National Current Affairs

Cabinet Approvals on 30 August 2017

- MoU by the Election Commission of India with the Election Management Bodies of other countries
- MoU with Myanmar for the Conservation of Earthquake-Damaged Pagodas at Bag
- Cabinet approves promulgation of GST (Compensation to States) Ordinance, 2017
- MoU on "India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund"
- MoU between India and Brazil for cooperation in the fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics
- Cabinet apprised of jointly issue of postage stamps between India and Canada
- Cabinet approves equivalence of posts in PSUs, PSBs

India-Myanmar to sign MoU for conservation of quake-damaged Pagodas at Bagan

The Union Cabinet has approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Myanmar for conservation of earthquake-damaged pagodas at Bagan, Myanmar.

- The MoU will be signed during official state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Myanmar during 6-7 September 2017.
- Pagodas are Buddhist temple, typically in the form of a many-tiered tower, built in traditions originating as stupa in historic South Asia. Pagodas at Bagan are one of the premier tourist attractions of Myanmar.

Significance of Project

- Implementation of conservation project will strengthen India's enduring ties in cultural and religious sphere with Myanmar.
- It will also generate immense goodwill for India among people of Myanmar due to religious significance as well as touristic significance of project.
- It will also contribute to India's development partnership with Myanmar. It will provided opportunity to showcase India's expertise in conservation and restoration of monuments.

<u>Cabinet approves MoU between India-Brazil for cooperation in Zebu Cattle Genomics</u> and <u>ARTs</u>

The Union Cabinet has apprised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between India and Brazil in October 2016 for cooperation in fields of Zebu Cattle Genomics and Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs).

The MoU aims to strengthen existing friendly relations between both countries and promote development of Genomics and ARTs in Cattle through joint activities to be implemented through mutually agreed procedures.

Key Facts

- The MoU will promote and facilitate scientific cooperation and setting up of genomic selection programme in Zebu Cattle through
 - o application of genomic in Zebu Cattle and their crosses and buffaloes
 - o application of ARTs in cattle and buffaloes
 - o capacity building in genomic and ART
 - o Related R&D in Genomics and ART in accordance with respective laws and regulations of two countries.
- It is covered under Rule 7 (d) (i) of 2nd Schedule of Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961.
- An implementation committee will be constituted with an equal number of representatives from both countries for purpose of regularly determining activities and developing work plans and subsequently their evaluation.
- It will be done through joint projects in fields of Productivity Improvement of buffaloes and cattle, for purpose of broadening existing knowledge base on sustainable dairy development and institutional strengthening.

Zebu Cattle

- Zebu Cattle (also known as indicine cattle or humped cattle), is a species or subspecies of domestic cattle originating in Indian subcontinent.
- They are characterised by fatty hump on their shoulders, a large dewlap, and sometimes drooping ears.
- They are well adapted to withstanding high temperatures, and are farmed throughout tropical countries. They are used as dairy cattle, draught oxen and beef cattle.

Cabinet approves promulgation of GST (Compensation to States) Ordinance, 2017

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the proposal of Union Finance Ministry to promulgate an ordinance to suitably amend the Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017. The approval will allow GST Council to hike the maximum rate of compensation cess levied from the current cap of 15% to 20%. The ordinance will amend Schedule of Section 8 of the GST (Compensation to a State) Act, 2017.

Key Facts

- It will be only an "enabling Ordinance" and the decision to increase the compensation cess will be taken by the GST Council, the apex tax rate setting body under the GST regime.
- The hike in rate of compensation cess will be levied on SUVs, mid-sized, large and luxury cars.
- It should be noted that compensation cess is applicable not just to cars but also tobacco and coal.
- It is used to form corpus for compensating the states which experience tax revenue loss post-GST.

