

National Current Affairs

Karnataka launches unified health scheme 'Arogya Bhagya'

Karnataka government will merge the existing seven health schemes to launch a unified health scheme 'Arogya Bhagya'.

Key Points:

- The main theme of the 'Arogya Bhagya' scheme is "Treatment First and Payment Next".
- All the health facilities will be provided through Aadhaar linked Universal Health Card.
- Universal Health Coverage scheme would help the card holder to get treatment in all the enrolled private hospitals besides government hospitals to get treatment without paying any cash.
- The State Cabinet had given administrative sanction for the unified schemes and it will come to effect from 1st of November.
- The facilities would be provided by categorising the beneficiaries into two groups—A and B.
- Category A will be a priority category, which will include farmers, deprived households, labourers from the unorganised sector, pourakarmikas, all SC/ST people, members of cooperative societies, government employees, media persons and elected representatives. The rest will fall under Category B.
- Those in rural areas would need to contribute Rs3 00 per person and those in urban areas Rs 700 per person.
- The State Government will be spending Rs 867 crore for the unified scheme in the first year.

India gets its first Indigenous sniper rifle from West Bengal

India's first indigenous sniper rifle was launched at the rifle factory in West Bengal.

Key Points:

- Its total cost is Rs 2.5 lakh and weighing 6.7 Kg.
- The rifle has a shooting range of 800 meters. The factory has received orders from the CRPF and police forces of Haryana and Rajasthan.
- These rifles are a must for urban police, for VIP protection, hostage situations and terror attacks.

- They will no longer need to import the preferred German machine, Heckler & Koch, referred to as H&N.
- The biggest advantage of an indigenous sniper is that no one will ever run short of ammunition and spares.
- The research and development for the sniper was done at Ishapore itself for over a year or so.
- According to an Ishapore official it even won a gold medal in a shooting competition.

National Parks in West Bengal

- Sunderbans NP
- Buxa Tiger Reserve
- Gorumara NP

Sports Ministry approves constitution of Empowered Steering Committee (ESC)

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has approved constitution of 13-member Empowered Steering Committee (ESC). It will shape and influence India's preparation for multi-disciplinary events, including 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

- The decision to form ESC was taken on basis of recommendations made by Olympic Task Force headed by Abinav Bindra in its interim report.
- The ESC will have chairperson appointed by the Government. It will have the mandate to work till December 31, 2020 with clearly defined terms and references.

Terms and references of ESC

- Review of core probable list of each High Priority and Priority disciplines for Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Olympic Games. Recommend specific plans or packages for beneficiaries of Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS).
- Review annual calendar for Training and Competitions (ACTCs) approved by Government in consultation with the National Sports Federation (NSF) concerned. Make specific recommendations with respect to any additional or supplementary requirements.
- Recommend names of national and international training institutions for their empanelment for providing training, coaching and other support to athletes. Recommend names of companies for carrying out athlete monitoring and data analytics work.
- Make specific recommendations for strengthening sport sciences within Sports Authority of India (SAI) as well as outsourcing sports science support in short to medium term for providing sports science support. Assist Government in mobilizing CSR funds to meet additional funding requirements for training and preparation of national team in various sports disciplines.

Background

- Earlier, the Sports Ministry had constituted Task Force in September 2016 head by Abhinav Bindra for preparation of comprehensive action plan, including short-term and medium to long-term measures for effective participation of Indian sportspersons in next three Olympic Games to be held in 2020 (Tokyo), 2024 (Paris) and 2028 (Los Angeles).
- The 8-member Task Force had submitted its interim report to Government in May 2017 with focus on preparations in the short-term for 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

Assam for first time extends AFSPA orders on its own

Assam Government has extended term of Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958 and declared entire state a Disturbed Area for six more months under Section 3 of AFSPA Act. This is for first time state government has extended AFSPA and Disturbed Area provision on its own. In the past, AFSPA provisions in state were always extended by the Centre.

Why it was extended?

The law and order situation in Assam continues to be matter of concern due to violent incidents carried out by the underground groups, as many as 16 incidents involving these groups were reported between May and July 2017. These incidents had resulted in deaths of civilians, security personnel and militants.

