

National Current Affairs

Government issues rules for no-fly list

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has issued rules to tackle on-board disruptive and unruly behaviour by passengers. It allows for formation of national, No Fly List of such unruly passengers.

- In this regard, DGCA has revised relevant sections of Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR Section 3, Series M, Part VI on Handling of Unruly Passengers). It has been done in accordance with provisions of Tokyo Convention 1963.
- The promulgation of No-Fly List in India is unique and first-of-its-kind in world. Its concept is based on concern for safety of passengers, crew and aircraft and not just on security threat.

Key Facts

- Revised CAR will be applicable for all Indian operators engaged in scheduled and non-scheduled air transport services, both domestic and international. It will also be applicable to foreign carriers subject to compliance of Tokyo Convention 1963.
- It defines three categories of unruly behavior (i) Level 1: Behaviour that is verbally unruly, and calls for debarment upto 3 months if found guilty; Level 2: Physical unruliness and can lead to passenger being debarred from flying for upto 6 months and Level 3: Life-threatening behaviour where debarment would be for a minimum of 2 years.
- The cases of unruly behaviour will be probed by an internal committee set up by every domestic airline under chairmanship of retired District and Sessions judge. Its members will be from different scheduled airlines and consumer associations, passenger associations and retired officials of Consumer Dispute Redressal Forum.
- The internal committee will have to decide matter of offence committed by passenger within 30 days along with duration of ban. In case Internal Committee fails to come to a decision in 30 days then passenger will be free to fly. Revised CAR also has appeal mechanism which provides an aggrieved person provision to appeal within 60 days of order to an appellate committee constituted by Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Interestingly, under new CAR one airline is not be bound by no-fly list of another domestic airline. It also does not allow passenger to circumvent domestic fly ban by flying to nearby foreign country and then fly back to original destination in India. Moreover, unruly behaviour of passengers in airport premises will be dealt with by relevant security agencies.

CGWB inks MoA with IISc for development of ground water flow models

The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has inked Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru for Development of ground water flow models and preparation of aquifer management plans for parts of Karnataka.

Key Facts

- This mathematical model is being developed as part of aquifer mapping and management programme. It will help for better understanding of existing groundwater scenarios, predicting response of groundwater system to various stress conditions expected to arise in future and developing effective management plans incorporating different demand and supply side interventions.
- IISc will prepare final study report that will include data analysis, conceptualisation and model study plan, hydrogeological setting, sensitivity analysis, groundwater related issues and response of groundwater system to different scenarios and block-wise management plans.

Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)

- CGWB is multidisciplinary scientific organization under Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation.
- Its mandate is to develop and disseminate technologies and monitor and implement national policies for scientific and sustainable development and management of India's ground water resources.
- It is vested with responsibilities to carry out scientific studies, monitoring of ground water regime, exploration aided by drilling, management and regulation of country's ground water resources.
- It also undertakes exploration, assessment, conservation, augmentation, protection of groundwater system from pollution.

About Ministry of Water Resources:

- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Minister – Ms.Uma Bharathi
- Deputy Ministers (Ministers of State) – Mr.Sanjeev Balyan, Mr.Vijay Goel

About IISc (Indian Institute of Science):

- Location – Bangalore
- Founder – Mr.Jamshedji Tata
- Director – Mr.Anurag Kumar

Joint Parliamentary Committee under Bhupender Yadav on the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017

On 8th September 2017, a Joint Parliamentary Committee has been formed to examine and present a report on the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017, in New Delhi.

About the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill 2017:

The Bill claims to provide:

- Resolution to certain categories of financial service providers in distress
- Deposit insurance to consumers of certain categories of financial services
- Designation of important financial institutions
- Establishment of a 'Resolution Corporation' for protection of consumers of specified service providers for ensuring stability
- Recovery of the financial system

This bill along with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016, is expected to provide a resolution mechanism for the Indian economy.

About the Joint Parliamentary Committee:

- This is a joint committee of both the houses of the parliament.
- Chairman – Mr.Bhupender Yadav, MP.
- Consists of 20 members of Lok Sabha and 10 members of Rajya Sabha.
- The Committee will gather views and suggestions from stakeholders and public on the provisions of the Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017.
- Persons interested can submit their views or suggestions as a written Memoranda to the Committee.

