

Daily News Decode

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India and France to hold annual Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi today



- National Security Advisor Ajit Doval will lead the Indian delegation while the French delegation will be led by Emmanuel Bonne, Diplomatic Advisor to the French President.
- In a statement, External Affairs Ministry said, the two sides will hold discussions on wide-ranging bilateral and global issues. Mr Bonne will also call on other Indian dignitaries.
- The last edition of the Strategic Dialogue was held in February last year in Paris.

Centre decides to form committee to protect language, culture & land of Ladakh



- Centre has decided to form a committee to protect the language, culture and land of Ladakh and ensuring citizen's participation in the Union Territory's development.
- The Committee will be headed by the Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy and will include elected representatives from Ladakh, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, central government, and the Ladakh administration.
- The decision to form the Committee came yesterday after Union Home Minister Amit Shah met a 10-member delegation from Ladakh who expressed their views about the need to protect Ladakh's unique cultural identity.
- The delegation also spoke about the geographic location and strategic importance of Ladakh, its demographic changes and the need for generating more employment opportunities in the UT.

PM to inaugurate New Rewari - New Madar Section of Western Dedicated Freight Corridor



- Prime Minister will dedicate to the nation the 306 Kilometer New Rewari - New Madar Section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor today.
- He will also flag off the world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train hauled by electric traction from New Ateli -New Kishangarh during the event.
- The New Rewari - New Madar section of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor is situated in Haryana and Rajasthan.
- It consists of nine newly built dedicated freight corridor stations which includes three junction stations in New Rewari, New Ateli and New Phulera.
- The opening of this stretch will benefit various industries in Rewari - Manesar, Narnaul, Phulera and Kishangarh areas of Rajasthan and Haryana and will also enable better usage of the container depot of CONCOR at Kathuwas.
- This section will also ensure seamless connectivity with the western ports of Kandla, Pipavav, Mundhra, and Dahej situated in Gujarat.
- With the inauguration of this section, seamless connectivity between the Western and Eastern dedicated freight corridors will be achieved.

The world's first Double Stack Long Haul



- The world's first Double Stack Long Haul 1.5 Kilometer long Container Train hauled by electric traction from New Ateli -New Kishangarh during the event.
- The Double Stack Long Haul Container Train Operation which adds an enhanced axle load of 25 tons will maximize capacity utilization.
- These wagons on a long-haul double stack container train on the western freight corridor can carry four times in terms of container units compared to the current traffic on Indian Railways.

The Draft 5th National Science Technology and Innovation Policy



- The 5th National Science Technology and Innovation Policy finalized and available for public consultation is guided by the broad vision of achieving technological self-reliance and positioning India among the top three scientific superpowers in the decade to come, to attract, nurture, strengthen and retain critical human capital through 'people-centric' science technology and Innovation Ecosystem.
- The policy drafted through a4 track process of consultation aims to bring about profound changes through short, medium, and long-term mission mode projects by building a nurtured ecosystem that promotes translational as well as foundational research and innovation among both individuals and organizations in alignment with global standards.
- The objective of the draft policy is to identify and address the strengths and weaknesses of the Indian STI ecosystem to catalyse the socio-economic development of the country and also make the Indian STI ecosystem globally competitive.
- It aims to foster, develop, and nurture a robust system for evidence and stakeholder-driven STI planning, information, evaluation, and policy research in India.
- An India-centric Equity & Inclusion (E&I) charter will be developed for tackling all forms of discrimination, exclusions, and inequalities in STI leading to an institutional mechanism and an inclusive culture facilitated through equal opportunity for all marginalized groups
- The STIP Secretariat was coordinated, supported, and guided by the Office of PSA, NITI Aayog, and DST.

Seventh Trade Policy Review of India at the WTO begins



- The TPR is an important mechanism under the WTO's monitoring function, and involves a comprehensive peer-review of the Member's national trade policies. India's last TPR took place in 2015.
- With an eye on the rapidly expanding size of the Indian market, leading industrialized and developed countries sought greater liberalization of India's trade policy, especially in the area of agriculture, harmonizing its standards regime with international standards as well as reducing anti-dumping and other trade-remedy measures.

India-Germany Leaders' Video-Teleconference



- The Prime Minister appreciated the long-standing role of Chancellor Merkel in providing stable and strong leadership at the European and global stage, and thanked her for guiding the growth of the India-Germany Strategic Partnership.
- The two leaders discussed key issues of mutual importance including the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, bilateral ties, regional and global issues, particularly India-EU relations.
- The Prime Minister welcomed Germany's decision to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA), and expressed his desire to further strengthen cooperation with Germany under the platform of Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI).
- Noting that this year marks the 70th anniversary of setting up of bilateral relations between India and Germany and 20th anniversary of the Strategic Partnership, the two leaders agreed to hold the sixth Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC) at an early date in 2021 and to set an ambitious agenda for the same.

