Shankar School of Banking | ASPIRANT'S CHOICE
Information is a Blessing
A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 21-06-2025

NATIONAL NEWS

Government to Set Up Birsa Munda Prize for Developing Sickle Cell Drug

The Government of India will institute the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Prize to promote research and development of new drugs for treating Sickle cell disease.

This was announced by the Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Durgadas Uikey, in a function held at the All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), New Delhi, on World Sickle Cell Day on 19 June 2025.

He also announced the setting up the National Tribal Health and Research Institute in AIIMS. New Delhi.

World Sickle Cell Day is observed on 19 June every year to raise awareness among people and policymakers about genetic blood disorders.

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs has instituted the Bhagwan Birsa Munda Prize for Sickle Cell Drugs in collaboration with AIIMS Delhi.

It will provide funds up to Rs 10 crore for the approved drug research proposal for treating Sickle cell.

Birsa Munda was a Santhal tribal leader of the Chota Nagpur area of Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Google's 1st Asia Pacific Safety Centre In Hyderabad Inaugurated

Google has set up its first Safety Engineering Centre in the Asia-Pacific region in Hyderabad, Telangana. It is Google's fourth Safety Engineering Centre worldwide after Munich in Germany, Malaga in Spain, and Dublin in Ireland.

The Google Safety Engineering Centre was formally inaugurated by Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy in Hyderabad.

The Google Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) launch follows the unveiling of the tech giant's "Safety Charter for India's AI-led Transformation" in Delhi

Google provides internet-related services. To safeguard the privacy, security, content responsibility, and family safety of its users worldwide, Google has established four Safety Engineering Centres.

It will focus on protecting users from online fraud and securing enterprise and government infrastructure.

It will be a strategic hub for the Asia Pacific region to develop safety solutions.

It will work on cybersecurity, end-user safety, and building responsible artificial intelligence (AI).

The centre will use AI and large language models to drive real-time scam alerts via Gemini Nano on Android, enhance fraud detection across Google services like GPay, Search, and Gmail, and strengthen Google Play Protect.

Bihar Becomes First Indian State to Launch Mobile-Based e-Voting in Urban Polls

In a historic move, Bihar has become the first state in India to implement mobile-based e-voting, set to debut during the urban local body elections on 28th June 2024.

The initiative, spearheaded by the Bihar State Election Commission (SEC), is expected to revolutionize voting accessibility, particularly for marginalized and remote populations.

Bihar's e-voting system will operate through two dedicated Android mobile applications:

"e-Voting SECBHR" developed by C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing)

A second app developed by the Bihar State Election Commission

The system is designed to empower voters unable to physically reach polling booths, including Migrant workers, Persons with disabilities (Divyang voters), Pregnant women and Senior citizens.

Chennai Unveils India's First-Ever Resting Pod for Gig Workers

Chennai has launched India's first "Gig Workers' Pod".

The initiative is aimed at providing safe, clean, and comfortable resting spaces for gig and platform-based workers such as delivery agents and ride-hailing drivers.

The pod includes seating, charging points, toilets, and drinking water.

It is part of a broader push by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) and Cities4Workers initiative.

The pod is located in Anna Nagar and was inaugurated in June 2024.

Chennai is reportedly the first city in India to implement such a dedicated public facility for gig workers.

The initiative acknowledges the essential role gig workers play and aims to provide them with dignified urban infrastructure.

This effort could become a model for other cities to improve working conditions for the informal workforce.

Andhra Pradesh's Belum Caves declared Geo Heritage Site by GSI

Belum Caves, located in Kolimigundla mandal, Nandyal district, Andhra Pradesh, have been declared a Geo Heritage Site by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).

These caves are India’s second largest natural cave system, after Meghalaya’s Siju Caves.

The limestone caves stretch over 3.6 km, with 1.5 km open to tourists.

Known for their stalactite and stalagmite formations, the caves also have freshwater galleries and underground streams.

The GSI's move aims to preserve and protect the geological significance of the site.

The caves are believed to be millions of years old, formed by constant underground water flow.

The designation could boost geo-tourism and scientific research in the region.

Belum Caves are already a popular tourist destination, maintained by the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC).

With this status, the site will receive better conservation and promotion efforts.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

TCS Partners with Council of Europe Development Bank

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has announced a strategic partnership with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) to transform the bank’s transaction reconciliation processes.

This initiative highlights India’s growing influence in global financial technology and the role of AI in improving operational efficiencies.

TCS will deploy its AI-powered solution TCS BaNCS for Reconciliations.

The goal is to automate and modernise the CEB’s reconciliation processes for enhanced accuracy, control, and operational transparency.

It integrates AI and automation into the core banking functions of a major European financial institution.

It aligns with CEB’s mission to improve operational efficiency for better delivery of social development projects across Europe.

BANKING

RBI Increases Agency Commission for Banks Handling Government Transactions

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has increased agency commission for banks conducting government business such as revenue receipts and payments, pension payments, and other related transactions.

The move aims to encourage agency banks to improve efficiency in handling government-related transactions.

For revenue receipt and payment transactions in electronic (e-) mode, the agency commission has been raised from ₹9 to ₹12 per transaction.

For physical mode transactions related to revenue receipts and payments, the commission remains ₹40 per transaction (unchanged).

For pension payments relating to Central/State Governments, the commission has increased from ₹75 to ₹80 per transaction.

For other payments (non-pension), the commission rate has been raised from 5 paise to 7 paise per ₹100 turnover.

The revised commission rates will be effective from April 1, 2025.

RBI clarified that commission may be paid on all payment transactions handled by agency banks, except those that are pre-funded or where the government provides some compensation to the banks.