About the Finance Ministry:

- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Minister – Mr.Arun Jaitley
- Deputy Ministers (Ministers of State) – Mr.Arjun Ram Meghwal, Mr.Santhosh Gangwar

First water ATM inaugurated in Hyderabad

First water ATM has been inaugurated by Telangana State Home Minister N Narasimha Reddy at Nalgonda X Roads on 7th of Sept. 2017.

Key Points:

- A total of 200 ATMs will be set up to reach a targeted 150,000 people. In the first phase 50 water ATMs will be operationalised by 2018.

- Safe Water Network, an international NGO has partnered with Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) to launch water ATMs.
- It will provide affordable, 24×7 safe water access in Hyderabad.
- The initiative is supported by USAID under the Urban WaSH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) Alliance Partnership and funded by Honeywell India.
- These water ATMs use a seven step treatment process to purify water that adheres to national norms.
- The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) will supply raw water for these ATMs.
- They are connected via cloud-based technology for real-time monitoring and analyses operational parameters, thereby minimising downtime.

About Hyderabad Tourist Destination:

- **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.
- **Qutb Shahi Tombs:** It is home to various tombs dedicated to Rulers of Qutub Shahi dynasty, located at Shaikpet, near Golconda Fort.
- **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.

Centre allows import of raw sugar through southern ports of India at 25% Import duty

The government has allowed import of 3 lakh tonnes of raw sugar at a concessional duty of 25% import duty under Open General License (Tariff Rate Quota) through millers/refiners.

Key Points:

- The import shall be open to millers/refiners who have their own capacity to convert raw sugar into refined /white.
- The imports will be allowed through the ports namely Tuticorin, Karaikal, Chennai, Mangalore, Kakinada, Gangavaram and Vishakapatnam in the South.
- The scheme shall be operated by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) as per their rules and regulations.
- It had hiked import duty on sugar in July to 50% from 40% to curb dumping of the commodity in India as international prices fell.

- Sugar is selling at an average price of Rs 42 per kg in the retail market, while branded sweetener is available at Rs 50 per kg.
- White sugar prices in the international market have fallen by 8% since July but raw sugar prices have remained stagnant.

Assam govt signs MoU with Google to increase digital literacy

Assam government has signed a MoU with Google India Pvt. Ltd. to increase digital literacy and take Internet connectivity to the remotest part of the north-eastern state.

Key Points:

- Under this MoU the government would work to provide Internet connections to 26,000 villages and 1,500 tea garden areas in Assam.
- Information Technology Secretary Nitin Khare and Google India Country Head (Policy) Chetan Krishnaswami has signed the Memorandum of Understanding.
- The MoU will be used as a launch pad to achieve the state government's vision of women empowerment, skill development, and universal education.

About Assam

- Capital: Dispur
- Governor: Banwarilal Purohit
- CM: Sarbananda Sonowal

Gujarat, GCMMF, dairies jointly to provide nutritive foods to Anganwadies children and women

The Women & Child Welfare Department of the Gujarat Government, Gujarat Milk Marketing Federation and three leading dairies have signed tripartite MOU to save the children of anganwadi from malnutrition.

Key Points:

- The MoU was signed in the presence of Gujarat Chief Minister, Vijay Rupani in Gandhinagar.
- According to the MOU, under the 'Take Home Ration' district dairies in cooperation with the milk marketing federation will provide nutritive foods to more than 42-lakh children of 53029 anaganwadies, pregnant-mothers, foster mothers and young girls.
- The GCMMF has prepared a recipe book to teach the beneficiaries about the kind of food items that can be prepared from the 'Take Home Ration'.

- Each child would get about 125 gms of Balbhog every day and pregnant-mothers, foster-mothers and young girls would get devibhog of about 145 gms daily in order to provide necessary, sufficient calories and proteins to the body.
- The scheme is a part of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- ICDS mainly offers a package of services to address the development needs of children under six years of age including pregnant and nursing women and adolescent girls.

About Gujarat

- Capital: Gandhinagar
- Governor: Om Prakash Kohli
- CM: Vijay Rupani

Bharat Petroleum set to get Maharatna status

State-run oil marketing company Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) is all set to become a Maharatna company. Presently it is having Navratna status.

- The decision to elevate BPCL to Maharatna status was taken by panel headed by Cabinet secretary and an announcement to this effect will be made soon.
- BPCL will be eighth Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSE) to get coveted Maharatna status. The status will enable BPCL Board to get enhanced powers which will help in expansion of its operations, both in India and abroad.

