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India and states

Haryana becomes first state to launch High Risk Pregnancy portal

- Haryana has achieved the distinction of becoming the first state in the country to launch High Risk Pregnancy (HRP) Portal. This portal not only helps in early identification of high-risk pregnant cases up to the grass-roots level but also ensures their timely referral to the civil hospitals for further management and delivery by specialists.
- State health minister, Anil Vij, said on Saturday that this initiative had been lauded by the Niti Ayog and the Union ministry of health and family welfare. The High Risk Pregnancy Policy has been implemented across the state since November, 2017, for identifying 100 per cent name-based high-risk pregnancy cases, and ensuring their delivery by specialists at civil hospitals.
- The Union ministry of health and family welfare and Niti Ayog have acknowledged the portal as a good practice to be implemented at the conference held in Delhi Friday

International kite festival begins in Gujarat

- The international kite festival which attracts kite flyers from across the country and the world, began on Sunday in Ahmedabad.
- The international kite festival was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani at Sabarmati Riverfront. The Governor O.P. Kohli was also present on the occasion.
- Kite enthusiasts from across India and also foreign countries are participating in the week-long festival that is being celebrated across cities in Gujarat.
- The state government-sponsored festival will culminate on January 14, which is celebrated as Uttarayan (Makar Sankranti).
- Around 150 delegates from 44 countries, including the UK, South Korea, New Zealand, China, Indonesia and Malaysia, have arrived here to participate in the event.
- Nearly 100 kite enthusiasts from 18 Indian states and hundreds of them from Ahmedabad also displayed their kite flying skills on the occasion.

Centre sanctions construction of 14,000 bunkers along LoC, International Border

- 4,000 community and individual bunkers would be constructed along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) for border residents facing Pakistani shelling in Jammu division, officials said on Sunday.
- While 7298 bunkers would be constructed along the LoC in the twin districts of Poonch and Rajouri, 7162 underground bunkers would be constructed along the IB in Jammu, Kathua and Samba districts, the officials said here.

- The Centre recently sanctioned the construction of 14,460 individual and community bunkers at a cost of Rs 415.73 crore for people living along the LoC and IB.
- A total of 13,029 individual bunkers and 1431 community bunkers were being constructed, the officials said, adding that the capacity of the 160 square feet individual bunker was eight people, and that of the 800 square feet community bunker was 40 people.
- The officials said 4918 individual and 372 community bunkers would be constructed in Rajouri, and 3076 individual and 243 community bunkers would come up in Kathua district.

Indian Railways to equip all 8,500 stations with Wi-Fi

- All railway stations -- nearly 8,500 across the country, including those in rural and remote areas - will be equipped with Wi-Fi facilities at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore (\$110 million).
- As part of the government's ambitious Digital India initiative, the national transporter has currently commissioned Wi-Fi services at 216 major stations enabling about seven million rail passengers to log on to the free Internet facility.
- As per the plan finalised at a recent meeting, while 1,200 stations have been identified for this facility to primarily cater to rail passengers, about 7,300 stations have been earmarked to not only serve passengers but also local people in rural and remote areas.
- The Wi-Fi facility at these stations in rural and remote areas will be offered to the local population as part of the digital makeover of rural India to promote e-governance.
- Railway stations in rural areas will have kiosks with Wi-Fi that will become digital hot spots offering services like digital banking, Aadhaar generation, issuing government certificates, including birth and death certificates, and filing taxes and paying bills, among others.

MHA ranks Coimbatore's R.S. Puram police station as No. 1 in the country

- The RS Puram police station (B-2) in the city won the ministry of home affairs' trophy for the best police station in the country, in the category of Smart police stations, on Saturday.
- Director general of police TK Rajendran and station inspector T Jothi received the trophy from union home minister Rajnath Singh at the 'All India Conference of Director Generals/Inspector Generals of Police -2017' held at Takenpur in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.
- While Panjagutta police station in Telangana ranked in the second place, Gudumba police station in Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh nabbed the third place.

