

NEWS ANALYSIS

For Civil Services Exams

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Lead Article

Creation of Gorkhaland: A long-standing demand

In news:

West Bengal's Darjeeling district has been on the boil over a separate state demand and witnessed widespread clashes between Gorkha Janmukti Morcha activists and the police. The tourism sector has been hit hard.

Background:

Sikkim gifted Darjeeling to the East India Company in 1835. Historically, until 1905, when the then Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, effected the partition of Bengal, Darjeeling was a part of the Rajshahi division, now in Bangladesh. From 1905 to 1912 Darjeeling formed a part of the Bhagalpur division now in Bihar. It was given back to Rajshahi in 1912 and remained with the Rajshahi division till Partition.

The Gorkhaland region, comprising the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, is home to a large number of Nepali speakers, who resent being part of a state dominated by Bengali speakers. It remains among the earliest demands for statehood in India. Recognised as an official language of Bengal in 1961, Nepali is the official language in the hills of West Bengal. In 1992, Nepali was recognised as one of the official languages of India.

Why the Nepali people agitate?

Although the Nepali-speaking segment makes up just 1.2 per cent of Bengal's population, Darjeeling evokes more interest in Nepal than any other Indian region where Nepali-speaking persons are settled.

The idea of a "Greater Nepal" still motivates a section of Nepal activists who want Darjeeling restored.

The tactful and rigid segregation of workers from the British era to the line of ethnicity in the hills, where the Nepalese

were brought in and the plains, where the Chottanagpur migrants worked, rendered one community hostile against the other.

The few Bengalis present in the hills were and have always been the babus, working for the British and then the State. The marwaris have controlled most of the wealth, further isolating the Nepali population.

The Nepalese find themselves reduced to second class citizens, at the hands of these otherwise miniscule inhabitants.

The movement led by the Gorkha National Liberation Front, projected the CPM-led government in Bengal as anti-Nepali.

The demand for Gorkhaland has always found its support among the tea plantation workers. Kipat (ownership of land by a community) and Maato (mud) remain central to the movement.

What sparked the renewed protest? Gorkhaland demand has been there for more than 75-80 years. Between 1907 and 1987, demands for a separate Darjeeling were raised on "at least on 15 occasions. Ongoing for over decades, language is at the heart of the Gorkhaland crisis. Supporters of Gorkhaland want a separate Nepalese-speaking region. However, the approximate cause of unrest is:

The present crisis in Darjeeling was sparked by fears of Bengali being imposed in schools in the GJM-administered areas where a majority of the people are Nepali-speaking Gorkhas. The GJM and other separatist political forces saw this as a ploy to undermine the GTA's authority.

Gorkha Janmukti Morcha-led by Bimal Gurung intensified its demands for a separate state of Gorkhaland calling an indefinite bandh in the region. GJM is a political party which campaigns for the creation of a separate state Gorkhaland within India, out of districts in the north of West Bengal

While the protests started with the suspicion that Bengali would be made

mandatory in the hills. Later it spiralled into a broad-based 'indefinite' agitation with the GJM targeting symbols of the state and ordering closure of all government offices.

Tripartite agreement, 2011:

- Long back, the Gorkhaland movement was called off following a tripartite agreement that led to creation of an autonomous hill council.

- In 2011, after the Trinamool Congress came to power in the State, the GJM, the State government and the Centre signed a tripartite agreement for the establishment of the GTA, a regional autonomous body aimed at giving significant administrative control over the region to the elected party in the hills.

Way forward:

The State government must reach out to the GJM and work out a way to transfer powers to the GTA as was promised in 2011. A signal in this direction will go a long way in tamping down the violent agitation. It should also abandon its wishful thinking that short cuts can solve the intractable Gorkhaland issue, which is culturally rooted.

Take steps to empower the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration. In the years since the establishment of GTA, little has been done on the ground to transfer many of the subjects to the body as was promised, rendering the notion of autonomous rule in the Hills rather moot.

Legitimate grievances with the West Bengal government on transfer of powers to the GTA aside, the GJM, which has ruled the Authority, too has been guilty of lackadaisical administration. Thus GTA needs to strengthen its administration.

Language has been a fraught issue in the Darjeeling hills for more than a century. Identity politics aside, there is something utilitarian about learning a language. Learning the language, formally, will only help expand the economic avenues of Nepali-speaking people in the Darjeeling hills in West Bengal.

A dialogue must be initiated with those demanding a separate Gorkhaland state and the issue thoroughly examined, and that it should not be kept lingering for long.

Conclusion:

The demand for carving out a separate state, Gorkhaland, from West Bengal is a decades old demand. The issue needs to be handled diplomatically. The cultural divide based on ethnicity and language must be bridged and this can be done only through discussion and engagement rather than violence. The GJM and the state government with the Centre as mediator must come together to bring this issue to a peaceful end.

