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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 19-02-2024

NATIONAL NEWS

Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan Program

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth over Rs 17,000 crore in Rajasthan under the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Rajasthan' programme via video conferencing.

These projects cater to a number of important sectors including Roads, Railways, Solar Energy, Power Transmission, Drinking water, and Petroleum and Natural Gas.

The double-engine government of Rajasthan has started working rapidly

The projects whose foundation stone was laid and inaugurated will employ thousands of youth in the state.

The rail and road network will not only facilitate connectivity with many districts of Rajasthan but will also strengthen the connectivity of Rajasthan with its neighbouring states.

Assam Cabinet Passes Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024

The Assam Healing (Prevention of Evil) Practices Bill, 2024, has been passed by the Assam cabinet.

It has banned magical healing practices in the name of treatment.

The bill prohibits the use of magical healing practices under the guise of medical treatment.

This includes treatments for conditions such as deafness, dumbness, blindness, physical deformities, and autism.

Individuals found guilty of engaging in illegal magical healing practices can face imprisonment and fines as per the provisions of the bill.

The Wildlife Safari and Rescue Centre is set to be established in the Namdang Reserved Forest in the Dibrugarh district.

The centre aims to provide international-standard safaris for herbivores, carnivores, and bird aviaries, enhancing wildlife tourism in the region.

NITI Aayog and the Government of Andhra Pradesh

NITI Aayog in partnership with the Government of Andhra Pradesh, successfully organised a two-day National Workshop on “Harnessing Potential of Fisheries in Inland States” in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

It is a collaborative effort aimed at maximising the potential of fisheries in India's inland states.

The workshop, held, drew participation from key stakeholders including central and state government officials, researchers, industry representatives, practitioners and the Fish Farmer Producer Organisation (FFPO).

The workshop in its various technical sessions focused on critical aspects such as sustainability practices, export competitiveness, infrastructure gaps, and livelihood challenges facing India's inland fisheries industry.

Hon'ble Minister Shri Parshotam Rupala emphasised the need for active handholding and skill development of traditional fishermen to enhance their competitiveness.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India and Colombia Signed a Memorandum of Understanding

India and Colombia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in the field of Sharing Successful Digital Solutions Implemented at Population Scale for Digital Transformation.

It was signed between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and the Information Technologies and Communications of Colombia.

The MoU intends to promote digital transformation (viz INDIA STACK) through capacity-building programs, the exchange of best practices, the exchange of public officials and experts, the development of pilot or demo solutions and the facilitation of private sector contacts to mutually benefit the digital ecosystems of both countries.

Both sides discussed the importance of Digital Public Infrastructures.

These infrastructures constitute a set of shared digital systems that are secure and interoperable.

They can be built on open standards to deliver and provide equitable access to public and private services.

India Stack Solutions are DPIs developed and implemented by India at a population scale to provide access and delivery of public services.

India is keen on partnering with Colombia by building upon a development partnership on digital transformation leading to a smooth adoption of Digital Public Infrastructure in Colombia.

BANKING

Reserve Bank of India and Nepal Rastra Bank

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Nepal Rastra Bank (NRB) signed and exchanged Terms of Reference (ToR).

It is to integrate fast payment systems of India and Nepal through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and National Payments Interface (NPI) of Nepal, respectively.

Aim of the integration is to facilitate cross-border remittances between India and Nepal by enabling users of the two systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers.

The collaboration between India and Nepal in linking their fast payment systems through the UPI-NPI linkage will further deepen financial connectivity and reinforce the enduring historical, cultural, and economic ties between the two countries.

Based on the Terms of Reference exchanged between RBI and NRB, the necessary systems will be put in place for interlinking of UPI and NPI.

The formal introduction of the linkage, that is, commencement of operations would take place at a later date.

The development comes after India’s Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services launched in Sri Lanka and Mauritius at a virtual ceremony, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Mauritian PM Pravind Jugnauth, and Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

SPORTS

Second Indian Player To Reach The 500th Test Wicket Milestone

Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed his 500th Test wicket in the first innings of the third Test match against England at the Niranjan Shah Stadium in Rajkot. The 37-year-old achieved this monumental feat in his 98th Test Match.

Ashwin dismissed Zak Crawley in the final session of the second day to join Anil Kumble as the second Indian, and fifth overall, to take 500 wickets in Test history.

Meanwhile, England were 207 for two at stumps in their first innings.

