

National Current Affairs

Swiss president Doris Leuthard is on a three-day visit to India

Swiss president Doris Leuthard will be received by India's president Ram Nath Kovind and PM Narendra Modi. The talks will strengthen bilateral ties and it will ramp up trade and investment ties.

Issues to be discussed in the meet:

- The visit is significant as Switzerland is the chair of the Nuclear Suppliers Group where India has been seeking membership.
- Both countries will sign trade agreements and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on railway infrastructure.
- India and Switzerland will try having new investment protection agreement.

Delhi LG Anil Baijal bans dumping of solid waste at Ghazipur

On September 2, 2017, Delhi lieutenant governor Anil Baijal banned dumping of waste at the Ghazipur landfill after a mountain of waste collapsed into a canal, killing two people. Baijal ordered immediate halt to dumping of solid waste at the landfill and clearing the site within two years.

- The landfill has reached as high as 15 storey building putting people's like at risk. A day after torrential rain, the heaviest in three years lashed Delhi, a section of the pile in a landfill slumped over a car and three two-wheelers, pushing the vehicles off the road and into a canal.
- The order was passed after the meeting held by L-G with the east municipal body commissioner, general manager of the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and senior bureaucrats. NHAI stated that this solid waste will be used in construction of roads.

Karnataka to give free education to all girls till graduation

The Karnataka government has decided to make education free for all girls from Class 1 to graduation level in all public and aided private schools and colleges from the next academic year announced on 2nd Sept 2017.

Key Points:

Karnataka government is expecting around 18 lakh students whose parents' income would be less than Rs 10 lakh to opt for this scheme and are planning to earmark Rs 110 crore for this scheme.

- The scheme will apply to all private aided and government schools and colleges.
- Under this scheme, student must pay the fees first at the time of admission and later get it reimbursed by the government.
- The main objective is to provide free education to underprivileged girls who generally drop out of school after Class 10, especially in rural areas.
- Similar schemes have been launched in Telangana and Punjab.
- Telangana has announced free education for girls from kindergarten to post graduation and Punjab recently fulfilled a key poll promise by extending the scheme till PhD.

About Karnataka

- Capital: Bangalore
- Governor: Vajubhai Vala
- CM: Siddaramaiah

CIPAM-DIPP launches social media campaign to promote Geographical Indications

The Cell for IPR Promotions & Management (CIPAM) under Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) has launched social media campaign to promote Indian Geographical Indications (GIs).

- It has been launched under CIPAM's ongoing campaign #LetsTalkIP to make more people aware about importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs).
- The promotion of GIs is in line with Government's ambitious 'Make in India' campaign.

Geographical Indication

- Geographical Indication (GI) is sign or insignia used on products that have specific geographical origin and possess qualities or reputation that are due to that origin. Such name, sign or insignia conveys assurance of quality and distinctiveness which is essentially attributable to its origin in that defined geographical locality.
- The status to products marks its authenticity and ensures that only registered authorised users are allowed to use popular product name. Darjeeling Tea, Blue Pottery of Jaipur, Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Banarasi Sarees and Tirupati Laddus are some of examples for products having GIs.

Importance of GIs to India

- GIs products are of utmost importance as they are integral part of India's rich culture and collective intellectual heritage.
GI tag has accorded protection to number of hand-made and manufactured products, especially in informal sector.
- Certain GI products benefits rural economy in remote areas, by supplementing incomes of artisans, farmers, weavers and craftsmens who possess unique skills and knowledge of traditional practices and methods, passed down from generation to generation, which need to be protected and promoted.

GI Governance

- GIs are covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property (IPRs).
- At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- In India, GI registration is governed by Geographical Indications of goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 which came into force in September 2003.
- It is granted by Chennai based Geographical Indications Registry (GIR).
- Darjeeling tea was first product to accorded with GI tag in India.

'Ye India ka time hai' event organized at NIT Raipur

'Ye India ka time hai' event was organized at National Institute of Technology, Raipur Chhattisgarh on 3rd of Sept.