National Events

India and Israel sign 7

Agreements: India and Israel have signed 7 agreements on areas including space, tech and agriculture during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. Also, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit marks the 25 years of establishment of diplomatic relationship between India and Israel. In the joint statement released after talks between India and Israel, both the countries have called for taking strong measures against terror organisations and also against those who encouraged, supported and financed terrorism.

MoUs

MoU for setting up of India-Israel Industrial R&D & Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) MoU for conservation of water in India MoU on State Water Utility Reform in India India-Israel Development Cooperation- 3-year work program in Agriculture (2018-2020) Plan of cooperation regarding cooperation in atomic clocks MoU regarding cooperation in GEO-LEO optical link. MoU regarding cooperation in electric propulsion for small satellites.

India-Israel

The diplomatic relationship between India and Israel was established in 1992. India is Israel's topmost destination for arms export. India is already buying an average of \$1 billion per year in military equipment. For India, Israel is the third largest source of arms after the US and Russia with a share of 7.2% between 2012 and 2016. The earliest India-Israel defence collaboration took place during the 1962 Sino-Indian war when Israel provided military aid to India. Israel also helped India during its two wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. India reciprocated by helping Israel during the six-day war in 1967 by supplying spare parts for French-made Mystere and Ouragan aircraft as well as AX-13 tanks. In April 2017, India and Israel had signed a \$2 billion deal for an advanced medium-range surface-to-air missile system which will be helpful for the Indian army to shoot down aircraft, missiles and drones etc. Israel is India's 38th-largest trading partner with the trade balance standing in India's favour in 2016-17.

US House of Representatives passes Bill on defence co-operation with India

The United States House of Representatives has passed an amendment to National Defense Authorisation Act (NDAA), 2018, a \$621.5 billion defence expenditure bill to advance defence cooperation with India. India related amendment in the bill was adopted by a voice vote in the House by 344-81. Now, NDAA needs to be passed by the US Senate before it can be sent to US President Donald Trump to sign into law.

Key Facts

The India-related amendment in NDAA 2018, requires the US Secretary of Defence, in consultation with the Secretary of State to develop a strategy for advancing defence cooperation between US and India. The amendment asks the State Department and Pentagon to develop a strategy to address common security challenges, the role of US partners and allies in India-US defence

relationship, and role of the defence technology and trade initiative. It also asks them to address issues to advance communications interoperability and security memorandum of agreement and the basic exchange and cooperation agreement for geospatial cooperation.

National Defense Authorisation Act

The NDAA is a United States federal law specifying the budget and expenditures of the United States Department of Defence. Each year's NDAA also includes other provisions. The US Congress oversees the defence budget primarily through two yearly bills: the NDAA and Defense appropriations bills. They are authorization bill that determines the US agencies responsible for defence, establishes funding levels and sets the policies under which money will be spent. The NDAA-2017 had designated India as a major defence partner of US. This designation had brought India at par with closest partners of US in terms of defence trade and technology transfer.

India's first solar powered DEMU train launched

Indian Railways has launched India's first solar powered diesel multiple unit (DEMU) broad gauge train. It is 1600 Horse Power (HP) train with all solar powered coaches. The train will run from Sarai Rohilla in Delhi to Farukh Nagar in Haryana. It will replace an existing non-solar powered rake on the same route.

Key Facts

The solar powered DEMU train has six trailer coaches, with 16 solar panels of 300 watts fitted in each of them. These solar panels have been manufactured under 'Make in India' initiative. The energy generated by these solar panels will be stored in batteries and will be used during the night.

Benefits

The solar energy system fitted in the DEMU train would result in the saving of 5.25 lakh litres of diesel per train over a life time of 25 years. It will also help in reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) of almost 9 tonnes per

coach, per annum and 1350 tons of CO₂ per train over a life time of 25 years

Government sets up new wing to provide intelligence inputs

The Union Government has set up Directorate General of Analytics and Risk Management (DGARM), a new wing to provide intelligence inputs taking action against tax evaders. It has been set up will be under the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC). It will also do big data analytics for taxmen for better policy formulation.

Key Facts

The DGARM was set up on 1 July 2017, coinciding with rollout of Goods and Services Tax (GST). It will function as an apex body of CBEC for data analytics and risk management and will report to the chairman of CBEC. It will utilize internal and external data sources for detailed data mining and analysis to generate outputs for focused and targeted action by field formations and investigation wings of the CBEC. The field formations of CBEC are also expected to gainfully and effectively utilise the data and other inputs shared by the DGARM. The data analytics and processing coupled with intelligence inputs by DGRAM will provide the CBEC the national and sub-national perspective for policy formulation.

DIPP to set up India's first TISC in Punjab

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) will establish India's first Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC) at Patent Information Centre, Punjab. In this regard, DIPP has signed an Institutional agreement with the Punjab State Council of Science and Technology. The TISC will be set up under the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) TISC program.

Key Facts

Objective of TISC: Stimulate a dynamic, vibrant and balanced Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) system in India to foster

creativity and innovation. It will play an important role in promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing social, economic and cultural development by establishing a network of TISCs in India.

