

NATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

Indo-Thai joint military exercise begins in Himachal Pradesh

- The main aim is **to build and promote bilateral Army-to-Army relations and enhance inter-operability between the two armies.**
- Approximately 50 troops from Royal Thailand Army and an equal number of Indian soldiers from the Northern Command will participate in the exercise.
- The conduct of 'Ex Maitree 2017' will enhance defence cooperation between the two countries.
- The two armies will jointly plan and execute a series of drills for the neutralisation of likely threats that may be encountered in counter terrorism environment.

Free GST facilitation centres set up across Goa

- In **Goa**, the Office of the Commissioner of Commercial Taxes has set up **GST facilitation centres in ward offices across the state.** The department's **head office** has set up in **Panaji.**
- The trained help desk personnel have been appointed for each ward and the head office to assist taxpayers in resolving their technical issues related to migration to GST, registration, amendments, return filing and payments.
- The Government has identified some Chartered Accountants for this work and the fees of the identified CA's would be paid by the government itself.
- The accountants would give free advice or consultation to the taxpayers on the implementation of the landmark Goods and Service Tax system.

India's tallest ATC tower to be operational at Delhi airport by December

- The tower, among the tallest structures in Delhi, will give a 360-degree view of the airport to the controllers who will be able to see all the three runways, aprons and taxiways.
- The tower, built at a cost of **Rs 350 crore**, has come up at a more centralised location.
- The new ATC tower and the fourth runway is expected to help to reduce congestion in the air and handle more flights.
- The new ATC tower will have **21 controller positions with a 360 degree view at the visual control room and 12 ground controllers at the operational level.**

President clears bill, banning hookah bars in Gujarat

- Those who will run hookah bars in Gujarat will now draw a maximum jail term of three years.
- The main aim of the government is **to protect the youth from this dangerous addiction, which causes various kinds of cancer.**
- The Cigarettes and Other **Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) (Gujarat Amendment) Bill, 2017** had been passed by the Gujarat Assembly in February
- After giving his approval, the governor had sent the Bill to the president, who gave his assent recently.

- It is necessary to put a total ban on hookah bars in the state to save the young generation from falling prey to this new addiction, which is “more dangerous” than cigarettes.

INTERNATIONAL CURRENT AFFAIRS

TERI ranked second among world's climate think tanks

- **TERI was ranked number two by the International Center for Climate Governance (ICCG)**. ICCG is an internationally-renowned body whose activities focus on the design of climate policy and related governance issues.
- The system would need to be guided by extensive research, climate modelling capabilities and assessments of economically viable and technologically feasible solutions.
- ICCG ranking helps **highlight the scale and magnitude of work done by the think tanks working in the field of climate change.**

Chinese troops entered Doklam area in attempt to construct road

- **India told China** that its attempt to construct a road in the **Doklam area in Bhutan** will cause a “significant change of status quo”, is a “violation of a 2012 understanding”, and will lead to “serious security implications.
- On June 16, 2017, Chinese Army's construction party entered the Doklam area and attempted to construct a road.
- Indian soldiers as well as soldiers from the **Royal Bhutan Army** urged Chinese soldiers “to desist from changing the status quo”.
- In 2012, India and China agreed that the tri-junction boundary points between them and a third country will be decided upon in consultation with the concerned countries.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

India in 88th place in money hoarded in Swiss banks

- As per an analysis of the latest figures compiled by the **Swiss National Bank**, **India has slipped to 88th place in terms of money parked by its citizens with Swiss banks** by the end of 2016.
- With maximum holdings, **UK has topped the list.**
- **Money officially held by Indians** with banks in Switzerland now accounts for a meagre **04% of the total funds kept by all foreign clients in the Swiss banking system**
- India was placed at 75th position in 2015 and at 61st in 2014. Till 2007, India used to be among top-50 countries in terms of holdings in Swiss banks.
- **UK accounted for the largest chunk** at about CHF 359 (over 25%) of the total foreign money with Swiss banks.

India gets good ranks on FSB's reform report card to G20

- **FSB has listed India among countries that are 'compliant or largely compliant' on implementation of priority area reforms.**
- The report listed **India as a 'compliant' jurisdiction with regard to the Basel III reforms** in area of risk-based capital and as **'largely compliant' on liquidity coverage ratio.**
- Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey and the US have been found to be 'compliant or largely compliant' with regard to the Basel III reforms
- France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK have been found to be 'materially non-compliant' on at least one parameter.

ADB pledges USD 220mn for improving road connectivity in Rajasthan

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has committed **USD 220 million** for improving road connectivity as well as transport efficiency and safety on state highways of **Rajasthan**
- The loan is the first tranche of the **USD 500 million** Rajasthan State Highways Investment Program, approved by the ADB Board in May this year.
- It will **upgrade about 2,000 kilometers of state highways and major district roads to two-lane or intermediate-lane standards to meet road safety requirements.**
- The main aim of ADB and the government will together **strengthen the transportation efficiency of the state highway.**
- It will also enhance the capacity of the state public works department in the areas of road asset management, road safety and project management.
- It will have a **25-year term**, including a grace period of 8 years.