Key Points:

- The event was held as per the directives of HRD ministry to mark India's 70 years of independence and 75 years of the Quit India movement.
- On the occasion of 'Ye India ka time hai event', students of NIT Raipur participated in a session on 'New India Manthan'.
- Under the event there was discussion about views on 'what kind of India do they imagine for the year 2022'.
- This was followed by a music concert by a rock band.
- The students and teachers also took the 'Sankalp Se Siddhi' pledge, vowing to make India free from menaces like corruption, casteism and communalism.

Link-4 of SAUNI Scheme: President Ram Nath Kovind lays foundation stone

President Ramnath Kovind laid foundation stone for link-4 of Saurashtra Narmada Avataram Irrigation Scheme (SAUNI) Yojana in Rajkot district, Gujarat.

- SAUNI Yojana is multipurpose project that aims to solve water problems of parched Saurashtra region of Gujarat.
- Three phase of SAUNI yojana already have been dedicated to people following completion of work.

SAUNI project

- SAUNI project was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his tenure as Chief Minister of Gujarat. It aims to fill up 115 major dams in Saurashtra by diverting overflow of water from Sardar Sarovar Dam on Narmada River. It is an out-and-out irrigation and drinking water project designed solely for Saurashtra peninsula.
- Its unique feature involves making pipe canals instead of conventional open canals which has led to no acquisition of land and involve less loss of water. It has network of canals comprising 1,125-km network of pipelines that will help to channel water into farms.

International Current Affairs

Surya Kiran: Indo-Nepal joint Military exercise

The 12th edition of India-Nepal joint military exercise- Surya Kiran XII was held at Nepal Army Battle School (NABS) in Saljhandi, Nepal.

The 14 day exercise (from 3 to 16 September 2017) focused on skills required counter-terrorism and counter-terror, forest fighting and natural disaster management operations.

Key Facts

- In this edition of exercise, Indian Army was represented by troops of Kumaon Scouts and Narayan Dal Battalion participated on behalf of Nepal Army.
- Both troops focused on the various counter insurgency operations. They also focused on important aspects such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations and environmental conservation.
- The exercise mutually benefited both armies by gaining varied experiences and also strengthened friendly relation between India and Nepal.

Background

- The Surya Kiran series of bilateral military exercises are conducted bi-annually, alternatively in India and Nepal.
- It is largest exercise in terms of troop's participation in series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries.

- It aims at promoting military relations and increasing interoperability armies of neighbouring countries.
- The 11 edition of the exercise was held in Pithoragarh area of Uttarakhand in March 2017.

About Nepal

- Capital: Kathmandu
- President: Bidhya Devi Bhandari
- VP: Nanda Kishor Pun
- PM: Sher Bahadur Deuba
- Currency: Nepalese Rupee

Nepal signs UN development assistance plan

Nepal has signed UN assistance package for a USD 635 million for 2018-2022. The UNDAF lays out the development strategy for the UN Country Team for the next five years.

Key Points:

- The package will involve 26 individual UN agencies, spans interventions and it also aimed at assisting in four broad areas:
 - a. Inclusive economic growth
 - b. Social development
 - c. Resilience, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction
 - d. Governance, rule of law and human rights
- The National Planning Commission, apex advisory body of the Government of Nepal, and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Nepal signed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) on 2nd of Sept 2017.
- The strong alignment of the UNDAF with the national plans, international conventions, and the Constitution of Nepal help in supporting the Government of Nepal's efforts in ensuring that no one is left behind as laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals.

About UN

- The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental organization tasked to promote international co-operation and to create and maintain international order.
- HQ: New York
- Secretary General: Antonio Guterres
- General Assembly President: Peter Thomson

Seychelles ratifies international solar alliance framework pact

Seychelles ratifies the ISA Framework Agreement and became the ninth member of ISA framework agreement.

