DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 21-02-2025

NATIONAL NEWS

'Waste Recycling and Climate Change 2025' Conclave

Union Minister for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav, inaugurated a day-long conclave organized by the Recycling and Environment Industry Association of India (REIAI) on ‘Waste Recycling and Climate Change 2025’.

He highlighted that India generates 62 million tonnes of waste annually, with a sharp increase in plastic, electronic, and hazardous waste.

The linear economy model (take-make-dispose) is unsustainable due to landfill pressure, resource depletion, and environmental damage.

Circular economy is focused on reducing, reusing, and recycling, which is essential to conserve resources, drive innovation, and create jobs.

Under PM Narendra Modi’s leadership, India is moving from waste management to resource recovery through the waste-to-wealth initiative.

By 2050, India’s circular economy is expected to be worth $2 trillion and create 10 million jobs, offering new opportunities for start-ups.

The recycling industry is encouraged to adopt new technologies to reduce natural resource dependence and cut critical mineral imports.

Kerala Health Department Launches nPROUD

In a first-of-its-kind initiative in India, the Kerala Drugs Control Department is set to launch a programme for the collection and scientific disposal of expired and unused medicines.

The Kerala government is set to launch 'nPROUD' (New Programme for Removal of Unused Drugs), a pioneering initiative aimed at the scientific collection and disposal of expired and unused medicines.

This program, the first of its kind at the government level in India, addresses the critical issue of improper disposal of pharmaceuticals, which can lead to antimicrobial resistance, health hazards, and environmental pollution.

Under nPROUD, facilities will be established to collect unused medicines from households, allowing residents to deposit them at designated collection points.

The project will initially roll out in Kozhikode Corporation and Ulliyeri Panchayat, with plans for

statewide expansion.

The collected medicines will be processed at the Kerala Enviro Infrastructure Limited (KEIL) waste treatment plant, ensuring environmentally safe disposal.

This initiative reflects Kerala's commitment to public health and environmental sustainability by providing a structured system for the disposal of pharmaceutical waste.

India’s First Open-Air Art Wall Museum

On the occasion of the celebration of the 150th year of the foundation of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), India’s first “Open Air Art Wall Museum” was inaugurated at the Mausam Bhawan in New Delhi.

Mausm Bhawan is the name of the building that houses the headquarters of the Indian Meteorological Department in New Delhi.

The Indian Meteorological Department was founded by the British on 15 January 1875 and presently it is under the Union Ministry of Earth Science.

The Open Air Museum refers to the artwork done on the walls of the Mausma Bhawan.

The IMD, in collaboration with the ‘Delhi Street Art’ organisation, has depicted the history of the IMD in 38 unique murals.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

India Elected To The Vice Presidency Of The IALA In Singapore Meeting

India has been elected Vice Presidency of the International Organisation of Aids to Marine Navigation (IALA). India was elected for this post at the first 1st General Assembly of the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation (IALA) held in Singapore from 18-21 February 2025.

This was the first General Assembly of the IALA since becoming an intergovernmental organization on 22 August 2024. It was established as a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in 1957.

After becoming an inter-governmental organisation, the organisation's name has been changed to the International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation.

The Indian delegation was led by K. Ramachandran, Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways.

The General Assembly meeting provided a platform for the stakeholders to discuss issues related to developments in Aids to Navigation, vessel traffic services, emerging technologies, and governance in the use of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Kerala Launches World's First AI-Driven Government Screening Program

The Kerala Government has launched Nayanamritham 2.0, the world's first AI-powered public health screening program for chronic eye diseases in collaboration with Remidio, a leading Indian health-tech company.

Expanding beyond its initial focus on diabetic retinopathy, the upgraded program now includes glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD), marking a significant milestone in AI-driven healthcare.

Kerala becomes the first government public health system globally to implement AI-based chronic eye disease screening at scale.

Optometrists are now equipped with Remidio's AI-enabled fundus cameras, which instantly classify cases as referable or non-referable.

This real-time AI screening allows for faster diagnoses and timely specialist referrals, improving patient outcomes.

The AI-driven screening model aims to reduce preventable blindness, enhance early detection, and improve healthcare efficiency.

BANKING

IRDAI Permits One-Time UPI Mandate For Buying Life, And Health Cover

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has permitted a one-time UPI mandate for blocking premium amounts for life and health insurance policies.

Previously, no premium deposit/proposal deposit was required while submitting a proposal form, except for policies issued based on a declaration of good health where coverage starts immediately upon payment.

Insurers must obtain explicit consent from the policyholder before deducting the premium amount from their bank account.

Based on insurer requests, UPI One Time Mandate (OTM) has been enabled to streamline premium payments and ensure smooth transactions.