National Focal Point (NFP): The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) has been designated as the NFP for the TISC national network. CIPAM will identify potential host institutions, assess their capacities and support them in joining the TISC program. It will also act as the main intermediary between WIPO and TISC host institutions and coordinate all the activities of the national TISC network.

Services offered by TISC will include:

Access to online patent and non-patent (scientific and technical) resources and IP-related publications; Training in database search; On-demand searches (state-of-the-art, novelty and infringement); Assistance in searching and retrieving technology information; Monitoring technology and competitors; technology commercialization and marketing, and basic information on industrial property laws, management and strategy.

About WIPO's TISC program

WIPO's TISC program provides innovators in developing countries with access to locally based, high quality technology information and related services. It helps them to exploit their innovative potential and to create, protect, and manage their IPRs. Over 500 TISCs operate worldwide. Establishing TISC in India will give the host institutions an access to the global network.

International Events

Okinoshima Island: Japan's men-only island gets UNESCO heritage tag

July 11, 2017 Okinoshima Island, Japan's men-only island was declared as a UNESCO world heritage site. The island will be the 17th set of Japanese cultural

assets to be granted this status and overall 21st in the list. The island is part of the prefecture's Munakata region. It is located in south-west Japan between the main island of Kyushu and the Korean Peninsula in the Sea of Japan (East Sea). It still follows strict taboos from ancient times, including the controversial ban on women from entering the island.

Okinoshima Island

Okinoshima Island is an ancient religious site in Japan that is considered sacred by the local Munakata Taisha. Entries of women are strictly banned on the island. Even male visitors need to take off their clothes and take a naked bath (purifying bath) before visiting the shrine. It is permanently manned by a Shinto priest who prays the island's goddess, in a tradition that has been kept up for centuries. The entire island is considered a Shinto Kami, an ethnic religion of Japan that focuses on ritual practices to be carried out diligently, to establish a connection between present-day Japan and its ancient past. Kami are the spirits or phenomena that are worshipped in the religion of Shinto. The island covers an area of 240 acres and has a maximum elevation of 244 m. Since ancient times, it was an important window for foreign trade in Japan, forming part of a trade route that linked the archipelago to the Korean peninsula and China.

G-20 leaders adopt Hamburg Action Plan The 12th G-20 summit concluded in Germany's Hamburg city with adaptation of Hamburg Action Plan. It sets out the group's strategy for achieving strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth. The action plan aims to address major global challenges, including climate change, harnessing digitalisation, and to contribute to prosperity and well-being.

Key Highlights of Hamburg Action Plan

Tackle common challenges: G20 members resolved to tackle common challenges to the global community, including terrorism, displacement, hunger, poverty and health

threats, job creation, climate change, energy security and inequality including gender inequality, as a basis for sustainable development and stability.

Trade and globalisation: They stressed on the importance of harnessing the benefits of globalisation, reaffirm the importance of transparency for predictable and mutually beneficial trade relations. They also underlined importance to boost employment by improving sustainable global supply chains, as an important source of job creation and balanced economic growth.

Continue to use all policy tools: G20 members will use all policy tools such as monetary, fiscal and structural- individually and collectively to achieve the goal of strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth, while enhancing economic and financial resilience.

Paris Agreement: They agreed that the 2015 Paris Agreement is irreversible and reiterated the importance of fulfilment of the UNFCCC commitments by developed countries in providing means of implementation including financial resources to assist developing countries with respect to both mitigation and adaptation actions.

Sustainable livelihoods: G-20 members are committed to increase innovation on sustainable and clean energies and energy efficiency, work towards low greenhouse-gas emission energy systems and harness digitalisation to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Global Health systems: G-20 members called for strengthening health systems and safeguarding against health crises. The leaders called on the UN to keep global health high on the political agenda and strive for cooperative action to strengthen health systems worldwide, including through developing the health workforce. The leaders also stressed on combatting Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR), which is a growing threat to public health and economic growth. About Group of Twenty

(G20) The G20 is the premier forum for its members' international economic cooperation and decision-making. It is deliberating on global economic issues and other important development challenges. It was started in 1999 as a meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in the aftermath of the Southeast Asian (Tiger economies) financial crisis. In 2008, the first G20 Leaders' Summit was held in Washington DC, US. Since then the group had played a key role in responding to the global financial crisis. Its members include 19 countries India, Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey, South Africa, UK, US and European Union (EU). They collectively represent 85% of global GDP, 80% of international trade, 65% of world's population.