Background

Assam has remained “disturbed area” under provisions of AFSPA for nearly 27 years, after it was invoked by Centre for first time in November 1990, after ethnic insurgencies broke out in end of 1980s and following incidents of violence by ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom).

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)

The AFSPA was enacted in 1958 to bring ‘disturbed’ areas declared under it under control. It empowers both state and central government to declare areas as ‘disturbed’ due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

Declaration of Disturbed area: The section (3) of the Act empowers governor of State/UT to issue an official notification in Gazette of India, following which Centre has authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid. Once declared ‘disturbed’, the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months.

Special powers to armed forces: The Act gives special powers to army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy any property used by insurgents in

disturbed areas. It also provides army personnel with safeguards against malicious, vindictive and frivolous prosecution.

Note: At present, the AFSA has been enforced in 6 states viz. Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh (only the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts plus 20-km belt bordering Assam), Manipur (except Imphal municipal area), Meghalaya (confined to 20-km belt bordering Assam) and Jammu and Kashmir.

Ahmedabad's Walled City gets World Heritage City Certificate

The 600-year-old Walled City in Gujarat's commercial capital Ahmedabad was formally accorded status of India's first World Heritage City by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

In this regard, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova handed over certificate declaring it as 'World Heritage City' to Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani in Gandhinagar. The status recognises heritage value of walled city's unique heritage.

Walled city of Ahmedabad

The walled city of Ahmedabad was founded in the 15th century by Ahmed Shah of Gujarat Sultanate. It is situated on the eastern bank of Sabarmati River. It presents rich architectural heritage from sultanate period, notably the Bhadra citadel, walls and gates of Fort city and numerous mosques and tombs, as well as important Hindu and Jain temples of later periods. It has 28 Archaeological Survey of India's centrally protected monuments. The 5.5 km walled city area has approximate population of four lakh living in century old wooden residences in around 600 pols or neighbourhoods.

Important Facts

- The walled city of Ahmedabad is first city in India to get World Heritage City status and third in Asia after Bhaktapur (Nepal) and Galle (Sri Lanka). India now has total 36 World Heritage Inscriptions 28 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed site.
- India is second after China in terms of number of world heritage properties in Asia and Pacific (ASPAC) region, and overall seventh in world.
- World Heritage Cities Programme
- It is one of six thematic programmes formally approved and monitored by World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO. It aims to assist state parties in the challenges of protecting and managing their urban heritage sites.

International Current Affairs

World's tallest sandcastle built in Germany

On September 1 2017, an international team of sand artists have built the world's tallest sandcastle in Duisburg, in the Ruhr region, Germany after the city's attempt failed last year.

- It was 54.5ft (16.68 meters) high and its theme is tourism.
- It is the new Guinness World Record for tallest sandcastle.
- It was carved by Lucas Brueggemann.
- The previous record holder was built 14.8m tall in Puri, on India's east coast by the Sudarsan Sand Institute.

About Germany

- Capital: Berlin
- Official language: German
- Currency: Euro (€)

Tourism in Germany

- Germany is the seventh most visited country in the world. Berlin has become the third most visited city destination in Europe.
- Germany's most-visited landmarks are Neuschwanste in Castle, Cologne Cathedral, Berlin Bundestag, Hofbräuhaus Munich, Heidelberg Castle, Dresden Zwinger, Fernsehturm Berlin and Aachen Cathedral. The Europa-Park near Freiburg is Europe's second most popular theme park resort.
- Lake Obersee in Bavaria, Baltic Sea coast (Scharbeutz) also included in tourists place of Germany.

Australia, East Timor agree on maritime boundary

Australia and East Timor have agreed on key elements of a maritime boundary and revenue sharing from a natural gas field beneath the seabed between the two countries announced on 2nd Sep 2017.

Key Points:

- Australia and Timor-Leste have resolved their bitter and long-running dispute over maritime boundaries in the Timor Sea. It is being described as a "landmark day" in the relationship between the two nations.
- The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague has announced the parties reached an agreement over the disputed territory, which contains large oil and gas deposits worth an estimated \$40 billion.
- An agreement, which supports the national interest of both our nations, further strengthens the long-standing and deep ties between our Governments and people of Australia and East Timor.

- The deal will be finalised in October. Until then, the details will remain confidential.