Opener Ben Duckett was batting on 133, and his teammate Joe Root was not out at nine.

Earlier, India posted a total of 445 runs in their first innings helped by centuries from skipper Rohit

Sharma and Ravindra Jadeja.

AWARDS & PRIZES

India wins 9th Gov Tech Award at World Government Summit in Dubai

At the World Government Summit 2024, India secured the prestigious 9th GovTech Prize for endeavours in Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered government services.

India won the award under the category of 'AI-Powered Government Services'.

The award has been presented to recognize the ‘iRASTE’ project of the Ministry for Road Transport & Highways.

This initiative is a collaborative effort of the government, industry, and academia.

Its main aim is to reduce 50% of road accidents anticipated in urban areas.

Additionally, iRASTE aims to significantly diminish black spots within the city's road network.

The government of the UAE instituted this award and is presented to government entities, central or local, worldwide, to recognise creative and innovative solutions.

This award was distributed by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum.

APPOINTMENTS & RESIGNATIONS

Chairman and Managing Director of IRCTC

Sanjay Kumar Jain, an Indian Railway Traffic Services (IRTS) Officer of the 1990 batch has taken over the charge of Chairman and Managing Director of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Ltd (IRCTC).

Jain's career spans over three decades with leadership roles in policy-making, commercial ventures, and developmental projects within the Indian government and public sector undertakings (PSUs).

He brings with himself more than three decades of extensive experience of handling important portfolios in the Ministry of Railways, PSUs and Department of Public Enterprises, Min of Finance, Govt. of India.

He had the privilege of initiating the prestigious Heritage conservation of Mumbai Byculla Railway Station in 2019 with the support of a leading Industrial House and a well-known NGO in Mumbai.

The station won UNESCO Asia Pacific Cultural Heritage Award for cultural heritage conservation in

2023.

Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets

Virendra Bansal has been appointed as the new Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of SBI Capital Markets (SBICAPS), the wholly-owned subsidiary and investment banking arm of State Bank of India (SBI).

He replaces Rajay Kumar Sinha, who has been appointed as the Whole Time Member (Finance and Investment) of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) for 3 years in January 2024.

Prior to his appointment as SBICAPS' chief, Bansal was the Country Head for SBI's US Operations, which includes its offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Sao Paulo and Washington DC.

The new SBICAPS' chief has also worked as the Chief Executive Officer, SBI New York branch and Vice-Chairman of SBI (California), a US Retail Banking subsidiary of the bank.

He has also worked in SBI UK operations as Head (Trade) and Head of the retail branch handling high net-worth customers.

Finland's 13th President

Former Prime Minister of Finland Alexander Stubb became the 13th President of Finland.

Stubb received 51.7% of the vote while his Green Party rival, former Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, received 48.4%.

On 1 March 2024 Mr Stubb will officially assume office, replacing Sauli Niinisto.

On 11 February, after a seven-year hiatus, Former Prime Minister, triathlete, and Europhile Alexander Stubb made a triumphant return to politics, winning the Finnish presidency in the election.

In the counting, 98% of the votes were counted.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

NASA Launches Extensive Air Pollution Monitoring Flights

In a bid to enhance the forecasting and management of air pollution, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has initiated an extensive series of flights across Asia using its DC-8 flying laboratory.

Flights are conducted using NASA's DC-8 flying laboratory, which can last up to 8 hours and sometimes occur at altitudes as low as 15 meters above the ground.

A smaller NASA Gulfstream jet capable of creating 3D maps of pollutants is also utilized for the mission.

The mission, named ASIA-AQ, is a partnership between NASA and the governments of the regions experiencing some of the highest rates of air pollution-related fatalities globally.

Flights have already been conducted over densely populated areas in the Philippines as part of the initiative.

The data collected during these flights will contribute significantly to the global effort to tackle air pollution and its devastating impacts on human health and the environment.

Uttar Pradesh Government to Collaborate With IITR

To enhance disaster management, the UP government will collaborate with IIT Roorkee.

The MoU will be signed between both as part of a strategic move aimed at strengthening disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts over the next five years.

To reduce the loss of life and take people to safe places before the disaster, an MoU will be signed between the Relief Commissioner's Office and IIT Roorkee.

Under the MoU, experienced professionals from IIT Roorkee will provide specialized training to personnel in the Office of the Relief Commissioner, equipping them with advanced skills and techniques in disaster management.

During this period, experts from IIT Roorkee will lead important research initiatives and capacity-building exercises.

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