Science & Technology

NASA launches Rocket to produce Colourful Artificial Clouds

The NASA has successfully launched Terrier-Improved Malemute sounding rocket that created colourful artificial clouds visible in the skies of the US. The rocket was launched from its Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

Salient Facts

The rocket during the 8-minute flight had released 10 canisters about the size of a soft drink into space. It was ejected about 9 to 19 kilometres away from the 300-kg main payload. The canisters deployed blue-green and red vapour that formed artificial clouds visible in the skies of the United States from New York to North Carolina. The artificial clouds are formed through the interaction of barium, strontium and cupric-oxide. The vapour tracers will help in understanding the movement of the particles in the ionosphere. It will help to learn more about the movement of the air currents at that altitude. The artificial clouds

or vapour tracers will help in understanding the movement of the particles in the ionosphere. It will help to learn more about the movement of the air currents at that altitude. They will permit scientists on the ground to visually track particle motions in space. The multi-canister ejection system will also help scientists to gather information over a much larger area than previously possible. Sounding rockets have been in use for more than 40 years to carry science payloads on scientific missions that usually last five to 20 minutes. Sounding rockets have been in use for more than 40 years to carry science payloads on scientific missions that usually last five to 20 minutes.

Ionosphere

The ionosphere is called so because it is ionised by solar radiation. It plays an important part in atmospheric electricity and forms the inner edge of the magnetosphere. Ionosphere stretches from 50 to 1,000 km and typically overlaps both the exosphere and the thermosphere. It has practical importance because it influences, for example, radio propagation on the Earth. It is also responsible for auroras.

Scientists develop world's sharpest laser

Scientists from Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB) in Germany have developed the world's sharpest laser with record-breaking precision. This precision can be useful for various applications such as optical atomic clocks, radioastronomy, precision spectroscopy, testing the theory of relativity and carry out new precision measurements on ultracold atoms.

What is Laser?

A laser (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation) is a device that emits light through a process of optical amplification based on the stimulated emission of electromagnetic radiation. Major difference between laser and other sources of light is that, laser emits light coherently. Laser light is used in numerous

applications in industry, medicine and information technologies. It also brought about a real revolution in fields of research and in metrology etc.

Features of sharpest laser

Theoretically, laser light has only one colour, wavelength or frequency. In reality, however, there is always a certain linewidth. This newly developed laser has linewidth of only 10 miliHertz (0.01 Hz), — closer to the ideal laser than ever before. In addition to the new laser's extremely small linewidth, researchers also have found out that the emitted laser light's frequency was more precise than what had ever been achieved before.

Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile successfully test fired:

The indigenously developed **Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air (QRSAM)** short-range missile, which has a capability of engaging multiple targets was successfully test-fired from a test range along the Odisha coast. The missile has a strike range of 25 km to 30 km. Designed to be a quick reaction missile, it involves an all-weather weapon system capable of tracking and firing. The missile was test-fired from a truck-mounted canister launcher from launch complex-3 at the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, Odisha.

Saraswati: Indian scientists discover supercluster of galaxies

A team of Indian astronomers have identified previously unknown, extremely large supercluster of galaxies located in the direction of constellation Pisces. It has been named "Saraswati". It was discovered by astronomers from Inter University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) and Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), both in Pune, Maharashtra.

What is Supercluster?

A supercluster is a chain of galaxies and galaxy clusters. It bound by gravity consisting of tens of thousands of galaxies.

It often stretches several hundred times the size of clusters of galaxies. Thus, it can be said, galaxies are made of billions of stars and planets and grouped into clusters. These clusters of galaxies, in turn, are grouped together to form superclusters. The Milky Way, the galaxy in which earth is located is part of a supercluster called the Laniakea Supercluster.

About Saraswati supercluster

Saraswati supercluster is one of the largest known structures in the nearby universe. It is 4 billion light years away from Earth and may contain the mass equivalent of over 20 million billion suns. It has 43 galaxies that may contain thousands of suns, besides having billions of stars, planets, other bodies, gases and dark matter. It is estimated to be stretched over 650 million light years in distance. The discovery of Saraswati supercluster will help astronomers in understanding galaxy formation and evolution, effect of superclusters on environment of the galaxies.

Scientists discover smallest star known in the universe

Scientists from University of Cambridge, UK have discovered the smallest star in the universe. It has been named as EBLM J0555-57Ab. The star was identified by SuperWASP, a planet-finding experiment run by several universities. It was detected when it passed in front of its larger parent star, forming an eclipsing stellar binary system.

Key Facts

EBLM J0555-57Ab is located about 600 light years away. It is slightly larger than Saturn in size and may possibly have Earth-sized planets with liquid water in its orbit. It is likely as small as stars can possibly become, as it has just enough mass to enable the fusion of hydrogen nuclei into helium at its centre. The gravitational pull at EBLM J0555-57A's stellar surface is about 300 times stronger than on Earth. It is likely colder than many of the gas giant exoplanets that have so far been identified. The discovery of EBLM J0555-57A also makes

the best possible candidate for detecting Earth-sized planets which can have liquid water on their surfaces, such as TRAPPIST-1, an ultracool dwarf surrounded by seven temperate Earth-sized worlds.

