

# National Current Affairs

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## The Code on Wages Bill 2017

The Union Government as part of labour law reforms has undertaken drive to rationalize 38 Labour Acts by framing 4 labour codes viz Code on Wages, Code on Social Security, Code on Industrial Relations and Code on occupational safety, health and working conditions. The codification of labour Laws will remove multiplicity of definitions and authorities leading to ease of compliance without compromising wage security and social security to workers.

## **The Code on Wages Bill, 2017**

- The bill was introduced in Lok Sabha recently. It subsumes and repeals 4 existing Laws, viz. Minimum Wages Act, 1948; Payment of Wages Act, 1936; Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.
- It will apply to establishments where trade, business, manufacturing or occupation is carried out.
- It will also include government establishments.

## **Features of the Bill**

**National minimum wage:** The code ensures minimum wages to one and all and timely payment of wages to all employees irrespective of the sector of employment without any wage ceiling. It introduces concept of statutory National Minimum Wage for different geographical areas. It will ensure that no state government fixes minimum wage below the National Minimum Wages for that particular area as notified by Union Government. It specifies that central or state governments will revise or review minimum wage every five years.

**Advisory boards:** The central and state governments will constitute their respective advisory boards to advise respective governments on aspects of fixing minimum wages and increasing employment opportunities for women. These boards will have representation from employees, employers, and independent persons. Further, one-third of total members will be women.

**Payment of Wages:** The code proposes payment of wages through cheque or digital/electronic mode along with conventional cash payments. It mentions deduction of employee's wages on certain grounds by not exceeding 50% of employee's total wage.

**Redressal of grievances and settlement of claims:** It proposes appellate authority between Claim Authority and Judicial Forum for speedy, cheaper and efficient redressal of grievances and settlement of claims

**Offences:** The Code specifies penalties for offences committed by an employer. Such penalties vary depending on nature of offence have been rationalized with the amount of fines varying as per gravity of violations. Moreover it specifies that compounding of offences are not punishable by penalty of imprisonment.

### **Jharkhand Governor gives assent to Religious Freedom Bill, 2017**

Jharkhand Governor Draupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Jharkhand Religious Freedom Bill, 2017. The state government will now issue notification on the Religious Freedom Bill, after which it will become an Act.

With this Jharkhand, become seventh state in the country to have anti-conversion law. Other six states with similar law are Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh.

### **Jharkhand Religious Freedom Bill, 2017**

The Bill seeks to bring stringent anti-conversion law in place under which forceful or allurement induced religious conversion will be non-bailable criminal offence. It defines allurement for religious conversion and also includes religious conversion based on cash or economic benefits under the definition.

The Section 3 of Bill prohibits forceful conversion. The violation of this section will result in punishment upto 3 years imprisonment or Rs 50000 penalty or both. If the religious conversion crime involves a minor, woman or person from S ST community than prison term would be up to 4 years and a penalty of Rs.1 lakh.

### **Background**

The state assembly had passed this law in order to prevent rampant religious conversions taking place in state. It was found that most of the religious conversions cases in the state were predominantly in tribal and backward communities lured by money or other benefits.

### **Andhra CM Naidu announces new programme 'Jala Siriki Haarati' to offer prayers to water bodies**

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has announced a new programme named 'Jala Siriki Haarati'. It is a programme offering prayers to water bodies and to create awareness among the public regarding water preservation.

### **Key Points:**

- The programme will be held on September 6, 7 and 8 across the state.

- The programme is aimed at praying at all kinds of water bodies like rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, irrigation projects, water reservoirs, check dams etc.
- The Chief Minister also stated that 28 projects would be completed by next three months.
- He attended the 'Krishna Haarati' programme held at the Pavitra Sangam (meeting point of Rivers Godavari and Krishna) at Ibrahimpatnam.
- The Pattiseema Lift Irrigation Project had been completed through which diverting the Godavari water into River Krishna was possible.

#### **About Andhra Pradesh National Park:**

- Sri Venkateswara NP
- Rajiv Gandhi NP
- Papikonda NP

#### **Gujarat government signed MoU with Google for Digital Gujarat**

The Gujarat government has signed a MoU with Google India for 'Digital Gujarat' movement under 'Digital India'.