Govt releases AISHE 2016-17; no. of students enrolling for higher education up by 0.7%

- The number of students enrolling for higher education in India saw a marginal 0.7 per cent increase in 2016-17, according to a government survey released on Friday.
- Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Prakash Javadekar released the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) for the year 2016-17 in New Delhi on Friday. It said the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in higher education had gone up 25.2 per cent in 2016-17 from 24.5 per cent in 2015-16.

- The country has set an aggressive target of achieving 30 per cent GER in higher education by 2020. GER is the total enrolment in higher education among the population in the age group of 18-23.
- According to the survey, the number of universities in the country rose to 864 last year as compared to 799 in 2015-16.
- Tamil Nadu had the highest GER in the country at 46.9 per cent. Bihar is at the bottom with 14.9 per cent of its youth in the age group of 18 to 23 enrolling for higher education.

In a first, ITBP to sponsor India tour for elderly citizens living in border areas

- In a major policy move, China frontier guarding force ITBP will sponsor India-wide excursion tours for senior citizens living in border areas of Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh to build strong ties with the people, described as “strategic assets” by home minister Rajnath Singh.
- The paramilitary force has also decided to almost double, to a dozen in a year, the number of such regular educational tours for the children living in border areas.
- Both the steps have been undertaken for the first time in decades and are understood to be done in the backdrop of India’s strategy to enhance security on its borders.
- Official sources said the new policy to take elderly citizens on excursion tours to mainland India, including the national capital Delhi, was made after Singh recently told the force that they should always keep in mind that the border population living along the Sino-India border were the country’s “strategic assets”.
- Addressing the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) troops at their camp in Uttarakhand’s Joshimath in September after a forward area tour, Singh had directed the frontier guarding force to ensure that this population is taken care of as their migration would put India’s security at risk.

India’s second FTII to be set up in Arunachal Pradesh

- Arunachal Pradesh would get its first Film and Television Institute, being set up by the Union Government as part of tapping the potential of the Northeastern region, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Saturday.
- This would be the second such one in the country. The first Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) was set up in Pune, an autonomous institute operating under the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.
- Dr. Singh said he learnt that only two film shootings had taken place in Arunachal Pradesh in the last few decades as the requisite infrastructure for film shootings and storing the equipment was not there in that State.
- He said the south Indian film industry could take the lead in giving a fillip to the FTII there by shooting films in that State.
- Dr. Singh was speaking at a conference ‘Indian Entertainment Industry: Global Leader in Making’ organised by Bharat Niti and South India Film Chamber of Commerce.

Finance and Banking

Janata Sahakari Bank launches “Jet Pay”

- In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s dream of creating digital India, the leading Urban Cooperative Bank Janata Sahakari Bank Pune has recently launched the application called “Jet Pay” which is based on latest technology of Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- The application launching ceremony was held in Pune and was inaugurated on the hands of Dr. N S Umrani, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU). Bank Chairman Sanjay Lele, CEO Jayant Kakatkar, board members and others were also present during ceremony.
- Jet Pay app can be easily available on the Google Play Store. This application provides Money Transfer, Balance Enquiry, Scan & Pay from UPI Mobile Application.
- It also allows any bank customers to send or collect money in a simple and secured way. By adding accounts of different banks, customers can manage multiple accounts in Jet Pay.
- It allows transaction in different modes like Using Virtual Payment Address, Account id and IFSC, Mobile No and MMID. Jetpay allows creating QR code of VPA or the amount to be taken from sender.

It is headquartered in Pune, Maharashtra

Govt relaxes provisions for levying Minimum Alternate Tax

- In a bid to minimise the hardship faced by companies against whom an application for corporate insolvency resolution process has been admitted under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016, the Centre on Saturday announced a relaxation in the provisions relating to levy of Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT).
- With effect from Financial Year 2017-18, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) stated that a company against whom an application for corporate insolvency resolution process has been admitted by the Adjudicating Authority under section 7 or section 9 or section 10 of the IBC, the amount of total loss brought forward (including unabsorbed depreciation) shall be allowed to be reduced from the book profit for the purposes of levy of MAT under section 115JB of the Income-tax Act, 1961.
- The existing provisions of the aforementioned section provide that for the purposes of levy of MAT in case of a company, the amount of loss brought forward or unabsorbed depreciation, whichever is less as per books of account shall be reduced from the book profit.