About SuperWASP

SuperWASP is the UK's leading extra-solar planet detection programme. It is run by a consortium of eight academic institutions. It consists of two robotic observatories that operate continuously all year around, to cover both hemispheres of the sky. The first robotic observatory, SuperWASP-North is located on La Palma Island (in Atlantic Ocean) amongst the Isaac Newton Group of telescopes (ING). The second observatory, SuperWASP-South is located at the site of the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO), Sutherland, South Africa. The observatories each consist of eight wide-angle cameras that simultaneously monitor the sky for planetary transit events. These cameras can monitor millions of stars simultaneously to detect the rare transit events.

Indigenously developed S-band Doppler Weather Radar commissioned in Kochi

A state-of-the-art, indigenously developed S-band doppler weather radar (DWR) of India Meteorological Department (IMD) was commissioned at Palluruthy in West Kochi, Kerala. It has been manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) based on the indigenous technology provided by ISRO. It joins the latest in a chain of 27 such advanced radars already installed in various parts of the country. The S-band DWR is capable of predicting weather events such as storms and cyclones, other severe weather conditions occurring in 500-km radius from Kochi with increased accuracy.

Doppler weather radar

Doppler weather radar is an observational tool for monitoring and predicting severe weather events such as hailstorms, thunder storms, cyclones and tornados. It uses the

Doppler effect by bouncing a microwave signal off a desired target to produce velocity data. This data helps in analyzing object's motion by altered the frequency of the returned signal. It mainly gives information about wind velocity and also about precipitation. DWR can provide area specific rain and storm warnings which are beneficial for disaster management and emergency response, aviation and related services. It can be used for wind speed measurements during cyclones and thunderstorms which is not possible in conventional weather radar. Thus, it helps in providing improved warning and better weather forecasts.

Doppler effect: It is an increase (or decrease) in the frequency of sound, light, or other waves as the source and observer move towards (or away from) each other.

Places in News

Walled City of Ahmedabad designated as India's first World Heritage City

The 600-year-old Walled City of Ahmedabad was declared World Heritage City by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO after it met in Karlow, Poland. It is first Indian city get the honour. The Walled City of Ahmedabad is located on the eastern banks of Sabarmati river. It presents a rich architectural heritage from the sultanate period, notably the Bhadra citadel, walls and gates of the Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs, as well as important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods. It will be third city from the Indian subcontinent to enjoy this status along with Bhaktapur in Nepal and Galle in Sri Lanka.

Background

The nomination of Ahmedabad was supported by about 20 countries including Turkey, Tunisia, Lebanon, Peru, Portugal, Croatia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Korea, Croatia, Cuba and Poland. Earlier, the committee also added Asmara (capital of

Eritrea), added Hebron-Al Khalil Old Town (Palestine) and W-Arly-Pendjari Complex (Benin, Burkina Faso) to the list.

About Walled City of Ahmedabad

The Walled City of Ahmedabad was founded by Sultan Ahmed Shah I of Gujarat Sultanate in 1411. It remained the capital of the Gujarat Sultanate and later important political and commercial centre of Gujarat. It was established as a product of the Sultan's ambitions to create a trading rival to the neighbouring Hindu trade centre of Asaval. Further, he made Ahmedabad centre of his own line of dynasty and replaced the old capital of Anhilvad Patan, located nearby. Ahmed Shah I had laid the foundation of Bhadra Fort starting from Manek Burj, the first bastion of the city in 1411 which was completed in 1413. During Mughal rule, Bhadra Fort served as the seat of Governor of Gujarat. The richness of architecture present in Ahmedabad is enhanced by the cultural fusion of Hindu and Muslim elements. The city also holds rare distinction of being one of the oldest trading points in India and also centres of Indian freedom struggle under Mahatma Gandhi. Spread over 5.43 square kilometres, the city now has approximate population of four lakh, living in century old wooden residences in around 600 pols or neighbourhoods. Today, despite having become extremely crowded and dilapidated, it still serves as the symbolic heart of metropolitan Ahmedabad.

About World Heritage Cities Programme

It is one of six thematic programmes formally approved and monitored by the WHC. It aims to assist state parties in the challenges of protecting and managing their urban heritage. The programme is structured along a two-way process (i) development of a theoretical framework for urban heritage conservation, and (ii) provision of technical assistance to States Parties for the implementation of new approaches and schemes.

CM of Delhi launches e-RTI, Delhi becomes 2nd state to accept online applications: Filing an RTI application with the Delhi government is now just a click away. Delhi became the second state to launch e-RTI portal that will enable citizens to file online Right to Information (RTI). Maharashtra is the first state to launch the online RTI platform. The portal launched recently will enable citizens to file RTI and seek information related to 172 departments of the Delhi government including the office of the CM and his ministers. The e-RTI portal, which has been designed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), includes filling of application, payment of fees and getting replies online

Awards

Ankit Kawatra bags Queen's Young Leaders Award for 2017

Anti-hunger activist Ankit Kawatra has been awarded the Queen's Young Leaders Award for 2017 by Queen Elizabeth II at a ceremony in the Buckingham Palace.

Salient Facts

The Queen's Young Leaders Award recognises exceptional work towards solving hunger and malnutrition in India. Ankit Kawatra is the founder of Feeding India, an organisation which works towards eradicating hunger and food wastage in India. The organisation which was established in 2014 functions across 43 Indian cities with the help of 4,500 volunteers serving 8 million meals to the needy.

