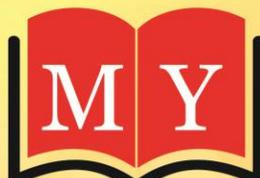


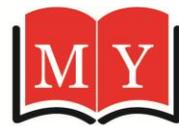
Weekly Current Affairs

24 March – 30 March, 2019

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National News

1. NITI Aayog's FinTech Conclave to be held in New Delhi

- ✦ NITI Aayog is organising a day-long FinTech Conclave at Dr. Ambedkar International Center
- ✦ The objective of the conference is to shape India's continued ascendancy in FinTech, build the narrative for future strategy and policy efforts, and to deliberate steps for comprehensive financial inclusion.
- ✦ The Conclave will be featuring representatives from across the financial space - central ministries, regulators, bankers, startups, service providers and entrepreneurs.

2. Navin Chawlas new book titled Every Vote Counts was launched by former Vice President of India, Hamid Ansari

- ✦ Former Chief Election Commissioner of India Navin Chawla's book 'Every Vote Counts' was launched by former Vice President of India, Hamid Ansari in New Delhi.
- ✦ This book is about how the electoral machinery works in India. The book explains about India is on the cusp of change, and with its parliamentary elections coming up.
- ✦ Navin Chawla is a well known and recognized Indian bureaucrat. He is an occupant of one of India's most prestigious constitutional offices as Election Commissioner.

3. President Administers Oath of Office to Justice PC Chose As Lokpal Chief

- ✦ President Ram Nath Kovind administered the oath of office to Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose as the country's first Lokpal.
- ✦ Justice Ghose, a former Supreme Court judge, was named the country's first Lokpal, the anti-corruption ombudsman.
- ✦ The oath was administered at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, a communique issued by the President's office said.

4. eBay partners with Google, will allow users to pay via Google Pay for purchases

- ✦ Google and eBay have partnered up to offer customers Google Pay as a payment option to pay for their shopping on eBay.
- ✦ This is part of the company's new managed payments programme, under which it provides customers with the ability to check out without the need for leaving the platform by using their preferred method of payment.
- ✦ This integration will help consumers with Google Pay accounts to complete purchases on the eBay app or website.

5. Pak Approves Plan to Open Sharada Temple Corridor to Hindu Pilgrims from India

- ✦ The Pakistan government approved a proposal to establish a corridor that will allow Hindu pilgrims from India to visit Sharada Peeth.
- ✦ Sharda Peeth Corridor will be the second corridor to be established after the Kartarpur Corridor which provides access to Gurudwara Darbar Sahib at Kartarpur in Pakistan.
- ✦ It is also one of the three famous holy sites for Kashmiri Pandits, the other two being the Martand Sun Temple in Anantnag and the Amarnath temple.

6. Centre notifies new rules for drugs, clinical trials

- ✦ The Union Health Ministry has notified the Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019 with the government stating that the move is aimed at promoting clinical research in the country.
- ✦ The rules will apply to all new drugs, investigational new drugs for human use, clinical trials, bio-equivalence studies and ethics committees.
- ✦ The new rules will ensure patient safety and an ethics committee will monitor the trials and decide on the amount of compensation in cases of adverse events.

International News & Foreign Affairs

1. India ranks 76th on WEF's global Energy Transition index

- ✦ India has moved up two places to rank 76th on a global energy transition index, which has ranked 115 economies on how well they are able to balance energy security and access with environmental sustainability and affordability.
- ✦ China is ranked even lower than India at 82nd position, though it ranks very high at seventh place in the world for regulation and political commitment.
- ✦ Despite its low ranking, India is the second best in the BRICS block of emerging economies, with Brazil being the best at 46th place globally.

2. World's largest e-waste recycling facility opens in Dubai

- ✦ Dubai e-waste specialist Enviroserve has opened The Recycling Hub, the world's largest e-waste recycling facility at a total cost of Dh120 million.
- ✦ Located at Dubai Industrial Park, the 280,000 square-foot e-waste recycling plant, will process WEEE (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment), IT asset disposition (ITAD), refrigerant gas and specialised waste.
- ✦ These include air conditioners, batteries, computers, household appliances, mobile phones, and even military avionics.

3. Cabinet approves MoU between India and Croatia in the field of tourism

- ✦ The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its ex-post facto approval on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Croatia in the field of tourism.
- ✦ The MoU in the field of Tourism will help the two parties in creating an institutional mechanism for enhancing cooperation in the tourism sector.
- ✦ Croatia Capital-Zagreb, Croatia currency- Croatian kuna.

