

National Current Affairs

Supreme Court declares right to privacy as Fundamental right under constitution

The nine-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice of India JS Khehar in a landmark unanimous decision has declared right to privacy a fundamental right under the constitution.

With this, the apex court overruled its own previous eight-judge Bench and six-judge Bench judgments of M.P. Sharma and Kharak Singh delivered in 1954 and 1961, respectively, both of which had pronounced that the right to privacy is not protected under the constitution.

Supreme Court Judgment

- The apex court ruled that right to privacy is an intrinsic part of Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21 and entire Part III of the Constitution. It overruled the apex court's earlier two judgements that right to privacy is not protected under the Constitution.
- The apex court also had voiced concern over the possible misuse of personal information in the public domain. The question whether Aadhaar violates right to privacy will be dealt with by the five-judge bench which has been hearing the petitions since 2015.

Comment

- The Supreme Court of India's judgment gains international significance as privacy enjoys a robust legal framework internationally, though India had earlier remained circumspect.
- The judgment finally reconcile Indian laws with the spirit of Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966, which legally protects persons against the arbitrary interference with one's privacy, honour and reputation, family, home and correspondence.

Sushma Swaraj to inaugurate first Videsh Bhavan in Mumbai

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj will inaugurate the country's first Videsh Bhavan, incorporating all Regional Passport Offices under one roof, at the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC). The formal inauguration will be on August 27, 2017

- Regional Passport Officer Swati Kulkarni informed that as a first pilot project, four offices of have been assimilated and brought under one roof at the state-of-art office.

- MEA – Regional Passport Office (RPO),
- Protector of Emigrants (PoE) office,
- Branch Secretariat
- Regional Office of ICCR
- Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Retd) V.K. Singh, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Administrator of Union Territories of Daman & Diu and Dadra & Nagar Haveli Praful Patel and other dignitaries will be present on the occasion.
- The formal inauguration on August 27 by Sushma Swaraj follows the shifting of the RPO from its Worli premises to the Videsh Bhavan from August 14 and merging of the Thane and Mumbai RPOs from August 21.
- But the existing Passport Seva Kendras in Thane and Malad (Mumbai) will continue to function.

Karnataka ties up with Microsoft to develop India's first Farm Price Forecasting Model

Karnataka Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with software giant Microsoft India to develop a unique “farm price forecasting model.”

The proposed initiative is claimed to be the first-of-its-kind in the country. It will aid farmers from states to predict farm prices in advance and deal effectively with the unpredictable market.

Key Facts

- The farm price forecasting model will use latest IT tools in a bid to help farmers, administrators and other stakeholders to understand market behaviour in advance. It will be a “multi-variate” platform that will take into consideration various factors beyond conventional supply-demand equation while forecasting prices of crops.
- The model will examine a slew of related factors including weather, rainfall and external factors that impact market behaviour. It will help to provide real-time market data, besides helping analyse its implications on farm sector. The model is expected to be in place for major crops by 2018 kharif season.

Significance

- The purpose of the mode is to achieve is predictability as well as stability of farm incomes. Knowing the market situation in advance, it will help farmers, policymakers and industry make informed decisions.
- Moreover, the forecast will also help the government prepare in advance for market intervention if there was an indication of price crash

Rajasthan govt accords OBC status to Jats of Bharatpur and Dholpur

Jats of Dholpur and Bharatpur districts have been given reservation under the Other Backward Class (OBC) category in Rajasthan on August 24, 2017.

Key Points:

- The state social justice and empowerment department has issued a notification after approval from the cabinet.
- It was a long pending demand of the Jat community people residing in both the districts to include them in the OBC list
- Jats residing in districts except for Dholpur and Bharatpur were getting benefit of the OBC quota.

About Rajasthan

- Capital: Jaipur
- CM: Vasundhara Raje
- Governor: Kalyan Singh

UIDAI launches door step Aadhar enrolment in Delhi

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has launched door step enrolment facility with Common Services Centers (CSCs) in Delhi. It is the facility available for the elderly, patients and others who cannot travel the Aadhar centers.

