

NATIONAL

Government allows women to work in underground mines

- Union Ministry of Labour has allowed women to work in underground mines and eased restrictions that prohibited them from working night shifts (7 pm and 6 am) in surface mines or open cast mines.
- This move is aimed at bringing about greater gender equality and generates more employment opportunities for women in mining sector.
- Earlier, employment of women in opencast and underground mines was restricted under Mines Act, 1952 due to hazardous nature of work. It also restricted employment of women in opencast or above ground workings of mine during night hours between 7 pm and 6 am.
- There was demand from several women employees' groups, mining industry and students enrolled with various institutions pursuing mining engineering courses at different forums, requesting government to provide women equal employment opportunity for working in mines.

New Rules

- It amends Section 46 of Mines Act, 1952 which earlier restricted women from working in mines as it was considered hazardous.
- It allows owner of mine to deploy women between 7 pm and 6 am in any mine above ground. In the case of underground mines, women can be deployed between 7 pm and 6 am in supervisory, technical and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.
- Such deployments will be made after obtaining written consent of woman and shall be in a group of not less than three women in a shift. Women will be also provided with adequate facilities and safeguards regarding occupational safety, security and health.

ECI to provide braille voter slips to blind voters in Lok Sabha elections

- Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced to provide visually impaired and blind voters with braille voter slip in coming Lok Sabha elections this year.
- Braille voter slips Chief electoral officers (CEOs) will issue these accessible photo voter slips with braille to voters who are visually impaired or blind.
- The braille enabled slips were also used in recently held assembly elections.
- ECI is also planning to provide braille election photo identity cards to visually challenged. Electronic voting machines (EVMs) already have braille feature. The ballot paper pasted on EVMs with name and symbol of candidates is Braille enabled.
- This initiative has been launched as part of ECI's strategic framework for 'accessible elections'.

Accessible Elections

- It is compilation of guidelines issued by ECI and Department for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Union Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment.
- It was adopted on 4th July 2018 in National Consultation on Accessible Elections as part of ECI's series of measures to maximize participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Election Process and premise of 'No voter to be left behind'.

ASEAN-India Youth Summit 2019 organised

- The 2nd ASEAN-India Youth Summit is being organised in Guwahati ,Assam.
- It is organised by India Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs and Government of Assam.
- The theme of the summit is 'Connectivity is the pathway to shared prosperity'.

INTERNATIONAL

IORA meet on Disaster Risk Management held in New Delhi

- Meeting of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Cluster Group on Disaster Risk Management (DRM) was held in New Delhi with aim to help strengthen cooperation in disaster response.
- It was organized by Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in collaboration with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
- DRM is one of priority areas of IORA and its Action Plan (2017-2021) has specific goals to improve resilience in IORA countries.

Indian-Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

- It is inter-governmental organisation consisting of coastal states bordering Indian Ocean.
- It was first established as Indian Ocean Rim Initiative in Mauritius in March 1995 and was formally launched in March 1997 by conclusion of multilateral treaty known as Charter of IORA for Regional Co-operation (IOR-ARC).
- Its coordinating Secretariat is located at Ebene, Mauritius.
- Basic areas of IORA are: maritime security, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management, disaster risk reduction, academic and scientific cooperation and tourism promotion and cultural exchanges.
- Membership: IORA has many disaster-prone countries among its 22 members viz. India, Indonesia, Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Asian Elephant Alliance launches initiative to secure elephant corridors

- Asian Elephant Alliance has launched initiative to raise ₹20 million (Rs.187.16 crore) to secure 96 remaining elephant corridors, old and new across the country in the next ten years.
- These 96 elephant corridors are out of total 101 identified corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.
- Five corridors- two in Meghalaya and one each in Assam, Kerala, and Karnataka already have been secured by Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) with help of conservation partners and support of State governments.

Asian Elephant Alliance

- Every year, India loses nearly 400 people and about 50 elephants to man-animal conflict due to ever shrinking habitat of animal.
- It is umbrella of five NGOs-Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), IUCN Netherlands, World Land Trust (WLT) and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).
- It was launched on July 2015 in London, United Kingdom.
- It aims to secure safe passage for India's elephants, which comprise approximately half of the world's wild Asian elephant population and reduce human-elephant conflict.

ECONOMY

Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme Series 6 to be opened from 4th February 2019

- The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2018-19 (Series 6) has been opened from Monday, 4th February 2019 and will continue till Friday, 8th February 2019.
- Investors who apply online and make the payment through digital mode will get a discount of 50 rupees per gram from the issue price.
- The issue price of the Bond during this period will be Rs 3,326 per gram.
- These bonds are being sold through banks, designated post offices, and stock exchanges-NSE and BSE.

What is the sovereign gold bond scheme?

- Sovereign Gold Bond (SGB) Scheme is a form of investment offered by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on behalf of Government of India. Gold Bonds are denominated in grams and can be purchased as an alternative to physical gold. The SGB can be easily redeemed to cash.
- According to reports, the biggest advantage of holding gold bond instead of physical gold is the payment of interest as sovereign bondholders would be paid periodical interest @ 2.50% yearly on the quantity of initial investment.
- There is no interest paid on physical gold holding.
- The sovereign gold bond scheme was launched in November 2015 with an objective to reduce the demand for physical gold. Under the scheme, the bonds are denominated in units of one gram of gold and multiples thereof.
- The first tranche of the scheme was opened for subscription from October 15-19 and the bonds were issued on October 23.
- SGBs can be purchased from banks in India.
- An individual who is interested in buying gold bond must make a minimum investment of one gram.