#### **Key Points:**

- Under the MoU, Google will train small and medium scale entrepreneurs on the use of digital platform for business development under the 'Digital Unlocked' programme.
- The MoU was signed in presence of the chief minister, Gujarat's chief secretary J N Singh, and Google India Public Policy Director Chetan Krishnaswamy.
- It will provide 'cloud' facility up to \$20,000 to recognized startups.
- Google will also help to develop skills in the use of modern mobiles and web technology, train degree, diploma and science postgraduate students in 'Google Android Fundamentals' and 'Mobile Development'.

#### **About Google**

Google is an American multinational technology company that specializes in Internet-related services and products. These include online advertising technologies, search, cloud computing, software, and hardware.

- Founded: 4<sup>th</sup> Sep 1998
- Founders: Larry Page and Sergey Brin
- CEO: Sundar Pichai

#### **Home ministry gives more finance powers to chiefs of CRPF, BSF, NIA**

On 6th September 2017, Home Ministry announced that Chiefs of central armed police forces like Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Border Security Force (BSF) and other central agencies have been empowered to spend up to Rs.15 crore for executing major projects and Rs.1 crore for minor works, including repairing of residential buildings.

**Enhancement of financial powers by the Home Ministry:**

- The home ministry in an order enhanced the financial powers of the directors general of CRPF, BSF, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo Tibetan Border Police Force (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), National Security Guard (NSG), Assam Rifles, National Investigation Agency (NIA) and director of Intelligence Bureau (IB) to execute major projects from to Rs.10 crore upto Rs.15 crore.
- The major projects include construction of buildings, purchase of vehicles etc. Similarly, the chiefs have also been authorised to spend up to Rs.1 crore for carrying out minor works like petty repairs and administrative expenditure. So far, they were allowed to spend up to Rs.50 lakh.
- The decision was taken by Union home secretary Mr.Rajiv Gauba to bring greater flexibility in operations, reduce delays and facilitate quick decision on matters involving financial expenditure, the official said.
- Earlier, the ministry gave financial powers to the joint secretaries to spend up to Rs.50 crore for executing works and purchasing land. Joint secretaries have also been allowed to make procurement through open or limited tender of up to Rs.20 crore and procurement through negotiated or single tender or proprietary contract of up to Rs.5 crore.

**About CRPF:**

- Central Reserve Police Force
- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Agency executive – Mr.Rajiv Rai Bhatnagar

**About BSF:**

- Border Security Force
- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Agency executive – Mr.K.K.Sharma

**About NIA:**

- National Investigation Agency
- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Agency Executive – Mr.Sharad Kumar

**Government extends FAME India Scheme by six-month**

The Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises has extended the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME)-India scheme by six months to promote electric and hybrid vehicles.

The Phase 1 of the scheme was effective from April 2015, to March 2017, but had received six-month extension till end-September 2017. Now it has been extended by another six months up to March 31, 2018.

### **FAME India Scheme**

- The FAME India scheme was launched in 2015 under National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) with an aim to promote eco-friendly vehicles in the country. Its objective is to provide fiscal and monetary incentives for adoption and market creation of both hybrid and electric technologies vehicles in the country.
- It also aims to support hybrid or electric vehicles market development and its manufacturing eco-system in country in order to achieve self-sustenance in stipulated period. It is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry. It will provide demand incentives to electric and hybrid vehicles from two-wheeler to buses.
- The Department of Heavy Industries had allocated Rs 75 crore and Rs 122.90 crore for FY2016 and FY2017 respectively. It has benefited total of 148,275 electric and hybrid vehicles from April 2015 till June 2017.

### **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020**

NEMMP aims to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles in country. It has set ambitious target of 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles year on year from 2020 onwards.

### **Indian Army to induct women in military police**

The Indian Army has finalised plan to induct women in military police. The plan is seen as major step towards breaking gender barriers in force.

Under this plan 800 women will be inducted initially with yearly intake of 52. The decision to induct women in Corps of Military Police will help in investigating allegations of gender specific crimes. Currently, women are allowed in select areas such as medical, educational, legal, signals and engineering wings of Indian Army.

### **Military police**

The role of military police includes policing cantonments and army establishments, preventing breach of rules and regulations by soldiers, maintaining movement of soldiers. It also provides logistical support during peace and war, handle prisoners of war and extend aid to civil police whenever required.

