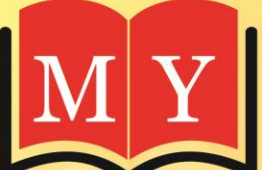


Weekly Current Affairs

10 February – 16 February, 2019

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National News

1. Centre allocates Rs 59 cr for Asiatic Lion conservation in Gujarat

- ✦ With the aim to protect and conserve the worlds last ranging free population of Asiatic Lions, the Ministry of Environmentlaunched a three-year Asiatic Lion Conservation Project in collaboration with the state of Gujarat.
- ✦ It will focus on the scientific management of the lion habitat with the involvement of communities, disease control and veterinary care for the overall conservation of Asiatic Lions.
- ✦ The Asiatic Lion in Gir is one of the 21 critically endangered species identified by the Ministry for taking up recovery programmes.

2. Facebook acquires virtual search startup to boost AI capabilities

- ✦ Facebook has acquired US based virtual search start up, Grok Style, at an undisclosed amount.
- ✦ GrokStyle also noted on its LinkedIn page that it has been acquired by Facebook.
- ✦ The basic idea is to allow users to match a piece of furniture or a light fixture in an image to visually find similar ones in stock at stores.

3. Harsimrat Kaur inaugurates Himachal's first mega food park in Una

- ✦ The mega food park has been set up at a cost of Rs 107.34 crore
- ✦ Food Processing Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal inaugurated Cremica Food Park, which is the first mega food park of Himachal Pradesh.
- ✦ The Cremica Mega Food Park will benefit people of Una district and nearby districts of Kangra, Hamirpur and Bilaspur.
- ✦ The mega food parks create modern infrastructure facilities for food processing along the value chain from farm to market with strong forward and backward linkages through a cluster based approach.

4. 3-day Krishi Kumbh begins in Motihari, Bihar

- ✦ In Bihar, Governor Lalji Tandon and Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh jointly inaugurated the three -day Krishi Kumbh in Motihari .
- ✦ Over fifteen thousand farmers from different states and about two hundred agricultural scientists are participating in the Kumbh. The objective of Krishi Kumbh is to promote modern techniques and diversification in agriculture that could help in doubling farmers income.
- ✦ Addressing the function Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said the government is committed to doubling the income of farmers by 2022.

5. India, Norway launch 'India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative' to combat Marine Pollution

- ✦ The Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change signed a Letter of Intent (LoI) with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to launch the 'India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative'.
- ✦ The Joint Initiative was signed by Nils Ragnar Kamsvag, Norwegian Ambassador to India and Anil Kumar Jain, Additional Secretary in the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- ✦ The India-Norway Marine Pollution Initiative will combat marine pollution, which is one of the fastest growing environmental concerns.

6. PM Modi launches several development projects for Haryana

- ✦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid foundation stones of several development projects in Haryana. The projects include National Cancer Institute, Jhajjar and Shri Krishna Ayush University, Kurukshetra.
- ✦ The event was attended by woman sarpanchs and women associated with the 'Swachhta' campaign from across the country. Mr Modi distributed the 'Swachh Shakti 2019' awards on the occasion.
- ✦ The Prime Minister highlighted that over 11 lakh people benefited from Ayushman Bharat and his government is making efforts to make the life of farmer, poor and middle class easier.

7. CREDAI's Event YouthCon-19 Held In New Delhi

- ✦ Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the CREDAI YouthCon -19 in New Delhi Talkatora Stadium.
- ✦ The theme for this YouthCon is 'Next Generation'.
- ✦ The annual conference will bring together the next generation of real estate builders and developers to enlighten their young minds and share their thinking and approach.

8. Exercise Rahat Concluded In Jaipur

- ✦ Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Exercise 'Exercise Rahat' concluded in Jaipur, Rajasthan.
- ✦ It was demonstrated in Jaipur, Kota, and Alwar in Rajasthan.
- ✦ Indian Army was represented by Jaipur based Sapta Shakti Command. Representatives from Armed Forces, National Disaster Management Response Mechanism (NDMRM), SDMA Rajasthan and DLMAs participated in the exercise.

