

# NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## Cabinet Approvals on January 4 2017

- Approval of signing of an agreement between **India and Uruguay** for cooperation and mutual assistance in **Customs Matters**.
- Approval for signing of an **agreement** for cooperation in the field of **Agriculture and allied sectors** between **India and Portugal**.
- Approval of signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between **India and Kenya** on bilateral cooperation in the field of **Agriculture and Allied Sectors**.

## New Projects for Ganga Cleaning over Rs. 370 Crore

- **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** has approved many new projects at an estimated cost of over **Rs 370 crore** for its ongoing **Ganga rejuvenation program in Haridwar and Varanasi**.
- Six more cities/towns under surface cleaning exercise of the river using trash skimmers have been included.
- In Haridwar, **68 MLD sewage treatment plant (STP)** in **Jagjeetpur** and **14 MLD STP in Sarai** have been approved at an indicative cost of **Rs 110.30 crore** and Rs 25 crore respectively under Hybrid Annuity based PPP mode.
- Approval for the implementation of **50 MLD sewage treatment plant at Ramana in Varanasi** has been given at an indicative cost of **Rs 120 crore** under Hybrid Annuity-based PPP mode.
- 'Namami Gange' program was launched as a mission to achieve the target of cleaning river Ganga in an effective manner by involving all stakeholders, especially five major Ganga basin states namely Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.
- The program is responsible for river surface cleaning, STP infrastructure, river front development, bio-diversity, afforestation and public awareness.

## Swachh Bharat survey, Swachh Survekshan 2017 Begins in 500 cities

- Survey will be conducted by **Quality Council of India** to rank **500 cities** across the on cleanliness.
- The cities will be judged on the basis of data provided by **Municipal bodies** which will carry 900 marks, **direct observations** and **independent assessment** would carry 500 marks and **citizen feedbacks** with 600 marks.
- Areas to be evaluated includes waste collection, sweeping and transportation carrying 40 Percent marks.
- Open defecation free and toilets will carry 30 Percent marks, municipal solid waste-processing and disposal 20 Percent, information.
- Education and behavior change, and Capacity building – Swachh Bharat Mission e-learning portal with 5 Percent.
- Citizens can give their feedback by either giving a missed call on 1969 to record their response or by filling up a feedback form on the Swachh Survekshan website.

### **Telangana and Assam Joins UDAY Scheme**

- **Assam and Telangana** signed a pact to join the **UDAY scheme**. **The total states covered under the scheme rose to 20.**
- The scheme envisages the State Governments to bear 75% of their respective DISCOM debt outstanding as on September 30, 2015.
- The Government of Telangana would take over Rs. 8,923 crore of the total Rs. 11,897 crore of DISCOM Debt .
- The Assam government would take over Rs. 928 crore out of total Rs. 1,510 crore DISCOM Debt and the balance debt would be re-priced or issued as State guaranteed DISCOM bonds.
- This would enable Telangana and Assam to save an annual interest cost of about Rs 387 and Rs 37 crore, respectively.
- Telangana will also reduce its Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses and Transmission losses to 9.95% and 3% respectively which would bring additional revenue of around Rs. 1476 crores.
- The two states is also expected to have a gain of around Rs. 1200 crores & Rs. 260 crores respectively through Demand Side interventions in UDAY such as usage of energy-efficient domestic as well as industrial/commercial equipment.

### **National Green Tribunal Imposes Stay on Pune Metro rail project**

- **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** bench issued an **interim stay** on any construction activity in relation to the **Pune Metro rail project** passing through the **Mula-Mutha river bed** in the city.
- The group of applicants objected to the Pune metro rail route alignment proposed through a 1.7 km stretch of the Mutha river bed and argued that construction on the river bed would **destroy the eco-system** of the river and **cause environmental damage**.

### **Election Commission of India Announces Assembly polls Dates for Five States**

- **Polling Dates**
  - 1.Uttar Pradesh: Polling will be held in seven phases from 11 February, 15 February, 19 February, 23 February, 27 February, 4 March and 8 March
  - 2.Manipur: Polling will be held in two phases between 4 March and 8 March
  - 3.Uttarakhand: 15 February
  - 4.Punjab: 4 February
  - 5.Goa: 4 February
- All elections will be held simultaneously and the candidates will have to open bank accounts because any expenses above Rs 20,000 will have to be made through the bank accounts and through cheques only.
- Candidates would not be allowed to use loudspeakers after 10 pm. The police and electoral officers would ensure strict actions against those violating the direction.
- Candidates can spend up to Rs 28 lakh in UP, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Rs 20 lakh in Manipur and Goa.
- The commission has increased the height of voting compartments by 30 inches for secrecy.

# INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## **Supreme Court of Nepal Gives Go Ahead Nod to Government on crucial Constitution amendment bill**

- **Nepal's** Supreme Court gave a go ahead signal to the government with a crucial Constitution amendment bill, to accommodate the demands of the agitating **Madhesi and ethnic groups**.
- The bill, which was registered at the Parliament Secretariat in November 2016, aims to resolve the issues relating to citizenship and provincial boundary demarcation among others put forth by the Madhesis.

## **Finland become 1st country in world to pay basic income to randomly picked citizens on national level**

- Finland has become the **first country in the world** to give some **basic income** to unemployed citizens to ensure a universal income offering greater security, especially as technological advances reduce the need for human labor.
- **Aim** : To tackle unemployment, which stands at **8.1 percent** in a nation of 5.5 million.
- This program will be started from this month. Under this, every month **2,000** selected unemployed persons will get **560 euros**.