Key Points:

- The ISA will need the ratification of just six more countries to become a recognized inter-governmental body.
- The ISA aims to get at least six more countries on board before October-end.
- Once recognised, the ISA can embark on its task to channelise \$300 billion in 10 years to promote renewable energy projects under a global mega fund for clean energy.
- Till now India, France, Nauru, Niger, Fiji, Mauritius, Tuvalu and Bangladesh have ratified the ISA Framework Agreement.

About ISA

- ISA was instituted to connect 121 solar-resource-rich nations for research, low-cost financing and rapid deployment of clean energy.
- These countries lie within the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
- On August 30, Costa Rica became the 39th signatory to the list that already has Australia, Brazil, Cambodia and Peru.
- Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Dominican Republic and Ethiopia are also signatories to the agreement.
- It is expected that these countries will eventually ratify the ISA Framework Agreement.

CBDT signs 4 more Advance Pricing Agreements

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has entered into four more Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs), pertaining to sectors like telecom, banking, manufacturing and education in August 2017.

- Out of these four agreements, three were unilateral and one was bilateral.
- The bilateral APA was for international transactions between an Indian company and UK-based company.
- With this, total number of APAs entered into by CBDT has reached 175. This includes 162 unilateral APAs and 13 bilateral APAs.

Advance Pricing Agreements (APA)

- The APA scheme of CBDT aims to provide certainty to taxpayers in domain of transfer pricing by specifying methods of pricing and setting prices of international transactions in advance. The APA provisions were introduced in Income Tax Act in 2012 and `rollback` provision to pull out was introduced in 2014.

- The APA scheme's objective is to strengthen government's resolve of fostering non-adversarial tax regime. Moreover, Indian APA programme has been appreciated nationally and internationally for being able to address complex transfer pricing issues in fair and transparent manner.
- It endeavours to provide certainty to taxpayers in domain of transfer pricing by specifying methods of pricing and setting prices of international transactions in advance. Under BAPA, certainty in tax treatment is provided for next 5 years while rollback provides dispute redressal for maximum of four past years preceding APA years.

Banking & Finance

First project of BRICS development bank starts operation

On September 2, 2017, the first project funded by The New Development Bank, set up by India and other members of the BRICS grouping of emerging economies, has started operation in Shanghai. The \$76 million loan with a maturity length of 17 years was granted to Shanghai Lingang Distributed Solar Power Project, under an agreement signed in December 2016.

About NDB:

- Headquarters: Shanghai
- The first regional office of the NDB will be opened in Johannesburg, South Africa
- 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 was established as an alternative to World Bank. The initial capital was shared among the nations and voting power will be equal to the number of its subscribed shares.
- It will fund infrastructure projects in BRICS and other developing countries. Four of the bank's loan projects are in China.

UBS lowers India growth forecast to 6.6% for Financial Year 2018

On September 3, 2017, Global brokerage firm UBS has lowered India's GDP growth forecast to 6.6 per cent from 7.2 per cent. The brokerage said that the growth is expected to rise in coming quarters as the economy is getting normalised post implementation of the GST.

- According to official data, India's economic growth slipped to a three-year low of 5.7 per cent in April-June as disruptions caused by demonetisation spilled to the third straight quarter amid slowdown in manufacturing activities. The report said reforms like implementation of GST, adoption of inflation targeting, a new bankruptcy code, liberalisation of FDI, measures to curb black money and encouraging digitisation would help in improving the productivity dynamics of the country and lay the foundation of a sustainable growth.
- Tanvee Gupta Jain, an economist with UBS, said that though the implementation of GST has resulted in temporary disruption in economic growth, it is a significant structural reform that could add 0.6-0.9 percentage point to India's GDP growth in the medium term.

DBS becomes second bank to get in-principle nod to operate as wholly-owned unit

On September 4, 2017, Singapore based bank DBS has got final approval to operate as a wholly-owned subsidiary (WOS) in India.

- DBS was the first foreign lender to apply for the new operating WOS model two years ago and its approval was delayed due to lack of precedent.
- Now as the problems got sorted out DBS is the second bank after State Bank of Mauritius to receive the nod for its operation in India .

