

# NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## Final Draft of Central GST & Integrated GST Approved By GST Council

- The state had recommended as many as **26 changes** regarding CGST and IGST, all of which were accepted by the Centre.
- Under the IGST bill which is related to taxation of inter-state transfer of goods, the legislation has been made for **cross empowerment** of state and central officers.
- Both Centre and states have agreed to provide a **composition scheme** for small businesses. Now the small businesses with an annual turnover of up to Rs 50 lakh will pay 5 percent tax (to be shared equally between the Centre and states).

## Aadhaar Mandatory to Get Mid-Day Meal and Booking Train Tickets Online

- It has been made mandatory for the **students** across the country to have an **Aadhaar number** for getting their **midday meals**.
- **Cook-cum-helpers** working under the midday meal scheme will also have to furnish Aadhaar number.
- The stated rule will be applicable across the country except Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya and Assam.
- The move is aimed to ensure greater transparency and simplification in the government delivery process and enable beneficiaries to get their entitlements directly and in a seamless manner.
- Railway will soon make **Aadhaar number** compulsory for **booking railway tickets online**.
- The decision aims to end fraudulent bookings and prevent selling tickets registered with fake identities.
- Aadhaar number has also been made mandatory for **senior citizens** to avail concessions in train tickets from **April 1, 2017**. A three-month trial run for this is going on.

## Assam Cabinet Declares Sanskrit as Compulsory Subject upto Class 8

- The government also decided to **promote computer education** in the state. The government would also appoint teachers for the two subject.
- The decision to make Sanskrit mandatory was highly appreciated by the Assam Sanskrit Sahitya Sabha and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) as it would prevent western impact on state's culture.
- All Assam Students Union (AASU) criticized the decision to make Sanskrit compulsory instead of promoting Assamese language in the schools.

## Punjab, J&K seal fresh deal on Shahpur Kandi project

- A renewed agreement between **Punjab** and **Jammu and Kashmir** has been sealed for the completion of the **Shahpur Kandi Dam project**, work on which was halted two years ago following a dispute.

- **The 55.5-metre high Shahpur Kandi dam** in Punjab, will help in providing irrigation facility to 5000 hectares of land in Punjab and 32173 hectares in J&K, besides generation of **206 MW power**
- The pact will pave the way for completion of the dam also would stop the Ravi waters from flowing into Pakistan.

**West Bengal Clinical Establishment Bill 2017 Unanimously Passed in State Assembly**

- The Bill aims to regulate the private hospitals and bring transparency, end harassment of patients and take necessary steps to stop medical negligence in health institutes.
- The Bill replaces the West Bengal Clinical Establishments (Registration, Regulation and Regulation) Bill, **2010**.
- The state will set up a **13 member West Bengal Clinical Establishment Regulatory Commission** which will monitor private healthcare facilities, decide on charges for hospitals and deal with complaints from patients.
- **Key Highlights of the Bill**
  - i. Hospitals cannot charge more than as stated in the Bill.
  - ii. Hospitals cannot delay the release of a deceased patient even if the family cannot pay up immediately.
  - iii. In case of death due to negligent treatment, hospital would be liable to pay Rs. 10 lakh as compensation.
  - iv. Victims of accidents will have to be provided care even if he or she cannot immediately pay for it.
  - v. Hospitals that received land from the state government will have to provide free treatment to one in five outdoor patients, and one in 10 patients admitted to the hospital.
  - vi. Every clinical establishment shall maintain a public grievance cell for lodging of complaints on treatment, improper billing, deficit service, behaviour of attending staff.
  - vii. Offer free Cardiac surgery to children under Sishu Sathi Scheme

**West Bengal Gives Official Status to Tribal Language Kurukh**

- **West Bengal** government has given an official status to **Kurukh language** in the state which has been listed as an **endangered language by the UNESCO**.
- Kurukh is a tribal language that belongs to the **Dravidian family**. It is spoken by the **Oraon tribal community** living in Birbhum-Bankura-Purulia-Midnapore belt and the tea garden regions in north Bengal.
- Kurukh is mostly spoken by around 16-lakh Oraon and Kisan tribal peoples and a sizeable number of them live in West Bengal.

# INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

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## Syrian Army Backed by Russian Jets Recaptures Ancient City Palmyra

- **Syrian troops** successfully recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra from the **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)** group for the second time in a year with support from **Russian** forces and warplanes.
- The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) group known as **Jihadists** first captured Palmyra in May 2015 and began to systematically destroy and loot the **UNESCO's World Heritage Site's Monuments and Temples**.
- They were driven out in March 2016 but again recaptured the city in December 2016 in a surprise move when Syrian government was focused on seizing rebel-held east Aleppo.
- Before Islamic State entered the city, Palmyra was well known for temples, colonnaded alleys and elaborately decorated tombs that were among the best preserved classical monuments in the Middle East.

