

# NATIONAL

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## 'Laureates and Leaders' Summit for Children

- **Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation** organized a **'Laureates and Leaders' Summit** for Children in New Delhi.
- The summit aimed to fight against child labour, child slavery and violence against children to build a strong moral platform for protecting children from violence, and bringing forward a world where children are free to be just children.

## Madhya Pradesh Inaugurates First Crop Insurance Claim Distribution Program

- Program to distribute **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Beema Yojna** claim worth **4 thousand 416 crore rupees** to **20 lakh 46 thousand** farmers of the state from **Ujjain district**.
- Madhya Pradesh is the first Indian state to start the biggest and first ever crop insurance claim distribution program worth Rupees 4 thousand 416 crore.
- Under the scheme, the Farmers who lost Kharif Crop in the year 2015 due to natural calamities will be benefited.
- The insurance claim amount will be provided to the farmers in their bank accounts through online procedure.

## India International Science festival -2016

- **2016 India International Science festival (IISF)** was organized at **CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (NPL)**
- **Aim:** to promote the science and technology developed by the Indian research laboratories among masses and to inculcate scientific understanding, temperament and appreciation for various achievements in Indian science & technology.
- About 10,000 people including 5,000 young scientists, 3,000 children from rural India and 600 foreign students participated in the festival.

## Railway Starts Giving Free Accidental Insurance Cover for Booking Railway Ticket Online

- To promote Digital Transaction after demonetization of Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 currency note, the **Indian Railways** has started to give **free accidental insurance cover** to the passengers who booked their tickets through online mode
- Earlier in September 2016, an **optional insurance scheme** was launched by the IRCTC on a pilot basis for one year, which provided an insurance cover of about Rs. **10 lakh** for booking online ticket by paying **92 paisa**.
- Passenger was entitled to get Rs. 10 lakh in case he gets permanently disabled, Rs 7.5 lakh in case of partial disability, while Rs 2 lakh for the hospitalization expense.

## Model Village Scheme launched in Puducherry

- Selection of **Thimmanaicken Palayam** village in the Manaveli Assembly constituency under **Model Village Scheme**.

- As a part of corporate social responsibility, Puducherry chapter of the Confederation of Indian Industries, the Mahindra Holidays, Aravind Eye Hospital and a few other organisations had also come forward to take up developmental works in the village.
- The model village scheme aims at creating a clean environment in the village under the **Swachh Bharath Abhiyan** and also make the village **open defecation free** within a month.

#### **Ajit Mohan Committee to Fight Online Piracy**

- **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI)** has constituted a committee to fight against the problem of online piracy and develop suitable business standards and best practices for the digital entertainment industry.
- The aim of the committee is to safeguard the interest of the digital entertainment industry.
- The committee will take necessary steps to create a self-regulatory code of conduct, measures for standard and good business practices, create public awareness measures to minimize online piracy and also take regulatory and legal actions as per requirement.

#### **First Children Special Train in Kashmir**

- **Fortnightly** special train '**Vaadi ki sair**' (**Tour of the Valley**) on December 11, 2016, for children that will run between **Banihal to Baramulla**.
- **610 children** boarded the train from various stations of valley to enjoy the ride.

#### **Rajasthan High Court scraps 5% quota for Gujjars**

- Rajasthan High Court has scrapped the Rajasthan Special Backward Classes (SBC) Reservation Act, 2015 that provided 5% quota to five communities, including Gujjars in jobs and education.
- The verdict was given on bunch of writ petitions challenging the 2015 Act on grounds of violation of Supreme Court mandated limit of 50% on reservation.
- State government had given the reservation illegally to five communities and declared SBC Reservation Act, 2015 and its notification unconstitutional.
- It has failed to consider Article 16(4B) of the Constitution, which forbids reservation exceeding 50%.

#### **Parliamentary Standing Committee seeks transparency in appointment of judges**

- Need of transparency in the appointments process on the part of the judiciary and the government, while ensuring the independence of the judiciary.
- Raising of the retirement age of Supreme Court judges to 67 from 65 and that of High Court judges to 65 from 62.
- Consideration of a fixed tenure for Chief Justices.

#### **DigiShala TV channel to promote digital payments**

- DigiShala is dedicated 24\*7 and 365 days free-to-air TV channel to inform citizens about digital payment ecosystem, benefits and processes.

- Through it, citizens will be informed and educated about various digital payment options through step by step demos of digital payments using e-wallets, UPI, USSD, Aadhaar-enabled payment systems and cards.
- It will impart information and education, especially in rural and semi-urban areas related to Digital Payment ecosystem, its tools, processes and benefits.

#### **Recommendations of Ratan Watal Committee for Digital Payments**

- The Committee has recommended medium term strategy for accelerating growth of Digital Payments in India.
- The strategy must be backed with regulatory regime which is conducive to bridging the Digital divide by promoting competition, interoperability and open access in payments
- Inclusion of financially and socially excluded groups and assimilation of emerging technologies in the market.
- Need of safeguarding security of Digital Transactions and providing level playing to all stakeholders and new players who will enter this new transaction space.
- Inter-operability of payments system between banks and non-banks, up-gradation of digital payment infrastructure and institutions.
- A framework to reward innovations for leading efforts in enabling digital payments.