About East Timor

- Capital: Dili
- President: Francisco Guterres
- PM: Rui Maria de Araujo
- Currency: US Dollar

India-ETFA to hold FTA talks

India and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) will meet shortly in an attempt to conclude their long pending negotiations on Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

So far, 16 rounds of negotiations have taken place which had started in 2008. Both sides had resumed talks on the agreement in January 2017 after a gap of three years.

Key Facts

- The proposed FTA between India and EFTA covers trade in goods and services, investments, IRPR protection, trade facilitation, customs cooperation and public procurement. The early conclusion of the proposed FTA between India and EFTA as well as an investment protection framework will boost economic ties between the two sides.
- The India-EFTA bilateral trade was worth \$19 billion in 2016-17 from \$21.5 billion in 2015-16. The trade balance was in favour of EFTA members.

European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

- EFTA is regional trade organisation and free trade area consisting of four European states, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein.
- It operates in parallel with European Union (EU), and all four member states participate in the European single market.
- It was established in May 1960 through Stockholm Convention to serve as an alternative trade bloc for those European states that were unable or unwilling to join the European Economic Community (EEC) (which subsequently became European Union).
- EFTA is not a customs union and member states have full rights to enter into bilateral trade arrangements with third-country. Moreover, it does not envisage for political integration nor issue legislation. Its secretariat is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Banking & Finance

Fincare Small Finance Bank starts banking operations with 25 branches

On September 12 2017, Fincare Small Finance Bank (previously known as Disha Microfin Limited) started its banking operations with about 25 operational branches across Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The bank was given final small finance bank (SFB) licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in May this year.

- Fincare CEO Rajeev Yadav informed that the bank started its operations with 25 branches, out of which nearly 50 per cent are located in Gujarat. Currently, Fincare has Gross NPA of about 7-8 per cent, while the Net NPA is around 5-6 per cent.
- In order to get a small finance bank license, Disha Microfin had acquired the business of Future Financial Services in October 2016. Currently, as per the RBI norms, promoters and management hold 20 per cent in Fincare, while the remaining 80 per cent is with Private Equity funds. The bank aims to be digitally driven, rural and semi-urban bank, focusing on the priority sectors and retail segments of micro and small enterprises.
- Fincare has laid ambitious plan to have 10 million customers with a deposit base of Rs. 14,000 crore and assets of Rs. 20,000 crores by 2022.

Business

SAAB, Adani Group announce collaboration for defence manufacturing

Swedish defence and security company SAAB and Indian conglomerate Adani Group have announced collaboration in defence manufacturing entailing billions of dollars of investment.

- The partnership was announced mainly for design, development and production of single engine Gripen fighter jets under 'Make in India' if they win government contract to equip Indian Air Force (IAF) with new jets.
- They will compete with collaboration of US aircraft major Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) which are planning to manufacture F-16 fighter aircrafts in India.

Key Facts

- The \$12 billion Adani Group has interests in energy, real estate, logistics and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), among others. It has no presence in the defence sector and nor does have experience in manufacturing space either.
- SAAB is manufacturer of Gripen, a single-engine multi-role fighter aircraft featuring state-of-the-art technology, including advanced data links and sensors.

Background

- IAF is expected to begin process for procuring 100 plus single engine fighter jets to replace ageing fleet of Russian Mig-21s and Mig-27s in service. The procurement will be under recently promulgated Strategic Partnership (SP) model of Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP). The deal is estimated to be worth over Rs. 60,000 crore.
- Under this deal, first 18 aircraft will be brought to India in a flyaway mode and rest will be manufactured in India by Indian private company with technology transfer from foreign manufacturer. Only two aircrafts are available in global market to meet IAF's requirement criteria viz, F-16 and Gripen.

Need for new aircrafts

- The IAF needs minimum strength of 42 fighter squadrons to dominate and tackle two-front collusive threat simultaneously from China and Pakistan.
- Currently, IAF has 32 fighter squadrons. Further due to retirement of old aircraft, numbers will further go down by 2021. By then, 11 squadrons of Mig-21 and Mig-27, which are 35 to 45 years old, will be retiring from service. So to mitigate the shortfall, IAF is procuring new advance single engine fighter aircrafts.