Key Points:

- A mobile van in partnership with CSC India will go and enroll people who are unable to travel to Aadhaar centers for enrolment like elders, patients, small children.
- The van was flagged off by Law and IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad.
- CSC India provides permit and monitor the operations of common service centers across India.
- CSC India is meant to provide government services in rural area. There are about 2.5 lakh CSCs operational across country.

Bilateral Meeting between India and Uzbekistan held in New Delhi

The bilateral meeting between India and Uzbekistan was held in New Delhi on 23rd August 2017.

The Commerce and Industries Minister, Mrs. Nirmala Sitharaman ,Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Elyor Ganiev, Minister of Foreign Trade held detailed discussions on deepening trade and economic ties between India and Uzbekistan.

Key Points:

- It will include investments, trade in goods and services such as education and health in Uzbekistan and India and also underlined the high importance of transport & logistics infrastructure for strengthening bilateral trade ties.
- Commerce Minister also requested Uzbek Minister to become member of multilateral INSTC Agreement which would facilitate increased international transit cargo traffic through Iran.
- Commerce Minister informed Uzbek Minister that existence of Non-Tariff Barriers such as import quotas and licensing, price and foreign exchange control, complex customs and administrative procedures have also been limiting inter-regional trade.

About Uzbekistan

- Capital: Tashkent
- President: Shavkat Mirziyoyev
- Prime Minister: Abdulla Oripov
- Currency: Uzbekistani Som

Telangana government launches 181 helpline for distressed women

- Department of Women Development and Child Welfare in collaboration with Hyderabad District Collectorate launched a Women Helpline 181 to help and assist women in distress.
- The helpline will support women affected by harassment, trauma and violence both in private and public spaces such as family, community and workplace.
- The helpline will function 24/7 and provide service to women affected by violence, women seeking emotional support and also provide information about women welfare schemes introduced by the State and Central government.
- Women Helpline is being launched with the technical support of GVK-EMRI and it is financially supported by Union government.

CCEA approves renaming SAMPADA Scheme as PM Kisan Sampada Yojana

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved renaming of SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY).

The SAMPADA scheme was approved by the CCEA in May 2017 for the period of 2016-20 coterminous with the 14th Finance Commission cycle. The objective of the scheme is to supplement agriculture, modernize processing and decrease agricultural-waste.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)

- PMKSY is an umbrella scheme which incorporates all ongoing schemes of the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI). It includes MoFPI's schemes such as Mega Food Parks, Food Safety and Quality Assurance Infrastructure, Integrated Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure, etc.
- It also includes new schemes like Creation of Backward and Forward Linkages, Infrastructure for Agro-processing Clusters, Creation/Expansion of Food Processing & Preservation Capacities.

Financial Allocation

- PMKSY will have budgetary allocation of Rs. 6000 and is expected to leverage investment of Rs. 31,400 crore, handling of 334 lakh MT agro-produce valuing Rs. 1 lakh 4 thousand 125 crore.
- It will benefit 2 million farmers and generate over 5 lakh 30 thousand direct or indirect employment in the country by the year 2019-20.

Significance

- The implementation of PMKSY will result in creation of modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet. It will provide a big boost to the growth of food processing sector in the country which is important segment of the Indian economy in terms of its contribution to GDP, employment and investment.
- It will help in providing better prices to farmers and is a big step towards doubling of farmers' income. It will create huge employment opportunities especially in the rural areas and also help in reducing wastage of agricultural produce, increasing availability of safe and convenient processed foods at affordable price to consumers and enhancing the export of the processed foods.

Odisha Government launches rooftop solar project

Odisha Government has launched a grid-connected rooftop solar programme through net-metering system at the State Secretariat in capital city of Bhubaneswar.

The programme aims at harnessing renewable solar capacity through people's participation to further strengthen the grid and reduce power losses and benefit the public. It will also help state to targets in addressing the climate change action plan.

