

National Current Affairs

SDMC launches 'Mosquito Terminator Train'

The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), in a joint initiative with the Northern Railway, launched the 'mosquito terminator train' at the New Delhi Railway station on 18th of Aug 2017.

Key Notes:

- The train will spray insecticide or bactericide on water bodies along the tracks across the city.
- It is expected to cover a distance of 70 kilometres a day.
- The truck contains a mixture of 8,000 litres of water and 200kg larvicide.
- The train runs at a speed of 20 km/hour to ensure that water bodies are sanitized effectively.
- This is an annual exercise carried out to curb mosquito breeding in localities near railway tracks, which are inaccessible by road.
- The authorities have planned eight trips of terminator trains between 18th August and 16th September.
- The special train covered south Delhi areas such as Hazrat Nizamuddin, Lajpat Nagar, Patel Nagar, Delhi Kishanganj and Sadar Bazar.
- The train will cover areas in Sadar Bazar, Sarai Rohilla, Patel Nagar, Delhi Cantonment, Palam and Gurgaon on 19th August.
- In the subsequent days, the terminator train will pass through localities of north and east Delhi municipal corporations.
- A truck-mounted power sprayer is being provided by the municipal corporation for sanitising water bodies located within 50-60 metres of the track.

Power Grid Corporation inks \$500 million loan pact with ADB

State-run power transmission utility Power Grid Corp announced that it will get a loan of USD 500 million from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for its various projects.

Key Points:

- Power Grid has entered into a loan agreement with ADB on 17th August 2017.
- According to the statement, the proceeds of the loan are proposed to be utilised for funding of:
 - Green Energy Corridor
 - 800KV High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC)
 - Bipole link between Western Region (Raigarh, Chhattisgarh) and Southern Region (Pugalur, Tamil Nadu)

- 320 KV HDVC link between Pugalur and North Trichur (Kerala)

About ADB

- Formation: 24 November 1966.
- Headquarters: Mandaluyong, Metro Manila, Philippines
- President: Takehiko Nakao

Smriti Irani inaugurates handicraft manufacturing unit in Jharkhand

Smriti Irani has inaugurated Jharkhand's first textiles manufacturing and export unit 'Orient Craft Ltd'.

Key Points:

- Currently, Jharkhand produces an annual production of nearly 1,200 metric tonnes of tasar silk alone and shares 62% share in the total market production of the entire country.
- The unit has come up in record time of 4 month with all the modern machines.
- Irani will also lay foundation stones of numerous companies under special make in Jharkhand drive, called "Momentum Jharkhand in Jamshedpur.
- The second phase of the 'Momentum Jharkhand' will bring upon more employment and development to the state.
- This initiative is under the ongoing Momentum Jharkhand initiative of state government whose theme is ease of doing business in the state.
- In 4 months, 900 people were given employment in the manufacturing unit of the textile sector.
- The ongoing ceremony, named as "Second Groundbreaking Ceremony" laid foundation stones for 70 companies.

About Jharkhand

- Capital: Ranchi.
- Governor: Draupadi Murmu.
- Chief Minister: Raghubar Das.

India, US establish Two-By-Two Ministerial Dialogue

India and US have established new two-by-two (2 by 2) ministerial dialogue to enhance strategic coordination between them and maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The new dialogue format will replace the earlier India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue. It will be similar to the India-Japan 2+2 dialogue format between foreign and defence secretaries of the two countries.

Key Facts

India and US had elevated their Strategic Dialogue in 2009 which mainly focuses on regional security, economic cooperation, defence, trade and climate challenges. The purpose of two-by-two ministerial dialogue is to put strategic, defence and security relationship between the two countries at the forefront and centrestage. The new format would include External Affairs Minister and Defence Minister from India and their American counterparts Secretary of State and Defence Secretary.

Comment

The new ministerial dialogue would enhance strategic coordination between the two nations. It will also elevate strategic consultations between both countries. It will be helpful to coordinate more closely on Afghanistan, developments in the Asia Pacific, Indian Ocean and also in the Middle East (West Asia). It will insulate the India-US strategic relationship from feuds over trade and deep divide on economic integration policies as trade and deep divide on economic integration policies as trade and commercial issues were discussed in the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue earlier.

