

National Current Affairs

India, Sri Lanka hold ministerial level talks in New Delhi

On September 9, 2017, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Sri Lankan counterpart Tilak Marapana held wide-ranging talks to deepen bilateral relationship between the two countries. It is Marapana's first overseas visit after assuming charge as foreign minister on 15th August. Marapana also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi concluding the official part of his three-day visit.

Issues discussed:

- Talks on the plight of fisherman issue was discussed from both sides, the talks are going on for the past one year in Columbo to arrive at a permanent solution.
- Wide range of co-operation in the areas of trade and investment.
- Faster implementation of bilateral projects like finalising the Mattala airport project near Hambantota as well as a container terminal at the Colombo Port.

Srilanka - Quick facts:

- Capital : Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte (Administrative)
- Colombo (Commercial)
- Currency : Sri Lankan Rupee
- President : Maithripala Sirisena
- Prime Minister : Ranil Wickremesinghe

Venkaiah Naidu lays foundation for first Greenfield smart city project in Ranchi

On September 9, 2017 Vice president M.Venkaiah Naidu laid the foundation stone for the first and only greenfield smart city project, in Ranchi coming up on the HEC land.

- He also laid the foundation stone for an urban civic centre, a convention centre and an urban planning and management institute.
- The smart city is coming up on 656 acres of HEC land which would be fully wi-fi, carbon free, garbage free locality with modernised housing, traffic management system, education hub and equipped with facilities like round the clock power and water supplies.

West Bengal cabinet approves changing state's name to Bangla

On September 8, 2017, West Bengal government cleared a proposal to rename the state as 'Bangla' and sent a proposal to the Centre for approval.

- The Mamata Banerjee government had earlier too sent a proposal for the change of name, but it was rejected by the central government.
- The earlier proposal had three different names for the state – Bangla in Bengali, Bangal in Hindi and Bengal in English.
- In order to avoid the confusion the government decided to send another proposal to change it to only 'Bangla' in all three languages including Hindi, English and Bengali.
- Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wants to rename West Bengal because the name of the state appears at the bottom of lists prepared in alphabetical order in any official circular of the central government. Also, it will help MPs from the state in the Parliament to raise issues in the first half of session. Last year, Mamata Banerjee during an Inter State Council meeting in New Delhi, had expressed annoyance because she was made to speak at the end due to the state's 28th alphabetically.
- If the Parliament clears its, then West Bengal's position will be raised to four from 28 currently.

Assam to provide skill training to 30,000 surrendered militants

On 11th September 2017, Assam government announced that it would provide skill development training to 30,000 surrendered militants.

About the skill development training:

- Mission Director of Assam Skill Development, Mr.A.P.Tiwari said that the skill development training would be given to 30,000 surrendered militants and jail inmates, during an AIR (All India Radio) talk show.
- He said that the Assam Skill Development Mission would provide skill training in 40 sectors.
- Chief Project Manager of the Mission Mr.N.Dhiraj Singha said that nine Centres of Excellence would also be set up in Assam.
- Cost of the skill development training would be taken care by the state and the centre.
- In addition, 24,000 youth in Assam would be trained under the Prime Minister Kaushal Vikash Yojna.

About Assam:

- Capital – Dispur
- Chief Minister – Mr.Sarbananda Sonawal
- Governor – Mr.Banwarilal Purohit
- Official languages – Assamese, Bodo and Bengali

Kochi to host summit on coastal shipping and waterways

Kochi will host the 5th edition of the 'Coastal Shipping and Inland Water Transportation Business Summit 2017' on 22nd of September at Hotel Crowne Plaza.

Key Points:

- Kerala Governor P Sathasivam will present the India Sea trade Award for Excellence in Coastal Shipping & Inland Water Transportation.
- The summit will be an initiative to explore the potential of coastal shipping and waterways.
- It will also help to build a shared commitment and decode the role that each stakeholder will have to play in integrating the coastal and waterways transport infrastructure.
- The summit will create a platform to discuss various topics such as Indian Coastal Shipping & Inland Water Transport.
 - It includes several sub-topics like:
 - Policies, Current Updates & Vision
 - IWAI's perspective to forward trade and economic growth with focus on Kerala
 - Understanding the cargo owners' perspective on a commitment towards an instant modal shift
 - Reviving coastal shipping
 - Call to move and handle domestic cargo on coastal waters and river-borne trade

The traditional Bonderam festival started in Divar Island of Goa

The traditional Bonderam festival has started in Divar Island of Goa on 9th September 2017.