Key Facts

- The programme is being implemented by Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA). Under it, consumers from state can install subsidised small solar plants on their rooftops and consume the generated solar power during daytime. They can also export excess power to grid at 220V/440V level through their service cables.

- Under this programme, state government will provide subsidy of 30% to consumers belonging to residential and institutional segments as well as registered societies and trusts. The exported power will be metered on Net-Metre, a special type of metre provided by the discoms (power distribution companies).
- The Net-Metre will help to bill consumer by taking into consideration positive difference of import from the grid and the export to the grid. It will enable consumer to reduce his power consumption by using his own solar power and simultaneously a reduce bill on account of export of solar power to the grid.

Government notifies new Rs.200 notes

The Union Finance Ministry on the recommendations of the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has notified currency notes of Rs.200. The new notes are likely to be in circulation shortly.

The new Rs.200 currency note was issued through an official gazette notification by the Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs in exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 24 of RBI Act, 1934.

Key Facts

- The Rs.200 denomination banknotes in the Mahatma Gandhi (New) Series bear signature of Governor Dr. Urjit R. Patel. It has Motif of Sanchi Stupa on the reverse, depicting the country's cultural heritage. The base colour of the note is Bright Yellow.
- The new Rs.200 currency note will carry advanced security features to prevent counterfeiting. It has gone through different levels of security and quality checks at the government's press unit at Hoshangabad (Madhya Pradesh).
- It has also reported that RBI may not allow ATMs to dispense new Rs 200 notes. It may be circulated only through banks and not ATMs like Rs.50, Rs.20 and Rs.10 notes are circulated.

Comment

- This is the fourth new note (after Rs.2000, Rs. 500 and Rs.50) to be announced since November 2016 aftermath of demonetisation when Rs. 1000 and Rs.500 old currency notes were demonetised.
- The introduction of the new Rs. 200 note is expected to ease the problems faced by people due to high-value Rs.2,000 notes and ease pressure on lower-denomination currency bills.

Printing of currency notes

The printing of currency notes in India is done either in printing units run by the government-run Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd (SPMCIL) or at printing presses

in Salboni (West Bengal) and Mysore (Karnataka), managed by the RBI-owned Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Ltd (BRBNMP).

International Affairs

Nepal launches world's First Climate smart landscape management plan for snow leopard conservation

Nepal has launched its climate-smart snow leopard landscape management plan on 23rd of August 2017.

Key Points:

- It has been launched to safeguard the Snow Leopard endangered species, also found in India, and its habitat.
- This is the first climate-smart landscape management plan for snow leopard conservation in the world.
- Its conservation plan launched ahead of the International Snow Leopard Summit and Ecosystem Forum, which starts on 24th of Aug 2017.
- It addresses current and emerging threats to the snow leopards and will include climate change.
- It will be used as a model for other range countries to adopt.
- It must cover for more substantial action in securing 20 snow leopard landscapes by 2020.

Indian Navy Band to Participate in International Military Music Festival in Moscow

The International Military Music Festival “Spasskaya Tower” is the parade of the best military music bands of Russia and other countries that takes place every year at Red Square in Moscow. “Spasskaya Tower” is scheduled from 24 Aug to 03 Sep 2017.

Key Points:

- This is considered as one of the largest international event in Russia, where military musicians represent the variety of national, artistic and military traditions of the world.
- A Tri-Services band from the Indian Armed Forces has also been invited to participate and perform in the prestigious event.
- Every year about 1500 musicians, military men and other artists from around 40 countries perform at the “Spasskaya Tower”.

- The Tri- Services Band comprises 07 Officers and 55 PBORs.
- Commander Satish K Champion, Command Musician Officer, and Eastern Naval Command will lead the Naval Band component with 01 officer and 09 musician sailors.

9th meeting of Heads of Governments of SCO dealing with the prevention and elimination of emergency situation

The 9th meeting of Heads of Governments of SCO dealing with the prevention and elimination of emergency situation was attended by the Union Home Minister Shri Rajnath Singh at Cholpon- Ata in Kyrgyz Republic on 24th August 2017.

