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India

Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar launches 'Paudhagiri' Campaign

- Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on July 16, 2018 launched the 'Paudhagiri' campaign with an aim to increase the green cover in Haryana.
- CM Khattar launched the 'Paudhagiri' campaign by planting a 'maulsari' sapling in the Tau Devi Lal Sports Complex premises of Gurgaon.
- Under this plantation drive, 22 lakh students from class 6 to 12 of all government and private schools in Haryana will plant a sapling each during three months of monsoon -- July, August and September.
- Every student will get a sapling from the Forest department and they can plant it either in the courtyard of their house, field or park or school or at any open space available in their proximity.

High level Inter ministerial meeting held to deliberate on issues of pollution affecting Taj Mahal

- A High level Inter ministerial meeting was held on July 16, 2018 in New Delhi to deliberate on various issues and actions to be taken to conserve The Taj Mahal.
- The meeting focussed on action points needed to overcome Air and Water pollution in and around the Taj Mahal.
- The meeting was chaired by Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping & Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Nitin Gadkari and was attended by Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan.
- The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath also attended the meeting.

Kerala: Over 40,000 school classrooms turn hi-tech

- The schools in Kerala are fast becoming digital with hi-tech classrooms equipped with advanced gadgets, including laptops and multi-media projectors, coming up in over 40,000 classrooms in the state.
- The Kerala Infrastructure and Technology for Education (KITE) has enabled 40,083 classrooms in select state-run and aided schools to become hi-tech, as a part of the state government's ambitious 'Hi-Tech school' project.
- KITE, formerly IT@School project under the state General Education Department, is a special purpose vehicle envisaged to promote IT education in state schools.

Centre opposes PIL barring candidates from contesting election from more than one constituency

- The Union Government has opposed in the Supreme Court a PIL for barring candidates from contesting from more than one constituency in a general election.
- In an affidavit, filed by Deputy Secretary with the Ministry of Law and Justice, KK Saxena, the government stated that the plea failed to establish that fundamental rights of citizens were being infringed upon in any way.
- The affidavit, which would be considered by a bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, said a person has been allowed under the Representative of Peoples Act to contest election from two constituencies simultaneously and the law has to be amended for disallowing the same.

BBC World Service launches its first Gujarati language television news bulletin

- The BBC World Service has launched its first Gujarati language television news bulletin.
- 'BBC Samachar' will be broadcast live five days a week from Delhi and will air on the broadcaster's partner station GSTV at 8 pm.
- The launch is part of a wider BBC World Service expansion, which has seen 12 new language services launched around the world over the last 12 months.
- Four new language services have been launched online in India - Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi and Telugu.

Gujarat government launches measles-rubella vaccination drive

- The Gujarat government on July 16, 2018 launched a vaccination campaign to protect children from measles and rubella for which it has received a Rs 300 crore grant from the Centre.
- The campaign, which will last for five weeks, will seek to vaccinate 1.6 crore children between the age of nine months to 15 years across the state against measles and rubella.
- The state has got a 100 per cent grant of Rs 300 crore for the campaign which its plans to implement on a mission mode.

ISRO scientists successfully test Vikas Engine

- ISRO said on July 15, 2018 that it has successfully conducted a ground test of its high thrust version of the Vikas Engine that would improve the payload capability of the space agency's launch vehicles.
- The Vikas Engine is the workhorse liquid rocket engine used to power the second stage of the ISRO's trusted Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- It is also used in the second stage and also at the four strap on stages of Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV) and in the twin engine core liquid stage (L110) of GSLV Mk-III.
- During the test, the propulsion parameters were found to be "satisfactory" and "closely" matched the predictions.

NGT plans to hear cases using video-conferencing

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is planning to conduct hearings through video-conferencing to decide the environmental cases pending in its regional benches.

- The NGT's functioning has been hit by vacancies. The apex environment watchdog is functioning with less than one-third of its sanctioned strength of 20 officials besides the chairperson.
- Recently many cases from regional benches in Pune, Bhopal, Chennai and Kolkata have been transferred to the principal bench in Delhi due to non-availability of judicial and expert members.
- Due to this, petitioners had to travel to Delhi to attend hearings which turned out to be a financial and physical burden on them. A total of 3,236 cases were pending with the tribunal till April.

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UK ranked world's top 'soft power'

- The United Kingdom has been ranked at the top in the 2018 'Soft Power 30' index, which was published last week by the UK-based strategic communications consultancy firm Portland and the University of Southern California Center on Public Diplomacy.
- The index, which comprises a ranking list of 30 countries, does not feature India.
- While the United Kingdom was ranked first with a score of 80.55, France was placed at a close second with 80.14 points.
- The third-ranked nation was Germany with 78.87 points, followed by the United States at the fourth position with 77.80 points and then Japan at fifth with 76.22 points.
- Canada was ranked sixth with 75.70 points, while Switzerland and Sweden were ranked at the seventh and eighth position with 74.96 and 74.77 points respectively.
- The final two in the top ten included the Netherlands at the ninth position with 73.79 points and Australia at the tenth rank with 72.91 points.

World

EU, Canada, Norway warn Sri Lanka over capital punishment

- European Union (EU) member states along with government of Canada and Norway have warned Sri Lanka against ending its moratorium on capital punishment and said the island risked losing trade concessions if it went ahead.
- The diplomatic missions based in Colombo wrote a letter to Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena on July 16 stating that they fully oppose the recent statement by him that he will reinstate the death penalty.

Peru declares 60-day state of emergency on its border with Colombia

- Peru has declared a 60-day state of emergency on its border with Colombia in order to guarantee security in a region rife with drug trafficking.

- President Martin Vizcarra said that the decision was taken as there are security problems created by Colombian citizens crossing the border and there was a need to re-establish the state's presence.
- The police and armed forces used five helicopters and three planes in joint operations with their Colombian counterparts in the first patrol in the area.

Appointments

Goldman Sachs appoints David Solomon as new CEO

- Goldman Sachs named David Solomon its new chief executive Tuesday, implementing a much-telegraphed succession plan as it expands beyond its Wall Street roots to the broader consumer market.
- The prestigious investment bank said Solomon will assume the top executive job on October 1, succeeding longtime chief Lloyd Blankfein, who will remain as chairman through the end of the year. Solomon will then succeed Blankfein as chairman.

Awards

Aruna Sairam to be conferred 'Sangita Kalanidhi' award

- Well-known carnatic vocalist Aruna Sairam has been selected for this year's 'Sangita Kalanidhi' award of the Music Academy here.
- At its meeting held on July 15, 2018, the Academy's executive committee unanimously selected Sairam for the award and also announced the winners of various other awards.
- Sairam, one of the most popular carnatic vocalists, has been chosen for the coveted Sangita Kalanidhi award.
- Over an illustrious career spanning decades, she can be credited with taking the art to a very wide audience both in India and abroad.

Obituaries

Veteran actress Rita Bhaduri passes away

- Veteran actress Rita Bhaduri passed away on July 17, 2018 following a cardiac arrest at Sujoy Hospital in suburban Juhu, Mumbai. She was 62. The actress was in the hospital for the last 10 days.
- She was suffering from kidney ailment and had to go for dialysis every alternate day.
- Currently, she was seen playing the role of a grandmother in Star Bharat's 'Nimki Mukhiya' show.