

International Affairs

Union Tourism Ministry is planning to extend its electronic visa (e-visa) service to 36 more countries including Italy, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The proposal has been forwarded to the Home Ministry for approval.

If the proposal gets accepted, citizens of 186 countries will be able to get an online visa to travel to India.

Peru has declared Zika outbreak as a health emergency across the northern half of the country after 102 people were infected with the virus.

The 90-day health emergency was declared to prevent the spread of the disease.

So far 34 cases of disease (principally transmitted by mosquitos) were detected in pregnant women.

India's Vice-President Mohammad Hamid Ansari is on a Two day visit to Mongolia.

During this visit, he will lead the Indian delegation at the 11th ASEM (ASia -Europe Meeting).

The two-day ASEM Summit is being held at UlaanBaatar - the capital of Mongolia.

Important Points to Note :

ASEM was established on 1st March 1996.

India joined ASEM in January 2007 and has taken part in four earlier summits.

This year is unique for ASEM as it celebrates 20 years of its establishment.

ASEM currently has 53 partners : 51 countries and 2 regional organisations (European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat).

National Affairs

The Union Government has launched 'Operation Sankat Mochan' to evacuate Indian nationals from violence-hit South Sudan.

The operation is being carried out by the Indian Air Force and will be led by General VK Singh.

Note : Singh had already led Operation Rahat to evacuate Indians from Yemen last year.

The Union Cabinet today approved various facilities for minority communities of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan residing in India on Long Term Visa.

The facilities include opening of bank accounts, permission to take up self-employment and purchase property for the same, and issuance of driving licences, PAN cards and Aadhaar numbers.

The Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) with an outlay of 12000 crore rupees to impart skilling to one crore people over the next four years (2016-2020).

PMKVY will impart fresh training to 60 lakh youths and certify skills of 40 lakh persons acquired non-formally under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

The target allocation between fresh trainings and RPL will be flexible and interchangeable depending on functional and operational requirements.

Science & Technology

Spanish-made Talgo has become fastest train in India.

In a trial conducted by Railways on the Mathura-Palwal route, Tago clocked a speed of 180 kms per hour and covered 84 kms in 38 minutes.

Important Points to Note :

It has broken the record of Gatimaan Express at 160 km/hour.

Talgo comprises nine lightweight coaches and aims to connect Delhi and Mumbai within 12 hours.

Books & Authors

A book on Beijing Olympics bronze medallist pugilist Vijender Singh was recently released online.

The title of the book is 'Ringside With Vijender'.

Penned by senior journalist Rudraneil Sengupta, the book, published by Juggernaut Books, deals with the boxer's life post his transition to the brutal world of pro boxing.

Business & Economy

Switzerland-based UBS retained its position as the world's biggest private bank in 2015, a study by wealth management researcher Scorpio Partnership has stated.

UBS had \$1,737.5 billion managed assets by the end of 2015, nearly \$300 billion more than the second-placed Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the disinvestment of 15% paid up equity of National Buildings Construction Corporation Limited (NBCC).

Note : The disinvestment of 15% will done out of Union Government's 90% shareholding.

New Appointments

Congress leader Nabam Tuki today took charge as the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh at Arunachal Bhavan in New Delhi.

Note : Earlier on Wednesday, the apex court had reinstated the Tuki-led government in the state and

quashed the Governor's order to impose President's Rule.

Boris Johnson, the former London mayor and "Leave" campaign figurehead in Britain's EU referendum, was appointed Foreign Secretary in new Prime Minister Theresa May's government.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) today selected Punjabi singer and actor Gurdas Maan as the icon for the upcoming Punjab Assembly polls.

Maan will motivate youngsters to get enrolled in the voters list and inspire them to vote ethically without getting influenced.

The Union Government has appointed senior IPS officer Ashok Patnaik as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID).

He is going to replace Raghu Raman, the first CEO of NATGIRD, whose tenure ended in June 2015.

Awards & Honors

Pokémon Go has become the biggest ever mobile game in the US history by beating Candy Crush with nearly 21 million daily active users.

Note : This number is also higher than Twitter's daily active users.

Mumbai's civic body has renamed a city square near Hiranandani Garden in suburban Powai to Jyotirmoy Dey Chowk.

This is an effort to recognise the contribution of veteran crime reporter Jyotirmoy Dey.

Important Points to Note :

Dey was an famous journalist, crime and investigations editor for MiD DAY (a tabloid newspaper published in several cities in India) and an expert on the Mumbai underworld.

He was shot dead by motorcycle-borne sharpshooters on 11 June 2011.

Deaths

Abu Omar al-Shishani, who is described as Islamic State's "minister of war" by the US Department of Defence was killed during combat in Iraq's Shirqat.

Shishani ranked amongst USA's most wanted militants with a \$5 million bounty on him.

Sports

India's young Grand Master Harika Dronavali has today won her first Fide women's Grand Prix chess title at Chengdu in China.

The Chinese Football Association has struck a deal with FIFA to host the first 'China Cup' in January 2017, a competition that will involve its national side against three international "first-class" teams.

The deal is backed by China's richest man, Wang Jianlin, whose conglomerate is a FIFA sponsor.