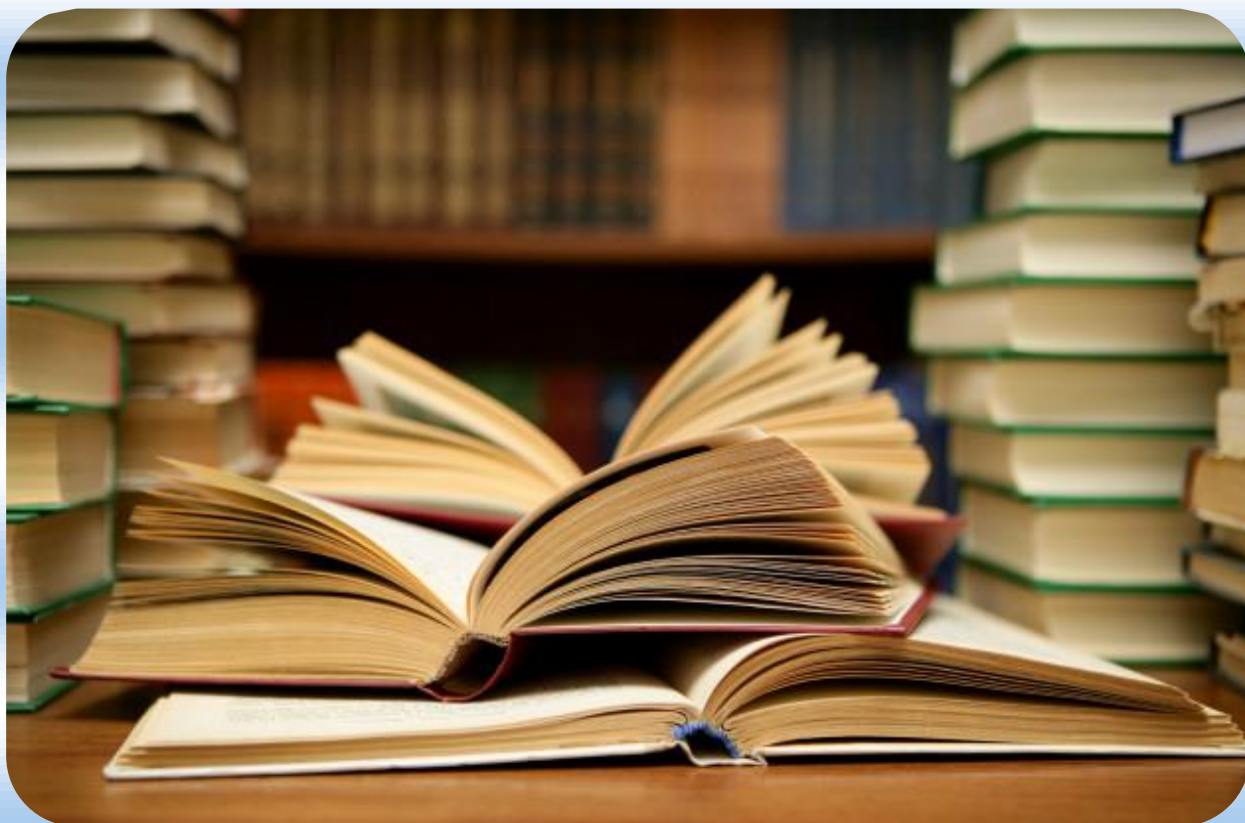


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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE MONTHLY



JANUARY-2020

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

India's first underwater Metro: To begin in March 2022 in Kolkata

Kolkata Metro Rail Corp. expects to complete its East-West project, which runs partly under the city's iconic Hooghly river, by March 2022 after a delay of several years doubled costs. The authority is awaiting a final installment of 200 million rupees (\$2.8 million) over the next two years from the Indian Railway Board, said Manas Sarkar, managing director at KMRC. A soft loan of 41.6 billion rupees from Japan International Cooperation Agency helps fund 48.5% of the project. India's oldest metro, which started in 1984 with a North-South service, was due to expand by 2014 but faced problems including squatters on the planned route.

Republic Parade

NEW DELHI: A tri-Services formation, comprising three advanced light helicopters, was for the first time part of the flypast during the Republic Day parade. The grouping represented the synergy between the Army, Air Force and Navy. The formation, flying at a speed of 180 km/hour, was led by IAF Group Captain Abhishek Shukla, commanding officer of 116 Helicopter Unit. The Army pilot was Lieutenant Colonel Atul Srivastava and the Navy's was Commander Ajay Yadav.