### **IIM-Lucknow, Yes Bank tie up for climate Awareness**

Indian Institute of Management Lucknow (IIM-L) and Yes Bank has tied up with the purpose of spreading climatic awareness.

#### **Key Points:**

- The main aim of the collaboration will be to enhance the 'Climate Literacy' amongst people.
- IIM Lucknow also aims to achieve sustainable development with the cooperation of Yes Bank.
- Institute will be implemented Shared learning program to encourage climate awareness.
- The bank will also assist IIM Lucknow in updating the curriculum of its two-year programme.
- The collaboration with Yes Bank will help the students to understand the viewpoint of corporates as well as address social and environmental issues.
- It will help in overcoming the current economic challenges.

#### **About Yes Bank**

- CEO: Rana Kapoor
- Yes Bank is the only Greenfield Bank licence awarded by the RBI in the last two decades.
- Tagline: Experience our expertise
- HQ: Mumbai

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## **International Affairs**

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### **Visit of Prime Minister to Myanmar 2017**

Visit of Prime Minister to Myanmar 2017 On 5th September 2017, Indian Prime Minister Mr.Narendra Modi arrived at Myanmar on a three-day visit on President Mr.Htin Kyaw's invitation.

### **India refuses to sign Bali Declaration over Rohingya issue**

India has refused to be a part of Bali Declaration adopted at conclusion of World Parliamentary Forum on Sustainable Development held in Bali, Indonesia to show of solidarity with Myanmar.

It was not adopted because it carried “inappropriate” reference to violence in Rakhine State from where 1,25,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh and was not in line with agreed global principles of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### **What Declaration Says?**

It calls on all parties to contribute to restoration of stability and security, exercise maximum self-restraint from using violent means, respect human rights of all people in Rakhine State regardless of their faith and ethnicity and facilitate safe access for humanitarian assistance.

### **India's Objection**

India objected part of declaration highlighting deep concern on ongoing violence in Rakhine State of Myanmar. India reiterated its stance that purpose of convening Parliamentary forum was to arrive at mutual consensus for implementation of SDGs which required inclusive and broad-based development processes.

Therefore, proposed reference to violence in Rakhine in declaration was considered as inappropriate and not consensus-based. Moreover, country-specific amendment to declaration added at the eleventh hour by selective countries dilute the objective of these Forums which require unity and focussed efforts of all countries.

### **Rohingya**

- Rohingya is ethnic Muslim minority group, largely comprising Muslims living primarily in Myanmar's western Rakhine state. They practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam. They differ from Myanmar's dominant Buddhist groups religiously, ethnically and linguistically. They speak Bengali dialect, as opposed to commonly spoken Burmese language in Myanmar.
- Myanmar considers Rohingya's as illegal Bengali immigrants, despite fact that many they have resided in Rakhine province of Myanmar for centuries.
- The Myanmar government even refuses to grant them citizenship status, and as a result they do not have any legal documentation, effectively making them stateless. They are also restricted from freedom of movement, state education and civil service jobs.
- UN has often described Rohingyas as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world.

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## **Banking & Finance**

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### **International Finance Corporation invests \$10 mn in Power2SME**

A member of the World Bank Group, International Finance Corporation (IFC) has invested \$10 million as equity in e-commerce firm Power2SME.

#### **Key Points:**

- It will help small and medium companies to buy raw materials at bulk prices and get working capital without collateral.
- The main aim is to improve access to finance for over one million SMEs in the next five years.
- Its sectors of focus include consumer internet, edutech, healthtech, cleantech, and business-to-business e-commerce.
- IFC will also help in improving its ability to provide working capital to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by adding more banks as partners and increasing the number of users on its platforms.
- Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) accounts for 45% of the country's industrial output and 40% of its exports.
- Investment in Power2SME will encourage greater venture capital interest in the SME sector in the country and support India's vision to become a global manufacturing hub.
- Since 1956, IFC has invested in over 400 companies in India, providing \$17 billion in financing to the private sector.