Queen's Young Leader Awards

The award was established by The Queen Elizabeth Jubilee Trust, the Royal Commonwealth Society and Comic Relief. The awards mark the Queen Elizabeth's 60 years on the throne and over six decades of service to Commonwealth nations. The award highlights the importance of solving the problem of hunger and take action

towards “725 million people around the world who do not even have basic food and nutrition.” The award identifies and supports 60 exceptional young people from across the Commonwealth, aged 18-29 who have made a lasting difference by transforming the lives of others.

Raipur Airport ranked first in Customer Satisfaction Index

Survey Raipur’s Swami Vivekananda Airport was ranked first in Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) Survey among 49 airports in the country. It has achieved 4.84 score on a five point scale index. It was followed by Udaipur (2nd), Amritsar (3rd) and Dehradun (4th) airports which have scored 4.75, 4.74 and 4.73 respectively. This is third consecutive time in the past two years, Raipur airport has received this recognition.

CSI survey

Customer Satisfaction is one of the key performance objectives of Airport Authority of India (AAI) which is evaluated through CSI survey conducted by an independent agency commissioned by AAI. The survey covers a wide range of parameters like transportation, passenger facilities, cleanliness and parking etc. The latest CSI survey was conducted for the period of January-June 2017.

Swami Vivekananda Airport

Raipur’s Swami Vivekananda Airport is located at Mana between Raipur and Naya Raipur. It is the primary airport in Chhattisgarh. Its integrated terminal building was inaugurated in 2012. It is the 28th busiest airport in India in terms of passenger traffic and 31st busiest by aircraft movement. The airport was renamed from Raipur Airport to present name in 2012 as tribute to Swami Vivekananda who spent 2 years of his teenage in Raipur.

Sports

India’s Sundar Singh Gurjar wins gold medal at World Para Athletics

India’s Sundar Singh Gurjar (21) won gold medal in the men’s javelin throw event at World Para Athletics Championships held in London, United Kingdom. In the F46 category, Sundar recorded his personal best effort of 60.36m ahead of Dinesh Priyantha Herath (Sri Lanka) who emerged second with 57.93m, followed by defending champion Guo Chunliang (China) with 56.14m. Sundar Singh Gurjar Sundar Singh Gurjar hails from the Karauli district in Rajasthan. Till November 2015, he was competing in General Category. But he had lost his left hand in an accident. After accident, he started participating in para-athlete competitions. Sundar was not able to participate in the F46 javelin throw category at the 2016 Rio Paralympics after he was disqualified. But at the same event, India’s Devendra Jhajharia had won the gold medal. In February 2017, at 8th Fazza IPC Athletics Grand Prix held in Dubai, Sundar had won three gold medals, one each in javelin throw, shot put and discus throw.

India’s Mithali Raj becomes first to score 6000 runs in women’s ODI cricket

Indian captain Mithali Raj (34) scripted history by becoming first player in the history of women’s ODI cricket to score more than 6000 career runs. She also became all-time leading run-getter in women’s ODI. She achieved the record feat against Australia in the ICC Women’s World Cup 2017 match at Bristol. She broke previous record of Charlotte Edwards (5992) in 164 innings – 16 less than Charlotte.

Mithali Raj

Mithali had made her ODI debut at the age of 16 against Ireland in June 1999 at Milton Keynes and scored unbeaten 114 runs. So far, Mithali has scored 6028 runs with the help of 5 centuries and 49 half-centuries. During the 2017 Women’s Cricket World Cup, she had created record of scoring seven consecutive fifties in women’s ODIs. Apart from this, she has also scored 49 ODI half-centuries, highest by any woman cricketer.

She is often called the Sachin Tendulkar of Indian women's cricket.

BCCI appoints Ravi Shastri as new head coach of Indian cricket team

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has named former Indian all-rounder and captain Ravi Shastri as the new chief coach of the Indian cricket team till ICC World Cup 2019. He will succeed Anil Kumble who had resigned from the post after the ICC Champions Trophy 2017. The decision was announced after the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) zeroed in on his name ahead of other strong contenders, including Virender Sehwag and Tom Moody. Besides, BCCI also appointed former fast bowler Zaheer Khan as bowling coach for a period of two years. Former Indian Captain Rahul Dravid was also appointed as batting consultant for specific overseas tours. Ravi Shastri is a veteran of 80 Tests and 150 ODIs. He had played for the India national cricket team between 1981 and 1992. He was team India's manager during their Bangladesh tour in 2007. Most recently, he was Indian cricket's team director from their tour of England in 2014 to the 2016 ICC World T20, where India lost to eventual champions West Indies in the semi-final.