9. Lok Sabha Passes Bill To Remove Congress President From Jallianwala Trust

- ✦ A bill to remove the Congress president as a permanent member in a trust that runs the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial to make the body "apolitical" was passed in Lok Sabha.
- ✦ The bill also confers power to the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of the term without assigning any reason.

- ✦ The 2018 bill added a clause to allow the central government to terminate the term of a nominated trustee before the expiry of his term without assigning any reason.

10. Rajasthan introduces 5% quota bill for Gujjars, 4 other castes

- ✦ The Rajasthan government introduced a bill in the assembly to give a five per cent quota in jobs and educational institutes to Gujjars and four other communities agitating for it.
- ✦ The bill was presented in the Rajasthan assembly by Energy Minister B.D. Kalla to pacify members of the Gujjar community who have been holding demonstrations.
- ✦ The bill seeks to increase the backward classes' reservation from the present 21 per cent to 26 per cent with five per cent reservation to Gujjars, Banjaras, Gadia Lohars, Raikas and Gadaria.

11. National Conference on “Sustainable and Environment-friendly Industrial Production” held in new Delhi

- ✦ Under Indo-German Development Cooperation, Forest and Climate Change(MoEFCC) organized Second National Conference in New Delhi on Sustainable and Environment-friendly Industrial Production (SEIP).
- ✦ The project concludes in two weeks and Ministry organized this conference for dissemination of results, successful models and experiences so as to enable replication.
- ✦ The project worked directly with companies and advised them on environment friendly production and wastewater management in 5 industrial areas in three states (Delhi, Uttarakhand and Gujarat).

12. PM Modi Flags Off Vande Bharat Express, India's Fastest Train

- ✦ Vande Bharat Express, India's first semi-high speed train, was flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from the New Delhi railway station amid sombre mood in the backdrop of the terror attack in Pulwama.
- ✦ Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and members of the Railway Board were also on board the train on its inaugural journey.
- ✦ Vande Bharat Express will travel from Delhi to Varanasi in 9 hours and 45 minutes.

International News

1. Hindi included as third official court language in Abu Dhabi

- ✦ Abu Dhabi has decided to include Hindi as the third official language used in its courts, alongside Arabic and English, as part of a move designed to improve access to justice.

- ✦ The move will help the Hindi speakers to learn about litigation procedures, their rights and duties without a language barrier.
- ✦ Abu Dhabi Judicial Department has extended the adoption of interactive forms of statement of claims filed before courts by including Hindi.

2. INS Trikand participates in multinational training exercise Cutlass Express 2019

- ✦ INS Trikand, a front-line warship of the Indian Navy, participated in a multinational training exercise 'CUTLASS EXPRESS - 19' held from Jan 27 to Feb 06.
- ✦ The aim of the exercise was to improve law enforcement capacity, promote regional security and progress inter-operability between the armed forces of the participating nations for the purpose of interdicting illegal maritime activity in the Western Indian Ocean.
- ✦ The exercise was conducted in two phases. The first, called the Command Post Exercise (CPX) was conducted from Jan 27 to Feb 2. It involved training of personnel on shore for coordination and conduct of VBSS operations.

3. India, US commercial dialogue on Feb 14

- ✦ Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu will hold bilateral discussions on trade issues with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross on February 14 here.
- ✦ Annual bilateral trade in goods and services between the countries doubled over the last decade, from USD 58 billion in 2007 to USD 126 in 2017.
- ✦ The talks assumes significance as officials of both the sides are negotiating a trade package to boost bilateral commerce.

4. Former Goa deputy chief minister Francis D'Souza passes away

- ✦ Former Goa deputy chief minister and BJP's Mapusa legislator Francis D'Souza passed away
- ✦ Elected for five terms from Mapusa constituency, D'Souza was suffering from cancer for the past few months.
- ✦ D'Souza was dropped from the cabinet while he was in the US and he had reacted bitterly over his ouster.

5. UAE's Tabreed to build India's first district cooling system in Amaravati

- ✦ A UAE-based international cooling provider has entered into a 30-year concession with Andhra Pradesh government to build, own, operate and transfer India's first district cooling system in the state's new capital Amaravati.
- ✦ The agreement between the National Central Cooling Company (Tabreed) and Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) is for a contracted cooling capacity of 20,000 refrigeration tonnes.
- ✦ Tabreed CEO, Jasim Husain Thabet, said the company is pleased that its first project in India has increased its presence to six countries.