9K families in Maha slums get addresses based on latitudes, longitudes



- At least 9,000 families living in slums in Maharashtra's Pune, Thane, Navi Mumbai and Kolhapur got independent digital addresses, based on their latitudes and longitudes, called 'Plus Codes'. "For basic facilities...navigable location address is a must in the digital era," a Pune-based NGO said.
- "Lack of granular data has...hampered governments from reaching out to vulnerable families," NGO added.

Cryptocurrency market value crosses \$1 trillion for the 1st time



- The total market value of cryptocurrencies passed \$1 trillion for the first time on Thursday.
- The market value has climbed fivefold in the past year, as per CoinGecko data.
- Bitcoin, which rose 4% on Thursday to hit a record high of \$37,000, represents around two-thirds of the cryptocurrency market value. Ether represents about 14% of the market value.

For first time in 55 years, chief guest unlikely at R-Day parade



- This year, Republic Day celebrations may be truncated on account of the pandemic.
- Last year's Independence Day celebrations had been scaled down as well.
- An invitation to be chief guest at India's Republic Day is a special honour for the visiting foreign dignitary.
- New Delhi has been weaving strategy with hospitality while deciding on the chief guest.
- The choice is dictated by a number of factors — strategic and diplomatic, business interests, and geo-politics.

Meeting India air quality targets across South Asia may prevent 7% of pregnancy losses: Study



- An estimated 349,681 pregnancy losses per year in South Asia were associated with exposure to PM 2.5 concentrations that exceeded India's air quality standard (more than 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$), accounting for 7 per cent of annual pregnancy loss in the region from 2000 to 2016.
- This is the first study to quantify the burden in South Asia, which is the most populous region in the world and has the highest rate of pregnancy loss,

Avian flu: more migratory birds reported dead in Himachal



- As many as 336 migratory birds were reported dead in Himachal Pradesh's Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary area
- In all, avian influenza (H5N1) has led to the death of around 2,736 migratory birds in the sanctuary area in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh

Theme-based monitoring for Rajasthan forestry works



- A new theme-based monitoring mechanism has been developed by the Forest department in Rajasthan to enable the field officers to ensure progress and timely completion of works for protection of flora and fauna.
- The new method will involve selection of a specific theme for every week.
- The Forest department apprised its officials in all districts of the theme-based mechanism

Project at Basavakalyan



- Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for the 'New Anubhava Mantapa' in Basavakalyan, the place where 12th century poet-philosopher Basaveshwara lived for most of his life.
- Basavakalyan, an important pilgrim centre for Lingayats
- The New Anubhava Mantapa, as envisaged now, will be a six-floor structure in the midst of the 7.5 acre plot and represent various principles of Basaveshwara's philosophy.
- It will showcase the 12th Century Anubhava Mantapa (often referred to as the "first Parliament of the world") established by him in Basavakalyan, where philosophers and social reformers held debates.
- The building will adopt the Kalyana Chalukya style of architecture.

Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh:



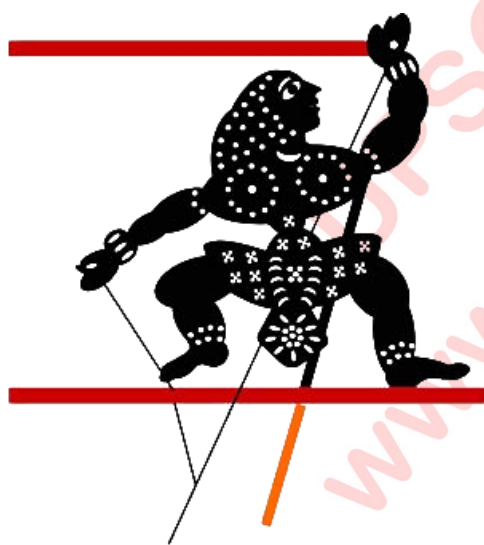
- Kanha Tiger Reserve, also called Kanha National Park, is one of the tiger reserves of India and the largest national park of Madhya Pradesh, state in the heart of India.
- The present-day Kanha area is divided into two sanctuaries, Hallon and Banjar, of 250 and 300 km² respectively.
- Kanha National Park was created on 1 June 1955 and in 1973 was made the Kanha Tiger Reserve. Today it stretches over an area of 940 km² in the two districts Mandla and Balaghat.
- The park has a significant population of the Royal Bengal tiger, Indian leopards, the sloth bear, barasingha and Indian wild dog.
- The Kanha National Park is spread across the area of 940 sq km in the Maikal chain of hills