Climate change costs India \$10 billion every year: Government

In its recent report, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture has observed that extreme weather events are costing India \$9-10 billion annually. It also observed that climate change is projected to impact agricultural productivity with increasing severity from 2020 to the end of the century.

It also mentioned that the extreme weather events are not always linked to climate change but their frequency and severity is increasing and this is being increasingly read as fallout of climate change.

Decrease in Productivity

The productivity of major crops will be marginal in the next few years but it could rise to as much as 10-40% by 2100 unless farming adapts to climate change-induced changes in weather. Major crops such as wheat, rice, oilseeds, pulses, fruits and vegetables will see reduced yields over the years.

It will force farmers to either adapt to challenges of climate change or face the risk of getting poorer. It could turn India into a major importer of oilseeds, pulses and even milk. Adaptation to climate change will need different cropping patterns and suitable inputs to compensate yield fluctuations.

Food Security

Vulnerability of Indian agriculture due to vagaries associated with climate change and low adaptation capacity of majority of Indian farmers poses risk to food security of the country. By 2030, India may need 70 million tonnes more of foodgrains than the expected production in 2016-17.

The demand for food is also going to increase due to an increasing population, expanding urbanisation and rising income. To meet increasing demand, India to depend on import if it does not

act on time to increase production and productivity of major food crops, pulses, oilseeds and milk by adapting to climate change.

Projected food demand

The ICAR-National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research has projected food demand of 345 million tonnes (MT) by 2030- almost 30% higher than in 2011. The projected demands for fruits, vegetables, milk, animal products (meat, eggs and fish), sugar and edible oil, by 2030 is estimated to be 2-3 times more than that in 2011.

Economic Losses

According to the economic survey estimates, India currently incurs losses of about \$9-10 billion annually due to extreme weather events. Of these, nearly 80% losses remain uninsured. The quantum of losses are going to increase substantially in future if one takes into account the impact of climate change on farm productivity.

Improve in Yields

Though there is possibility of decrease in yields of certain crops in traditional sown areas due to climate change but it may increase elsewhere due to change in weather pattern. Though most crops will see reduced production, but climate change may also help improve yields of soyabean, chickpea, groundnut, coconut (western coast) and potato (in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh).

RBI to issue new Rs 50 currency note

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will shortly issue new banknotes of Rs.50 denomination in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series. The base colour of the new notes will be fluorescent blue.

RBI also has clarified that all banknotes in Rs.50 denomination issued in the earlier series will continue to be legal tender.

Key Features new Rs.50 note

Its dimension will be 66 mm x 135 mm. It will have a motif of Hampi with Chariot on the reverse, depicting the country's cultural heritage along with the Swachh Bharat logo, numeral 50 in devnagiri, year of printing and the language panel.

It will have Mahatma Gandhi's portrait at the Centre and a see through register with enominational numeral 50. Micro letters 'भारत', 'INDIA', 'RBI' and '50' and Ashoka Pillar emblem on the right will also feature on the front side.

The security thread will have inscriptions 'भारत' and RBI. The number panel will have numerals growing from small to big on the top left side and bottom right side. The banknote will bear the

signature of RBI Governor Dr. Urjit R. Patel on the front side along with the guarantee and promise clause and the RBI emblem.

International Affairs

China launches First Cyber Court in e-commerce Hub

On August 18, 2017, China launched its first cyber court specialising in handling internet-related cases in the e-commerce hub of Hangzhou amid a spike in the number of online disputes.

About China's first Cyber Court:

- The Hangzhou Internet Court in Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province will handle cases such as online trade disputes and copyright lawsuits.
- The cases handled by the court will be tried online.
- On August 17, 2017, the Hangzhou municipal legislature appointed the president, vice presidents and judges of this court.
- It is to be noted that Hangzhou is home to many Internet companies, including e-commerce giant Alibaba.