Banking

1. RBI doubles 'bulk deposit' criterion for banks to single deposit of Rs 2 crore

- ✦ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) decided to raise the criteria for 'bulk deposits' for banks to Rs 2 crore from the current Rs 1 crore, to provide more operational freedom to lenders to raise funds.
- ✦ Banks have been given discretion to offer differential rate of interest on the bulk deposits as per their requirements and asset-liability management (ALM) projections.
- ✦ Interest rates on bulk deposits are marginally higher than on smaller-amount fixed deposits for similar maturity period.

New Appointments & Person in News

1. Mukesh Ambani tops Hurun India Philanthropy list

- ✦ Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) Chairman Mukesh Ambani topped the Hurun India Philanthropy List 2018, released on Saturday, with the highest contribution of Rs437 crore between October 2017 and September 2018.
- ✦ Ambani was followed by Piramal Group Chairman Ajay Piramal who made Rs200 crore donations during the period.
- ✦ The total Indian philanthropy amount in the list stands at Rs1,560 crore. The list included 39 Indians.

2. Ruchira Kamboj appointed India's Ambassador to Bhutan

- ✦ Ruchira Kamboj was appointed as the Ambassador of India to Bhutan.
- ✦ She is serving as the High Commissioner of India to South Africa since 2017, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- ✦ A 1987-cadre Indian Foreign Service (officer), she is expected to take up the assignment shortly. Kamboj has previously served as the Ambassador/PR to Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO, Paris.

3. NTPC signs pact with SBI for Rs 5000 cr term loan

- ✦ State-owned power giant NTPC said that it has signed a term loan agreement for Rs 5,000 crore with State Bank of India
- ✦ The loan facility is extended at an interest rate linked to 3-Month MCLR of the Bank. This loan has a door to door tenure of 15 years and will be utilised to part finance the capital expenditure of NTPC
- ✦ The loan agreement was signed by Masood A Ansari, General Manager (Finance), NTPC Ltd and Neelabh Sinha.

4. Sushil Chandra appointed new Election commissioner

- ✦ Sushil Chandra was appointed as the new Election Commissioner ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, making the poll panel a three-member entity again.
- ✦ The other two members of the Commission are Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora and Election Commissioner (EC) Ashok Lavasa.
- ✦ Chandra is the second Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer to be appointed to the Commission after T.S. Krishnamurthy, who went on to become the CEC in 2004.

5. Ashwani Lohani reappointed Air India CMD

- ✦ Ashwani Lohani, a retired bureaucrat, has been appointed the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of national carrier Air India.
- ✦ Lohani held the position for around two years from 2015. In August 2017, he was named the Chairman to the Railway Board. Lohani retired on December 31, 2018.
- ✦ Earlier on February 6, the government appointed Air India CMD Pradeep Singh Kharola as the new Civil Aviation Secretary.

6. DHFL CEO Harshil Mehta resigns

- ✦ DHFL CEO Harshil Mehta has decided to resign from his position with immediate effect.
- ✦ Besides, the board has recommended appointment of Sunjoy Joshi as an Independent Director and Srinath Sridharan as a Non-Executive Director.
- ✦ DHFL's board has further appointed Sunjoy Joshi as an Independent Director and Srinath Sridharan as a Non-Executive director.

7. Arun Jaitley resumes charge as finance minister

- ✦ Arun Jaitley resumed charge as the finance minister after a gap of over a month, which was the second break within a year that he had to take to undergo medical treatment.
- ✦ He had stopped attending office at the beginning of April last year due to his kidney ailment and was back in North Block on August 23, 2018.
- ✦ He was earlier last month named the publicity head of the BJP for the upcoming general elections.

Science Tech & Defence

1. Helicopter-launched anti-tank missile 'Helina' test-fired

- ✦ India test-fired its helicopter-launched version of one of the most-advanced anti-tank weapon from the Odisha Coast.

- ✦ Helina, the helicopter-launched version of the Nag anti-tank guided missile with a hit range of 7-8 km, was launched from an Army chopper.
- ✦ The weapon system was tested for its full range at 12.55 pm near the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur in Balasore district.