RuPay JCB Cards to Provide Cashback on In-Store Purchases

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), in partnership with JCB International, announced a limited-time 25% cashback offer for RuPay debit and credit cardholders.

The offer aims to expand RuPay card usage in eight Asian countries: Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, and Hong Kong.

The cashback is valid for in-store (point of sale) transactions until August 31, 2025.

To be eligible for cashback, a cardholder must complete a minimum of two transactions in the eligible countries during the offer period.

The maximum cashback per transaction is ₹1,500.

The total cashback cap per card during the offer period is ₹15,000.

First Abu Dhabi Bank Adopts eMACH.ai Platform

First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB), the largest bank in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has implemented Intellect Design Arena’s eMACH.ai Lending platform as part of its digital transformation journey.

The move transitions FAB from manual credit processes to a fully automated digital lending workflow, improving operational efficiency and customer experience.

The ai Lending platform automates a wide range of credit processes and integrates with over ten subsystems within FAB, providing real-time visibility into the credit portfolio.

The platform enables advanced collection strategies including equal distribution, percentage allocation, and bucket-based queue stamping to efficiently manage collections across loan and card products.

FAB aims to fully automate its debt collection features over the next five years.

The implementation leverages Intellect's "First Principles" technology suite, which includes over 329 microservices, 1,757 APIs, and 535 events, allowing for future-ready, composable, cloud-native solutions.

UGRO Capital to Acquire Profectus Capital for ₹1,400 Crore

UGRO Capital Limited, a Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC), has proposed to acquire 100% shares of Profectus Capital Pvt Ltd for a cash consideration of Rs 1,400 crore.

The acquisition aims to expand UGRO's MSME loan business.

UGRO has signed a Share Purchase Agreement (SPA) with existing shareholders of Profectus for the deal.

The all-cash deal will be paid in a single tranche at closing, funded by proceeds from UGRO's recent equity raise.

Post-acquisition, Profectus Capital will become a wholly owned subsidiary of UGRO Capital.

The acquisition is expected to add approximately Rs 150 crore of annualised profit to UGRO.

DEFENCE

Indian Army Troops Depart for India-France Joint Military Exercise Shakti

The Indian Army contingent has departed to participate in the 8th edition of Exercise SHAKTI, a biennial India-France Joint Military Exercise.

The exercise will be conducted at Camp Larzac, La Cavalerie, France, from 18th June to 1st July 2025.

The Indian contingent includes 90 personnel, primarily from the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles, along with troops from other arms and services.

The French contingent, also comprising 90 personnel, will be represented by the 13th Foreign

Legion Half-Brigade (13th DBLE).

Exercise SHAKTI is held biennially and aims to enhance interoperability, operational coordination, and military-to-military cooperation between the two armies.

The 2025 edition will focus on joint operations in a sub-conventional environment, under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, conducted in semi-urban terrain.

The exercise will enable troops to:Rehearse tactical drills, Share best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), Train on contemporary military technologies, Strengthen physical endurance

It also fosters esprit-de-corps, mutual respect, and professional camaraderie between the Indian and French forces.

RANKS, INDICES & REPORTS

QS World University Rankings

The Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-Delhi), was ranked the top Indian institute in the QS World University Rankings 2026, released on June 19, 2025.

IIT-Delhi has been ranked 123rd in the world, the highest ranking ever achieved by an Indian institution in the QS World University Ranking.

For the 14th consecutive year, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) of the United States of America has maintained its position as the best institute in the world.

Over 1500 universities around the world were ranked in the latest edition of the QS World University Ranking 2026.

This year, 54 Indian universities were included in the QS World University Rankings.

India has the fourth most represented universities in the list, behind the United States of America (192), the United Kingdom (90), and Mainland China (72).

Skytrax 2025 Awards

In a major global achievement for Indian aviation, IndiGo has been ranked 3rd in the World’s Best Low-Cost Airlines 2025 by Skytrax World Airline Awards, placing India firmly on the international aviation map.

While IndiGo gained global recognition in the low-cost category, no I ndian full-service airline appeared in the top 10 full-service airline rankings this year.

Skytrax Awards are regarded as the “Oscars of the aviation industry”, established in 1999.

The 2025 edition was based on 22.3 million passenger votes globally, covering over 325 airlines.

The award ceremony was held at Le Bourget Airport during the Paris Air Show, attended by over 500 industry leaders including CEOs and crew members.

IndiGo ranked 3rd in the World's Best Low-Cost Airlines 2025, behind AirAsia (Malaysia) and Scoot (Singapore)

IndiGo's recognition is attributed to its affordable fares, operational efficiency, and dependable domestic and international service.

In the full-service airline category, Qatar Airways topped the rankings, winning the title for the ninth time.

SPORTS

Indian-American Faizan Zaki wins 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee

Faizan Zaki, a 13-year-old Indian-American student from Texas, won the 2025 Scripps National Spelling Bee by correctly spelling "éclaircissement", meaning "the clearing up of something obscure: enlightenment."

Zaki is a 7th-grade student at C M Rice Middle School and had finished second in 2024, losing in a spell-off to Bruhat Soma.

This was Zaki's fourth time participating in the Spelling Bee, previously finishing 21st in 2023 and 370th in 2019.

He became only the fifth speller in Bee history to win after finishing second the previous year.

Zaki won the title in Round 21, outlasting eight other accomplished spellers.

In what could have been the final round, Sarvadnya Kadam and Sarv Dharavane misspelled their words, giving Zaki another chance after an earlier miss.

The championship trophy was presented by Adam Symson, President and CEO of The E.W. Scripps Company.