Navratna scheme

The Government had introduced Navratna scheme, in 1997, to identify CPSEs that had comparative advantages and to support them in their drive to become global giants. The Boards of Navratna CPSEs have been delegated powers in following areas: Capital expenditure, Investment in joint ventures / subsidiaries, Mergers & acquisition and Human resources management, etc.

Maharatna companies

- The “Maharatna” category for CPSEs was introduced in 2009 with objective to empower mega CPSEs to expand their operations and emerge as global giants or become Indian Multinational Companies (MNCs).
- At present, there are seven Maharatna companies — Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL), Coal India (CIL), GAIL (India), Indian Oil Corporation, NTPC, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Steel Authority of India (SAIL). Maharatna and Navaratna state-owned units operate in strategic fields such as coal, petroleum, steel, heavy engineering, telecommunications, power supply and transportation services.

Criteria for Maharatna status

Under government rules, Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) must fulfill following criteria for grant of Maharatna status.

Having Navratna status.

- Average annual turnover of more than Rs. 25,000 crore, during last 3 years.
- Average annual net worth of more than Rs. 15,000 crore, during last 3 years.
- Average annual net profit after tax of more than Rs. 5,000 crore, during last 3 years.
- Should have significant global presence and international operations.
- Listed on Indian stock exchange with minimum prescribed public shareholding limit under SEBI regulations.

India imposes countervailing duty on some Chinese steel products for 5 years

The Union Finance Ministry has imposed 18.95% countervailing duty (CVD) on certain Chinese flat steel products for period of five years to protect domestic players from cheap subsidised imports.

- The decision to impose CVD was taken by finance ministry based on the recommendation of Directorate General of Anti-Dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD).
- This is the first case of imposition of CVD on any steel product in India.

Background

The Commerce Ministry's investigation arm, DGAD in its probe had concluded that despite sufficient demand in India and capacities, domestic industry has lost sales opportunities, due to direct consequence of subsidised imports from China.

Key Facts

The move assumes significance as steel sector in India is facing challenges due to cheap steel imports. The imposition of CVD will help domestic players to grow to full potential after attaining second rank in stainless steel production in world in 2016 and provide level-playing field to domestic industry. It will strengthen the ongoing efforts of Indian industry to move towards 100% quality regime for better safety and health of users.

Countervailing duty

It is imposed to safeguard domestic industry against unfair trade subsidies provided by local governments of exporting nations. It is basically country specific. It is generally equal to excise duty paid by manufacturers when same product is produced in home country. It is mainly levied to neutralize effect of subsidies in exporting country on price and domestic market of importing country.

International Current Affairs

Pakistan's Habib Bank kicked out of US over terror financing charge

The Department of Financial Services has fined USD 225 million to Pakistan's Habib Bank and its New York branch announced on 8th Sept. 2017.

Key Points:

- The bank has failed to comply with laws and regulations designed to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and other illicit financial transactions.
- Habib Bank, Pakistan's largest private lender, has been ordered by the US banking regulators to shut down its New York office after nearly 40 years of operation.
- According to the report, Habib Bank had allowed 13,000 transactions that were not sufficiently screened to ensure they did not involve sanctioned countries.
- The bank has repeatedly been given more than sufficient opportunity to correct its glaring deficiencies, yet it has failed to do so.
- Habib Bank has been operating in the US since 1978.

Jordan launches Sahara Forest Project

Jordan, a water-poor country that is 90% desert, has launched Sahara Forest Project near the southern port city of Aqaba to turn desert land into farming land to produce food using sun and sea water.

The project seeks to demonstrate innovative application of technology to revolutionize our land systems in a way that benefits the climate, people, and businesses. It is funded by Norway and European Union.

Key Facts

- Sahara Forest Project aims to provide fresh water, food and renewable energy in hot, arid regions as well as re-vegetating areas of uninhabited desert. It combines saltwater-cooled greenhouses with solar power technologies, and technologies for desert revegetation.
- In the first stage, the project aims to produce up to 130 tonnes of organic vegetables annually from area size of four football pitches. It will also produce fresh water. It will use solar panels to provide power and include outdoor planting space, water desalination unit, two saltwater-cooled greenhouses and salt ponds for salt production. In later stages, it is expanded to be expanded from three hectares to around 200 hectares of desert.

