

International Affairs

Today is 'Nelson Mandela International Day'.

In November 2009, the UN General Assembly declared 18 July "Nelson Mandela International Day" in recognition of the former South African President's contribution to the culture of peace and freedom.

He was born on July 18, 1918.

Important Note :

Mandela was awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna in 1990 for his role in the anti-apartheid movement.

Apart from Pakistan national Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, he is the only non-Indian to have received the award.

He was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize in the year 1993.

India is hosting the United Nation Peacekeeping Course for African Partners-1, (UNCAP - 1).

This will be held from 25th July to 12th August 2016.

This is a first ever collaboration between Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK), New Delhi & US Government's Global Peace Operations Initiative.

National Affairs

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa today launched the Free Bus Pass Scheme for school and college students for 2016-17.

The scheme, aiming to benefit students from poor backgrounds, covered 28.05 lakh students in 2015-16.

This year, 31.11 lakh students would be provided free smart card bus passes at an estimated ₹504.31 crore.

The Centre, as on 12th July 2016, has released ₹28,022.87 crore to states under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(MGNREGA).

The amount has been given to states / UTs to cover previous fiscal's liabilities and for running the programme in 2016-17.

The National Green Tribunal ordered immediate banning of Diesel Vehicles more than 10 years old in Delhi to deal with pollution.

To prevent a clique from dominating the official cultural space, the Culture Ministry has decided to rate Indian artists and writers, on the basis of which they will be sent to represent India.

As a pilot project, the ministry has graded 185 artists into three categories. They are,

- - (Outstanding),
- P - (Promising),
- W - (Waiting)

To reduce paperwork in the day-to-day functioning of the Parliament, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan has launched an e-portal enabling online interaction with various branches of the Secretariat.

By this, the government is not only preserving the environment but also saving money.

The Union Railway Ministry has launched a project to install Solar Panels in all Railway Buildings in order to reduce expenditure on electricity.

As part of the project, Union Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu laid the foundation stone of one Megawatt (MW) solar power plant at Amritsar Railway station in Punjab.

Awards & Honors

Kushal Paul, a 17-year-old singer from Kolkata, has won the singing reality show 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa' for this year.

Business & Economy

The fourth tranche of Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) scheme has opened for subscription today, through which the government aims to curb the demand for physical gold.

SGBs, with an issue price at around ₹3,119-per-gram, can be bought from NSE and BSE, bank branches, select post offices, and Stock Holding Corporation.

SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold.

RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan today announced that the Unified Payment Interface will be operational by this month-end.

Using UPI, customers can access virtual accounts to do transactions generated from a bank app.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has filed for an initial public offering of shares, this will be India's first insurance sector IPO.

It could reportedly raise around ₹5,000 crore, the biggest local IPO in six years.

India's ICICI Bank, holding nearly 68% of the insurer, will sell up to 181.34 million shares.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) today trimmed its 2016 growth forecasts for developing economies in Asia-Pacific region to 5.6% as against the earlier estimate of 5.7%.

This follows a slowing US economy and the near-term impact of the 'Brexit' vote.

Note : India's economy is still forecast to grow 7.4% this year and 7.8% in 2017.

MOUs & Agreements

India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a \$100 million loan agreement for strengthening irrigation, drainage and water

management in the Vennar sub-basin of the Cauvery delta in Tamil Nadu.

The Uttar Pradesh government has signed a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) with the Netherlands to set up a skill development center to help farmers.

The MoU was signed by Dutch Ambassador Alphonsus Stoelinga and UP Chief Secretary Deepak Singhal in presence of Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav.

Science & Technology

SpaceX today successfully landed its two-stage Falcon 9 rocket.

The landing marks the second time SpaceX recovered a rocket on land and their fifth recovered first stage in all.

A Dragon capsule was perched on the top of the rocket carrying 2,267 kg of supplies for six crew members working at the International Space Station.

General Knowledge

The first volume of 'Mein Kampf', the autobiography of German dictator Adolf Hitler, was published on this day (18th July) in the year 1925.

The Nazi leader outlined his future plans for Germany, and his ideas on politics and race in the book.

'Mein Kampf', which translates to 'My Struggle', was originally titled 'Four and a Half Years of Struggle against Lies, Stupidity and Cowardice'.

The first photo uploaded on the web is of an all-female parody pop group of CERN employees called 'Les Horribles Cernettes', taken on this day (18th July) in the year 1992.

It was approximately the size of a stamp and took a minute to load. Though researchers internally shared scientific images before, this photo was the first "photo that opened the web to life."

The Indian Independence Act, an act of the British Parliament to make provision for the independence of India and its partition into two independent dominions, received the royal assent on this day (18th July) in the year 1947.

The Act declared August 15, 1947 as the appointed date of partition.

It was formulated by the British PM, Governor General of India, and Indian political leaders.

New Appointments

Rudra Gaurav Shresth, presently High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Mozambique has been concurrently accredited as the High Commissioner of India to the Kingdom of Swaziland.

Turkish musician Kudsi Erguner was appointed as the UNESCO Artist for Peace by the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova.

People in News

BJP leader Navjot Singh Siddhu resigns from Rajya Sabha.

Siddhu's resignation came amid speculation that cricketer turned politician may join Aam Aadmi Party in view of upcoming assembly elections in Punjab.

Sports

Pakistani spinner Yasir Shah has become the top-ranked bowler in Test cricket, following his 10-wicket haul in Pakistan's victory over England at Lord's today.

Yasir is the first Pakistani bowler since Mushtaq Ahmed in 1996 and the first wrist spinner since Shane Warne in 2005, to top the rankings.

Note : Indian spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is ranked number two.

Reliance Jio, the digital services wing of Reliance Industries, has signed up as 'Principal Partner' of India's contingent at the Rio Olympics, which begin on August 5.

Earlier, dairy giant Amul was also signed up as sponsor for the Indian contingent.

Note : India is sending 121 athletes to the Rio Olympics, making it the largest contingent for the country in history.

The 73rd Senior National Squash Championship was recently held in Mumbai, Maharashtra. Here are the winners.

Women's Category : Dipika Pallikal Karthik

Men's Category : Saurav Ghosal