Bharat Parv, a festival of culture being held at Red Fort

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Tourism will host the fourth edition of Bharat Parv, which will be held in Red Fort in the capital, between January 26 and January 31. The event will be a part of Republic Day celebrations. The tourism ministry is arranging this event in collaboration with other ministries. The first edition was held in 2016. The aim of the event is to promote the idea of 'Ek Bharat, shreshtha Bharat', and promote the country's cultural diversity.

200 fighter jets to be acquired by Indian Air Force

KOLKATA: The government is in the process of acquiring around 200 aircraft to cope with the depleting aerial inventories of the Indian Air Force, defence secretary Ajay Kumar said here on Sunday. The contract for Hindustan Aeronautics Limited-manufactured 83 LCA Tejas Mark 1 A advanced fighter jets are in the final stages, he said. Apart from these, Expression of Interest (EOI) has been floated for another 110 aircraft, based on which Request for Proposal (RFP).

"TIGERSHARKS", First Squadron of Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft inducted by IAF in Tamil Nadu

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh would inaugurate the induction ceremony of Su-30 fighter squadron at the Air Force Station in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, Air Marshal Amit Tiwari. Air Marshal Tiwari said this would be the second frontline fighter squadron of the Indian Air Force (IAF) to be based in South.



Vertical Farming: A silent Revolution in Agriculture

New Delhi: A silent revolution is underway in the agriculture sector, which is going to be quite evident in the days to come. With the global population is set to reach near ten billion marks by 2050, the food production must increase by 70 per cent, estimates the United Nations.



MECOS-3, 2020: Global Marine Ecosystem Meet in Kochi

Eminent marine scientists, oceanographers, fisheries researchers and marine biotechnologists from across the globe are expected to participate in the third international symposium on marine ecosystems – challenges and opportunities (MECOS-3) in Kochi from January 7 to 10..



Phase Out of Ozone Depleting Chemicals achieved by India

India has successfully completed the phasing out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141b, used by foam manufacturing companies and one of the most potent ozone-depleting chemicals, the Union Environment Ministry said on Wednesday. Ozone occurs naturally in small amounts in the upper atmosphere of earth. It protects life on earth from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

171 Hospitals de-empanelled under Ayushman Bharat Scheme

NEW DELHI : A total 171 hospitals have been de-empanelled and penalties to the tune of ₹4.5 crore have been imposed on hospitals for allegedly committed fraud and indulging in malpractices under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme, the apex body implementing it said on Friday. FIRs have been lodged against six hospitals in Uttarakhand and Jharkhand, the National Health Authority said.

Gol to confer first “Antarrashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman”

Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Prakash Javadekar, on Tuesday conferred the First Antarrashtriya Yoga Diwas Media Samman to 30 media organizations, at an event in National Media Centre here. "Addressing the gathering, Javadekar described the award as a unique honour to media organizations that contributed to the spread of Yoga for the benefit of society," a statement from Ministry of Information and Broadcasting said. "Appreciating the efforts of various media organizations, the Minister said that this event, the first of its kind.

Four Colonial structures re-dedicated to Kolkata

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is scheduled to visit Kolkata later this week, will “re-dedicate three recently restored iconic buildings” to the people of Kolkata, a senior official of the Ministry of Culture said on Thursday.



Padma Awards announced on Republic Day

Former Union Ministers George Fernandes, Sushma Swaraj and Arun Jaitley will be awarded Padma Vibhushan posthumously. Pejavara math seer late Vishveshateertha Swamiji will be awarded Padma Vibhushan posthumously.



AI powered National Stock Exchange Knowledge Hub inaugurated in New Delhi

National Stock Exchange More on this topic from Business Today "National Stock Exchange to pull out Jet Airways shares from daily trading (NSE) on Monday launched an AI-powered learning platform NSE Knowledge Hub in the presence of Union Minister of Railways and Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal. The NSE Knowledge Hub will curate the content for learners from many internal, external and premium sources for the personalised learning experience.

ISRO to launch GSAT-30 satellite

The nation's latest communication satellite, GSAT-30, was sent to space from the Guiana Space Centre in Kourou at 2:35 a.m. IST on Friday. The 3,357-kg satellite will replace INSAT-4A which was launched in 2005 and marks the first mission of the year for Indian Space Research Organisation. The high-power satellite is equipped with 12 normal C band and 12 Ku band transponders. ISRO quoted its Chairman K. Sivan as saying, "GSAT-30 will provide DTH (direct to home) television services, connectivity to VSATs.

