

Prelim Bits 11-07-2018

MoU by the Vice President

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- Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu becomes first Chairman of Rajya Sabha to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a foreign country.

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- Rajya Sabha has, for the first time in 76 years since it came into being, entered a MOU with a foreign counterpart for promoting inter-parliamentary dialogue.

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- The MoU was inked with the visiting President of the Senate of the Republic of Rwanda

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- It covers the following articles of cooperation -

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1. To promote Inter-Parliamentary dialogue,
2. Capacity building of parliamentary staff,
3. Organisation of conferences, forums, seminars, staff attachment programmes, workshops and exchanges,
4. Collaboration in mutual interest in regional and international multilateral parliamentary bodies in furtherance of bilateral relations.

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Ease of Doing Business - India State wise Ranking

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- Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently released the final rankings of States in Ease of

Doing Business.

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- DIPP in collaboration with the **World Bank** conducted an annual reform exercise for all States and UTs under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP).
- The top rankers are **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana**.
- Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.
- The aim of this exercise is to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.
- It is for the first time that DIPP has introduced taking feedback to ensure that the reforms have reached ground level.

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GRACE-FO

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- NASA has launched Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On (GRACE-FO) mission recently.
- It will map changes in water and ice around the world by detecting variations in Earth's gravity.
- It involves two identical spacecraft that will orbit the Earth in tandem.
- It is a follow-on mission to the original GRACE mission, which mapped Earth's gravity field from 2002 to 2017.
- Both missions are joint projects between NASA and the GFZ German Research.
- To detect these gravitational changes, the twin spacecraft will fly about 220 km apart and send microwave signals back and forth.
- When they pass over a region where gravity increases or decreases, the distance between the two spacecraft will change slightly, allowing the satellites to map Earth's gravity field.

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Best tourist spot

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- Western Ghats has figured in **Lonely Planet's top five "2018 Best in Asia" list**, a collection of 10 of the best destinations to visit in the continent for the year.
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- It came 4th in the list of the lonely Planet, which is considered a Bible by travellers worldwide.
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- It is one of the Hottest Biodiversity Hotspots and UNESCO World Heritage site.
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- It is older than the Himalayas and well known for its rich and unique flora and fauna.
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- Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*), which has started blooming after 12 years in the famed hill station of Munnar has found mention in report.
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- The neelakurinji flower blooms only once every 12 years and is expected to boom from August to October 2018.
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Eat Right Movement

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- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently unveiled 'The Eat Right Movement'.
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- The programme aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.
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- It is built on two broad pillars of 'Eat Healthy' and 'Eat Safe'.
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- FSSAI has also undertaken 'Safe and Nutritious Food (SNF)' initiative to promote awareness towards consumption of safe and nutritious food.
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- FSSAI has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
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- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.

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Plastic Ban

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- State Government of Odisha has recently announced complete ban on use of plastic in several places from October 2, this year.
- The Housing & Urban Development department and Panchayati raj department have been mandated for executing the order in urban and rural areas, respectively.
- The Forest & Environment department will monitor the plastic pollution control work across the state.

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Source: The Hindu, PIB

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