Background

- In the new GST regime, cars attract the top tax rate of 28%. On top of this, compensation cess of 1-15% is levied for the creation of the state compensation corpus.
- The post introduction of GST, the total incidence tax on motor vehicles [GST+ Compensation Cess] has come down vis-a-vis pre-GST total tax incidence, making these SUVs, mid-sized, large and luxury cars cheaper post GST rollout.
- To rectify the anomaly, the GST Council, comprising of representatives of all states, had recommended that the Central government move legislative amendments required for increasing the cess.

<u>Cabinet approves MoU on India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation</u> Fund

The Union Cabinet approved Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to set up US \$40 million India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F).

- The MoU was signed in July, 2017 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.
- India and Israel will make contribution of US \$4 million (Rs.25 crore) each for Fund, both equivalent amount, annually for 5 years.
- The fund will be governed by joint Board which will consist of 4 members from each country.

Key Facts

- The MoU envisages promotion of bilateral Industrial R&D and Innovation cooperation between both countries in fields of science and technology by extending support to joint projects for innovative or technology-driven new or improved products, processes or services.
- Such collaborative projects will lead to affordable technological innovations in focus areas of mutual interest such as agriculture, water, energy and digital technologies.

- These projects will also provide institutional support in building up consortia including private industry, enterprises and R&D institutions from India and Israel.
- The activities supported by the Joint I4F Fund will increase the techno-economic collaboration between both countries by investing in jointly developed technology projects and collaborations based on technological innovation.
- It will encourage Israel-Indian joint projects that capitalize on both the national and global marketplace. It will provide a comprehensive set of support tools to encourage joint projects. It will foster and strengthen eco-system of innovation and technoentrepreneurship in India and will contribute directly to the Start-up India programme.

NITI Aayog proposes Judicial Performance Index for lower judiciary

The premier government think tank National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog has suggested establishment of a judicial performance index (JPI) to check delay in finalisation of cases in lower judiciary.

It was suggested as part of 'Three Year Action Agenda (2017-20) recommendations for farreaching reforms to expedite justice delivery system, particularly lower courts where nearly 3 crore cases have been pending for years.

Judicial performance index (JPI)

- Establishing of JPI will help the high courts and its chief justices to keep track of performance and process improvement at district courts and subordinate levels for reducing delay. It can also include certain progress on process steps that have already been approved by high courts, like removing burden of day-to-day activity of judges and giving it to administrative officials.
- The process of calculating index will require fixing non-mandatory time frames for different types of cases. Using existing infrastructure and data, index's indicators can be created to check duration of pendency of case along with percentage of cases that have been delayed and how many cases were disposed in previous year compared to the year before.

Other recommendations

- **Separate administrative cadre**: Establishing separate administrative cadre in judicial system to reduce workload on judges. This cadre should report to Chief Justice in each high court to maintain judicial independence.
- Use of automation and ICT: High priority should be given to automation process in courts and use of information and communication technology for e-court and case management, including e-management of court schedules and migration of all courts to unified national court application software.
- Online real time judicial statistics: Steps should be taken for ensuring availability of online real time judicial statistics for determining the adequacy of judicial manpower

- and infrastructure to deal with work load of cases. It will enable priority appointment of judges at lower judiciary levels keeping in mind a scientific approach to assessing number of judges needed to tackle pendency problem.
- Internationally developed measures: Government must look into and adopt
 internationally developed measures such as 'global measures of court performance',
 created jointly by Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration, Federal Judicial
 Center (US), National Center for State Courts (US) and Subordinate Courts of
 Singapore.

Narendra Modi's visit in Rajasthan – August 2017

On 29th august, 2017 Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Rajasthan to inaugurate few highway projects and to dedicate some to our nation along with road transport and highways minister Nithin Gadkari. He informed that his government is setting in a culture of completion of projects unlike previous governments. PM Modi will also visit Pratap Gaurav Kendra which exhibits the valour and achievements of Maharana Pratap and pay his homage to the famous King of Mewar.

