

# NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## Election Commission Issues Notification for Assembly Election in Punjab and Goa

- **Important Dates as per the notification**
  - ♦ Last date of filing nominations by candidate: January 18, 2017
  - ♦ Scrutiny of the nomination paper: January 19, 2017
  - ♦ Last date to withdraw nominations from the election: January 21
  - ♦ Date of casting election vote in both the states: February 4, 2017
  - ♦ Counting of the votes: March 11, 2017
- There are 117-Assembly constituencies in Punjab while Goa has 40 assembly constituencies.

## Supreme Courts Directs Kerala Government to Compensate Victims of Endosulfan Poisoning

- The state government of **Kerala** has been directed by the **Supreme Court** to pay **Rs.500 crore** as compensation to **5,000 victims** suffering various types of deformities, health issues and other complication due to the use of **Endosulfan pesticides** in the state.
- Endosulfan pesticides were generally used in 1950 in agricultural sector.
- After 2 decades many countries realized its hazardous impact on environment as well as health of the people and was gradually banned in about 80 countries.
- Since the mid-1970s, villages in Kasargod district of Kerala also used aerial spraying of Endosulfan on thousands of hectares of cashew nut plantations.

## Center Drafts Rules to Regulate Dog Breeding Centres

- **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has proposed draft rules **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Dog Breeding and Marketing Rules, 2017)**, to regulate dog breeding centers in the country.
- Proposed rule would prohibit dog breeding without registration. The rule prescribes the various requirements that should be met by the registered breeders for breeding or housing of dogs.
- It also contains conditions for medical care, age, pet shop licenses, record keeping and sterilization for sale of these dogs.
- The move is aimed to protect the thousands of dogs that are illegally bred under deplorable conditions without proper medical care. Besides, new born puppies often less than two months of age are sold to customers without any registration or records.

## Jammu & Kashmir Government Presents Reform Focused Power Budget

- The budget has a strategy to focus on addressing the **purchase liability** and put **reforms as the core agenda** for the power sector.
- It provides a transparent accounting system for the sector. In 2016-17, the government spent Rs 12,000 crore on power purchases and liquidating past liabilities.

**Arunachal signs MoU with NDDB to promote dairy development**

- According to the MoU, NDDB will conduct a **survey** related to milk production and consumption and identify areas of intervention in Arunachal Pradesh
- NDDB would prepare a **5 year dairy development plan** and provide technical support to the state to set up a milk procurement system.
- NDDB would also provide technical support in terms of establishment of dairy infrastructure, cattle feed and mineral mixture plant besides providing training and capacity building of farmers, dairy technicians and others.

## INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

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**Saudi Arabia Increases Annual Haj Quota for India by 34500**

- With this the India's Haj quota has been increased from 1,36,020 to 1,70,520. Last year, 1,35,903 devotees from India performed Haj. The increase will be effective from January 1, 2017.
- It is the biggest increase in quota for Haj pilgrims after 1988. Five years ago, the Saudi authorities slashed quotas for foreign pilgrims from each country by 20 per cent considering the devotees' safety as they undertook expansion of the Grand Mosque.

**Europe's first underwater museum opens in Lanzarote**

- The first and only underwater **sculpture museum of Europe, Museo Atlantico**, has been inaugurated off the **Canary Island coast of Lanzarote**.
- It features over 300 life-sized sculptures and has 12 sprawling underwater installations and it took almost three years to complete the project.
- The sculptures are created with pH neutral materials and have been designed to last for hundreds of years as an artificial reef for marine life to thrive on.
- They have also been created to raise awareness of the need for environmental conservation and to highlight marine ecology issues.

## BUSINESS & ECONOMY

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**NITI Aayog Estimates the GDP Growth of 8 Percent for 2016-17**

- **NITI Aayog** has projected the GDP growth rate of **8 Percent for 2016-17** based on the appraisal document for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan.
- The estimate does not take into account the impact of demonetization.
- The policy think tank laid that overcoming the lack of reforms in land acquisition, labour, skill development and simplification of regulatory cum administrative procedures can lead to growth prospect of above 8 percent.

