

STATE-AP

Academy of Adventure Sports at Gandikota soon

Why in news?

The State government is contemplating establishing an Academy of Adventure Sports at Gandikota village on the banks of river Pennar in Kadapa district.

Need/benefits

The Academy is being established to empower unemployed youth in taking up adventure sports /adventure tourism centres as career building.

The government also aims attracting tourists apart from employment generation and promoting adventure sports.

It would also help in bringing in new investors and business opportunities. Mountaineering and trekking are considered more lucrative since they attract the maximum number of foreign tourists.

Status

The Tourism department is preparing a detailed project report (DPR).

The Academy will establish three hubs at Kondapalli (Kethana konda) in Krishna district, Gandikota in Kadapa district and Thatipudi reservoir in Vizianagaram district.

The government through the Academy would provide technical expertise, operation of adventure sports/activities, explore locations and promote them and tourism activities.

Sub-centres

The Academy would identify the areas of operation throughout the State.

Sub-centres for various specialisations like camping, survival, rock climbing, aero & water (aqua) sports will be planned at remote corners of the State to attract local youth.

Phirangipuram to be the first all-women railway station in A.P.

Why in news?

An all-women railway station being launched at Phirangipuram shortly will be a big step in addressing gender equality in Railways.

The railway station on the Guntur-Narsaraopet line would be handed over to an all-women crew – from the station master to the signalling staff to the ticket-checking employees.

Third in country

Phirangipuram station is only the third-of-its-kind railway station in the country after Jaipur's Gandhi Nagar and Mumbai's Matunga.

IR

Putin unveils new nuclear weapons

Why in news?

Russian President Vladimir Putin unveiled an array of new nuclear weapons.

He also said a nuclear attack on any of Moscow's allies would be regarded as an attack on Russia itself and draw an immediate response.

Among the new weapons that were either in development or ready are : a new intercontinental ballistic missile, a small nuclear warhead that could be attached to cruise missiles, underwater nuclear drones, a supersonic weapon and a laser weapon.

'Useless measures'

Mr. Putin further said that the technological advances meant that NATO's build-up on Russia's borders and the roll-out of a U.S. anti-missile system would be rendered useless.

Steps to contain Russia would also become unjustifiably expensive and pointless, he forecast.

Nuclear doctrine

The Russian leader also voiced concerns about a new U.S. nuclear doctrine, saying that Russia's own doctrine was defensive and only envisaged the use of nuclear weapons in response to an attack.

Pak. welcomes Ghani's peace offer to Taliban

Why in news?

Pakistan has welcomed Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's offer that sought peace through dialogue and said that it would do its best to facilitate the realisation of the objective.

Meanwhile, U.S. Ambassador John R. Bass hailed Mr. Ghani's "very courageous stand" and his "commitment to pursue a peaceful settlement through talks" after more than 16 years of conflict.

Economy

No expenditure cut in FY'18 to meet fiscal deficit target'

Why in news?

The government will not go for an expenditure cut in 2017-18 to meet fiscal deficit target of 3.5% of GDP even as it has breached the level of 113.7% of the target.

How the target would be met?

The revised fiscal deficit target of 3.5% will be met through indirect taxes. Indirect tax collections have already been factored into the revised target.

What is the present condition?

The government has accounted for only 11 months of GST against 12 months of expenses as March GST numbers would come in April. Fiscal deficit has touched ₹6.77 lakh crore at the end of January 2018, 113.7% of the target for the year, on account of higher expenditure.

Upward revision

The government had revised the fiscal deficit upwards at ₹5.95 lakh crore or 3.5% of GDP in the Union Budget 2018-19.

S&T

Astronomers glimpse cosmic dawn

Why in news?

A signal from the universe's first stars, born a cosmic heartbeat after the Big Bang, has been detected for the first time setting the science world aflutter.

The observation would be the biggest astronomical breakthrough since the Nobel-capped detection of gravitational waves in 2015.

The findings have to be confirmed by other experiments. Crucially, it is hoped the discovery will shed light on dark matter — an invisible, mysterious substance thought to make up a large share of the universe.

Finding this miniscule signal has opened a new window on the early universe.

Fingerprints of the stars, already active 13.6 billion years ago — a mere 180 million years after the Big Bang gave rise to the universe — were picked up by a dining table-sized radio spectrometer in the Australian desert.

The early universe, the data showed, appears to have been twice as cold as previously estimated, at minus 270 degrees Celsius, according to the study published in Nature.

Some suggested a role for dark matter — the theme of an accompanying science paper published in the same journal.

Invisible to telescopes, dark matter is perceived through its gravitational pull on other objects in the cosmos.

But its existence is not explained by the Standard Model of physics — the mainstream theory of the fundamental particles that make up matter and the forces that govern them.

The signals detected in the study came from primordial hydrogen, at a time that light from the first stars made the gas detectable for the first time.

The sun and Solar System was formed about nine billion years later. The earliest stars were the source of all heavy elements in the universe, including those necessary for life to exist.