What's WOS (Wholly owned subsidiary)?

A wholly owned subsidiary is a company that is completely owned by another company. The company that owns the subsidiary is called the parent company or holding company. The parent company will hold all of the subsidiary's common stock.

Business

India despatches first Diesel Consignment to Myanmar

The first consignment of 30 MT of High Speed Diesel was sent on 4th of Sep from India to Myanmar by land route.

Key Points:

- Numaligarh Refinery Ltd. (NRL), which has been supplying HSD to Bangladesh, dispatched the first diesel consignment through NH 37 across the Moreh Custom Check Point on the Indian side and Tamu Custom Check Point on the Myanmar side.

- It is to enhance hydrocarbon synergy with neighbouring countries as well as promoting India's Act East Policy.
- NRL refinery, situated at 420 km from the India-Myanmar border, is suited to supply diesel to Northern Myanmar.
- NRL has entered into an agreement with Parami Energy Group of Companies for the supply of diesel and collaboration in the retail petroleum sector of Myanmar.
- NRL has already exported 1700 MT of Paraffin wax to Myanmar.

About Myanmar

- Capital: Naypyitaw
- President: Htin Kyaw
- Currency: Kyat

Awards & Recognition

Karnataka Bank bags IDRBT award

Karnataka Bank has bagged the 'best bank' award among small banks for the use of technology for financial inclusion announced on 3rd Sept 2017.

Key Notes:

- It is the 13th IDRBT Banking Technology Excellence Awards 2016-17.
- Mahabaleshwara MS, MD & CEO of the bank received the award from Sudarshan Sen, Executive Director of RBI, in Hyderabad.
- Mahabaleshwara said in his speech that this recognition will further motivate the bank in implementing its IT strategies more effectively in promoting financial inclusion.

About Karnataka Bank

- Founded: 1924
- HQ: Mangaluru Karnataka
- Tagline: Your Family Bank, Across India.

Science & Technology

TRAPPIST-1 planets likely to have water

According to international team of astronomers, earth-sized planets orbiting ultracool TRAPPIST-1 dwarf star may have substantial amounts of water and could be habitable.

They had used Hubble Space Telescope (HST), a joint project of European Space Agency (ESA) and NASA to estimate whether there is water on seven planets orbiting in TRAPPIST-1 planetary system.

Key Facts

- Astronomers had examined amount of ultraviolet radiation (UV) received by individual planets of system to detect presence of water. UV radiation is important factor in atmospheric evolution of planets as it can break water vapour in atmospheres of planets into hydrogen and oxygen in process called photodissociation.
- UV rays with more energy and X-rays heat upper atmosphere of planet, which allows hydrogen and oxygen, products of photodissociation to escape. Hydrogen gas escaped from exoplanets' atmospheres was detected by HST indicating it as a possible indicator of atmospheric water vapour.
- The results suggest that outer planets of TRAPPIST-1 planetary system may harbour substantial amounts of water. This includes three planets within habitable zone (Goldilocks zone) of star, lending further weight to the possibility that they may indeed be habitable and support alien life.
- The observed amount of UV radiation emitted by TRAPPIST-1 suggests that planets could have lost gigantic amounts of water over course of their history. The inner planets (TRAPPIST-1b, 1c, 1d) could have lost water worth more than 20 Earth-oceans- during the last eight billion years. However, outer planets of system (e, f and g) which are in habitable zone might have lost much less water, suggesting that they could have retained some on their surfaces.

TRAPPIST-1

- The seven Earth-sized planets (named TRAPPIST-1b, c, d, e, f, g and h) orbiting ultracool dwarf star TRAPPIST-1 were discovered by astronomers in February 2017.
- The TRAPPIST-1 planetary system is 40 light-years away from Earth.
- Its dwarf star Trappist-1 is at least 500 million years old and is marginally larger than Jupiter.
- It has temperature of 2550K and shines with a feeble light about 2,000 times fainter than Earth's sun.