- According to NITI, India is lagging behind in electronics, food processing, leather, and textiles and garments sectors that are the reasons for hindering growth.

#### **Mahindra Asset Management launches Mahindra Mutual Fund Dhan Sanchay Yojna scheme**

- Mahindra Asset Management Company Pvt. Ltd (MAMCPL) launched an open ended scheme **Mahindra Mutual Fund Dhan Sanchay Yojna scheme** to generate long-term returns through investment in equity and debt.
- The scheme is for investors who seek to take a calculated exposure in both equity and debt with a long term investment outlook

## PEOPLE IN NEWS

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#### **Housing's ex-CEO Jason Kothari to join Snapdeal**

- After the announcement of a merger of Housing with PropTiger, CEO of Housing.com, **Jason Kothari** will be the chief strategy and investment officer of Snapdeal.
- He is a strong business leader and an entrepreneur who has already been the CEO of two successful companies.

#### **Manish Tewari appointed senior fellow of US think tank**

- Congress leader and former Union Minister **Manish Tewari** was appointed as the senior fellow of US-based think tank Atlantic Council.
- Tewari will focus on programming aimed at strengthening US-India relations.
- The Atlantic Council is a think tank in the field of international affairs. Founded in 1961, it provides a forum for international political, business, and intellectual leaders.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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#### **INS Khanderi, Second Scorpene Class Submarine Launched in Mumbai**

- Khanderi is the second among the six submarines being built at MDL in collaboration with M/s DCNS of France, as part of Project 75 of Indian Navy.
- Under Project 75, the navy would acquire 6 next generation diesel submarines with Air Independent Propulsion System (AIP) technology for the Indian Navy by **2022**.

#### **Chinese Navy Commissions Sophisticated Ship CNS Kaiyangxing into its Fleet**

- The new ship with **hull code 856** is capable of conducting all-weather, round-the-clock observation on multiple targets. The ship is so sophisticated that only a few countries, such as the US and Russia, are capable of developing it.
- The Kaiyangxing is a **Type 815A electronic reconnaissance ship**, with displacement of 6,000 metric tons and a maximum speed of 20 knots or 37 kilometers per hour.

**Low-Cost Hand Powered Blood Centrifuge Developed by Stanford Bioengineers**

- **Stanford Bioengineers** including Indian Origin among them have created a **ultra-low-cost**, human-powered **centrifuge device** that is capable to separate blood into its individual components in only 1.5 minutes.
- Centrifuge is a machine with a rapidly rotating container that applies centrifugal force to its contents, typically to separate fluids of different densities or liquids from solids.
- It is critical for detecting diseases such as malaria, African sleeping sickness, HIV and tuberculosis.
- The Bioengineers have developed a prototype of this Centrifuge using **20 cents of paper, twine and plastic**. This “paperfuge” can spin at speeds of 125,000 rpm and exert centrifugal forces of 30,000 Gs.

**NGT Directs Centre to Test Use of Microbeads in Cosmetics**

- **National Green Tribunal** has directed the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to test cosmetic products containing microbeads and submit a report in four weeks.
- The direction came after a petition was filed by Delhi-based lawyer Ashwini Kumar seeking a ban on their use as they are extremely dangerous for aquatic life and environment.
- Microbeads are tiny plastic substances measuring less than five millimetres that act as exfoliators, agents which remove dead cells on skin and teeth when used in soap, toothpaste and other products. Many brands manufacturing beauty products use microbeads.

## SPORTS CURRENT AFFAIRS

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**PR Sreejesh Becomes Member of FIH Athletes' Committee**

- Captain of Indian men's Hockey Team, **PR Sreejesh** was selected as a member of **International Hockey Federation (FIH) Athletes' Committee** by the FIH Executive Board.
- FIH Athletes' Committee comprises a total of eight current and former hockey players.
- They are responsible to act as a liaison between the FIH and the athletes to make sure the players have voice in the FIH decision making process.
- The Committee will also have to deal with areas such as develop, collaborate, provide and promote resources for athletes including athlete health and welfare, career preparation and management, anti-doping, betting and match-fixing.