Harinder Pal Sandhu Wins South Australian Open Squash Title

India's Harinder Pal Sandhu has defeated Rhys Dowling of Australia 11-8 12-10 11-4 to lift South Australian Open squash title. This will be Sandhu's first PSA tournament victory in Australia. South Australian Open squash title is on the Professional Squash Association (PSA) international circuit. This victory will be Sandhu's third this season after winning two in Malaysia in May. Overall, this will be Sandhu's eight title win at the PSA level. He had also managed to reach the quarterfinals of the Asian Individual Squash Championship in Chennai in April.

Defence

Government empowers Army to procure weapons systems for short intense wars

The Union Government has empowered the Army to directly procure critical weapons systems and military platforms to maintain combat readiness for short duration intense wars. The purpose of this new scheme is to maintain an optimum level to fight short intense wars following critical voids in capabilities of Army.

Need

The Army faces severe shortage in ammunition, mainly for artillery guns, air defence, tanks and certain infantry weapons. This shortage may make it very difficult for Army to fight a short intense war that lasts for 10 to 15 days. To overcome this issue, Army was pressing the government for ensuring speedy procurement of key military platforms citing evolving security challenges.

Key Facts

Under the new scheme, Vice Chief of Army has been given the full financial powers to procure ammunitions. Army has been empowered on a routine basis to review the optimum holding state and maintaining it on a recurring manner. The new procedure will be part of revenue procurement of the Army for in-service equipment and weapons. As part of it, the Army has been allowed to procure 46 types of ammunition and spares for 10 different types of weapons systems. The new revenue route for procurement of in-service equipment will not require going through numerous procurement stages which often cause inordinate delays. Earlier it was necessary to take permission from Defence Acquisition Council (headed by defence minister) or the Cabinet Committee on Security (headed by Prime Minister), for procuring such critical equipment. Thus,

new scheme will ensure that the time taken in procuring such equipment is reduced.

Environment

NGT declares 100m from edge of Ganga as No-development Zone

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has passed a slew of directions, measures, fines, and strict deadlines to rejuvenate River Ganga. It declared 'No-Development Zone' along an area of 100 metres from the edge of the river in the stretch between Haridwar in Uttarakhand and Unnao in Uttar Pradesh. This zone must be turned into green belts.

NGT directions

The NGT has banned dumping of waste of any kind within 500 metres from the edge of River Ganga. Rs. 50,000 environment compensation will be imposed on anyone who dumps waste in the river. The apex environment regulator also directed all authorities concerned to complete various projects including setting up of a sewage treatment plant and cleaning drains within two years. The NGT also directed Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh governments to formulate guidelines for regulating religious activities on the ghats of Ganga River or its tributaries. It also ordered to stop indiscriminate extraction of groundwater from all industrial units falling in the catchment area of Ganga River. The NGT also directed Uttar Pradesh government to be duty-bound to shift tanneries within six weeks, from Jajmau in Kanpur to leather parks in Unnao or any other appropriate place. It also appointed a supervisory committee, headed by the secretary of the Union Water Resources Ministry and comprising IIT professors and officials from UP government to oversee implementation of the directions passed in its verdict. It also asked the committee to submit reports at regular intervals.

NGT bans nylon, synthetic The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed nationwide blanket ban on the use

of kite strings (manja), made of nylon or any synthetic material on the grounds that it poses a threat to animals and humans. The judgement of Tribunal came on a plea filed by animal rights body People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and others.

Petition

The petition filed by PETA and others had contended that 'manja' poses a grave threat to humans and animals as a number of deaths are caused by it every year. It has also alleged that sometimes these strings coated with sharp metals, traps and kill migratory birds. It also claimed that minor children were engaged by the cottage industry for the manufacture of 'manja', which caused respiratory problems as they inhaled harmful substances which were detrimental to their health.

NGT Judgement

The Tribunal has directed all state governments to prohibit the manufacture, sale, storage, purchase and use of synthetic manja or nylon threads and all other synthetic strings used for flying kites with immediate effect. It also ordered the authorities across the country to ban import of any synthetic manja or nylon thread or other similar threads coated with synthetic substances.

About National Green Tribunal (NGT)

The NGT was established in 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources. It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues. It also includes enforcement of any legal right relating to environment and giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith. It adjudicates matters relating to Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974; Environment

(Protection) Act, 1986; Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991; Forest Conservation Act and Biological Diversity Act. The NGT is guided by principles of natural justice and not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908. It is mandated to make and endeavour for disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing. New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting NGT. Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai are other regional sitting of the Tribunal.

Persons in News

Mukesh Kumar Jain appointed MD & CEO of Oriental Bank:

The Centre has appointed **Mukesh Kumar Jain as Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Oriental Bank of Commerce**, a public sector bank. His appointment is for a period of three years. Prior to this appointment, Jain was an **Executive Director at Punjab & Sind Bank**

Debi Prasad Dash takes over as DRI chief: **Debi Prasad Dash**, a 1985-batch Indian Revenue Service (Customs) officer, has taken over as **director-general of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DG-DRI)**, the premier agency that tackles smuggling and black money. Mr. Dash was the acting DRI chief for the past five months. He has earlier worked in the UN Security Council, Commonwealth Secretariat, and the CBI.