4. Singapore airport named best, New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International at 59th

- ✦ Singapore's Changi Airport has been crowned the world's best aviation hub for the seventh time in a row, while New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport featured at number 59, according to the Skytrax World Airport Awards.
- ✦ The list has been compiled by the UK-based Skytrax, a consultancy firm which runs an airline and airport review and ranking site, featuring 100 airports.
- ✦ The Skytrax World Airport Awards are voted for by customers in a global airport customer satisfaction survey.

5. India-African Union sign MoU on strengthening cooperation in healthcare sector

- ✦ An agreement has been signed between India and the African Union to initiate and strengthen the cooperation in health sector in a structured and organised manner by establishing an India-Africa health sciences collaborative platform .
- ✦ The MoU will pave the way for the cooperation in the areas of research and development, capacity building, health services, pharmaceutical trade and manufacturing capabilities for drugs and diagnostics.
- ✦ The MoU signed aims to formalise this partnership by establishing a framework.

6. Adani becomes first Indian port operator to record 200 MMT cargo movement

- ✦ Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) has recorded cargo movement of more than 200 million metric tonnes (MMT) at nine ports along the east and west coasts, becoming the first Indian port operator to achieve the milestone.
- ✦ Adani Ports embarked its journey in 2001 and has become one of the largest port operators in the world.
- ✦ It took 12 years to reach the 50 MMT mark followed by another three years to cross the 100 MMT mark in 2013-14, and then just five years to exceed the 200 MMT mark.

7. India, Canada conclude comprehensive counter-terror joint action plan

- ✦ India and Canada have concluded an agreement on a Joint Action Plan outlining activities to further strengthen counter-terrorism collaboration, including through joint capacity building, information and technology sharing.
- ✦ The Joint Working Group also discussed multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation, in the context of the United Nations, the Financial Action Task Force, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum.

- ✦ This was decided at the 16th meeting of the Canada-India Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and its Expert Sub-group was held in Ottawa.

Banking

1. RBI again defers Indian Accounting Standards implementation by banks

- ✦ India delayed the introduction of tough new accounting rules for the second year running, in a move that will spare the country's banks from adding another layer to the \$190 billion pile of bad loans on their books.
- ✦ The new rules -- based on the IFRS9 standards created in the aftermath of the financial crisis -- were supposed to kick in at the start of the new fiscal year that starts on April 1.
- ✦ The new accounting standards would require banks to make provisions when they judge that a loan is likely to sour, rather than waiting for the borrower to start missing payments.

2. RBI appoints five-member committee to deepen digital payments

- ✦ Central bank of the country has appointed 5-member committee under the chairmanship of Nandan Nilekani to further deepen digital payments and enhance financial inclusion through Fintech.
- ✦ The objective of the conclave is to shape India's continued ascendancy in FinTech, build the narrative for future strategy and policy efforts, and to deliberate steps for comprehensive financial inclusion.
- ✦ NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant said India's ambition is to emerge as a 10 trillion dollar economy and this is not possible without a revolution in the Fintech sector.

3. Naresh Goyal quits Jet board, lenders take over cash-strapped airline

- ✦ Jet Airways Ltd Chairman Naresh Goyal and his wife Anita Goyal have quit the board of the cash-strapped airline.
- ✦ The government has asked state-run banks, led by SBI, to rescue Jet without pushing it into bankruptcy, seeking to avert thousands of job losses weeks before a general election.

4. Centre has set up Yarn bank in Karnataka for weavers of Mysore Powerloom Silk Manufacturers Cooperative Society

- ✦ The new yarn bank comes as a huge relief for thousands of weavers in and around Bengaluru.

- ✦ The Centre aided bank will purchase yarn at the wholesale rate from producers, then it will be sold to the subscribing weavers at reasonable rates to sustain production.
- ✦ In order to avoid fluctuation in yarn prices, Ministry of Textiles started Yarn bank help thousand of weavers at the Mysore Powerloom Silk Manufacturers Cooperative Society by ensuring steady supply of silk yarn and zari.

5. ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund launches Bharat Consumption Scheme

- ✦ ICICI Prudential AMC announced launched the ICICI Prudential Bharat Consumption Scheme.
- ✦ The Scheme aims to benefit from the Indian consumption story, considered as one of the fastest growing consumption markets globally.
- ✦ The benchmark for the Scheme is Nifty India Consumption Index and will be managed by Rajat Chandak and Dharmesh Kakkad. The overseas investments of the scheme will be managed by Priyanka Khandelwal.