Breakthrough Mission Project detects 15 radio bursts from dwarf galaxy

Breakthrough Listen project has detected 15 fast radio bursts (FRBs) coming from a dwarf galaxy about 3 million light years away from earth.

- The new detection was made with help of Green Bank Telescope (GBT) in West Virginia. It was emitted from FRB 121102, a mysterious source associated with galaxy in the distant universe. This detection brings the total of known FRBs from this strange object to more than 150.
- The first known radio burst from FRB 121102 was detected on November 2, 2012 (hence the object's name). Two more bursts were detected in May 2015 and eight more in June 2015. It is being speculated, among other things, that this detected FRB is an energy source used by extra-terrestrial (ET) civilisations to power spacecraft.

Fast radio bursts (FRB)

- FRB is brief, bright pulse of radio emission from distant galaxies. It was first detected in 2007 with help of Parkes Telescope in Australia.
- It is a high-energy astrophysical phenomenon of unknown origin manifested as transient radio pulse lasting only a few milliseconds.

Breakthrough Listen Project (BLP)

- BLP is US\$100-million global astronomical initiative launched in 2015 by Internet investor Yuri Milner and cosmologist Stephen Hawking.
- It has teams from around the world to find signs of intelligent life in universe. The 10-year programme aims to survey 1,000,000 closest stars to Earth by scanning entire galactic plane of Milky Way.
- It will listen for messages from the 100 closest galaxies at 10 billion different frequencies originated beyond our galaxy.

Sports

India's Divya Deshmukh wins gold at the Under-12 Chess Cadet Championships in Brazil

Nagpur-based Divya Deshmukh clinched the gold medal in the the girls' U-12 category at the World Cadets Chess Championship at Pocos de Caldas, Brazil.

Key Points:

- She scored a total of 9.5 points to give India its only medal in the championship this year.
- She topped the table by beating her compatriot and the top-seeded Rakshitta Ravi.

- It is Divyas second world title after her victory in the under-10 World Youth Chess Championship in Durban in 2014.
- She had previously won the U-10 Asian blitz event in early 2014 and won the rapid and standard formats in the Asian Schools Championship in 2012.
- In 2013, she had become the youngest woman FIDE Master.
- She had won gold in the blitz section, silver in rapid and bronze in the classical version in the Asian Youth Championship held in Uzbekistan in April 2016.
- Rakshitta Ravi finished eighth with seven points. Bhagyashree Patil finished 15th with 6.5 points. Dhayana Patil scored 6 points to finish 18th.

Obituary

US poet John Ashbery dies at 90

Pulitzer-prize winning poet John Ashbery, a post-modern American trailblazer, has died at age 90 in Hudson, New York.

Key Points:

- Ashbery received the National Humanities Medal in 2011 by President Barack Obama.
- Ashbery, who was first associated with the New York school of poetry in the 1950s and 1960s, won the Pulitzer Prize for “Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror” in 1976.
- He graduated from Harvard University and went to France as a Fulbright Scholar in the 1950s.

Marathi poet, activist Shirish Pai passes away

Noted poet and activist Shirish Pai had passed away on 2nd sept 2017. She was 88.

Key Points:

- She started writing Haiku in 1975. She studied Japanese Haiku, its origin and nature and published five Marathi Haiku books.
- She was born in 1929; Pai was the daughter of noted writer-journalist Acharya Pralhad Keshav Atre.
- She had also translated some Japanese Haiku from English to Marathi.
- She also worked as a journalist in the Maratha newspaper and participated in the Samyukta Maharashtra (United Maharashtra) movement.

TMC MP Sultan Ahmed passes away at 64

Former Union minister and Trinamool Congress MP Sultan Ahmed passed away on 4th of Sept. 2017. He was 64.

Key Points:

- He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Uluberia constituency on a TMC ticket.
- Ahmed had served as the Union Minister of State for Tourism in the UPA government.
- He was elected to the West Bengal Assembly twice.