Sports

Khelo India logo launch kick starts mission of mass participation and excellence

- The vibrant Khelo India logo, reflecting the freshness, agility and vitality of New India was launched at a simple ceremony by the Union Minister of State (I/C) Youth Affairs and Sports Col

Rajyavardhan Rathore at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here last evening. The logo also conveys an impression of fitness and competitiveness.

- The three-stroke Khelo India logo, designed by Ogilvy India, has in-built modularity, allowing plenty of adaptability and flexibility into endless pictorial forms. The colour of the Indian flag evoke a sense of National pride and team-work. We crowd-sourced the logo design and we were delighted that many of them chose the colours of the National Flag," Col Rathore said.
- The Khelo India School Games, to be broadcast by Star Sports, is being held in collaboration with the School Games Federation of India and National Sports Federations by setting up an Organizing Committee as per procedure of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. SGFI and NSFs will draw up and conduct an annual calendar of competitions leading up to the Khelo India School Games.

Roger Federer Leads Switzerland to Third Hopman Cup Title

- Switzerland won their third Hopman Cup on Saturday as Roger Federer and Belinda Bencic beat Germany's Alexander Zverev and Angelique Kerber 4-3(3) 4-2 in the deciding mixed doubles to secure a 2-1 victory in the final at the Perth Arena.
- It was Federer's second Hopman Cup triumph after victory in 2001 alongside then world number one Martina Hingis.
- Federer had earlier roared back from a set down to beat Zverev 6-7(4) 6-0 6-2 and give the Swiss a 1-0 lead.
- Unbeaten in three singles matches in the tournament before the final as he prepares to defend his Australian Open title later this month, the 19-time grand slam champion failed to wrap up the first set despite hitting 20 winners.
- However, it was only a matter of time before the 36-year-old Federer found his groove as he raced to win the second set 6-0 before sealing victory in the decider with a drop shot.

Julia Goerges defeats Caroline Wozniacki to claim ASB Classic title

- Powerful-serving Julia Goerges stunned top seed Caroline Wozniacki with a straight-sets win in the WTA Auckland Classic final on Sunday.
- The 29-year-old German, with a first serve topping 180 kilometres per hour (112 miles per hour), sent down 11 aces on her way to winning the Auckland title for the first time in her ninth attempt 6-4, 7-6 (7/4).
- It also stretched the world number 14's winning streak to 14 matches including winning successive WTA tournaments in Moscow and Zhuhai late last year.
- Goerges made an immediate statement at the start of each set with service breaks.
- Games went with service from there in the first set, which Goerges sealed with her seventh ace.
- Wozniacki double faulted at 15-40 at the start of the second set before she began to fight back.

Appointments

Diplomat T S Tirumurti Appointed Economic Relations Secretary

- India's High Commissioner to Kuala Lumpur T S Tirumurti was appointed the Secretary (Economic Relations) in the External Affairs Ministry on Friday, according to an official order.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment to the post, in place of Vijay Keshav Gokhale, who was recently named as the Foreign Secretary, the order issued by the personnel ministry said.
- Tirumurti is a 1985-batch officers of Indian Foreign Service (IFS).
- He assumed his current assignment as the High Commissioner of India to Malaysia on December 20, 2013.

World

Volcano erupts for first time in Papua New Guinea

- A dormant volcano erupted for the very first time in a dramatic fashion, spewing lava and sending an ash cloud at around two kilometres above the sea level.
- The local media reported that the volcano, located on the Kadovar Island, situated in north-eastern Papua New Guinea, lay dormant until yesterday when it began to erupt at around noon. The volcano is still spewing lava, stripping large parts of land in the island.
- Experts are calling the eruption the "first surprise volcano to erupt in 2018".
- At least 600 residents of the volcanic island were evacuated after the local authorities received distress calls from them.