6. Bank of Baroda to Develop Digital Agriculture Platform for Farmers

- ✦ Bank of Baroda has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the agriculture services companies in order to create an agriculture digital platform known as 'Baroda Kisan' that will provide solutions for agricultural requirements.
- ✦ The initiative is being carried out by ITCoE of Bank of Baroda, in collaboration with the IBM India.
- ✦ The digital platform aims at making a holistic approach towards resolving agricultural problems by means of providing reliable & customized information.

7. RBI To Set Up Regulatory Sandbox For Fintech Startups

- ✦ The Reserve Bank of India will now issue the guidelines just within the coming two months for the fintech companies to test their new products and services on the small group of people before expanding and scaling it.
- ✦ The companies will now be able to test the viability of the product without any expensive methods.
- ✦ Financial technology companies use the latest technology to provide the financial services which includes the crowdfunding, lending, payments and much more.

8. PNB inks pacts to sell 13% in housing arm for ₹1,852 crore

- ✦ Punjab National Bank (PNB) has sold 13.01 per cent stake in PNB Housing Ltd (PNBHF) to General Atlantic Group and VardePartners for ₹1851.60 crore.
- ✦ The new investors picked up about 6.50 per cent stake each in the housing finance company by investing ₹925.80 crore.
- ✦ The public sector bank also informed the exchanges that it has sold its entire stake (42 lakh unlisted shares) in Experian Credit Information Company India Ltd.

9. PFC has been named as the India's second largest Govt-owned Financial Firm after SBI

- ✦ After acquiring a majority stake in REC Ltd (formerly Rural Electrification Corporation Limited), center backed Power Finance Corporation (PFC) become India's second largest Govt-owned Financial Firm after State Bank of India (SBI), based on market capitalization.
- ✦ PFC has bought the 52.63% controlling stake in REC through Rs 14,500 crore deal with Union government.
- ✦ The REC' shares were acquired at Rs139.50 per equity share price.

New Appointments & Person in News

1. Vice Admiral Karambir Singh appointed next Navy Chief

- ✦ The government appointed Vice Admiral Karambir Singh as the next Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS).
- ✦ Vice Admiral Singh will take over as the 24th Navy chief from incumbent CNS Admiral Sunil Lanba, who is set to retire on May 31 on completing three years in office.
- ✦ Vice Admiral Singh is the senior-most naval aviator. He will be the first helicopter pilot of the Navy to become CNS.

2. Tata Coffee appoints Chacko Purackal Thomas as MD And CEO

- ✦ Tata Coffee announced the appointment of Chacko Purackal Thomas as the managing director and chief executive officer. He will replace Sanjiv Sarin, who retires on 31 March.
- ✦ He will assume the charge from April 1, 2019.
- ✦ Thomas, currently working as the executive director and deputy CEO of the Tata Group firm, has been associated with the company since 2015.

3. Shambhu S. Kumaran appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Morocco

- ✦ Shri Shambhu S. Kumaran presently Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Morocco.
- ✦ kUmaran is Presently serving as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence. He is an Indian Foreign Service officer of 1995 batch

4. Tourism Minister Manohar Ajaonkar appointed Deputy CM of Goa

- ✦ Goa Tourism Minister Manohar Ajaonkar, who switched to the Bharatiya Janata Party from Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Party (MGP) was appointed as the state's new Deputy Chief Minister.

- ✦ Ajgaonkar has become the second deputy chief minister after Vijai Sardesai is in the Pramod Sawant government in Goa.
- ✦ The development comes a day after Sudin Dhavalikar was dropped as the Deputy Chief Minister and two MLAs of MGP merged their party's legislative wing with the BJP.

Science Tech & Defence

1. Arianespace Successfully Launches Italian Earth Observation Satellite

- ✦ Arianespace successfully launched the Italian Space Agency's Prisma satellite on a Vega rocket at 10:50 p.m. local time from the Guiana Space Center (CSG) in French Guiana.
- ✦ Prisma is the 600th satellite to be orbited by Arianespace and the eighth for Italian institutions or operators.
- ✦ Prisma was built for the Italian Space Agency by OHB Italia as prime contractor, with Leonardo responsible for the payload.

2. ISRO to launch 29 satellites including EMISAT on first of April

- ✦ Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will launch 29 satellites including the primary payload EMISAT, on the first of April.
- ✦ Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, PSLV-C45 will take off from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota tentatively at 9:30 AM carrying the satellites onboard.