"Vyom Mitra"-ISRO's half Humanoid-An experimental mission of Gaganyaan

Exciting times lie ahead for India and its space quest, as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) firms up plans and timelines for the human space flight, Gaganyaan.



Indian Railway's first Waste to Energy Plant uses "PolyCrack" Technology

Indian Railways has commissioned country's first governmental waste to energy plant at Bhubaneswar. The national transporter has put in place the governmental Waste to Energy plant in Mancheswar Carriage Repair Workshop which falls under East Coast Railway. The waste to energy plant has been constructed in three months according to statement by the railway ministry.

Vidya Bal-Social Activist, Feminist passed away

Stalwart social activist, feminist writer and journalist Vidya Bal, who was a tireless crusader for gender equality, passed away at a private nursing home in Pune on Thursday. She was 83. According to sources, she was unwell for the past month and had been undergoing treatment. Active in the social field for more than half a century, Bal was a towering personality in Maharashtra's progressive milieu, articulating her 'socialist feminism' through her trenchant journalism in magazines such as Stree ('Woman') and Miloon Saryajani ('All of us together'), which she founded in 1989.

Finance Minister announces 102 lakh crore rupees project

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday unveiled Rs 102 lakh crore of infrastructure projects that will be implemented in the next five years as part of the government's spending push in the infrastructure sector. Addressing a press conference, she said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in his Independence Day speech spoken of investing Rs 100 lakh crore in infrastructure. Subsequently, a task force identified Rs 102 lakh crore worth of projects after conducting 70 stakeholder consultations in a short period of four months, she said.

RBI launches MANI application for visually challenged

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Shaktikanta Das here on Wednesday launched a mobile application called 'Mobile Aided Note Identifier' (MANI) to aid visually challenged persons in identifying the denomination of currency notes. The application is free and can be downloaded from the Android Play Store and iOS App Store without any charges or payment. This mobile application does not authenticate a note as being either genuine or counterfeit.

India to set strict restrictions on non-essential imports from China

New Delhi: India is set to finalize stricter quality standards for 371 items by March, a move primarily aimed at curbing imports of non-essential items such as toys, plastic goods, sports items and furniture, especially from China. The proposed rules, to be framed by ministries in coordination with the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), will also ensure stricter inspection of imports.

India's Foreign Exchange touches all time high of 457.468 billion USD

Mumbai: The country's foreign exchange reserves swelled by USD 2.520 billion to touch a record high of USD 457.468 billion in the week to December 27, according to RBI data. In the previous week, the reserves rose to USD 454.948 billion after increasing by USD 456 million. In the reporting week, the increase in reserves was mainly on account of a gain in foreign currency assets, major component of the overall reserves, which surged by USD 2.203 billion to USD 424.936 billion, the data released by the Reserve Bank on Friday showed.

Gol releases First Advance Estimates: GDP Growth Rate predicted as 5%

New Delhi: India's economy is forecast to grow 5% this fiscal, its slowest pace in 11 years, estimates released by the government on Tuesday showed, increasing pressure on finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to announce measures to revive demand and boost investments in the upcoming budget. The projected growth rate of gross domestic product (GDP) in FY20 is the lowest since FY09, the year of the global financial crisis, when GDP grew 3.1%.

Retail Inflation at 5-year high of 7.35% in December, 2019

Retail inflation soared to a five and a half year high of 7.35% in December 2019, with the shortage of onions driving the surge. According to information released by the National Statistical Office on Monday, retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index was only 2.11% in December 2018 and 5.54% in November 2019. The last time retail inflation was this high was the 7.39% recorded in July 2014, just after Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his first term in office.

MoU between Railways and SBI for door step banking

Indian Railways' and State Bank of India's tie up! The South Central Railway (SCR) zone of Indian Railways has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with SBI or State Bank of India for "doorstep banking" that will enable direct collection of earnings. The MoU will cover all the 585 railway stations of the zone. The MOU was signed on January 13, 2020 by the SCR zone and the SBI officials in Secunderabad.