Highlights of his visit:

- He laid foundation stone and inaugurated national highway projects worth Rs 15,000 crore.
- He dedicated 11 national highways to the nation. These highways cover a total length of 873 kms and inaugurated a suspension bridge built across the Chambal river at Kota, making it the first 6-lane cable suspended bridge in the Rajasthan. The bridge, 1.4 km in length, is constructed at a cost of Rs 278 crore at Kota.

Delhi Police launches YUVA – a skill development programme

The Delhi Police has launched YUVA – a skill development programme under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). It was inaugurated by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

The 'YUVA' initiative aims to connect with youth by upgrading their skill as per their competencies. It will help youths to get gainful employment under PMKVY. It will also play important role in building up confidence and faith of youths in police organization.

Key Facts

 For implementing YUVA initiative, Delhi Police has tied up with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) to provide mass job linked skill training for selected youth. NSDC role will of providing

- skill training to youth under PMKVY and CII will provide job linked training through its Sector Skill Councils which are connected to industry to provide job guarantee.
- The youth in age group of 17-25 years were selected by Delhi Police for this training based on detailed exercise conducted in all 13 districts under its jurisdiction. These youths belong to categories such as school dropouts, victims of crimes, Juvenile offenders and families in dire state mostly from the underprivileged colonies. So far, 2,269 candidates were selected to be trained by 36 training partners in 45 skills.
- 32 police station buildings of Delhi Police have been identified where Skill Development Centres would be opened at the earliest.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

- PMKVY is flagship Skill Certification Scheme of Ministry of Skill Development &
 Entrepreneurship (MSDE) launched in July 2015. Its objective is to enable a large
 number of Indian youth to take up industry-relevant skill training that will help them
 in securing a better livelihood.
- Under this Scheme, individuals with prior learning experience or skills are also assessed and certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Government will pay complete training and assessment fees.
 - The training includes soft skills, personal grooming, behavioural change.
- It is implemented through the national skill development corporation (NSDC). Skill training is based on the national skill qualification framework (NSQF) and industry led standards.

UP govt decides to end interview in Government jobs

The Uttar Pradesh cabinet has decided to close the process of holding interview for selection of candidates for the government jobs in all the non-gazetted posts of Group B, C and D categories announced on 29th of Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- The decision was taken in a cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.
- It has been decided with an aim to bring transparency in recruitment in government jobs.
- The state government has decided to do away with the interview in the recruitment of non-gazetted officers from Class II to IV but for recruitment of gazetted officers in Class II category, Interview will be a must.
- The chief minister has also given an assurance that the government will provide jobs to 10 lakh youths in Uttar Pradesh having skills.

Some of the other steps that have been decided in the meeting include:

- It decided to fix the support price of a common variety of paddy at Rs 1550 per quintal and Rs 1590 per quintal for grade-A paddy.
- It approved the construction work of the Kailash Mansarovar Bhawan in Ghaziabad.
- The Bhawan will be developed with an aim to facilitate the pilgrims of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, Sindhu Darshan Yatra and Chardham Yatra.
- The boundary of Nagar panchayat Bhawari in Kaushambi district will be increased and upgraded.
- The cabinet also decided to expand the boundary of the Aligarh Nagar Nigam.

About Uttar Pradesh

Capital: LucknowCM: Yogi AdityanathGovernor: Ram Naik

International Current Affairs

Hurricane Harvey strikes USA, menaces Texas & Louisiana

Harvey is one of the most destructive storms in US history that thrashed Texas for the consecutive fifth day.

Key Points:

- It has claimed 30 lives and left thousands homeless.
- Houston's mayor imposed an overnight time curfew to prevent looting and opportunistic crimes.
- Harvey was gearing up for another landfall near the Texas-Louisiana border.
- One Indian student has died after he nearly drowned in a swollen lake in the US state of Texas where Hurricane Harvey caused havoc.
- The National Weather Service reported that Houston has already received more than 42 inches of rain due to Harvey.