## Half of 4,096 KM of India-Bangladesh Border Fenced

- As per the report by the Border Security Force (BSF), **India** has completed the process of **fencing half** of the **4,096 km of border area** which it shares with **Bangladesh** and expects to finish fencing the rest by **2019**.
- The aim of fencing is to **curb infiltration** and **smuggling** of cattle and fake Indian currency notes.
- BSF has also identified the plots and sent the proposal to the government for fencing the remaining area but land acquisition is a major challenge for completing the work by the 2019 deadline.
- India and Bangladesh shares a 4,096 km border. Among Indian states, West Bengal shares 2,216.7km, Assam 263 km, Meghalaya 443 km, Tripura 856 km and Mizoram 318km border with Bangladesh.

## Sweden introduces military draft for both men and women

- Sweden's coalition government of Social Democrats and Greens instituted a military draft for **both men and women** to tackle the deteriorating security environment in Europe and around Sweden.
- The country has abolished compulsory military service for **men in 2010** because there were enough volunteers to meet its military needs.
- The country runs on Volunteer policy that Armed Forces with enough trained personnel and never had a military draft for women.
- Presently over 20,000 people now work for the Swedish armed forces, but this draft was announced to raise the strength of the forces by 1,000 active troops as well as 7,000 reservists.

# BUSINESS & ECONOMY

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## **SBI slaps charges on cash deposits, breaching balances**

- State bank of India has revised service charges **various transactions**, as well as cash deposits and for failing to maintain monthly average balance in their savings accounts.
- This move follows the leading private sectors banks announced similar charges in the week.
- SBI announced that three cash deposit transactions will be free in a month, beyond three transactions the bank will charge Rs 50 plus service tax for each transaction.

## **Rs 10000 penalty for bank branches refusing to exchange soiled notes**

- Reserve Bank of India has clarified that currency notes which have messages scribbled on it are legal tender bank branches that refuse to exchange soiled notes from people will have to **pay a penalty of Rs 10,000**.
- RBI however said that notes cease to be legal tender if message scribbled on it is **political in nature**.
- According to RBI's Clean Note Policy 1999, no banks can deny to exchange soiled or mutilated currency notes, However there is restriction is in place.
- The restriction for exchanging soiled notes is that if one **exchanges more than 20 notes or notes** worth Rs 5,000 in a day, then banks will levy service charge.

## **Google India inks MoU with Telangana government**

- **Google India** and **Telangana** government have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at supporting the digitisation efforts of the state.
- The MoU will cover various initiatives among, making all government websites mobile friendly and introduce programs to help local small and medium businesses go online and stay safe online.

## **Government's biotech innovation centre to be set up in Bengaluru's C-CAMP**

- Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), will house its regional entrepreneurship centre at **Bengaluru** based Centre for **Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP)**, a biotechnology innovation incubator.
- The centre will provide a direct interface between angel investors and early stage VCs, among other things. BREC will play a facilitator's role.

## **Airtel, Millicom ink pact to merge in Ghana**

- Bharti Airtel and Millicom International Cellular SA (Millicom) have entered into an agreement for Tigo Ghana Ltd and Airtel Ghana Ltd to combine their operations in Ghana.
- As a result, both the companies would have equal ownership and governance rights in the combined entity in Ghana, making it one of the largest communications companies in the country.

- The combined entity would serve nearly **10 million customers, of which 5.6 million are data customers.**
- It would cover more than 80 per cent of Ghana's population with high speed data and would have revenues close to \$300 million.

## ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

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### WCCB Conducts Operation Thunderbird & Operation Save Kurma to Combat Wildlife Crime

- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB)** under the Ministry of Environment and Forests coordinated nationwide '**Operation Thunder Bird**' from January 30 to February 19, 2017 to combat **illegal trade of wildlife animals** in the country.
- The operation was undertaken in coordination with International Criminal Police Organization (**INTERPOL**).
- 'Operation Save Kurma' is a **turtle specific operation** where over 15,000 live turtles were seized.
- **Operation Thunder Bird** is the **codename** for **Interpol's** multi-national and multi-species enforcement **operation**. It aimed to eliminate poaching of wildlife animals of India.

### NGT Fixes Norms for Camping Activity Along The River Ganga

- **National Green Tribunal** has passed an order on March 2, 2017 prohibiting all **camping activity** on beaches along the **Ganga** which fall within **100 meters** from the middle of the river during lean season flow from **Shivpuri to Rishikesh**, a hub for eco-tourism and river rafting.
- The permitted area can be used for the camping activity i.e. putting up of tents, providing of toilets and such other requirements of necessity while the remaining part of the beach can only be used for the purpose of walking and such activity which is not dependent upon setting up any permanent or temporary infrastructure.
- Out of the 33 sites recommended for beach camping, 3 fall outside the restriction of 100 meters, 8 sites are wholly within 100 meters while the remaining 22 sites are partially within 100 meters and partially outside 100 meters.

## SPORTS CURRENT AFFAIRS

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### Maria Sharapova handed wildcard to participate in the Italian Open

- The former world number one **will return to the tour on April 26 in Stuttgart** Open, after a 15-month ban for testing positive for the banned substance meldonium ends.
- The Russian would need the wildcard as her world ranking has disappeared during her absence. Besides She has also been handed a wildcard for the Madrid Open.