Amazon to invest 1 billion USD in India; Create 1 million jobs

New Delhi: Amazon.com Inc. founder Jeff Bezos wound up a three-day visit to India by promising to create a million jobs by 2025, as trade minister Piyush Goyal stepped back from his criticism of the world's richest man, saying he welcomes his pledge to invest \$1 billion in Asia's third largest economy. "It's still Day 1," the American billionaire said on the final day of his India visit in a direct message to "customers, sellers and partners" posted on Amazon.in promising more jobs, exports and investments.

Gol launches paperless licensing of petroleum service stations

New Delhi, Jan 20 () The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) on Monday said it has launched paperless licensing process for petroleum service stations such as retail outlets storing and dispensing petrol/diesel for motor conveyances. It was launched through Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) under the Petroleum Rules, 2002.

Amazon partnering with Eastern Railways sets up pick-up kiosk in Kolkata after Mumbai

KOLKATA: Amazon India has entered into a partnership with Eastern Railways to set up a pick-up kiosk at the buzzing Sealdah railway station in Kolkata. This follows after the successful pilot of pickup kiosks in four railway stations across Mumbai in 2019. In a media release, Amazon said with a daily customer footfall of lakhs of people, Sealdah railway station will enable the company to provide a secure and convenient delivery option for Amazon customers in the region.

Fiscal Deficit of Govt touched 132% of full year target

NEW DELHI: The government's fiscal deficit touched 132.4 per cent of the full-year target at December-end mainly due to slower pace of revenue collections, official data showed on Friday. In actual terms, the fiscal deficit or gap between expenditure and revenue was Rs 9,31,725 crore, the data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) showed. The government aims to restrict the gap at 3.3 per cent of the GDP or Rs 7,03,760 crore in the year ending March 2020.

Economic Survey suggests "Assemble In India Model" to create 80 million jobs

NEW DELHI : India should draw a lesson from China's success in exports, and launch a project to 'Assemble in India for the world' that would create 80 million well-paid jobs in the next 10 years, the Economic Survey 2019-20 said on Friday. The survey suggested that with China-US trade tensions at a high, India should step in to seize opportunities in export manufacturing and create well-paid jobs.

APEDA: Eight States finalise Agricultural Action Plan to boost Exports

NEW DELHI: The government on Sunday said eight states, including Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Karnataka, have finalised action plan for agriculture export policy which aims to double such exports. "The Agri Export Policy was announced last year with an objective of doubling the export and ensuring doubling of farmers' income...Many states have nominated nodal agency and nodal officer.

National Pension Scheme for traders: Not successful as expected

The National Pension Scheme for Traders and Self-Employed Persons has failed to gain traction as only about 25,000 persons have opted for the scheme as against the government's target to enrol 50 lakh by March-end. As per government data, only 84 traders and self-employed persons from Delhi have registered for the scheme so far, while 59 persons from Kerala, 54 from Himachal Pradesh, 29 from Jammu and Kashmir and two from Goa have registered.

2636 EV Charging Stations sanctioned under Phase II FAME India

NEW DELHI: The government has given sanction for setting up 2,636 charging stations in 62 cities across 24 states and union territories under the FAME India scheme which will encourage original equipment manufacturers to launch new electric vehicle models, Union Minister Prakash Javadekar said on Friday. The Department of Heavy Industry had invited the expressions of interest from entities for availing incentives under the FAME India Scheme Phase II for deploying charging stations

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

US army kills Iranian Commander Soleimani: India's Concerns

The US killing of Qassem Soleimani, commander of Iran's elite Quds through a drone strike on Friday has fuelled worries of tensions spiraling out of control. India sees the region as part of its extended neighbourhood housing about 7 million expatriate Indians who send home valuable foreign remittance. It also a major source of energy for import-dependent India. The strike that killed Soleimani, seen as an architect of Iran's growing military influence in the West Asia, is expected to slow down India's plans to develop the Chabahar port that New Delhi first spoke of turning into a gateway to access landlocked Central Asia and Afghanistan --bypassing hostile neighbour Pakistan -- in 2003.

Kobe Bryant, a retired NBA star dies in Helicopter Crash

The NBA, and much of America, was in shock on Sunday after Kobe Bryant, one of the greatest basketball players in history, died in a helicopter crash. He was 41. Bryant was on board the helicopter with eight others, including his 13-year-old daughter Gianna, when it crashed at 10am local time near Calabasas, 30 miles north-west of downtown Los Angeles, in foggy weather. The crash ignited brushfires, making it hard for rescue crews to get close to the site. There were no survivors.