#### **About IFC**

- The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is an international financial institution that offers investment, advisory, and asset-management services to encourage private-sector development in developing countries.
- The IFC is a member of the World Bank Group and is headquartered in Washington, DC.
- CEO: Philippe Le Houverou

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## **Environment**

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### **Parali I island: Uninhabited Lakshadweep island vanished**



According to a study, Parali I island, one of biodiversity-rich uninhabited islands part of Lakshadweep has disappeared due to coastal erosion and another four such islands in Lakshadweep sea are shrinking fast.

The researcher had conducted studies on assessment of biodiversity confining to five uninhabited islands– Parali I, II and III, Bangaram, Thinnakara in Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 36 islands in Lakshadweep sea.

### Study Highlights

- The assessment related to geo-morphological changes associated with each island for period of 45 years was carried out using geospatial techniques such as Remote Sensing (RS) and Geographic Information System (GIS) to confirm the claim.
- Parali I island, part of Bangaram atoll which was 0.032 square km in 1968 has been eroded to an extent of 100%, resulting in its inundation. Apart from Parali I, net erosion was higher in Parali II (80%), followed by Thinnakara (14.38%), Parali III (11.42%) and Bangaram (9.968%). The five islets of Bangaram atoll also have undergone coastal erosion.
- The study has recommended of a bio protection strategy using mangroves, in addition to the conventional physical protection measures from coastal erosion.

### Comment

- The complete erosion and inundation of Parali I is pointing to gravity of issues associated with coastal erosion within atoll.
- It calls for urgent measures to be implemented on each islet of the atoll in Lakshadweep sea to check further erosion.
- Further, due to increasing global temperature because of climate change, islands and coastal areas are facing erosion and inundation due to rising sea levels. India's coasts and islands, are densely populated, are highly vulnerable.
- There is urgent need to start preparing for building defenses to protect coastlines and islands as sea levels are predicted to rise further.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### Parineeti becomes 1st Indian woman ambassador for Tourism Australia

Parineeti Chopra has been appointed as the first Indian woman ambassador in “Friends of Australia” (FOA) advocacy panel by Tourism Australia.

### Key Points:

- According to Tourism Australia (TA) statement, she was presented the Friend of Australia (FOA) recognition by Australian Consul General Tony Huber for her contribution to promote Australia recently.
- She will be the first Indian woman ambassador to be a part of the FOA advocacy panel.
- In her new role she will be promoting Australia as a tourist destination.
- Chopra will be visiting Queensland and Northern Territory, exploring Australia's aquatic and coastal experiences, rugged outback, unique wildlife and its incredible variety of world-class food and wine offering.
- The FOA programme has been devised as a way for Tourism Australia to encourage mutually beneficial and long-term 'friendships' with those they regard as unique, positive and influential story-tellers.

### **MakeMyTrip president Ashish Kashyap resigns**

Online travel firm MakeMyTrip has announced the resignation of co-founder and President Ashish Kashyap.

#### **Key Points:**

- His resignation will come into effect from September 30.
- As per the settlement agreement, Kashyap will be under non-solicitation and non-competition obligation for the next two years.

### **Inderjit Singh appointed as Chairperson of National Authority Chemical Weapons Convention**

Senior IAS officer Inderjit Singh was given the additional charge of post of Chairperson of National Authority Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC). Currently, he is serving as Additional Secretary in Cabinet Secretariat.

Inderjit Singh is an IAS officer of 1985-batch from Kerala cadre.

#### **National Authority for Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC)**

- NACWC set up as an office of Cabinet Secretariat to fulfil obligations under Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). It was established in April 2017 under Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000.
- It acts as national focal point for effective bond with Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and other State Parties on matters relating to CWC meant for prohibition of development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and their destruction.

- It comprises a Chairperson and three Directors. The Directors comprise Joint Secretary in NACWC, Director General (DG) of Directorate of Revenue and Intelligence (DRI) and Joint Secretary of Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals.

### **Viveck Goenka elected as chairman of Press Trust of India**

Viveck Goenka, chairman and managing director of Express Group was unanimously elected as Chairman of Press Trust of India (PTI). N Ravi, former editor-in-chief of The Hindu was elected vice-chairman.

They were elected at meeting of board of directors of PTI following the company's 69th annual general meeting. Goenka who was earlier vice-chairman, will succeed Riyad Mathew of Malayala Manorama group.