3. Apple partners with Goldman Sachs and Mastercard for Apple Card

- ✦ Apple announced a new credit card in partnership with Goldman Sachs Group Inc. and Mastercard Inc.
- ✦ Apple Card can be used along the wallet app of the iPhone. It was a virtual credit card which will replace the traditional credit card with the smart and secure one.
- ✦ The card also includes a cash back rewards program, including 2 percent cash back on all Apple Pay purchases made with the card and 3 percent on purchases made at the Apple Store or with services like the App Store.

4. INS Kadmatt to participate in maritime and aerospace exhibition in Malaysia

- ✦ Indian Navy's frontline corvette INS Kadmatt reached Malaysian archipelago Langkawi to participate in the 15th edition of Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition, LIMA-19
- ✦ The ship would participate in numerous activities planned as part of LIMA 19 for seven days at Langkawi.

- ✦ The ship is fitted with state-of-the-art weapons, sensors and machinery and is also designed to embark the Seaking anti-submarine helicopter.

5. India Became 4th nation to enter elite space power club with anti-satellite weapon

- ✦ India has officially entered the elite space power club with the successful targeting of a live satellite with an anti-satellite weapon (A-SAT).
- ✦ After US, Russia and China, India becomes 4th nation to possess an ASAT weapon. On March 27, India achieved a historic feat by taking down a live satellite.
- ✦ This weapon aims to embolden India's national security and is only a step in ensuring peace.

6. Facebook launches initiatives to boost civic engagement

- ✦ Social-networking site Facebook launched two new India-specific tools called "Candidate Connect" and "Share You Voted", to boost civic engagement on its platform during the general elections that commence in April.
- ✦ While "Candidate Connect" will help people learn more about candidates, the "Share You Voted" will provide people with polling information and enable them to announce and celebrate their vote.
- ✦ The moves will help to prevent fake news and to make sure that it doesn't impact the general election in India.

7. ISRO launches Young Scientist Programme (Yuvika) for schoolkids

- ✦ Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has launched a special programme for schoolchildren called Young Scientist Programme or Yuva Vigyani Karyakram from this year
- ✦ The program is primarily aimed at imparting basic knowledge on space technology, space science and space applications to the younger ones with the intent of arousing their interest in the emerging areas of space activities.
- ✦ The programme will be of two weeks duration during summer holidays (second half of May 2019) and the schedule will include invited talks, experience sharing by the eminent scientists.

8. Google launches global council to advice on AI and tech ethics

- ✦ Alphabet's Google was launching a global advisory council to consider ethical issues around artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.
- ✦ Google already has its own internal AI principles, which, among other provisions, bars the California-based tech firm from using AI to develop weapons.
- ✦ The council, which is slated to publish a report at the end of 2019, includes technology experts, digital ethicists, and people with public policy backgrounds, Kent Walker.

9. U.S. Navy Signs Agreement to Use 2 Omani Ports

- ✦ The U.S. Navy has signed an agreement to use the southern Omani ports of Duqm and Salalah.
- ✦ Oman has already given berthing rights to India and the United Kingdom to use its Duqm port as it utilizes its reputation for neutrality to bolster its external security.
- ✦ This deal is aimed at bolstering Omani-American military relations. The deal will benefit the facilities offered at some of the Sultanate's ports and airports during visits of the US military vessels and aircraft, particularly in the port of Duqm.

Important days

1. World Tuberculosis Day observed on 24 March

- ✦ Each year, World Tuberculosis (TB) Day observed on March 24 to raise public awareness about the devastating health, social and economic consequences of TB, and to step up efforts to end the global TB epidemic.
- ✦ The theme of World TB Day 2019 - 'It's time' – puts the accent on the urgency to act on the commitments made by global leaders to scale up access to prevention and treatment, build accountability.
- ✦ The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a joint initiative "Find. Treat. All. #EndTB" with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership, with the aim of accelerating the TB response and ensuring access to care

2. International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

- ✦ International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a United Nations international observance designated in 2007 to be marked on 25 March every year.
- ✦ It was first observed in 2008 with the theme "Breaking the Silence, Lest We Forget"
- ✦ The theme for International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade 2019 is "Remember Slavery: The Power of the Arts for Justice".

Sports

1. Sri Lanka Captain Lasith Malinga To Retire After T20 World Cup In 2020

- ✦ Sri Lankan limited overs captain Lasith Malinga will retire from international cricket after next year's T20 World Cup.