Banking & Finance

<u>Canara HSBC Oriental Life Insurance Company (CHOICE) launches 'PoS-Easy Bima Plan'</u>

Canara HSBC Oriental Bank of Commerce Life Insurance Company (CHOICE) has launched with a 'Point-of-Sale' Easy Bima Plan targeted at the mass-market segment.

Key Points:

- The product 'PoS Easy Bima Plan' is the first PoS product for the company. It will provide life cover and also returns on all premiums paid during the payment term on survival till maturity.
- It is specially designed to provide an affordable and hassle free protection, to take care of the needs of your loved ones.
- The affordable premiums start from Rs.1,000 annually and there is inbuilt double life cover in case of accidental death.
- It would be available in the bank branches of Canara Bank and Oriental Bank of Commerce (OBC) in the next two months.
- The product will also be available online in next few months.

Ujjivan SFB receives scheduled bank status from RBI

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank Ltd is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Ujjivan Financial Services Ltd. It has been included in the second scheduled to the RBI Act 1934 on 30th Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- With this Ujjivan Small Finance Bank can issue certificate of deposits.
- Ujjivan SFB commenced its operations as a Small Finance Bank with effect from February 1, 2017.
- Currently, Ujjivan SFB has 65 full-fledged brick and mortar branches in eight states and two Union Territories.
- It plans to convert 160 existing branches and 29 new Unbanked Rural Centres (URCs) by the end of FY 2017-18 and the remaining branches will be converted over a period of two years in line with RBI approval.

Business

NTPC signs Rs. 3,000-cr term loan agreement with ICICI Bank

NTPC has signed a term loan agreement for Rs 3,000 crore with ICICI Bank for partially funding its capital expenditure signed on 29th Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- The loan has a tenure of 15 years and it will be utilised to part finance the capital expenditure of NTPC.
- NTPC commissioned 3,845 mw capacity and added 2,190 mw to its commercial capacity during 2016-17.
- The installed capacity of the group is 51,671 mw as on31st July and has over 28,000 mw of capacity under construction.

About ICICI Bank

- ICICI (Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India) is an Indian multinational banking and financial services.
- ICICI Bank headquartered is in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, with its registered office in Vadodara.
- Founded 1994
- Chairman: Mr. M. K. Sharma
- MD & CEO: Mrs. Chanda Kochhar

Apps Launched by ICICI

- iMobile
- Pockets
- EazyPay

Unicity launches world's first ever Genomeceuticals range of products in India

Unicity International has launched world's first ever Genomeceutical (gene controlling) range of products to India.

Key Points:

- Unicity International headquartered in Orem, Utah, United States.
- Unicity uses advanced Genomecutical technology in its products to support proper gene expression.
- It helps in maintaining healthy body function at their most basic levels.
- Unicity is currently researching an extensive range of products by leveraging this technology.
- Genomeceutical is a ground-breaking, patent-pending, technology whereby certain secondary metabolites found in nature and it can help maintain the gene response whenever needed by the body to help in maintaining overall metabolic health.

Government clears 100% strategic sale of CEL

The Union Government (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) has approved a 100% disinvestment through strategic sale along with transfer of management control of Central Electronics Ltd. (CEL).

- CEL was incorporated as CPSE in 1974 under the administrative control of Ministry of Science and Technology. It is wholly owned by the government and has a net worth of Rs. 50.34 crore as on March 2017.
- The government is planning to engage an advisor from a consulting firm, investment banker or financial institution or merchant banker for providing advisory services and managing the disinvestment process.

Alternative mechanism

- The strategic disinvestment of CEL will take place through new alternative mechanism which was approved by the cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) in August 2017.
- The alternative mechanism was approved for pursuing the government's strategic sale disinvestment programme.
- This mechanism comprise of finance minister, minister for road transport & highways and the minister for the concerned administrative ministry.

Strategic disinvestment

- In Strategic disinvestment, significant proportion of a Public Sector Unit's (PSU) share and the management control goes to a private sector which is as strategic partner.
- It is different from the ordinary disinvestment in which management of PSU is retained with Government.