Subhash Garg takes charge as Economic Affairs Secretary:

Subhash Garg takes charge as Economic Affairs Secretary Senior bureaucrat **Subhash Chandra Garg** assumed charge as **Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) in the Finance Ministry**. Mr. Garg was World Bank Executive Director for Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Sri Lanka prior to this appointment. **He succeeds Shaktikanta Das**, who retired after an extended tenure on

May 31. Corporate Affairs Secretary Tapan Ray was given additional charge of DEA Secretary after Das' exit.

Deaths

Renowned cartoonist Mangesh Tendulkar passes away

Renowned cartoonist **Mangesh Tendulkar** passed away in Pune. He was 83. Tendulkar was suffering from bladder cancer for the last three years. Tendulkar was one of the most decorated cartoonists in India. He was conferred with the president's medal in 1980, Marathi Natya Parishad Award in 1993 and Pulotsav award in 2003 among several other honors.

China's Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo passes away China's most famous political prisoner, the Nobel laureate and democracy icon Liu Xiaobo passed away in custody following a battle with cancer. He was 61. Liu was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize for his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.

Banking & Economy

SBI waives charge on IMPS fund transfer of up to Rs. 1,000

Country's largest bank SBI has waived charges for fund transfer of up to Rs 1,000 through its **IMPS (Immediate Payment Service)** to promote small transactions. SBI had been charging Rs 5 along with the applicable service tax for IMPS fund transfer of up to Rs 1,000. IMPS is an instant interbank electronic fund transfer service through mobile phones as well as internet banking. For IMPS, the charge will be Rs 5 along GST for fund transfer in the range of Rs 1,000 to Rs 1 lakh. The charge will go up to Rs 15 for transactions of Rs 1-2 lakh. GST at the rate of 18 per cent is applicable on all financial transactions.

YES BANK Launches 'YES GST' Program to Assist MSMEs YES Bank, India's fourth largest private sector bank, along with YES Global Institute has launched 'YES GST' program for MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) under its MSME CSR initiative, 'Say YES to Sustainable MSMEs in India'. Through the program, the bank will help MSMEs to understand the impact of the changes in tax system and prepare them to know the new GST tax system. YES Bank has also launched GST-Ready products for MSMEs

India to import crude oil from US for first time India, the world's third-largest oil importer, for the first time will import crude oil from the United States. The purchase comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US in June 2017 when President Donald Trump had assured that US looks forward to export more energy products to India.

Key Facts

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) has bought 1.6 million barrels of US Mars crude (a heavy, high-sulphur grade) and 400,000 barrels of Western Canadian Select that will be delivered onboard a Very Large Crude Carrier. The import will take place after IOC gets the carrier in October 2017 from PetroChina. The oil will be loaded off the US Gulf Coast, The import of crude from US could become an alternative source for the Indian companies for the supply of heavy, high-sulphur grades as feedstocks, which typically sell at a lower cost relative to other oil types. Besides IOC, Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL) is second Indian refiner which also has planned to buy its first ever US crude oil cargo and has issued a purchase tender. India will be the latest Asian country to buy US crude after Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Australia, China and Taiwan as they seek to diversify oil imports from other regions after the OPEC production cuts raised prices of

Middle East heavy-sour crude (grades with a high sulphur content).

India, European Union establish Investment Facilitation Mechanism

India and European Union (EU) have established Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM) for EU Investments in India. The mechanism will allow for a close coordination between EU and India with an aim to promote and facilitate EU investment in India.

Background

Trade and Investment are key elements of the EU-India Strategic Partnership launched in 2004. The EU is the India's first trade partner in goods and services and also largest foreign investor with a stock exceeding US\$ 81.52 billion as of March 2017. There are more than 6,000 EU companies currently present in India, providing direct and indirect employment to over 6 million people. The IFM builds on the Joint Statement of the 13th EU-India Summit held in Brussels in March 2016, where the EU had welcomed India's readiness to establish such a mechanism.

Key Facts

The key objective of IFM is to pave the way for identifying and solving problems faced by EU companies and investors with regard to their operations in India. It will cover both new investors as well as those already present in India. It will also serve as a common platform for discussing general suggestions from the point of view of EU investors and companies with regard to ease of doing business in India. Invest India, the official Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India, will also be part of the mechanism. It will create a single-window entry point for EU companies that need assistance for their investments at the central/state level.

The Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Union Ministry of Commerce & Industry will also facilitate participation of other relevant ministries and

authorities on a case-to-case basis. Under it, the EU Delegation to India and DIPP will hold regular high level meetings to assess and facilitate “ease of doing business” for EU investors in India. It will also include identifying and putting in place solutions to procedural impediments faced by EU companies and investors in establishing or running their operations in India.

Significance

The establishment of the IFM is considered as a right step in the direction of strengthening the trade and investment ties between the EU and India. This initiative will help ensuring a more robust, effective and predictable business environment for the EU investors.

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