# BUSINESS & ECONOMY

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## **Munich Re to open reinsurance branch office in Mumbai**

- Germany based **Munich Reinsurance Company** is planned to open its branch office in **Mumbai** to provide the property-casualty, life, health reinsurance markets across India.
- Munich Re is one of the **first foreign reinsurers** to receive approval for a dedicated branch in India following the 2015 amendment of the Insurance Bill.
- Munich Re Group or Munich Reinsurance Company is one of the world's leading reinsurers.
- It has been present in India since 1950.

## **Yes Bank ties-up with Bajaj Electricals for vendor financing using block chain**

- **Yes Bank** has entered into a tie-up with **Bajaj Electricals** for vendor financing using blockchain solution.
- There is an over 70 per cent cost reduction because of **blockchain** and the payback for investments is 6-8 months.
- **Blockchain solutions** is a distributed database that maintains a continuously-growing list of ordered records called blocks
- **ICICI Bank** is the India's first bank to execute its first transaction on blockchain.

**Rs 5 discount on online payment of LPG cylinder**

- **Cooking gas customers** can now avail an upfront discount of **Rs 5** on every refill booked and paid for online.
- **Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Hindustan Petroleum** have begun offering the price discount to cooking gas customers.
- State oil companies are already offering **0.75% discount** on the purchase of petrol and diesel to customers paying digitally

**Paytm Gets final approval from RBI to Start Operating as Payment Bank**

- Mobile commerce and payments company, **Paytm** received the final approval from the **Reserve Bank of India** to launch **Paytm Payment Bank**.
- Paytm Payments Bank Ltd is expected to start its operation in next 2 months with its first branch in **Noida, Uttar Pradesh**.
- Paytm Payments Bank aims to build a new business model in banking, focused on bringing financial services to hundreds of millions of unserved or underserved Indians.
- Paytm Payments Bank has set a target of 200 million accounts, across current and savings accounts, and mobile wallets, within 12 months of the launch.
- It aims to touch half a billion accounts by 2020. Paytm already has close to 150 million electronic wallets.

**Azure Power Commissions Largest Solar Power Project (150MW)**

- Solar power producer **Azure Power** commissioned **150 MW** solar power project in Punjab, which is its largest in North India.
- The 150 MW solar power plant represents a portfolio of three projects of 50 MW each.
- The weighted average tariff on these projects is **Rs 5.63 per kWh** or unit and the company will supply power to Punjab State Power Corp for 25 years.

**Output growth of India's Core sector slows to 4.9%**

- **India's core sectors** including **coal, steel and electricity**, register a growth of **4.9% in November 2016**.
- The rate of growth was smaller in comparison to the growth in October 2016 mainly due to the crash crunch caused by demonetization.
- The Refinery output grew just 2%, compared with a growth of 15.1% in October. Cement output fell sharply and rose a mere 0.5% in November after a 6.2% rise in October.
- Coal rose at 6.4% after three continuous months of decline. Electricity production grew the fastest at 10.2%, up from 2.8% growth in October.
- Steel output expansion also slowed to 5.6% from 16.9% in October.
- Fertilizer output rose 2.4% in November, compared to a mere 0.8% growth in October. Crude oil and Natural gas continued to fall at 5.4% and 1.7%, respectively.

**Google India launches My Business and Digital Unlocked tool for small and medium businesses in India.**

- Google India has launched **two** new initiatives named **My Business** and **Digital Unlocked** for the **small and medium businesses** in India.
- **Digital Unlocked program** will **impart mobile and online courses** to help small businesses. Google in association with **FICCI** and **Indian School of Business** has launched this program.
- It is a **digital training program** to enable the small businessman to adapt them with the changing technologies.

## PEOPLE IN NEWS

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**5 Indian Americans Takes Oath as Members of US Congress**

- Five Indian Americans, hailing from a Minority Ethnic Community which is just 1 percent of the entire US population, have created history by taking oath as US Congress Members.
- They are **Kamala Harris, Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Raja Krishnamoorthi and Pramila Jayapal**

**Jovenel Moise elected as the President of Haiti**

- Jovenel Moise is a businessman from Haiti capital city of Port-au-Prince and is related to banana export business.
- Mr. Moise who is from **Bald Heads Party (PHTK)** has won **55.6%** of the total votes casted. Jude Celestin remained at the second spot in the race of Presidential election with only 19.5% votes.
- Some people were of the view that Mr Moise has won with help of some fraud and hence some protesters marched against the result. But electoral tribunal officials dismissed allegations of fraud.

**RBI Appoints Surekha Marandi As Executive Director**

- India's central banking institution Reserve Bank of India(RBI) was appointed **Surekha Marandi** as its Executive Director (ED).
- Prior to this, Marandi was working as the Principal **Chief General Manager and Chief Vigilance Officer** in the Reserve Bank.
- She has worked in Consumer Education and Protection Department, Financial Inclusion and Development Department, and Secretary's Department.
- She has also served on the Boards of United Bank and Bank of Baroda.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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**District Administration of Ludhiana develops Mobile App for Election Commission of India**

- **District Administration of Ludhiana** has developed a mobile application named **"ECI360"** for the benefit of voters, candidates, election staff as well as the **Election Commission of India(ECI)**.

- The ECI360 will help bring transparency and accountability regarding the elections and voting.
- A **web-based application, RoNET**, was also developed to be used by ECI, CEO, DEO and RO that would enable the candidates to know what exactly they are required to do and when without the burden of creating an additional reporting forum.

**Mobile APP and Web Portal on UDAY**

- Aim: The main objective of the Portal and App would be to protect the **state power distribution companies suffering financial losses** and to **boost their operational revenues**.
- App and the web portal will provide all details regarding the scheme including the number of states joining the scheme as well as the progress achieved by each state under various parameters listed under the scheme, including AT&C losses, cost of electricity, bonds issued and others.