- The maximum limit of gold bond that can be purchased is 4 KG for individuals, 4 Kg for HUFs and 20 Kg for trusts and similar entities per fiscal (April-March) notified by the Government from time to time.
- According to reports, the tenure of the gold bond will be for a period of 8 years with an exit option from 5th year onwards to be exercised on the interest payment dates.
- These bonds will be issued by the Reserve Bank of India on behalf of the government in five tranches.

S. No.	Tranche	Period of Subscription	Date of Issuance
1	2018-19 Series II	October 15-19, 2018	October 23, 2018
2	2018-19 Series III	November 05-09, 2018	November 13, 2018
3	2018-19 Series IV	December 24-28, 2018	January 01, 2019
4	2018-19 Series V	January 14–18, 2019	January 22, 2019
5	2018-19 Series VI	February 04-08, 2019	February 12, 2019

SBI to roll out YONO Krishi and Global apps in April

- After receiving overwhelming response to its **YONO (You Only Need One) app**, the country’s largest lender. State Bank of India, now plans to launch **YONO Krishi and YONO Global apps** in April, according to its chairman Rajnish Kumar.
- **YONO Krishi**, which will have all the retail facilities, will also cater to the specific needs of farmers and create an ecosystem for them. They can purchase products, know weather and soil information, open accounts and apply for loans through this application.
- **The YONO Global** will cater to NRI citizens and people on the move.

PERSON IN NEWS

Pope Francis lands in Abu Dhabi, becomes 1st pontiff to visit Arabian peninsula

- Pope Francis landed in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on a historic visit, becoming the first pontiff to visit the Arabian Peninsula.
- He was received at the airport by the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed.
- The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi said, they warmly welcome Holy Father, Pope Francis.
- The Pope is visiting the UAE on the invitation of the Crown Prince to take part in an interfaith Conference.

Pradeep Singh Kharola appointed Civil Aviation Secretary

- Pradeep Singh Kharola (IAS officer -1985 batch- Karnataka cadre) has been appointed as the Secretary of the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Kharola will take over from Rajiv Nayan Choubey.
- Currently, Mr. Kharola is the chief managing director (CMD) and Chairperson of Air India (from 9th January, 2018).

Francois Laborde Conferred France’s Highest Civilian Honour

- Father Francois Laborde (92-year) was conferred the Légion d’Honneur (Legion of Honour), the highest civilian award of France, in recognition of his work for specially-abled children.
- He is the third person from the state to have been awarded the Legion of Honor after Satyajit Ray (film maestro- in 1987) and Soumitra Chatterjee(actor).

SPORTS

Nepal's Paudel Becomes Youngest Half-Centurion in International Cricket

- Aged just 16 years and 146 days, Nepal's Rohit Paudel became the youngest male player to record a half-century in international cricket when he hit 55 in 58 balls in a One-Day International against the UAE.
- Paudel bettered the record held by Sachin Tendulkar who had made 59 in a Test against Pakistan at the age of 16 years and 213 days.
- In ODI cricket the record was held by Shahid Afridi who creamed a maiden 50-over century aged 16 years and 217 days in his maiden international innings against Sri Lanka.

Nepal's Sundeep Jora becomes youngest player to hit T20I fifty

- Nepal's Sundeep Jora became the youngest cricketer to score a half-century in T20 Internationals. Aged 17 years and 103 days, Jora achieved the feat during a T20I match against UAE in Dubai on Thursday. The youngster scored an unbeaten 53 off 46 balls in the match.
- Earlier, Nepal's Rohit Paudel etched his name in the history books, becoming the youngest player in international cricket to hit a half-century, surpassing legendary Sachin Tendulkar and Shahid Afridi.

India slipped to 103rd in latest FIFA ranking

- With the end of AFC Asian cup in UAE, the world ranking list had some changes, in which India is dropped out of the top 100 ranks, but Belgium's pole position remained same.

Changes in the Rank List:

- India -103, Qatar – 55, Japan -27, Korea Republic -38 and UAE – 67

Vidarbha clinched second successive Ranji Title defeating Saurashtra

- Defending champions Vidarbha won the Ranji Trophy 2018-19, which is 85th season of the Ranji Trophy by defeating Saurashtra.

Obituaries

Veteran Marathi actor Ramesh Bhatkar passed away

- Veteran Marathi actor Ramesh Bhatkar (70-years) passed away at a hospital in Mumbai.
- His most recent movie was 'The Accidental Prime Minister'.

AWARDS AND HONOURS

Azim Premji honored lifetime achievement award in EOY 2018

- Azim Premji, Chairman of Wipro Ltd will be felicitated with the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- A highly respected business leader, Premji has been instrumental in developing the Indian information technology industry.
- He led Wipro's transformation from a vegetable oil business into a multi-business technology organization with revenues of over \$9 billion.
- He is also a Padma Bhushan and a Padma Vibhushan awardee.

MISCELLANEOUS

EXERCISE RAHAT

- A disaster relief exercise 'Exercise Rahat' will be demonstrated in Jaipur, Kota and Alwar in Rajasthan on Feb 11-12, 2019. Representatives from Armed Forces, National Disaster Management Response Mechanism (NDMRM), SDMA Rajasthan and DLMA's will be participating in the exercise.

ONE LINER

- The Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Ranjan Gogoi has inaugurated the new two-storied building of Andhra Pradesh High Court at Nelapadu in Amaravathy.
- Dr M. Manikandan, Minister for Information Technology of Tamil Nadu has inaugurated 'ICT Academy Bridge 2019' conference in Chennai.
- Tamil films actor Vijay Serthupathi has launched a mobile app "DigiCop" at the Commissioner's office, Vepery in Chennai.
- The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas observed the Ujjwala Utsav to celebrate the stellar role played by all stakeholders such as district nodal officers, policy makers, distributors and beneficiaries in making Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) a success.