Iran withdraws from the JCPOA deal completely

Iran has announced that it will fully withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, following the U.S. targeted strike that killed the country's Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani in Iraq early Friday. "From now on Iran will no longer commit to any limits on the level of uranium enrichment, stockpile of nuclear fuel and also nuclear research and development," Iran's local English daily The Tehran Times reported Sunday, citing a government announcement.

Corona Virus: A new stain of virus found in China

The number of people infected with a new virus in China tripled over the weekend, with the outbreak spreading from Wuhan to other major cities. There are now more than 200 cases, mostly in Wuhan, though the respiratory illness has also been detected in Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen. Three people have died. Japan, Thailand and South Korea have reported cases. The new strain of coronavirus, which causes a type of pneumonia, can pass from person to person, China confirmed.

India attends Hormuz Peace Initiative

Iran will welcome any peace initiative by India to de-escalate tensions with the US following the killing of Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani, the Iranian envoy here said on Wednesday while asserting that his country wants peace not war. Iran's Ambassador to India Ali Chegeni also expressed the hope there would be no further escalation in hostilities between his country and the US. The ambassador's comments came hours after Iran launched over a dozen ballistic missiles targeting at least two bases where US military and coalition forces' are stationed in Iraq. Tehran said it was a "slap in the face" of America.

Raisina Dialogue to be held New Delhi

New Delhi: Raisina Dialogue 2020 to be held here between January 14 and 16 promises to be a mega show amid presence of foreign ministers from across the globe. Besides Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who is the key note speaker at the dialogue, other ministers who will address the meeting include host and Indian foreign minister S Jaishankar, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and his counterparts from Iran, Morocco, Maldives, Bhutan, Australia, South Africa.

Bangladesh: Regularly submerging Island to house 100,000 Rohingya refugees

An island in Bangladesh that was regularly submerged during monsoon seasons is ready to house 100,000 Rohingya refugees, but no date has been announced to begin relocating people from crowded and squalid camps on the country's border with Myanmar, officials said Thursday. Flood protection embankments, houses, hospitals and mosques have been built on Bhasan Char, or floating island, in the Bay of Bengal, officials said.

Myanmar-China sign 33 deals of BRI: Increases China's ease of access of Indian Ocean

NAY PYI TAW: China and Myanmar on Saturday inked 33 deals aimed at speeding up key infrastructure projects to provide Beijing a stepping stone to the Indian Ocean after a meeting between President Xi Jinping and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, as the Communist nation ramped up support to cement its hold over the Southeast Asian country under fire for its treatment of Rohingya Muslims.

India to set up Maritime Research Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka and India vowed to strengthen military ties and widen maritime links with neighbours after security talks, the president's office said Sunday, as China's economic clout increases in the region. China, a long-time regional rival of India, has been widening its footprint in the region, including building ports and expressways and upgrading airports in Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

1 trillion USD required to achieve UN's Decarbonization Target of Shipping Industry

At least \$1 trillion of investment in new fuel technology is needed to enable the shipping industry to meet U.N. targets for cuts in carbon emissions by 2050, a study published on Monday showed. The global shipping fleet, which accounts for 2.2% of the world's CO2 emissions, is under pressure to reduce those emissions and other pollution. About 90% of world trade is transported by sea.

India Nepal inaugurate new check post, Jogbani-Biratnagar at the border

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepali counterpart KP Sharma Oli will on Tuesday jointly inaugurate the second Integrated Check Post (ICP) at Jogbani-Biratnagar, built with Indian assistance to facilitate trade and people's movement. The Prime Minister's Office here had on Monday said that the two Prime Ministers will jointly inaugurate the Integrated Check-Post (ICP) at Jogbani-Biratnagar border between the two countries on Tuesday.

India-Brazil ink 15 agreements during Brazil President's visit on Republic Day

India and Brazil agreed on an action plan to strengthen bilateral partnership and signed fifteen pacts in sectors ranging from agriculture to energy following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro in New Delhi on Saturday. Bolsonaro, who is on a four-day visit to India heading a high-powered delegation comprising eight Ministers, senior officials and several business representatives, will be the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations on Sunday.

Resolution against CAA in European Parliament; India's Measures

New Delhi: To the relief of the Narendra Modi government, the European Parliament decided to defer the vote on the resolution against India's controversial Citizenship Amendment Act till the second half of March. The vote to defer the joint resolution criticising the CAA was approved by 271 votes in favour and 191 against in the parliament. The debate on the joint draft resolution tabled by five major political groups in EP was to be debated on Wednesday, with a statement from the EU Vice President/High Representative for foreign affairs and security policy.