Awards & Recognition

NITI Aayog announces 12 winners of the Women Transforming India Awards 2017

Union Minister of Textiles, Information, and Broadcasting Smriti Irani will present Women Transforming India Awards 2017, a prestigious award to 12 incredible women winners at an event in New Delhi on 29th of Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- The award has been launched by NITI Aayog, in partnership with the UN in India and MyGov.
- It has been awarded to recognize the transformational impact of work undertaken by women across India.
- This year's campaign "to promote equal opportunity of women" received around 3000 entries from across India.

Top 6 Contestants

Laxmi Agarwal: Attacked in 2005 in broad daylight at the age of 15, Laxmi Aggarwal is today a champion of violence against women. She has filed public interest litigations in India's highest court to restrict the sale of acid.

Safeena Husain: The founder and executive director of Educate Girls, a non-profit organization working for girls' education, Safeena Husain has worked to bring education to some of India's most backward districts.

Kamal Kumbhar: Broke free from the shackles of poverty and a suffocating marriage to create a micro-enterprise network, enabling women like herself to realise their dreams of a brighter tomorrow.

Subasini Mistry: After losing her husband at a young age, Subasini Mistry saved for two decades to build a hospital for the needy.

Arunima Sinha: Is the first female amputee to scale the highest mountain in the world.

Jamuna Tudu: Along with her band of women activists, Jamuna Tudu has conserved 50 hectares of forest land around her village in Jharkhand, taking on encroachers with little more than bows and arrows and courage.

Appointments & Resigns

Dara Khosrowshahi is Uber's new CEO

Dara Khosrowshahi has accepted the position of Uber CEO after he was selected by the company's board announced on 29th Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- He was selected after Travis Kalanick resigned from the position of chief executive.
- Dara will join the company from 30th August.

About Uber

- Founded: March 2009
- HQ: San Francisco California
- Uber Technology Inc. is an American technology company and It develops markets and operates the Uber car transportation and food delivery mobile apps.

Dr. R.K. Raghavan appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to Cyprus

Dr. R.K. Raghavan has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Cyprus.

Key Points:

- He served as a former Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Director from January 4, 1999 to April 30, 2001.
- He is an Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the 1963 batch.
- He has also served as the director of Tamil Nadu Fire Service and as the directorgeneral of the Tamil Nadu State Vigilance Directorate.

About Cyprus

- Capital: Nicosia
- President: Nicos Anastasiades
- Currency: Euro

PV Sindhu to be brand ambassador for Bridgestone India

Tyre major Bridgestone India has announced badminton player and Olympic silver medallist P V Sindhu as its first brand ambassador.

Key Points:

- She will be a part of three year agreement. Sindhu will be included in Bridgestone's activations around its Worldwide Olympic Partnership.
- Bridgestone India is a subsidiary of the world's largest tyre and Rubber Company and also a Worldwide Olympic Partner.

About PV Sindhu

- Sindhu is among the world's leading professional badminton players who recently bagged a silver medal at the World Badminton Championship in Glasgow.
- She had also received Padma Shri and became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic silver medal in the Olympic Games Rio 2016.

About Bridgestone Corporation

- Bridgestone Corporation is a multinational auto and truck parts manufacturer founded in 1931 by Shojiro Ishibashi.
- Founded on 1 January 1931
- Headquarters: Kyobashi, Tokyo, Japan

Science & Technology

Athletes can identify prohibited medicines with "Pharma Jan Samadhan" app

Drug pricing regulator NPPA has tied up with National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA). It will help athletes to understand medicines that could contain prohibited substances in sports through its app Pharma Jan Samadhan.

Key Points:

- The two regulators signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 29th Aug 2017.
- Through NPPAs app every consumer can know ingredients in a medicine and it will
 make it easy for athletes to keep away from medicines that have prohibited
 substances.
- National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority foundation day was held on 29th of Aug 2017.
- This MoU plays a vital role in athletes and general public life by understanding which
 medicines they can take or cannot take and which medicines contain prohibited
 substances.