Banking & Finance

RBI Introduces ₹ 50 banknote in Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon release Rs 50 denomination banknotes in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series, having signature of Governor Urjit R. Patel. RBI clarified that all the Rs 50 banknotes in the earlier series will continue to be a legal tender. In December 2016, RBI had announced that it would soon issue new currency notes of Rs 50 and Rs 20.

About Rs 50 denomination banknotes in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series:

The base colour of the new note is fluorescent blue. It has a motif of Hampi with Chariot on the reverse, depicting the country's cultural heritage.

The note has geometric patterns aligning with the overall colour scheme, both at the obverse and reverse. Dimension of the banknote will be 66 mm x 135 mm.

First regional Centre of NDB opens in South Africa

The first regional centre of the New Development Bank was officially opened on 17th August 2017 by South African President Jacob Zuma and the bank's Indian head K V Kamath. It was set up by India and other BRICS nations.

Key Points:

- The New Development Bank (NDB), formerly referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank established by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). It has an authorized capital of the bank is USD 100 billion.
- The idea for setting up NDB was proposed by India at the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 held in New Delhi.
- The Creation of a NDB was the main theme of the meeting.
- In 2017 it is expected to approve loans aggregating between USD 2.5 and USD 3 billion for about ten projects.
- In 2018 it is expected to present about 15 to 20 projects involving a total lending of about USD 4 billion for the board's consideration.
- The main target is to end 2018 with a total loan book of about USD 8 billion dollars for approximately 35 projects.
- NDB has received total capital contributions of about USD 2.6 billion, including advance payments from member countries. It is expected to receive another USD 900 million by January 2018.

Business

Nestle India ties up with Amazon to launch new range of Maggi Noodles

Nestle India has tied up with Amazon India for the launch of its new Nutritious range of Maggi Noodles.

About Nutritious range of Maggi Noodles:

- The new range will be available first on Amazon.in, and the company, subsequently, aims to roll it out across retail outlets in India.
- Nestle India general manager, foods, Maarten Geraets said the association with Amazon will help the company reach out to consumers across India.
- He added that new Maggi Nutritious Noodles are in line with Nestle's "Simply Good" initiative to provide healthier & tastier choices to consumers.
- The Nutritious range is a wholesome proposition targeted towards the breakfast occasions.

Rajasthan govt signed JV agreement for refinery project with HPCL

On August 17, 2017, Rajasthan State Government and public sector oil firm Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) inked an agreement to form a joint venture company for Barmer petroleum refinery and petrochemical complex.

Background Information

- On April 19, 2017, after prolonged negotiations that lasted over three years, Rajasthan State Government signed a revised MoU with HPCL for a 9 million metric tonne crude oil refinery at Barmer that would require investments of Rs 43,129 crore and produce fuels meeting BS-VI specifications. As per the claims made by the present Rajasthan Government, revised deal will save the state Rs 40,000 crore with annual viability gap funding of Rs 1,123 crore for 15 years instead of Rs 3,736 crore as per the previous MoU that former CM Ashok Gehlot signed with HPCL.
- Principal Secretary Mines and Petroleum, Aparna Arora and Director (Finance) of HPCL, J. Ramaswami signed the JV agreement respectively on behalf of the Rajasthan State Government and the HPCL.
- As per the proposed plan, the refinery project would be established in 4,813 acres of land area.

Appointments & Resigns

Dr. (Ms.) Mamta Suri takes charge as Executive Director, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

- On August 16, 2017 Dr. (Ms) Mamta Suri took charge as Executive Director, Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) in New Delhi.
- Dr. Suri was serving as Chief General Manager, Insurance Regulatory Development Authority of India.
- Dr. Suri got Ph.D. in Finance from University of Delhi and M.Sc., Insurance Risk and Management from City University, London.
- Dr. Suri is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) from the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India, and she has completed her graduation in law.
- She has also received Honorary membership for High Scholastic Achievement from USA.

Vladimir Putin appoints Nikolay Kudashev as Russia's New Envoy to India.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has appointed career diplomat Nikolay Kudashev as Russia's new ambassador to India announced on 19th August 2017.