Britain releases new 50 pence coin marking BREXIT

The British government on Sunday unveiled a new 50 pence coin to mark the country's departure from the European Union on January 31. The coin bears the inscription "peace, prosperity and friendship with all nations." "Leaving the European Union is a turning point in our history and this coin marks the beginning of this new chapter," said Finance Minister Sajid Javid.

Passport Renewal Reminder Services begun by Passport Seva Kendras

NEW DELHI : Since many people forget to renew their passports on time, Passport Seva Kendras or offices have started sending out reminder alerts before the expiry of their passport. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said SMSes are being sent to passport holders before expiry of their passport starting September 2019. Two SMS are being sent to the concerned passport holders - one before 9 months and another before 7 months of the date of expiry of their passport.

India deploys INS Vikramaditya amidst Sea Guardians-The China-Pakistan naval drill

India has deployed its aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya in the Arabian Sea at a time China and Pakistan are holding a nine-day mega naval exercise in the region, a move seen as New Delhi sending a signal to its two neighbours.



India erects "steel fence" across Pakistan, Bangladesh border

NEW DELHI : India is erecting a new non-cut 'steel fence' to plug vulnerable and infiltration-prone patches along its sensitive border with Pakistan and Bangladesh, officials said on Friday. They said the single-row fence, with loops of concertina wires on top, is being erected at a 60-km border stretch in near Amritsar in Punjab. A 'pilot project' of this new fence is also being tested at a 7-km stretch in Assam's Silchar along India's border with Bangladesh.

World Games Athlete of the Year, 2019-Title won by Rani Rampal

Indian women's team captain Rani Rampal on Thursday became the first-ever hockey player to win the prestigious 'World Games Athlete of the Year' award. The World Games announced the winner on Thursday after 20 days of polling by sports fans worldwide. in a statement.



Ghana inspired by India's Ujjwala; India to assist; MoU signed

Ghana wants to replicate the highly successful Ujjwala model of giving out cooking gas (LPG) connections to the need and has signed an agreement with state-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC) seeking its assistance and technical expertise in implementation of the African nation's national LPG promotion policy. Alhassan Sulemana Tampuli, Chief Executive, National Petroleum Authority (NPA) of Ghana and L K S Chauhan.

Gujarat to import water soluble fertilizers from China

In a bid to encourage use of high-grade agri-inputs, the Gujarat Agro Industries Corporation (GAIC) has launched imported water-soluble fertilisers in Ahmedabad. The state agency, which promotes agro-based industries in Gujarat, has already imported 300 tonnes of water-soluble fertilizers from China. GAIC's role will be to import, package and sell the imported water-soluble fertilisers to the farmers through its network of dealers across the State.

Supreme Court: African Cheetah permitted to be introduced in India

The Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the Centre to introduce the African cheetah to a suitable habitat in India. Stating that the rare Indian cheetah is almost extinct in the country, the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) had filed an application seeking permission for the introduction of the African cheetah from Namibia. The apex court set up a three-member committee, comprising former director Wildlife of India Ranjit Singh, DG of Wildlife of India Dhananjay Mohan, and DIG, Wildlife, Ministry of Environment and Forests to guide the NTCA in taking a decision on the issue.

Carbon Disclosure Project: India ranks 5th

MUMBAI: India has ranked 5th among the countries surveyed for corporate commitments to science-based targets (SBT), ahead of Germany and Sweden, according to a report by a non-profit organisation released here on Monday. The report found that investors are demanding better disclosure of climate change risk from Indian companies which has spurred better disclosure from India Inc.

WHO: International Health Emergency declared over Corona Virus

The new coronavirus has been declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization, as the outbreak continues to spread outside China. "The main reason for this declaration is not what is happening in China but what is happening in other countries," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The concern is that it could spread to countries with weaker health systems. Meanwhile, the US has told its citizens not to travel to China. The state department issued a level four warning - having previously urged Americans to "reconsider".

Corona Virus: India bans respiratory masks export as Indians evacuated from China

New Delhi: India on Friday banned exports of all kinds of personal protection equipment, including clothing and masks used to protect people from air borne particles. The move assumes significance as there could be a spurt in demand for such products due to outbreak of deadly coronavirus that has claimed more than 200 lives in China while the number of confirmed cases reached near 10,000.