2. Cobra Gold, one of world's largest multinational military exercises, kicks off in Thailand

- ✦ One of the world's largest and longest-running international military exercises officially began this week in Thailand.
- ✦ The 38th annual Cobra Gold exercise, scheduled to run through Feb. 22, is co-sponsored by the Royal Thai and U.S armed forces. They are joined by another 27 nations, including Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea and Singapore. China and India participate in civic-action parts of the exercise.
- ✦ This year's exercise will focus on military field training, civic assistance to communities and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

3. Indian Army shows its artillery firepower during 'Exercise Topchi'

- ✦ Using ultra light Howitzers and indigenous Swathi weapon-locating radar, Indian Army Tuesday demonstrated its artillery firepower at the annual 'Exercise Topchi'.
- ✦ The Army's aviation assets included the indigenous advanced light helicopter, light combat helicopter, Cheetah & Chetak helicopters, it added.
- ✦ The precision of delivering the explosives in the target area, the coordination and timings of the firepower stunned all those present.

4. NASA's Opportunity Rover Mission on Mars Comes to End

- ✦ One of the most successful and enduring feats of interplanetary exploration, NASA's Opportunity rover mission is at an end after almost 15 years exploring the surface of Mars.
- ✦ The Opportunity rover stopped communicating with Earth when a severe Mars-wide dust storm blanketed its location in June 2018.
- ✦ NASA expected 90-day lifetimes for the rovers. Both Opportunity and Spirit far exceeded their expected lifetime.

5. NASA Will Launch a New Space Telescope in 2023 to Investigate the Universe

- ✦ NASA has selected a new space mission that will help astronomers understand both how our universe evolved and how common are the ingredients for life in our galaxy's planetary systems.
- ✦ The Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization and Ices Explorer (SPHEREx) mission is a planned two-year mission funded at \$242 million and targeted to launch in 2023.
- ✦ SPHEREx will survey the sky in optical as well as near-infrared light which, though not visible to the human eye, serves as a powerful tool for answering cosmic questions.

Important days

1. World Pulses Day observed on 10 February

- ✦ February 10, 2019 was celebrated as the First world Pulses Day .
- ✦ Pulses are a type of leguminous crop that are harvested solely for the dry seed.
- ✦ In December 2013, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly voted unanimously to declare 2016 as the International Year of Pulses (IYP), to celebrate, raise awareness and promote the consumption of pulses at events around the globe.

2. World Radio Day observed on 13 February

- ✦ Radio is still the most dynamic, reactive and engaging medium there is, adapting to 21st century changes and offering new ways to interact and participate.
- ✦ Theme of World Radio Day 2019 is Dialogue, Tolerance and Peace
- ✦ World Radio Day is observed on 13 February.

3. International Day of Women and Girls in Science 11 February

- ✦ The United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution declaring 11 February as the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.
- ✦ Theme; "Investment in Women and Girls in Science for Inclusive Green Growth"
- ✦ Over the past 15 years, the global community has made a lot of effort in inspiring and engaging women and girls in science.

Awards

1. Deepa Mehta to receive Lifetime Achievement Award from Canadian Academy

- ✦ The Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television has announced that it will be honouring filmmaker Deepa Mehta with the Lifetime Achievement Award.
- ✦ Mehta was born in India but she had moved to Canada in 1973 after her marriage to documentary filmmaker Paul Saltzman.
- ✦ Her film "Water", the third part of her Elements trilogy, was Canada's official entry at the 79th Academy Awards.

2. Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam wins Israel's Dan David Prize 2019

- ✦ Indian historian Sanjay Subrahmanyam won the prestigious Dan David Prize 2019 for his work on inter-cultural encounters between Asians, Europeans and people of North and South America during the early modern era.

- ✦ He won the Israel's prestigious USD 1 million dollar award in the category of "Past Time Dimension" for his work in macro history. He shared the award in the Past category with Professor Kenneth Pomeranz of University of Chicago.
- ✦ Once presented with the award money, Subrahmanyam will donate 10 percent of the prize money towards scholarships for graduate or post-graduate researchers.