About NADA

- National Anti-Doping Agency also referred to as NADA is the national organisation responsible for promoting, coordinating, and monitoring the doping control program in sports in all its forms in India
- NADA deals with adopting and implementing anti-doping rules and policies which conform to the World Anti-Doping agency, cooperates with other anti-doping organisations and promotes anti-doping research and education.

IIT Researchers develops bioartificial implantable pancreas

Researchers from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati have successfully created an implantable bioartificial pancreas model grown within 3D silk scaffold.

The bioartificial pancreas encapsulates insulin-producing beta cells, capable of naturally producing insulin in sustained manner. If successful in animal and human trials, it can be used for treating people with Type 1 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes arises when the body's immune system kills the insulin-producing beta cells.

Key Facts

- The 3D silk scaffold was found to be biocompatible (not toxic to living tissue) as it did not trigger any immune reaction or cause any adverse reaction after implanted. It was made porous by using salt grains of specific size to dissolve the silk proteins. These pores were 400-500 micrometre in size which allowed glucose and oxygen to enter scaffold and insulin released by beta cells with greater survival rate to enter bloodstream.
- The scaffold containing beta cells was coated with a semi-permeable membrane barrier. The membrane allowed insulin produced to be released into blood stream and does not allow immune cells to cross membrane and kill the islet cells.
- To ensure that the implant is not rejected by the body's immune system, drugs that suppress the immune system were embedded in the scaffold. Studies carried in lab showed that beta cells in scaffold were able to produce adequate amount of insulin in response to different glucose levels within a few seconds.

Sports

Kerala CM launches FIFA U-17 World Cup Logo for Kochi Venue

Kerala Chief Minister Shri Pinarayi Vijayan has launched the host city logo for Kochi. This time Kochi is selected as one of the venues of FIFA U-17 World Cup India 2017 announced on 29th Aug 2017.

Key Points:

- The logo represents and reflects Kochi's identity and will be a valuable tool in linking the local community in a global World Cup.
- The FIFA U-17 World Cup will have India official emblem, it will form a crucial link in the promotions and communications regarding the host city.
- The tournament will be hosted in the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium of the city. It will host eight matches and will feature football powerhouses Brazil, Spain and Germany among others.

About 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup

- The 2017 FIFA U-17 World Cup will be the 17th edition of the FIFA U-17 World Cup.
- It will be the first FIFA tournament hosted by India.
- The tournament will be hosted by India between 6 and 28 October 2017.
- The final will be held at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on 28 October 2017.

Important Days

International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

On August 30th each year, The United Nations (UN) observes the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances. On this day organizations such as the UN and Amnesty International play an active role in raising awareness that enforced disappearance is a crime and should not be used as a tool to deal with situations of conflict.

Enforced disappearance:

It is a strategy to spread terror within the society. It occurs when people are arrested, detained or abducted against their will and when governments refuse to disclose the whereabouts of these people. Enforced disappearance is a global problem and is not restricted to a specific region of the world.

It includes

- o the ongoing harassment of human rights defenders, relatives of victims, witnesses and legal counsellors dealing with cases of enforced disappearance;
- States that are using counter-terrorist activities as an excuse for breaching their obligations;
- Special attention must also be paid to specific groups of especially vulnerable people, like children and people with disabilities.

In December 2010, the UN officially declared that it would annually observe the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances on August 30 each year, starting from 2011. It is a UN observance day and not a public holiday.

Small Industry Day

On 30th august every year, small industry day is celebrated by ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME).

- This celebration will support and promote small industries. These industries play a major role in boosting state's financial health.
- The trend of celebrating "SSI (Small Scale Industry) day" started in 2001. Celebrating 'Industries Day' will help districts to exhibit their growth potential and opportunities.

