-saving plumbing fixtures

These initiatives led to a 37 per cent reduction in potable water consumption.

All wastewater is treated through an on-site Sewage Treatment Plant and fully reused within the premises.

The Administration Building operates on 100 per cent renewable energy.

89 per cent electricity is generated through on-site solar power.

11 per cent electricity is sourced from off-site renewable energy.

VOC Port also secured Shunya and Shunya Plus certifications from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency under the Ministry of Power.

Shunya Certification signifies a Net Zero Energy Building.

Shunya Plus Certification denotes a Net Positive Energy Building.

Oil India Limited Wins FIPI Award 2025 at India Energy Week

Oil India Limited (OIL) has won the FIPI Award 2025 under the category ‘Oil and Gas Production Company of the Year’ (more than 1 MTOE).

The award recognises OIL’s strong production performance and contribution towards India’s energy security.

The award was presented by the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI) during India Energy Week held in Goa.

The ceremony was attended by Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri and Dr Neeraj Mittal, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Dr Ranjit Rath, Chairman and Managing Director of OIL, received the award on behalf of the company.

OIL has demonstrated strong growth through:

Expansion of exploration activities

Improved recovery from mature oil fields

Adoption of advanced technologies

Enhanced operational efficiency

OIL is a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

The company has a strong operational presence in the Northeast region and is expanding its footprint across India.

The recognition reinforces OIL's role in ensuring sustainable energy growth and national energy security.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Brand Ambassador for Delhi Government's Delhi Khel Mahakumbh Sports Initiative

Shikhar Dhawan, former India cricketer and Arjuna Awardee, has been appointed as the Brand Ambassador of the Delhi Khel Mahakumbh, a major sports initiative of the Delhi Government.

The Delhi Khel Mahakumbh is an initiative of the Directorate of Education and Sports, Government of NCT of Delhi, aimed at strengthening grassroots sports participation and talent identification.

The initiative focuses on promoting sports, nurturing young talent, and integrating sports with education and youth development in the capital.

The motto of the event is "Aao Delhi Khele", highlighting mass participation and youth engagement in sports.

The initial phase will feature seven sports — Kabaddi, Football, Athletics, Wrestling, Basketball, Volleyball, and Squash.

Competitions will be conducted across 16 different stadiums/venues in Delhi.

The event will witness participation from thousands of young athletes representing all 12 districts of Delhi.

The official mascot 'Ranveer' was unveiled, symbolising energy, courage, and the sporting spirit of Delhi's youth.

The Mahakumbh is designed as a large-scale multi-sport platform bringing together school and community-level athletes to provide structured competition, exposure, and pathways towards professional sports careers.

APPS & PORTALS

SH Act 2013 Ensures Safe and Secure Workplace Environment for Women

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (SH Act) aims to provide a safe and secure working environment for women.

The SH Act covers all women, irrespective of age or employment status, in public and private sectors, organised and unorganised, including domestic workers.

The Act establishes institutional mechanisms for redressal through Internal Committees (IC) and Local Committees (LC).

An Internal Committee is mandatory in workplaces with 10 or more employees to handle complaints of sexual harassment.

A Local Committee is constituted at the district level to address cases in workplaces with fewer than 10 employees or complaints against employers.

The Act enforces compliance through strict penalties for employers who fail to implement its provisions.

A first violation attracts a fine of ₹50,000, while repeat violations may lead to a double fine and possible cancellation or non-renewal of business licences.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is the nodal ministry responsible for effective implementation of the Act.

The MWCD launched the Sexual Harassment electronic Box (SHe-Box) on 29th August 2024.

SHe-Box serves as a single-window, centralised digital platform, creating a central repository to strengthen monitoring of the Act’s implementation and track cases filed and disposed of nationwide.