The UPI mandate allows customers to block funds in their bank accounts for premium payments,

ensuring funds are available while delaying actual debit.

Under the Bima Applications supported by Blocked Amount (Bima - ASBA) system, funds are transferred only when the insurance policy is issued.

The insurer blocks the premium amount. If the proposal is accepted, the amount is debited. If the proposal is rejected, the blocked amount is unblocked and returned to the customer.

Insurers must offer Bima-ASBA as an option for policyholders purchasing life and health insurance policies.

The UPI mandate facility will be an optional mode of payment, available alongside existing payment methods.

Karnataka Bank Launches 2 Products

Karnataka Bank launched two new banking products to commemorate its 101st Founders' Day.

KBL Stri is a specialized savings bank account designed for women, catering to homemakers, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

KBL One Family Banking Programme is a solution that links family members under a single ID, offering shared privileges, tailored benefits, and seamless banking access.

Madhusudan Sai, Spiritual Leader, stressed the importance of fostering strong customer relationships.

With a strong capital base and strategic investments in digital transformation, Karnataka Bank aims to stay resilient and relevant in modern banking.

During the event, the dignitaries released 101 symbol lapel pins, launched new products, and handed over CSR commitment letters to three beneficiaries.

LIC Launches Smart Pension Plan

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) has launched a single-premium smart pension plan offering various annuity options for Single Life and Joint Life

The Non-Par and Non-Linked plan includes liquidity options for partial or full withdrawal as per policy terms.

Minimum Purchase Price: ₹1,00,000, with incentives for higher purchase amounts.

Flexible annuity payment modes: Yearly, Half-yearly, Quarterly, or Monthly.

Special Feature: Immediate annuity option for NPS subscribers.

Death Benefit Options: Lump sum, annuitisation of the benefit, installment payments, liquidity option, advanced annuity, or annuity accumulation.

IFSCA Notifies New Bullion Market Regulations, 2025

The International Financial Services Authority (IFSCA) has introduced the IFSCA Bullion Market Regulations, 2025, replacing the IFSCA (Bullion Exchange) Regulations, 2020.

These new regulations expand the scope of the bullion market ecosystem in GIFT City, Gujarat, and introduce key consumer safeguards.

The name has been changed from Bullion "Exchange" Regulations to Bullion "Market" Regulations to reflect a broader coverage beyond just the bullion exchange.

It now includes all market participants involved in the bullion ecosystem.

IFSCA is empowered to conduct inspections, inquiries, and impose penalties to ensure consumer interests are safeguarded.

BUSINESS

StockGro and Zomato Launch Financial Literacy Program

StockGro, a leading financial knowledge platform, has partnered with Zomato, India’s top food delivery service, to launch a financial literacy program aimed at improving the financial stability and planning skills of delivery partners.

The initiative provides educational training on budgeting, saving, and investing, offered in multiple regional languages to ensure accessibility.

StockGro has conducted 10 financial literacy workshops across Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Bangalore, reaching over 1,000 delivery partners.

The sessions focus on money management skills, helping gig workers handle irregular income and plan for financial security.

This program aligns with Zomato’s broader mission to upskill and support one million gig workers.

Zomato has been actively investing in financial well-being initiatives to provide its workforce with essential benefits and training.

Zomato Unveils ‘Nugget’

Zomato has launched ‘Nugget’, a no-code AI-driven customer support platform designed to help businesses automate and streamline their customer service.

Developed over three years, Nugget already manages 15 million+ monthly interactions across Zomato’s ecosystem, including Blinkit and Hyperpure.

This marks Zomato’s strategic shift towards AI-powered business solutions, enhancing efficiency in customer interactions.

It enables businesses to integrate AI-driven support without coding expertise.

It allows easy customization to match unique business needs.

Ministry of Labour and Employment Signs MoU with APNA

The Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) has signed an MoU with APNA, a leading job recruitment platform, to enhance employment prospects for young job seekers.

This partnership will add over 10 lakh job opportunities annually to the National Career Service (NCS) Portal, strengthening domestic employment avenues.

It serves as a bridge between job seekers and employers.

APNA will post job listings on NCS, connecting formal and informal sector employers with candidates.

APNA will access NCS's vast candidate database, while MoLE ensures smooth integration through an online and offline interface.

IMPORTANT DAYS

World Day of Social Justice

The United Nations (UN) World Day of Social Justice is annually observed on February 20 to encourage people to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for Social Development were reviewed by the UN member states a decade later in New York in 2005.

Finally, 20th February was declared the annual World Day of Social Justice by the United Nations on November 26, 2007.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the first specialized agency of the United Nations formed on October 29, 1919.

ILO is also credited with proposing the observance of February 20th as World Day of Social Justice adopting the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation at the International Labour Conference on June 10, 2008.

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