### **Viveck Goenka**

- Viveck Goenka has been heading Express Group since mid-1990s. The group runs English newspapers - The Indian Express and The Financial Express, Hindi newspaper Jansatta and Marathi newspaper Loksatta.
- He is also director of Indian Newspaper Society and member of Advertising Association's India chapter.
- In past, he was chairman of United News of India (UNI) news agency and council member of Audit Bureau of Circulation. He is also head of non-profit Ramnath Goenka Foundation.

### **Press Trust of India**

- PTI is largest news agency in India.
- It is nonprofit cooperative among more than 500 Indian newspapers and has more than 1,000 full-time employees.
- It provides news coverage and information of the region in both English and Hindi. It is headquartered in New Delhi.
- It had taken over operations of Associated Press of India (API) from Reuters after India's independence in 1947. It employs over 400 journalists and 500 part-time correspondents located in most of district headquarters in country.

### **DHFL appoints Harshil Mehta as Joint MD and CEO**

On 30th August 2017, DHFL, a leading housing finance company, has elevated Mr. Harshil Mehta as Joint Managing Director & CEO of the company with effect from September 2017. Prior to this elevation, Mr. Mehta was the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company.

### **About DHFL:**

- Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.
- Headquarters – India
- Chairman & MD – Mr. Kapil Wadhawan
- Joint Managing Director & CEO – Mr. Harshil Mehta

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## **Awards & Recognition**

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### **Mother Teresa named as co-patron of Kolkata archdiocese**

To mark the first anniversary of Mother Teresa's canonization, the Archdiocese of Kolkata will declare the saint a co-patroness of the local Church.

#### **Key Notes:**

- Sister Prema inaugurated a two-day exhibition of paintings and sculptures on Mother Teresa organised by the Indian National Forum of Art and Culture in association with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).
- According to Thomas D'Souza, the Archbishop of Calcutta, every diocese has a patron and the Archdiocese of Calcutta is dedicated to St Francis Xavier.
- She was declared a Saint by Pope Francis before over 1.20 lakh devotees at the Vatican on 4 September.
- In 2003, Mother Teresa was sanctified as "Blessed Teresa of Calcutta".

### **GIFT City wins ASSOCHAM Services Excellence Awards**

On 6th September 2017, India's first operational Smart City, Gujarat International Finance-Tec City (GIFT City), has won the prestigious Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) Services Excellence Award in New Delhi.

#### **About the ASSOCHAM Award winning:**

At a summit held in New Delhi, GIFT SEZ (Special Economic Zone) was honoured with the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) Services Excellence Award for its contribution to the growth of the International Financial Services and Technology Hub in India.

The Awards were presented in the categories of Tourism and Hospitality, International Financial Services and Technology Hub, Banking and Financial Services, Insurance etc.

### **Accomplishments of GIFT City:**

- GIFT City, India's first International Financial Services Centre (IFSC), is operational with approximately 10 leading banks, 2 international exchanges (India INX and NSE IFSC), around 100 capital market players and 8 insurance companies having established their operations here.
- Various leading corporations have commenced their operations at GIFT in the domestic services zone as well. Nearly 200 institutions/units are currently operational at GIFT City employing 7,000 people and are expected to exceed 10,000 by end of the year.
- GIFT City, a Gujarat Government project in partnership with IL&FS is developing India's first global financial hub.
- It is also India's first multi-service SEZ with IFSC status catering to the country's financial services market by offering global firms, world-class infrastructure and facilities.
- It is estimated that GIFT would provide 5,00,000 direct and an equal number of indirect jobs which would require 62 million square feet of office and residential space.

### **About GIFT City:**

- Gujarat International Finance Tec-City
- Location – Gandhinagar, Gujarat
- Founder – Mr. Narendra Modi
- MD & CEO – Mr. Ajay Pandey

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## **Acquisitions & Mergers**

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### **BSNL, Coriant ties up for industrial 5G applications**

On 6th September 2017, State-run Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) partnered with Coriant, a US-based packet optical and mobile routing solutions company to study and deploy 5G-based industrial internet applications for enterprise customers in New Delhi.