#### **India, Vietnam sign Civil Nuclear deal, three other agreements**

- With this, Vietnam became 14th country with which India has signed the civil nuclear deal.
- The two countries also signed three other agreements in the fields of energy, aviation and government cooperation.
- These agreements will enhance aviation links, cooperation in the area of energy efficiency and promotion of parliamentary cooperation between both countries.
- Vietnam also extended invitation to India to explore energy in South China Sea (SCS). It has urged India to intensify economic engagement with Southeast Asia, highlighting India's importance as a regional power.
- It also supported India's multilateral membership plans including UNSC.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

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#### **World's longest Rail Tunnel Starts Operating in Switzerland**

- The world's longest rail tunnel, **Gotthard Base Tunnel (GBT)**, began operating on regular basis in Switzerland, on December 11, 2016, to provide service to the passengers.
- The **57 km GBT** took **17 years** to build at a cost of over **12 billion Swiss francs** (\$11.8 billion, 11.2 billion euros).

- The 57 kilometre Gotthard Base Tunnel has exceeded Japan's 53.9-kilometre Seikan tunnel to become the world's longest train tunnel while the 50.5-kilometre Tunnel connecting Britain and France has been placed at third place.

## BUSINESS & ECONOMY

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### **OPEC, non-OPEC Agree to Cut Oil Output to Boost Oil Prices**

- **The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and non-OPEC Russia** reached a mutual agreement on their first deal since 2001, to jointly restrict oil production to control the excess global availability of the oil and thus **boost oil prices**.
- The decision between the two organizations was taken as the prices of the oil went down to very low for more than two years disturbing the budgets and creating unrest in some countries.
- While non-OPEC producers agreed to reduce output by **558,000 bpd**, from the previous 600,000 bpd but still the largest contribution by non-OPEC ever.
- **(OPEC)** is an intergovernmental organization of 13 nations, founded in 1960 in Baghdad by the first five members (Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela), and headquartered since 1965 in Vienna to coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its member countries

### **Government Scraps 10 percent Import Duty on Wheat to improve Domestic Availability**

- Government scrapped the **10 percent import duty on wheat** due to the **rising domestic prices** and **shortage in the buffer stocks** arising out of the consecutive drought in the years 2014 and 2015.
- The decision is likely to lower the domestic wheat prices and keep the food inflation under control.

## PEOPLE IN NEWS

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### **Gentiloni Named As Italy's New Prime Minister**

- **Paolo Gentiloni** was appointed as Prime minister of Italy on December 11, 2016. He replaces **Matteo Renzi** who resigned after losing a referendum on plans to reform Italy's constitution.

### **Rafia Qaseem Baig becomes first Pak woman to join Bomb Disposal Unit**

- **Rafia Qaseem Baig** become the **first Pakistani woman** to join the Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU) in the restive province that frequently witnesses terror attacks.
- She will work in the BDU after completing her 15-day training along with 31 other male members at Nowshera's School of Explosive Handling.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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### **Nanoceramic material for safer, economical nuclear reactors created**

- **Nanoceramic material** can be used at **higher temperatures and radiation fields**, producing energy efficiently and the material becomes tougher under radiation.
- Reactors are used for **generating electricity**, moving aircraft carriers and submarines, producing medical isotopes for imaging and cancer treatment, and for conducting research.

### **China Launches First, Second Generation Weather Satellite 'Fengyun-4'**

- It was China's **First second-generation weather satellites** launched as well as the country's first quantitative remote-sensing satellite in the geostationary orbit.
- The launch second-generation weather satellites were the **242nd mission of China's Long March series of rockets**. The China Meteorological Administration is the primary user of the satellite.
- 14 weather satellites have been launched by China till now, seven of which are still in orbit.

## SPORTS

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### **Cheerleading and martial art of Muay Thai Becomes Provisional Olympic Sport**

- **International Olympic Committee's** executive board has granted provisional recognition to **cheerleading and the martial art of Muay Thai as Olympic sports**.
- The governing body for each sport will now be entitled to receive at least **\$25,000** annually from the committee along with the opportunity to apply for additional grants and take part in a number of programs, including athlete development and anti-doping.
- With the inclusion of the two sports in Olympics, total **37 sports** are now part of the Olympic game.
- Provisional recognition of the two sports will be provided for up to **three years**, after which they can apply to become a part of the game.

### **Iqbal Sayed Becomes First Indian to Win Medal at Mr. Olympia Amateur Event**

- **Iqbal Sayed** of Mumbai won the silver medal at the **Mr Olympia amateur** event held in **Hong Kong**, beating participants from 20 countries under the Olympia Amateur Asia 2016's Classic Bodybuilding category.
- 27-year old Iqbal, who works as a **civil engineer** with **Reliance Infrastructure** and **Mumbai Metro**, has become the first Indian to win a medal at the Mr. Olympia amateur event.

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