Key Points:

- The word "Bonderam" originated from the involvement of flags. This festival starts with a flag which is accompanied by the brass band.
- The festival is a memoir to the dispute and the fury of the Villagers over the Portuguese system of resolving the disputes.
- Bonderam is a very popular monsoon festival in Goa and it draws huge crowds from all parts of Goa and world over.
- On this day a carnival ambience is created. Each section of the village has a float at the parade.
- Melodious music could be heard throughout the village.

About Goa

- Capital: Panaji

- Governor: Mridula Sinha
- CM: Manohar Parrikar

CCEA approves survey project of Un-appraised Areas of Sedimentary Basins

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved survey project to acquire 48,243 Line Kilometer (LKM) 2D seismic data for appraisal of Indian sedimentary basins where limited data is available.

- Sedimentary basin is a low area in the Earth's crust, of tectonic origin, in which sediments accumulate. It can range from as small as hundreds of meters to large parts of ocean basins.
- India has total 26 sedimentary basins covering area of 3.14 Million Sq Km (MSK) spread over onland, shallow water and deep water. 48% of total sedimentary basin area (about 1.502 MSK) does not have adequate geo-scientific data.

Key Facts

- The project will be implemented by Oil India Limited (OIL) and Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC). Under it, survey work will be carried out in 24 States.
- OIL will conduct survey in North-Eastern States, while ONGC will cover remaining area. The entire project is likely to be completed by 2019-20.
- After appraisal of these sedimentary basins, blocks will be offered for further exploration and production activities based on prospectivity of area. It will help in increasing the investments in domestic production of oil and gas and generate direct and indirect employment.

Significance

- The appraisal of all unappraised areas is considered an important task to launch future Exploration and Production (E&P) activities.
- Data acquisition will provide initial insight into basins and help in planning future E&P activities.
- It will be useful in deciding focus areas of exploration activities in country and on basis of this primary data, E&P companies will be able take up further exploration activities in acreages allocated to them.

Cabinet approves Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017

The Union Cabinet has given approved introduction of the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament. The Bill seeks to amend Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.

The Amendment will increase maximum limit of gratuity of employees, in Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)/Autonomous Organizations under Government and in private sector who are not covered under Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 1972, at par with Central Government employees.

Background

- The Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 is an important social security legislation to wage earning population in industries, factories and establishments. It was enacted to provide social security to workmen after retirement, whether retirement is result of rules of superannuation, or physical disablement or impairment of vital body part. It applies to establishments employing 10 or more persons.
- The present upper ceiling on gratuity amount under Act was Rs. 10 Lakh. The provisions for Union Government employees under CCS (Pension) Rules, 1972 with regard to gratuity are also similar. Before implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission, ceiling under CCS (Pension) Rules was Rs. 10 Lakh. However, with implementation of 7th Central Pay Commission from January 2016, the gratuity ceiling was increased to Rs. 20 Lakhs.

Cabinet approves hiving off BSNL's mobile tower assets into a separate company

The Union Cabinet has approved proposal for hiving off mobile tower assets of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) into a separate tower infrastructure company, fully owned by BSNL. Decision in this regard was taken in the Union Cabinet Meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

Significance

- The Cabinet approval authorizes BSNL to monetize its telecom tower infrastructure with formation of separate subsidiary company.
- Independent, dedicated tower company of BSNL with a focused approach will help to increase BSNL's external tenancies and generate higher revenue for new company.

Tower Infrastructure Company

- The tower infrastructure company owns passive infrastructure assets (tower structure, Diesel Generator sets, power interface unit, battery units, air-conditioning etc) and leases it to telecom service providers.
- It enables telecom companies to achieve economies of scale and reduce capital investment costs for providing mobile services.
- It helps them to minimize duplication of investments and economize on costs of Operation and Maintenance (O&M), thereby improving profitability.

Background

- There are around 4.42 lakh mobile towers in country out of which more than 66 thousand are of BSNL. The telecom tower industry has emerged as independent business to harness potential for sharing of infrastructure.
- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) policy also allows sharing of passive infrastructure which has facilitated growth of the telecom infrastructure industry.

Cabinet approves MoU between India and Japan in field of Silk Industry

The Union Cabinet has approved Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Japan for collaborative research in the field of silkworm and silk industries. The MoU was signed between Central Silk Board (CSB), India and National Institute of Agrobiological Sciences (NIAS), Japan in November 2016.