- ✦ Malinga made his ODI debut in 2004, in subsequent years becoming the first to take two World Cup hat-tricks and the first to take three ODI hat-tricks.
- ✦ He is also the only bowler to take four wickets in four consecutive balls. His international career has been interrupted by injuries. He even took a one-year hiatus from all forms of international cricket in 2016.

2. Manu Bhaker, Saurabh Chaudhary Win 10m Air Pistol Mixed Gold At Asian Airgun Championship

- ✦ India's 17-year-old shooter Manu Bhaker and 16-year-old Saurabh Chaudhary clinched gold in the 10m air pistol mixed team event at the 12th Asian Airgun Championship in Taoyuan, Taipei.
- ✦ The teenage pair of Manu and Saurabh broke the qualification world record prior to winning gold.
- ✦ Manu and Saurabh won gold in February at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup in the same event (10m air pistol) in New Delhi.

Books & Authors

1. Book "Indian Fiscal Federalism" authored by Dr. Y. V and G. R Reddy has been Released

- ✦ The Governor of Reserve Bank of India, Shaktikanta Das launched the book "Indian Fiscal Federalism" authored by Dr. Y.V. Reddy and G.R. Reddy.
- ✦ The launch event of the book was addressed by the Chairman of the 15th Finance Commission NK Singh, in New Delhi.
- ✦ Dr Y.V. Reddy has served as the Governor of RBI during 2003-2008 and as the Chairman of the 14th Finance Commission of India.

Awards

1. 64th Filmfare Award: Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt bag top honours

- ✦ Ranbir Kapoor and Alia Bhatt bagged the top honours at the 64th Filmfare Awards for their roles in 'Sanju' and 'Raazi', respectively, while Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer 'Andhadhun' won as many as five accolades..
- ✦ In the Critics Awards, Ranveer Singh ('Padmaavat') and Ayushmann Khurrana ('Andhadhun') were announced as the winners in the Best Actor (Male) category.
- ✦ The 64th Vimal Filmfare Awards 2019 kicked off at the Jio Garden in BKC, Mumbai.

2. Kenyan science teacher Peter Tabichi wins \$1m global award

- ✦ A science teacher from rural Kenya who donates most of his salary to help poorer students has been crowned the world's best teacher and awarded a \$1m prize, beating 10,000 nominations from 179 countries.
- ✦ Peter Tabichi, 36, a maths and physics teacher at Keriko secondary school in Pwani Village, in a remote part of Kenya's Rift Valley, has won the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize 2019.
- ✦ Tabichi gives away 80% of his income to help the poorest students at the poorly-equipped and overcrowded school who could not otherwise not afford uniforms and books.

3. Croatia honours President Kovind with highest civilian award

- ✦ President Ram Nath Kovind was honoured with Croatia's highest civilian award -- the Grand Order of the King of Tomislav.
- ✦ The civilian order is awarded to heads of state for their important contribution towards the development of state relations between Croatia and their respective countries.
- ✦ Kovind, who is the first-ever Indian head of state to visit Croatia, was earlier accorded a ceremonial welcome.

4. 'Godfathers of AI' honored with Turing Award, the Nobel Prize of computing

- ✦ The 2018 Turing Award, known as the "Nobel Prize of computing," has been given to a trio of researchers who laid the foundations for the current boom in artificial intelligence.
- ✦ Yoshua Bengio, Geoffrey Hinton, and Yann LeCun — sometimes called the 'godfathers of AI' — have been recognized with the \$1 million annual prize for their work developing the AI subfield of deep learning.
- ✦ The techniques the trio developed in the 1990s and 2000s enabled huge breakthroughs in tasks like computer vision and speech recognition.

Obituaries

1. Scott Walker, experimental singer-songwriter, dead at 76

- ✦ Scott Walker, the singer, songwriter and producer who rose to fame as part of The Walker Brothers, has died aged 76.
- ✦ The singer also produced Pulp's 2001 album "We Love Life," and composed several scores for cinema, most recently for the 2018 Natalie Portman film "Vox Lux."

2. Veteran journalist Prafulla Rajguru Passes Away

- ✦ Prominent educationist, journalist, social worker and columnist, Prafulla Rajguru passed away due to hip injury.
- ✦ He was the founder president of Jorhat Press Club, chairman of Jonaki Sangha Vidyalaya management committee for 20 years till his demise.
- ✦ He authored four books and was member of several organizations like Assam sahitya Sabha, and remained as adviser of Jorhat Press Club till his demise.



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