Key Points:

- Kudashev, a specialist in South East Asia, is currently the Deputy Director General Secretariat of the Ministry of foreign Affairs of Russia.
- Kudashev was the Russian Ambassador to Micronesia and the Marshall Islands in 2014-2015.
- The appointment of Kudashev comes nearly seven months after the death of Russia's previous ambassador to India Alexander Kadakin.

About Russia

- Capital: Moscow
- President: Vladimir Putin
- Prime Minister: Dmitry Medvedev
- Currency: Russian Ruble

Sri Lanka appoints Travis Sinniah, First Tamil Navy chief after four decades

Rear Admiral Travis Sinniah was appointed as the chief of Sri Lanka's naval forces. Sinniah is the first from the Tamil community to head the Navy since the outbreak of the civil war in the north and east of the island in 1972.

Key Points:

- Rear Admiral Travis Sinniah, who has served Sri Lanka Navy for many decades, took office as the Navy Commander.
- His services will be effective from 22nd August and Sinniah succeeds Vice Admiral Ravi Wijegunaratne who has retired.
- He is the second Tamil to head the Lankan Navy after Rajan Kadirgamar, who was the commander in the late 1960s.
- Sinniah, who played a pivotal role in the destruction of the LTTE warships in deep sea during the height of the civil war, was appointed as the Navy chief by President Maithripala Sirisena.
- Sinniah, who joined the Navy in 1982, was the senior most Naval officer to be in active combat operations at sea during the conflict with the LTTE separatists.
- It was also announced that Wijegunaratne would be appointed as the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

Science & Technology

Meghshala: Mobile app for Karnataka teachers

Bengaluru-based social education start-up Meghshala Trust has launched Meghshala ('School on the Cloud') offline mobile app on Google Play Store for the Android platform. It is supported by Tata Trusts.

Key Points:

- The app empowers teachers with the necessary tools and resources to create classroom learning experiences.
- It is preloaded with over 2,500 of Meghshala's 'TeachKits', aligned to the Karnataka State curriculum for science, maths, English and social studies.
- The content is multilingual and has lessons in Kannada, English, and Hindi.
- The teach kits will have new pedagogical techniques, teaching ideas, activities, videos, and pictures that help teachers engage with students.
- The app could be downloaded on the smart phones for free and is easy for teachers to use in their classrooms.
- Rajeev Gowda, Rajya Sabha MP, and G. Raghuram, Director, Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru, were present at the launch of the app at an event in Bengaluru.
- Jyoti Thyagarajan is the founder and trustee of Meghshala.

NASA successfully launches Tracking and Data Relay Satellite-M

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has successfully launched Tracking and Data Relay Satellite-M (TDRS-M) into orbit. It was launched aboard a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket.

TDRS-M is third and final satellite in a series of the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS), next generation communications satellites.

TDRS-M

TDRS-M as part of NASA's Space Network will provide navigation and high-data-rate communications to the International Space Station (ISS), Hubble Space Telescope, rockets and a host of other spacecraft. It will also expand the capabilities and extend the lifespan of the NASA's Space Network which will allow researchers to continue receiving and transmitting mission data well into the next decade.

Tracking and Data Relay Satellite System (TDRSS)

The TDRSS is a fleet of geosynchronous communications satellites that form part of NASA's Space Network. It was introduced in the 1980s to support the Space Shuttle. It is still in service, providing scientific data, relay for communications, telemetry and commands between operators on the ground and spacecraft in Earth orbit. TDRS-M's predecessors, TDRS-K and TDRS-L were also launched onboard of Atlas V rockets in January 2013 and January 2014, respectively. The TDRS fleet is a critical connection for delivering science and human spaceflight data to researchers on Earth.

Two new species of Earthworm discovered in Kerala

Scientists have discovered two new species of earthworm belonging to the primitive family Moniligastridae in Western Ghats ranges of Kerala.

The new earthworms distinguished by a set of characters have been named as *Drawida polydiverticulata* and *Drawida thomasi*.

Key Facts

In total, there are about 200 species of earthworm known in genus *Drawida*. To date, there are 73 earthworm species belonging to genus *Drawida* living in Indian subcontinent. The greatest concentration (43 species) is found in Western Ghats.