The importance of social interactions (Written by Asha Venugopalan)



- Of the many victims of the COVID-19 pandemic are social interactions and the millions of friendships that should have formed at schools and workplaces.
- what happens when everyone spends a year without forming new friendships or circumscribing their interactions to limited online (or offline) meetings?
- The pandemic's collateral damage may include tolerance and understanding between the majority and the minority.
- The idea was simple: contact (with some caveats) reduces prejudice.
- Multiple studies have noted that frequent interactions between members of different religious groups vastly reduce negative perceptions and anxiety towards 'the other'.

When art comes to the audience (Written by Kunal Ray)



- The International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), hailed by many as the best film festival in the country, recently announced that the festival will be held across four locations in Kerala between February-March this year
- During such an event, film lovers from different parts of the State and country travel to the location to participate in the proceedings and catch up with the latest works in the world of cinema.
- Film festivals, however, are not just screening avenues, but also spaces for dialogue and deliberation on the nature and craft of filmmaking.
- A film festival is thus much more than an event — it induces a culture of learning and thoughtful debate around the art of films.
- Film festivals usually offer a combination of foreign films with a generous dose of indigenous and homegrown filmmaking practices that are scheduled during the event.
- Only films can induce cinema literacy, and for such literacy to be broad-based, film festivals are crucial.

GAGAN



- GAGAN is an acronym for GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation.
- It is a Space Based Augmentation System (SBAS) jointly developed by ISRO and AAI to provide the best possible navigational services over Indian FIR (Flight Information Region) with the capability of expanding to neighbouring FIRs.
- It will serve as a low cost substitute to GPS service over India, Bay of Bengal, South-east Asia and Middle East along with expansion up to Africa.
- GAGAN is a system of satellites and ground stations that provide GPS signal corrections, giving you better position accuracy.
- GPS alone does not meet the ICAOs navigational requirements for accuracy, integrity and availability.
- GAGAN corrects for GPS signal errors caused by ionospheric disturbances, timing and satellite orbit errors and also it provides vital information regarding the health of each satellite.
- One essential component of the GAGAN project is the study of the ionospheric behaviour over the Indian region.
- It is primarily being used in the aviation sector for precise position information Services.
- And others services include Forest management, Railways signalling, Scientific Research for Atmospheric Studies, Natural Resource and Land Management, Location based services, Mobile, Tourism.
- GAGAN consists of a set of ground reference stations positioned across various locations in India called Indian Reference Station (INRES), which gathers GPS satellite data.

3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP)



- 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) is a collaborative project aimed at developing globally acceptable specifications for third generation (3G) mobile systems.
- Established in 1997, the project was based on the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) specifications and the International Telecommunication Union's Mobile Telecommunications-2000 effort.

- The 3GPP caters to a large majority of the telecommunications networks in the world.
- It is the standard body behind UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System), which is the 3G upgrade of GSM.
- Most cellular networks on the planet are based on GSM.
- The 3GPP unites telecommunications standards organizations around the world such as Japan's Association of Radio Industries and Businesses (ARIB), the Telecommunications Technology Committee (TTC), the China Communications Standards Association (CCSA), South Korea's Telecommunications Technology Association (TTA), the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), and the Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS).
- The 3GPP has begun outlining the extensive specifications required to design and build out a 5G network.

Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology Demonstration Programme (RLV-TD)



- RLV-TD is India's first uncrewed flying testbed developed for the Indian Space Research Organisation's Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology Demonstration Programme.
- It is a scaled down prototype of an eventual two-stage-to-orbit reusable launch vehicle.
- It is a prototype vehicle developed to achieve the Two-Stage To Orbit (TSTO) Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV).
- Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) handles the RLV-TD programme.
- The Technology Demonstration Programme consists of the development of a hypersonic rocket with air-breathing engines and the reusable launch vehicle
- The first test-flight took place on 23rd May 2016 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh RLV will not be used in the Gaganyaan mission.
- A Space Capsule will be used in Gaganyaan Mission.
- RLV-TD is a winged body aerospace vehicle that operates in hypersonic flight regime.
- It is capable of launching satellites into orbit around earth and then re-enter the atmosphere
- It has been configured to act as a flying testbed to evaluate various technologies, including hypersonic flight, autonomous landing, powered cruise flight.