Banking & Finance

Ujjivan Bank to replace loans with certificate deposits

According to the Ujjivan Small Finance Bank it will bring down its cost of funds by up to 150 basis points during the current financial year.

Key Points:

- It has replaced 75% of its bank loans with borrowings using money market instruments including certificate of deposits.
- The bank will be issuing 90-day CDs to mutual funds and insurance companies and FDs to corporates, trusts and cooperative banks.
- The decision follows the grant of a scheduled bank status to Ujjivan.
- Ujjivan, which operated a microfinance business, received a licence to operate as a small finance bank earlier this year.
- It means that the institution can raise money from the inter-bank money market.
- Ujjivan offers FD interest rates upto 7.00% per annum. Interest on deposits with Ujjivan is typically compounded quarterly.
- Ujjivan accepts deposits starting at Rs. 1000 for various tenures.

About Ujjivan Bank

- On October 7, 2015, Ujjivan received an in-principle approval from the RBI to set up Ujjivan small finance bank (“SFB”) and commenced banking operations in February 2017.
- Ujjivan’s business is primarily based on the joint liability group lending model for providing collateral free, small ticket-size loans to economically active poor women.

Business

Airtel Business launches ‘Airtel GST Advantage’

On 7th September 2017, Airtel Business, an arm of the Bharti Airtel telecom launched Airtel GST Advantage to enable small businesses and start-ups file their GST (Goods & Services Tax) returns with ease, in New Delhi.

Airtel GST Advantage:

- The Airtel GST Advantage was launched by Airtel Business in partnership ClearTax.

- This is offered for free to all existing Airtel Business customers.
- Airtel GST Advantage caters to its customers in three ways:
 - Customers can get free and secure access to the GST Network through Clear Tax
 - Airtel customers will have access to its GST Advantage Helpdesk between 8 am and 8 pm on all weekdays.
 - Airtel has released a GST Knowledge Bank, which provides an in-depth information about GST.
- In addition, customers can upload their returns without worrying about data charges.
- Also Airtel is the data hosting and connectivity partner for GST

About Airtel Business:

- B2B (business-to-business) arm of Bharti Airtel
- Director & CEO – Mr. Ashok Ganapathy

Nestle sets up first food safety institute in India at Manesar

The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has inaugurated India's first ever food safety institute set up by Nestle India in Manesar.

Key Points:

- It is inaugurated by the CEO of Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Pawan Kumar Agarwal.
- The institute aims to train and guide its students in food safety including nutrition check and keeping the ingredients in the food items within the limit among others.
- Nestle Food Safety Institute will conduct training programmes on food safety management systems, testing methods and regulatory standards.
- It also aims to bring in global expertise in the food items.
- Nestle is already running such institutes in China, Lausanne and Switzerland.

About Nestle

- HQ: Vevey Switzerland
- Chairman: Peter Brabeck Letmathe
- CEO: Paul Bulcke

Ashok Leyland, ELCOM ink defence pact with Russian firm

Ashok Leyland Defence Systems (ALDS), Russia's Rosoboronexport and ELCOM Group have signed a cooperation agreement in defence business announced on 6th of Sept. 2017.

Key Points:

The MoU has signed on the sidelines of the International Military Technical Forum Army, held at Kubinka, near Moscow.

Rosoboron export

- Rosoboronexport is the only state organisation in Russia for export of the entire range of military products and technologies.
- It represents Russian companies who are manufacturers of Infantry Fighting Vehicles and Main Battle Tanks, currently working with the Indian Army.

ELCOM

- ELCOM group is an India-based emerging strategic electronics player primarily involved in designing, developing, manufacturing and deploying devices in the areas of Aerospace, Electronics and Communications.

Ashok Leyland

- Ashok Leyland is an India automobile manufacturing company headquartered in Chennai, India. It is owned by the Hinduja Group.

Appointments & Resigns

Baijendra Kumar assumes charge as NMDC chief

Baijendra Kumar has assumed charge as Chairman and Managing Director of NMDC Ltd. He is an IAS officer of 1985 batch of Chhattisgarh cadre.

Key Points:

- Prior to this post, he was holding the post of Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh, as well as Commerce & Industries and Energy Departments in the Chhattisgarh government.
- He headed the Administration of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) New Delhi.
- He was the Chairman of Naya Raipur Development Authority (NRDA) and Chhattisgarh Housing Board (CGHB).