Appointments and Resigns

Rajiv Kumar assumes charge as DFS Secretary

Rajiv Kumar was appointed as the new Secretary, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance on 1st Sep 2017.

Key Points:

- Kumar was posted as Joint Secretary and then Additional Secretary, Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance from March 19th, 2012 to March 12th, 2015.
- Later he took over as Establishment Officer and Additional or Special Secretary, Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pension, D/o Personnel and Training from March 12, 2015 till August 30, 2017.

- He also worked in the Central Government in various capacities.
- In his previous post he was Special Secretary and Establishment Officer, Ministry of Personnel Public Grievances and Pension, D/o Personnel and Training in his immediate preceding posting.
- Kumar has held various important assignments including the Administrative postings in his home State of Jharkhand.

IGCAR nuclear scientist U. Kamachi Mudali appointed Heavy Water Board chief

Nuclear scientist U Kamachi Mudali was appointed the chief executive of the Heavy Water Board. It is one of the industrial units under the Department of Atomic Energy.

Key Points:

- The appointment was announced by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR).
- Mudali assumed the charge of the board on 1st Sep 2017.
- Before, being appointed to the post he served as the Group Director of the IGCAR at kalppakkam.

Anita Karwal replaces RK Chaturvedi as CBSE chairperson

IAS officer Anita Karwal was appointed as the new Chairperson of Central Board of Secondary Education, CBSE.

Key Points:

- She is currently serving as additional secretary in HRD Ministry.
- She was the Gujarat Chief Electoral Officer during the Lok Sabha election in 2014.
- She has replaced Rajesh Kumar Chaturvedi, who has been appointed as Director General of the National Skill Development Agency.
- Chaturvedi was appointed as Chairman of CBSE in July 2016.
- He was a 1987 batch IAS officer of Madhya Pradesh and was appointed for a period of five years.
- His one-year session was marked by a series of controversies like Errors in the evaluation of Class XII board exam papers and the practice of inflating marks.

Awards & Recognition

India is the most corrupt country in Asia

On September 2 2017, Forbes an American bi-weekly business magazine published a report stating that India remains the most corrupt country in the Asia Pacific region. The report was based on a study by Transparency International.

- Transparency International, a Berlin based NGO working against corruption, spoke to nearly 22,000 people across 16 countries in the Asia-Pacific to understand the levels of corruption in the region.
- While India remains the most corrupt country in this region, with 69 per cent bribery rates, Japan came out as the least corrupt nation, with a 0.2 per cent bribery rate, the report said.

Highlights:

- India: 69% bribery rate
- In five of the six public services—schools, hospitals, ID documents, police, and utility services—more than half the respondents have had to pay a bribe.
- The report also showed how poor sections of the society are more affected by the menace of corruption.
- The study showed that people in India are speaking up against corruption now, as according to the report, 63 per cent Indians felt most empowered to fight against corruption.

Reliance Foundation awarded Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Puraskar

The Reliance Foundation was awarded with the prestigious Rashtriya Khel Protsahan Award at Rashtrapati Bhawan.

Key Points:

- Chairperson of the foundation, Nita Ambani collected the award from President Ram Nath Kovind in New Delhi.
- She is also the first Indian woman to become a member of the International Olympic Committee.
- She is the owner of the Indian Premier League franchise Mumbai Indians.
- The award has been given for the immense contribution to the promotion of sports.
- Reliance Foundation helps in spreading sportsmanship among the youth of the country.
- It celebrates 29th August as Sports Day annually in rural areas across 12 states in India to commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend, Dhyan Chand.
- The Sports Day is designed to promote community connection through active participation in various games and activities organised during the event.

- The foundation, which is affiliated to Reliance Industries Ltd, focuses on using sports as a medium to encourage learning among the youth in rural areas.
- This initiative is a medium to enhance community partnership and promote traditional rural sports.

Hyderabad airport bags energy efficiency award

Hyderabad International Airport Ltd has bagged the National Award for 'Excellence' in Energy Management at a conference hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII).