Key Points:

- India has offered to host a joint urban earthquake search and rescue exercise with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member nations, including China and Pakistan, in 2019 to better respond to emergencies in case of natural disasters.
- Over the period 1996 to 2015, the SCO countries have lost 300,000 lives due to natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, storms, landslides, epidemics etc.
- In this regard, a joint Urban Earthquake Search and Rescue exercise will be very useful in improving our collective preparedness.
- India offers to host a joint exercise on Urban Earthquake Search and Rescue in 2019.

About SCO

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a Eurasian political, economic, and security organisation, the creation of which was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China.
- The SCO member countries are: China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. India and Pakistan had joined the SCO in June in Kazakhstan capital Astana.

India, Nepal sign 8 MoUs

India and Nepal have signed eight Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) in various fields, including Housing grant, prevention of drugs, post-earthquake reconstruction packages in health and education sectors.

The agreements were inked after delegation level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his visiting Nepalese counterpart Sher Bahadur Deuba in New Delhi. The two leaders also jointly inaugurated the Kataiya-Kusaha and Raxaul-Parwanipur cross border Transmission lines.

Signed MoUs are

- Agreement on Cooperation in the field of standardization and conformity assessment.
- MoU between Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal (ICAN).
- MoU on Modalities for Utilization of India's Housing Grant Component to support Reconstruction of 50,000 Houses.
- Three MoUs on Implementation of the Grant Component of India's Post-Earthquake Reconstruction Package in the Education Sector, Cultural Heritage Sector and Health Sector in Nepal.
- MoU for Implementation Arrangement for Construction of Mechi Bridge under ADB's SASEC Road Connectivity Programme (Tranche 2), Funded by India.
- MoU on Drug Demand Reduction and Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemical and Related Matters.

Business

Airports Authority of India ties up with Ola, Uber

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has tied up with cab aggregators Ola and Uber to allow for cab bookings from airport kiosks.

Key Points:

- It will provide option for passengers to hire these cabs at select aerodromes.
- According to this, both Ola and Uber will fulfil commute demand of passengers at the AAI-run Chennai, Kolkata, Pune, Lucknow and Bhubaneswar airports.
- This alliance with Ola and Uber will make easy for air passengers to book a cab through the booking kiosks located at the airport itself.
- It will help to reduce of waiting or moving out for such app-based cabs.

Andhra Pradesh first to implement Bharat QR digital payments to make Vizag less-cash city

Andhra Pradesh's Eastern Power Distribution Company Ltd (EPDCL) and the Southern Power Distribution Corporation of AP Ltd (SPDCL) have become the first state-owned distribution companies in India to accept payments through Bharat QR.

Key Points:

- It is the world's first interoperable quick response code acceptance solution launched by the Reserve Bank of India.
- The Vizag Digital Dhan Sankalp project is an initiative lead by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and Visa, to develop Visakhapatnam into India's first "less-cash" city.
- The less cash Vizag initiative aims to transform Visakhapatnam into the FinTech Valley of India, and to serve as a dynamic example of a digitized city, on a global scale.
- The initiative will aim to drive access, awareness and adoption of payments focusing on underserved merchant and consumer segments, such as small merchants and women, to educate them on the benefits of digital payments.

About Bharat QR

- Bharat QR is a secure, network-agnostic interface that enables customers to use their smartphones to make payments without exposing information like card numbers and CVV.
- To use Bharat QR to pay their electricity bills, customers will simply need to log in to their bank's app, and scan the QR code displayed on their electricity bill, enabling instant payment.
- Customers can also enter their unique Customer IDs online and generate a QR code that can be scanned using their bank app.

Tata Power synchronises its 186 MW hydro project in Georgia

Tata Power announced its joint venture company Adjaristsqali Georgia LLC (AGL) has synchronised 186 MW Shuakhevi Hydro Project in Georgia.