### **Tie between BSNL and Coriant:**

- The arrangement between the two companies is on a non-commercial basis at this stage but Coriant expects to take technology to BSNL subscribers after the 5G rollout commencement.
- BSNL has sought premium 700 Mhz band for offering 4G and 5G services. It is also planning to start 5G trial together with Finnish gear maker Nokia.

- In March, Nokia entered into a similar arrangement with BSNL to leverage its global experience in 5G-related industry initiatives focusing on software defined network (SDN) and multi-access edge computing.

#### **About BSNL:**

- Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
- Indian government-owned telecommunications company
- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Chairman & MD – Mr. Shri Anupam Shrivastava

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## **Science & Technology**

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### **Second-Fastest-Spinning Pulsar Discovered by Astronomers**

Astronomers have discovered a pulsar spinning at more than 42,000 revolutions per minute. It is the second-fastest Spinning Pulsar identified so far.

#### **Key Points:**

- The new object, named PSR J0952-0607 – or J0952 for short – is classified as a millisecond pulsar and is located between 3,200 and 5,700 light-years away in the constellation Sextans.
- A pulsar is the core of a massive star that exploded as a supernova.
- The pulsar contains about 1.4 times the Sun's mass and is orbited every 6.4 hours by a companion star.
- The rotating magnetic field powers beams of radio waves, visible light, X-rays and gamma rays.
- If a beam happens to sweep across Earth, astronomers observe regular pulses of emission and classify the object as a pulsar.
- The discovery was made with the Netherlands-based Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) radio telescope by following up on mysterious high-energy sources mapped out by NASA's Fermi Gamma-ray Space Telescope.
- The LOFAR discovery also hints at the potential to find a new population of ultra-fast pulsars.

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## **Sports**

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### **India to host Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships in 2019**

India has been selected to host the 2019 edition of the Commonwealth (Youth, Junior and Senior) Weightlifting Championships.

#### **Key Points:**

- The current edition of the tournament is being held at the Gold Coast Australia.
- India's Saikhom Mirabai Chanu and K Sanjita Chanu has bagged a gold medal in Commonwealth Weightlifting Championships.

### **Hyderabad girl Tejasvi Duduka wins U.S. Open women's singles title**

Tejasvi Duduka from Hyderabad won the women's singles of U.S. Open Grand Slam Carrom tournament.

#### **Key Points:**

- Earlier, she had won the Telangana State Women's singles title in Nizamabad.
- In the men's singles, Vemuri Anil Kumar of India finished runner up for the second year in the U.S Open.
- The U.S. Open Carrom tournament was won by former National Champion Radhakrishnan.

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## **Books & Authors**

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### **Shyam Saran's 'How India Sees the World' book launched**

The book of Former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran named "How India Sees the World: Kautilya to the 21st Century" was launched by former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

#### **Key Points:**

- The book records the crucial meeting of the CCS (Cabinet Committee on Security) on the eve of India-Pakistan Defence Secretary-level talks in May 2006.
- The book launch was attended by a number of diplomats and politicians including Minister of Law and Justice, and Information Technology Ravishankar Prasad and former Vice-President Hamid Ansari.

- The book, which is part memoir and part thesis on India's international relations, also has a section dedicated to the country's complex and troubled ties with Pakistan and Nepal.
- The book has four sections, each representing a seminal theme

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## Important Days

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### **8 September: International Literacy Day**

The International Literacy Day (ILD) is being observed every year on 8 September to emphasize the importance of literacy to individuals, society and communities.

- The day was established in 1966 by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This year it is 51st International Literacy Day. The theme announced by UNESCO for this year is 'Literacy in a digital world'.
- In India to observe this day, several functions were organised by the National Literacy Mission Authority. It included distribution of Saakshar Bharat Awards to best performing States, Districts, Gram Panchayats and NGOs. Government uses occasion of ILD for raising public awareness to eradicate illiteracy and create environment in favour of adult education programmes.

### **Background**

- The UNESCO in its 14th Session in November 1966 had declared 8th September as International Literacy Day. Since then, ILD is celebrated every year by most of the member countries. On this day, in year 1965, World Congress of Ministers of Education had met in Tehran for first time to discuss the programme of education at international level.
- The observance of ILD aims to mobilize public opinion in favour of struggle against illiteracy. It also seeks to disseminate information on literacy and raise the public awareness and the significance of literacy for individual and national development.