Drawida polydiverticulata: It has multiple lobes called diverticulum. It is an organ located in the front of its body which is unique amongst the members of the genus. It was found to be widespread in the protected shola grasslands of the Munnar region, including Eravikulam National Park, Pampadun Shola National Park and Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary.

Drawida thomasi: It was discovered at the Kozhippara Waterfalls near Kakkadampoyil, at the border between Malappuram and Kozhikode. The species has been named as a tribute to Professor A.P. Thomas who initiated the taxonomical studies on earthworms in Kerala.

Sports

Virat Kohli continues to top ICC ODI rankings for batsmen

India captain Virat Kohli continues to top the ICC One-Day International rankings. It has been announced on 18th of Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- In the latest rankings released by the game's governing body Kohli tops the list of batsmen with 873 points.
- Kohli who has a 12-point lead over second placed Aussie opener David Warner, will look to enhance their position.
- Former skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni (12th) place Shikhar Dhawan (13th) place and vice-captain Rohit Sharma (14th) place.
- In the bowlers' list, Bhuvneshwar Kumar (13th) is the only Indian in top 15.
- As for the ICC ODI Team Rankings, India are currently at number three with 114 points and they would have to win the upcoming series at least by a 4-1 margin to ensure that they stay at that position, ahead of England.

- The top two teams from this event will get to play in the ICC Cricket World Cup 2019.
- Winning two matches will take Sri Lanka to 90 points, while the West Indies will reach at 88 points.

Serena Williams named highest paid female athlete of 2017

American Tennis Player Serena Williams has topped the Forbes' list of highest paid female athletes of 2017 with \$27 million in earnings between June 2016 and June 2017.

Key Points:

- Her earnings, which include prize money and endorsements, is twice that of any other female athlete.
- The new list of Forbes's list of the world's 100 highest paid athletes in 2017, released on 17th of August 2017 includes 99 male athlete and Williams, are at the top of their sport.
- Williams ranked 51st on the list and made a \$27 million in 2016.

Rinku Hooda bags silver at World U-20 Para Athletics Championships

India's junior para-athlete Rinku Hooda won a silver medal in the Javelin Throw F46 at the first World Para Athletics Junior Championships.

Key Points:

- World Para Athletics Junior Championships held in Nottwil, Switzerland.
- Hethrew a distance of 54.92 to make the second place.
- Hooda also participated in the IPC World Para Athletics Championships which took place in London in June. There he could finish at fourth place with a throw of 55.12 metres.
- During Rio Olympics last year he finished fifth.
- He won his first national level medal in 2013 during a para nationals meet at the Rajiv Gandhi stadium in Rohtak.

Important Days

World Humanitarian Day -August 19

The World Humanitarian Day (WHD) is observed every year on 19 August to recognize work of humanitarian personnel and those who have lost their lives. The campaign theme for this year is #NotATarget.

The observance of the day also provides an opportunity to celebrate the spirit that inspires humanitarian work around the globe. It pays tribute to aid workers who risk their lives in humanitarian service and also to rally support for people affected by crisis around the world.

Background

The World Humanitarian Day was instituted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by passing a resolution A/63/L.49. The resolution passed by UNGA on the Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Assistance of the United Nations was sponsored by Sweden.

The day coincides with the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq. In this bombing, then Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to Iraq, Sérgio Vieira de Mello and his 21 colleagues were killed.

World Photography Day – August 19

World Photography day is observed on 19th August across the world. It aims to inspire photographers across the planet to share a single photo with a simple purpose and to share their world with the world.

Key Points:

- World Photo Day originates from the invention of the Daguerreotype, a photographic process developed by Frenchmen Louis Daguerre and Joseph Nicéphore Niepce in 1837.
- On 19th August 2010 World Photo Day hosted its first global online gallery.
- Almost 270 photographers shared their pictures and people from over 100 countries visited the website.
- This marked the first official, globally reaching World Photo Day.
- World Photo Day is a global event that's aspiring to create positive change in the world through photography.
- By bringing together millions of photographers around the world, it will connect people in a global celebration that invests back into their local and global communities