Key Points:

- The event focused on recognizing companies that are engaged in energy efficiency initiatives and displaying commitment towards energy conservation.
- It also deployed eco-friendly vehicles such as electricity powered buggys, ground handler vehicles, trolley movers, and have even commissioned e-cars.
- During the event, airport developer GMR made a presentation highlighting the energy savings of around 14.8 million units (MU) over the last three years.
- Under this it also showed a drastic decline in Greenhouse Gases (GHG) emissions after adopting various energy saving measures at the airport.

About Hyderabad Tourism

Mecca Masjid – A symbolic mosque, Mecca Masjid was built 400 years ago during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Qutub Shah, the 6th Qutub Shahi Sultan of Hyderabad.

Charminar – a major landmark of Hyderabad with four graceful minarets located in the old city. It was built by Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah as a memorial for plague victims.

Golconda Fort – Golconda Fort is one of the most magnificent fortress complexes in India. Seated on a hill on one side and spiraling fort on the other, its location and internal design made it one of the strongest forts in India.

Science & Technology

Applying for LDR and Accident claim documents made online in Tamilnadu

Tamil Nadu Police has launched of new online services. Under the online services, petitioners seeking documents to file accident claims can now download all necessary documents via the Internet on payment of a minimum charge.

Key Points:

- The online services has launched in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu.
- The petitioners could download 15 documents needed for filing the Motor Accident Claim Petition in court for compensation.
- Payment could be made through net banking. To ensure safety, the petitioner would get a one-time password (OTP) to their registered mobile phone for downloading the documents.
- Copy of the documents would also be sent to their e-mail address.
- The online service saved considerable time and money for the petitioner and also eliminated inordinate delay in getting documents.
- They could download each document on payment of Rs. 10 from the State police portal <http://eservices.tnpolice.go.in>
- The petitioner could also download Lost Documents Report (LDR) online.
- The petitioner could lodge a complaint about missing original documents such as passport, vehicle registration certificate, driving licence and identity card online.
- A receipt would be issued after the complaint had been lodged. Then the LDR could be downloaded.
- A copy of the LDR would be sent to the applicant's registered email.

Volcanic carbon dioxide drove ancient global warming: Study

According to study conducted by researchers from University of Southampton, UK, extreme global warming event 56 million years ago was driven by massive carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from volcanoes, during formation of North Atlantic Ocean.

They had used combination of new geochemical measurements and novel global climate modelling to show that Palaeocene-Eocene Thermal Maximum (PETM) was associated with rapid doubling of atmospheric CO₂ in less than 25 thousand years because of CO₂ emissions from volcanoes.

Key Facts

- The PETM was most rapid and extreme natural global warming event of last 66 million years. It had lasted for around 150 thousand years and increased global temperatures by at least 5 degrees Celsius. Its period coincided with the formation of massive 'flood basalts' — large stretches of ocean floor coated in lava, resulting from of a series of huge eruptions.
- Earlier it was suggested that PETM event was caused by injection of CO₂ into ocean and atmosphere, but ultimate trigger source of CO₂ was not known. Now researchers believe that, the CO₂ was released during land drifts, separating Greenland from north-western Europe, thereby creating North Atlantic Ocean.

- During this time, more than 10,000 petagrammes of CO₂ was released predominantly from volcanic source. This is a vast amount of CO₂, 30 times larger than all fossil fuels burned to date and equivalent to all current conventional and unconventional fossil fuel reserves.

Important Days

World Coconut Day – 2nd September 2017

World Coconut Day is all about coconut. Coconut day is celebrated on 2nd of Sep. It is celebrated by the Coconut Development Board.

Key Points:

- World Coconut Day is observed to make people understand that this crop is a vital source in reduction of poverty.
- The main function will be held at Vijayawada, with the theme 'Coconut for Family Nutrition, Health and Wellness.'
- The Coconut Day was declared by the Asian and Pacific Coconut Community (APCC) headquartered at Jakarta, Indonesia. Theme for this year, 'coconut, the diet of the whole family, the basis of health and happiness prosperity.'
- The APCC is an inter-governmental organisation of 18- member countries mandated to promote, coordinate, and harmonise coconut developmental activities of the Asian Pacific region.
- All major coconut-growing countries, including India, are members of the APCC.
- Coconut is described as 'Tree of life' or 'Heavenly tree' or 'Tree of abundance', because of its unique property by providing food, nutrition, drink, health, aesthetic sense, building material and other useful household material.