RBI ups FPI investment limit in g-secs by over 4% for Jul-Sep

- Reserve Bank has raised the **FPI investment limit in government securities by 4.7% to Rs 2.42 lakh crore (Rs 2.42 billion)** for July-September quarter, mainly to increase foreign capital inflows.
- The foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) will be allowed to **raise their investment in state development loans (SDLs) by Rs 6,100 crore (Rs 61 billion) to Rs 33,100 crore (Rs 331 billion) for September quarter of the current fiscal.**
- The overall limit of FPI investment in government securities goes up to **Rs 2.75 lakh crore (Rs 2,751 billion)** from Rs 2.58 lakh crore (Rs 2,580 billion).
- Market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) will issue the operational guidelines relating to allocation and monitoring of limits of the enhanced FPI investment in the central government securities and SDLs.
- There will be future increases in the limit for **FPI investment in g-secs will be allocated in the ratio of 75% for long term category of FPIs and 25% for general category.**

Credit card bill payment exempt from cash dealing limit

- As per a notification issued by Revenue Department, **restrictions on cash dealings of Rs. 2 lakh or more will not apply to credit card bill payments, business correspondents appointed by banks and issuers of prepaid instruments.**

- **Finance Act 2017** banned cash transaction of 2 lakh or above with effect **April 1, 2017**. However, some exceptions were made.
- **Five entities have been exempted from this rule.** These include receipts by a business correspondent on behalf of a banking company or co-operative bank; and receipt by a company or institution issuing credit cards against bills raised in respect of one or more credit cards.

Finance ministry removes additional excise duty on tobacco, cigarettes

- **Cess on Tobacco Products under GST:**

Item	Cess
Pan Masala	60%
Tobacco	71-204%
Scented Zarda & Filter Khaini	160%
Pan Masala containing Gutkha	204%
Filter and non-filter cigarettes not exceeding 65 mm	5% cess plus Rs 1,591 per 1,000 sticks
Non-filter cigarettes exceeding 65 mm but not exceeding 70 mm attract	5% cess plus Rs 2,876 per 1000 sticks
Filter cigarettes exceeding 65 mm but not exceeding 70 mm attract	5% plus Rs 2,126 per 1000 sticks
Cigars	21% or Rs 4,170 per 1,000 sticks, whichever is higher
Branded Gutkha	72%
Smoking Mixtures for pipes and cigarettes	290%

\$100-million fund Fundamentum launched

- The corpus may be extended to \$200 million if the fund sees more opportunities.
- The fund, which has so far closed \$50 million, will see one-third of the corpus coming from Nilekani and Aggarwal.
- It will include entrepreneurs who have built unicorns and decacorns.
- Fundamentum will invest about two-three startups in a year, ranging from **\$10 million to \$25 million**, and will mainly focus on consumer tech as well as enterprise technology startups serving global companies.

Microsoft India inks pact with NISA

- **Microsoft India** has signed an agreement with **National Independent Schools Alliance (NISA)** to offer **Microsoft Aspire School Program (MASP) Pro Plus** to over 55,000 member schools.
- MASP main aim is to **equip schools with technology and innovative learning solutions, modernise campuses, and prepare future-ready students, among others.**
- NISA brings together budget private schools (BPS) from across the country to give them a unified voice to address their concerns about legislations.

AWARDS

Pune NGO wins UN prize for sustainable farming model

- It has been awarded for devising an ecologically sustainable agriculture model to combat the adverse impacts of drought.
- The project has **helped empower more than 20,000 marginal women farmers and their families in Marathwada by helping them make informed decisions about agriculture and the environment**
- It is the **only Indian organisation** to win the award among 800 nominations across 120 countries.
- Fifteen projects from organisations across Africa, Asia and Latin America won the award in recognition of innovative solutions to tackle poverty, and environment and climate challenges.

PEOPLE IN NEWS

Lt General Mahesh Senanayake appointed as New Army Commander of Sri Lanka

- **Lieutenant General Mahesh Senanayake**, who played a key role in defeating the Tamil Tigers during the three-decade-long brutal civil war, has been appointed as **New Army Commander of Sri Lanka**
 - Mahesh Senanayake is a graduate of the prestigious United States Army Command and General Staff College and holds a Bachelor of Science (BSc) degree in Civil Engineering from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.
 - He is currently serving as the Commander Security Forces in Jaffna.
 - He was previously serving as the Chief of Staff (CoS) of the Sri Lanka Army.
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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

North Korea claims successful intercontinental ballistic missile test

- US Pacific Command confirmed it had tracked “the “single launch of a land-based, intermediate range ballistic missile” for 37 minutes after it lifted off from an airfield north-west of Pyongyang.
- The missile, which the US and South Korea had said was an intermediate-range projectile, landed inside Japan’s exclusive economic zone on Tuesday.

SpaceX’s Dragon returns with first Chinese experiment from ISS

- **SpaceX’s Dragon cargo spacecraft** returned to Earth from the **International Space Station (ISS)** bringing back the **first Chinese experiment ever to ISS**.
- This was SpaceX’s 11th contracted cargo re-supply mission for **NASA**.
- **Dragon has returned with more than 1,860kg of cargo**, including science samples from human and animal research, biotechnology studies, physical science investigations and education activities.
- One of the science samples was the first-ever Chinese experiment brought to the space station, which is fully commercial, under an agreement with **Houston-based NanoRacks**, which offers services for the commercial utilisation of the orbiting laboratory.
- The experiment from the **Beijing Institute of Technology** was aimed at studying the effects of the space radiation environment on DNA and the changes in mutation rate.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Sundarbans mangrove cover at risk says Study

- The total forest cover of the Indian Sunderbans as assessed by remote sensing studies for the year 1986 was about 2,246.839 sq. km., which gradually declined by 2,201.41 sq. km. in 1996, then down to 2168.914 sq km in 2001 and to 2122.421 sq km in 2012.
- The **loss in the mangrove forest in the Indian Sunderbans is about 5.5 %**. Maximum erosion of mangroves has occurred in **Bhangaduni (37% loss)**, **Dalhousie Island (16% loss)**, **Jambudwip (10% loss)** and **Dulibhasani West (9.7%)**.

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