Books & Authors

1. Manish Tewari launches book "What Marx Left Unsaid" on economic justice

- ✦ Former Union Minister and author Manish Tewari launched "What Marx Left Unsaid", authored by Malay Chaudhuri, Arindam Chaudhuri and Che Kabir Chaudhuri at the India International Centre here.
- ✦ The book is on a theory of economic justice that creates a case for an exploitation-free world with a maximum wage ratio of the highest paid to lowest paid worker at 3:1.
- ✦ It was launched to commemorate the 200th birth anniversary of Karl Marx.



1. Meghalaya govt to rename Dikkibandi stadium after P A Sangma

- ✦ The Meghalaya Cabinet has decided to rename the Dikkibandi stadium in Tura town after former Lok Sabha Speaker Purno A Sangma.
- ✦ The state Cabinet has also decided to name a road leading from Mawlai-Mawroh to Madan in honour of Saint Teresa.
- ✦ The Batti Bazar road at Laban was also renamed as Roland Lyngdoh Road, Sylhetipara Road at Laban as Krepsing Swer Road and Jackson Trace Road at Lower Lumparing as Melington Kharkongor Road.

2. Ricky Ponting named Australia's assistant coach for World Cup

- ✦ Former captain Ricky Ponting has been appointed as an assistant coach of Australia's men's team for the 50-over World Cup in England later this year
- ✦ The 44-year-old Ponting will work with Australia's batsmen for the May 30-July 14 tournament, with current batting coach Graeme Hick focussing on preparing the side for the Ashes tour in England, starting in August.
- ✦ Ponting's appointment is the second major shakeup in Australia's backroom staff in as many days, with bowling coach David Saker resigning "effective immediately".

3. Shane Warne named Rajasthan Royals brand ambassador

- ✦ Australia spin legend Shane Warne was named as brand ambassador of Rajasthan Royals for the upcoming Indian Premier League.
- ✦ Warne, who led Rajasthan Royals to its first and only IPL title in 2008, was the mentor of the side last season.
- ✦ Rajasthan Royals has decided to change its jersey colour from blue to pink this year.

4. Clouded Leopard to be Mascot of national Games 2022

- ✦ Clouded Leopard, the state animal of Meghalaya will be the mascot for the National Games 2022.
- ✦ Clouded Leopard is one of the wild cats that inhabit the forests of Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
- ✦ The meeting has decided that an open competition would be held to design a smiling clouded leopard that will be used as the mascot for the national Games.

5. Prajnesh Gunneswaran becomes the third Indian to reach Top 100 in ATP rankings

- ✦ Reaping rewards of his consistent performance, Prajnesh Gunneswaran broke into men's singles top-100 for the first time in his career with a jump of six places that took him to 97.
- ✦ Prajnesh is only third Indian player to break into the top-100 barrier in the past decade after Somdev Devvarman and Yuki Bhambri.
- ✦ Ramkumar Ramanathan is the second best Indian ranked 128. In the WTA charts, Ankita Raina continues to be country's top singles player at number 165

6. Derrick Pereira named coach of India U-23 football team

- ✦ Derrick Pereira named head coach of the India U-23 team for the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Qualifiers slated to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from March 22.
- ✦ Besides India, the other teams in the group are Tajikistan and Pakistan.
- ✦ The team will also be playing a friendly match against Qatar U-23 National side in Doha on March 11," the All India Football Federation said.

Obituaries

1. England's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Gordon Banks dies aged 81

- ✦ Gordon Banks, the goalkeeper in England's 1966 World Cup-winning team, has died at the age of 81.

- ✦ He was widely regarded as one of the greatest goalkeepers to have played the game and will perhaps be best remembered for the diving stop he made to deny Brazil's Pele at the 1970 World Cup.
- ✦ Banks denied Brazil's Pele with a spectacular diving effort, which later became known as the "save of the century"

2. Manfred Eigen, pioneer of study of exceptionally fast chemical reactions, dies aged 91

- ✦ Manfred Eigen, who was awarded a one-half share of the 1967 chemistry Nobel prize for developing ways to study extremely fast chemical reactions, has died aged 91.
- ✦ He had shared this prize with R. G. W. Norrish and George Porter.



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