About NMDC

- The NMDC (National Mineral Development Corporation) Limited is a state-controlled mineral producer of the Government of India.

- It is owned by the Government of India and is under administrative control of the Ministry of Steel.

Sjoerd Mrijne named India men's hockey team coach, Harendra Singh given charge of women's team

Hockey India has named Sjoerd Mrijne as the new chief coach of the India men's senior hockey team.

Key Points:

- The current coach of the senior women's team Mrijne will take the position of Roelant Oltmans who was fired by Hockey India recently.
- Junior World Cup winning coach Harendra Singh will take the charge of the women's team as the High Performance Specialist.

Science & Technology

Government sets up online service for importers, exporters

On 8th September 2017, the Government set up an online service facility to help importers and exporters resolve all foreign trade-related issues, in New Delhi.

Contact @DGFT service:

- The online system has been named Contact @DGFT.
- DGFT – Directorate General of Foreign Trade. This comes under commerce ministry.
- This system has been as a single point of contact for all foreign trade-related issues.
- Traders can raise issues related to the directorate or other agencies of the Centre and States.
- To make this service effective traders are expected not to send their queries through twitter or e-mail.

About ministry of commerce:

- Headquarters – New Delhi
- Minister – Mr.Suresh Prabhu

Scientists make cheap and clean fuel from air

Scientists from Cardiff University, UK have discovered a new way to produce methanol from methane using oxygen from the air.

Methanol is an important chemical often used as fuel in vehicles

- The discovery has major implications for cleaner, greener industrial processes worldwide. The new technique uses freely available air, inexpensive chemicals and an energy efficient methanol production process.

Key Facts

- Methanol is currently produced by in expensive and energy-intensive processes known as steam reforming and methanol syntheses. In these processes, methanol is produced by breaking down natural gas at high temperatures into hydrogen gas (H₂) and carbon monoxide (CO) before reassembling them.
- In the new method, scientists produced methanol from methane through simple catalysis i.e. by addition of substance called catalyst which speeds up a chemical reaction. It enables methanol production at low temperatures using oxygen and hydrogen peroxide.
- The new process can help to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and its commercialisation may take much longer. It seeks to use waste gas flared into the atmosphere during natural gas production, thus saving carbon dioxide emissions.

3rd Generation ATGM NAG successfully test fired

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully twice flight tested indigenously developed 3rd generation Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) Nag in Rajasthan.

During the test, ATGM Nag missile has successfully hit both the targets under different ranges and conditions with very high accuracy.

Comment

With these two successful trials and earlier test conducted in June 2017, complete functionality of Nag ATGM along with launcher system NAMICA has been established. It marks successful completion of development trials of Nag Missile.

Nag Missile

- The ATMG Nag missile is one of five missile systems developed indigenously by DRDO under integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP). The other four missiles developed under this programme include Agni, Akash, Trishul and Prithvi.

- The Nag missile is third generation anti-tank guided missile which works on “fire and forget” principle. It has been equipped with highly advanced Imaging Infrared Radar (IRR) seeker along with integrated avionics. This technology is possessed by very few nations. It also possess advanced passive homing guidance system.
- The missile has been designed mainly to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets. It can be launched from land and air-based platforms. It has operational range of 500m to 4km (Land version) and 7-10km (when air-launched).
- The helicopter launched version known of NAG missile is known as NAG (HELINA) can be fired from Dhruv advanced light helicopter (ALH) and HAL Rudra attack helicopter. The land-based version of missile is at present available for integration on the Nag missile carrier (NAMICA).

Sports

Ankur Mittal, Ahvar Rizvi won silver medals at ISSF Shotgun World Championships 2017

India's Ankur Mittal has won the silver medal in the men's double trap event at the ISSF Shotgun World Championships held in Moscow.

Key Points:

- Russia's Vitaly Fokeev has won the gold medal at ISSF Shotgun World Championships.
- In the junior category, Ahvar Rizvi also won a silver medal in the same event.
- Sangram Dahiya ended in 20th place with 135, while Md. Asab came in 23rd with 133 hits in the qualifying round.
- In the junior men's double trap team event, India won the gold with a combined score of 401. Italy won silver with 389 and China won bronze with 387.
- Italy is on top of the medal table with 6 Gold medals and a total of 11 medals. India is in fourth spot with one Gold and two Silver medals.