Obituaries

Saksham Yadav, world champion weightlifter, dies

- World champion Saksham Yadav succumbed to his injuries on Sunday evening at the AIIMS Trauma Centre in New Delhi.
- Saksham Yadav was admitted in an "extremely critical" condition at the AIIMS Trauma Centre after a car he was travelling in met with an accident in the early hours on Sunday.
- Five men, including Saksham, have died while one other person continues to battle for life after their car met with an accident near the Delhi-Haryana border.
- Saksham, who won a gold medal in the 2017 world weightlifting championship for India, was seriously injured along with another weightlifter, Rohit, 19, a police official said.

French pop star France Gall passes away at 70

- Singer France Gall, whose hits — including a Eurovision triumph with Serge Gainsbourg — made her an icon of French pop music, has died aged 70. Gall passed away on Sunday after a two-year struggle against cancer, French media reported.
- Gall revived her career in the 1970s with Michel Berger, another influential French songwriter whom she later married and with whom she had two children. In addition to a string of chart successes into the 1980s, she also took a turn on stage in the hit French-Canadian musical Starmania.
- She halted her career in the 1990s following the deaths of Berger and her daughter Pauline.
- Gall is the second French 1960s icon to have died in the past two months, following the death of rock singer Johnny Hallyday, dubbed “the French Elvis”, in early December.

Lagaan actor Shrivallabh Vyas passes away

- Lagaan actor Shrivallabh Vyas passed away on Sunday morning in Jaipur.
- Shrivallabh Vyas had appeared in over 60 Hindi films, with occasional stints in regional cinema, television and theatre. He had to take a break from acting in 2008 after he collapsed in his hotel room in Gujarat.
- Some of Shrivallabh’s popular films are Sarfarosh, Abhay, Aan: Men at Work, Shool, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero and Sankat City. He also did a few theatre plays among which Virasat (1985) gained him recognition.
- Vyas was known for his impactful characters. His character of Ishwar who tried to sabotage Bhuvan’s team in Lagaan and his portrayal of Muhammad Ali Jinnah in Ketan Mehta’s Sardar deserve a special mention.

John Young, who set records in space with NASA, passes away at 87

- Legendary astronaut John Young, who walked on the Moon and later commanded the first space shuttle flight, has died, NASA said on Saturday. Young was 87.
- The space agency said Young died on Friday night at home in Houston following complications from pneumonia.
- NASA called Young one of its pioneers — the only agency astronaut to go into space as part of the Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle programs, and the first to fly into space six times. He was the ninth man to walk on the Moon.
- Young was the only spaceman to span NASA’s Gemini, Apollo and shuttle programs, and became the first person to rocket away from Earth six times. Counting his takeoff from the Moon in 1972 as commander of Apollo 16, his blastoff tally stood at seven, for decades a world record.

Atomic scientist professor Baldev Raj passes away

- Atomic scientist Prof Baldev Raj, 70, passed away in Pune early on Saturday while attending a conference in Pune. Having held several key posts, Raj was serving as the direction, National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS), Bengaluru, since 2014.

- His death was sudden and no immediate confirmation about the cause was available, even as it was clear that he was healthy and fit to travel to attend the conference.
- Pursuits of Prof Raj in basic science and applications with multi and interdisciplinary approaches and teams have been regarded as substantial contributions in the domains of energy, cultural heritage, medical technologies, nanoscience and technology and education.

Comedian and Actor Jerry Van Dyke of 'Coach' Dies at 86

- Comedian and Coach actor Jerry Van Dyke has died at the age of 86.
- The actor died in his Arkansas ranch Friday, the New York Times reported. Jerry Van Dyke's wife Shirley Ann Jones told the Times that his health had been deteriorating since he was in a traffic accident back in 2015.
- Jerry Van Dyke also appeared on his brother's show The Dick Van Dyke Show as Stacey Petrie, the brother of Dick Van Dyke's Rob Petrie character. The Times noted that Jerry Van Dyke's casual style served as a foil to his brother Dick Van Dyke's more "dignified persona." In addition to The Dick Van Dyke Show, Jerry Van Dyke appeared on The Andy Griffith Show, My Mother the Car and Accidental Family.