Key Points:

- AGL is a Tata Power joint venture with Norway's Clean Energy Invest AS Norway (Clean Energy) and IFC InfraVentures (IFC), a member of the World Bank group.
- In the fall of 2013, plant was started and was synchronized on August 1-2, 2017, in a record time of less than four years.
- The shuakhevi project is the largest hydropower plant to be built in Georgia over the past 50 year.
- Its investment cost exceeded USD 420 million .The plant will generate about 470GWh of clean energy while lowering greenhouse gases emissions by more than 2,00,000 tonnes per year.

About Georgia

- Capital: Tbilisi
- President: Giorgi Margvelashvili

- PM: Giorgi Kvirikashvili
- Currency: Georgian Lari

Appointments & Resigns

Rajiv Bansal appointed as Air India chief

The government has appointed senior IAS officer Rajiv Bansal as the Chairman and Managing Director of Air India on 23rd of August 2017.

Key Points:

- He will serve for three months. He is additional secretary and financial adviser of the petroleum ministry.
- He will replace Ashwani Lohani who has been appointed as the Chairman of Railway Board.
- Bansal is from the Nagaland cadre of 1988 batch and hails from Haryana.
- He had served at the civil aviation ministry between 2006 and 2008.

About Air India

- Air India is the flag carrier airline of India .It is owned by Air India Limited, a government-owned enterprise, and operates a fleet of Airbus and Boeing aircraft serving 90 domestic and international destinations.
- The airline has its hub at Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi, alongside several focus cities across India.

Ajay Vipin Nanavati appointed chairman of Syndicate Bank

- Ajay Vipin Nanavati was appointed as the chairman of Syndicate Bank on August 21, 2017.
- His appointment has approved as Non-Official Director/Non-Executive Chairman in Syndicate Bank for three years according to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training.
- His appointment has approved by Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.

Former England captain Wayne Rooney retires from international football

- Former England captain Wayne Rooney announced his retirement from international football on Wednesday, ending a 14-year career in which he became the country's top goal scorer with 53 goals.
- Rooney earned his first cap against Australia in 2003 at the age of 17 to become the youngest player, at that time, to represent the national side. The 31-year-old also leaves as England's most-capped outfield player with 119 appearances.

Books & Authors

'I am HIV positive, so what?' book from Manipur bodybuilder Pradipkumar Singh's inspirational fight to overcome HIV

- Mr. World bronze medal-winning bodybuilder, Pradipkumar Singh from Manipur has written a book struggle against HIV AIDS with his condition and his triumphs.
- I am HIV positive, so what?' the book from Pradipkumar Singh, known for his personal struggle against HIV AIDS.

Points to be noted

- The book was released at the Press Club of India in New Delhi on August 18, 2017.
- Pradipkumar, who was diagnosed as HIV positive in 2000, had come out publicly about his condition in 2007. Pradipkumar Singh had won a bronze at the 2012 Mr. World contest in Bangkok. He won the Mr. Manipur title.
- He had been a drug addict during his younger years, he contracted the virus from a shared syringe. He went on to win the Mr. South Asia title in 2012, before bagging a bronze in the Mr. World contest the same year.
- He was a brand ambassador of the Manipur State AIDS Control Society

Obituary

India's oldest cinematographer Ramananda Sengupta dies at 101

India's oldest cinematographer Ramanda Sengupta passed away in Kolkata on 23rd of August 2017. He worked with legends like Jean Renoir, Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen.

Points to be noted:

- He died at the age 101. He was born on 8th May 1916 in Dhaka.
- His first film as a full-time cinematographer was in “Purbaraag” directed by Ardhendu Mukherjee in 1946.
- Sengupta was also a founding member of the Technicians’ Studio in South Kolkata’s Tollygunge.
- He worked with Ritwik Ghatak on his debut film Nagarik that was completed in 1952.
- Sengupta worked behind the camera in over 70 films, including landmark ones like Shilpi, Nishithe, Bindur Chhele, Personal Assistant, Headmaster and Teen Bhubaner Pare.