Key Facts

- The MoU was of scientific and technological nature. Its aim was to initiate Collaborative Research for developing prolific bivoltine hybrids of silkworm suitable for Indian tropical conditions.
- Its purpose was to help in developing prolific hybrid silkworms, which will improve quality standards and manufacturing capacity of Indian sericulture industry to enhance exports of silk and silk products.
- It is expected that subsequent to MoU, Indian Textiles and Apparel Industry will be able to produce world class silk and silk products. The improvement of quality and productivity will ultimately increase export of silk products.

India's Silk Industry

- India's Silk Industry is world's second largest after China. The total production of silk in India stood at around 23,000 tonnes in the year 2011-12.
- India produces four varieties of silk produced, viz. Mulberry, Eri, Tasar and Muga. About 80% of silk produced in country is of mulberry silk, majority of which is produced in the three southern States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Sericulture Provides gainful occupation to around 63 Lakh persons in rural and semi-urban areas in India.
- About 97% of raw silk in India is produced in five Indian states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir.

Government reconstitutes six Committees of Cabinet

The Union Government has reconstituted six Committees of the Cabinet after recent ministry reshuffle. Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who was elevated in recent Cabinet restructuring process was inducted as full time member of Cabinet Committee on Security, Cabinet Committees on Economic and Political Affairs. Railway Minister Piyush Goyal and

Dharmendra Pradhan were also included as permanent members of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).

Cabinet Committees

Under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules (TBR), 1961 executive arm of government is assigned task of conducting the business of it in an effective and convenient manner. The Cabinet Committees are constituted under these rules. They are extra-constitutional in nature and are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution. They are instrumental in reducing the workload of the Government.

The six Committees of the Cabinet are

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC): It is responsible for all appointments of higher ranks in the Central Secretariat, Public Enterprises, Public Enterprises and Financial Institutions.

Cabinet Committee on Accommodation (CCA): It is responsible for the allotment of accommodation for various top positions in the Government of India.

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA): It deals with the activities pertaining to the economics of the country Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA): It looks into the matters related to the progress of government business in the Parliament of India. It is headed by Union Home Minister.

Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA): It is responsible for all issues related to domestic and foreign affairs. It is most powerful cabinet committee and is described as Super Cabinet.

Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS): It is one of the most important committees in India, it looks into the matters of defence expenditures and National Security.

Note: All Committees of Cabinet except Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA) is chaired/headed by Prime Minister. CCPA is headed by Union Home Minister.

FoSCoRIS: FSSAI launches online platform for food inspection, sampling

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched 'FoSCoRIS', a nationwide online platform to bring in transparency in food safety inspection and sampling. The food regulator has asked all states to adopt this system as it would help eliminate discrepancy and make food safety officers accountable.

Key Facts

- The web-based 'FoSCoRIS' system will help to verify compliance of food safety and hygiene standards by food businesses as per the government norms. It will bring

together all key stakeholders– food businesses, food safety officers, designated officers, state food safety commissioners on a nation-wide IT platform.

- The platform will help to seamlessly share data related to inspection, sampling and test result by all officials. The system will help to ease process of sample collection, make it transparent and traceable and control the quality of compliances.

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

FSSAI is a nodal statutory agency responsible for protecting and promoting public health in India through regulation and supervision of food safety. It was established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and operates under aegis of Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

International Current Affairs

Asian Development Bank to provide \$152 million to Nepal to enhance power transmission

On 10th September 2017, Asian Development Bank announced that it would provide \$152 million loan to Nepal, to enhance power transmission, in Kathmandu.

About the loan details:

- The loan agreement was signed between Nepal's Finance Secretary Mr. Shanta Raj Subedi and Officer-in-charge of the ADB's Nepal Resident Mission Mr. Sharad Bhandari, in Kathmandu.
- The loan amount would be utilized to implement the Power Transmission and Distribution Efficiency Enhancement Project (PTDEEP).
- This project aims to build electricity transmission lines and upgrade power sub-stations at Barhabise, Laphsiphedi, Khimti and Chapagaun areas, and enhance the capacity of distribution systems.
- This project would take 4-5 years for completion.
- ADB has also agreed to provide a \$21 million policy-based loan to the government of Nepal.
- This loan would be utilized in the implementation of South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation's (SASEC) customs reforms and modernization of trade facilitation programme.
- An agreement for this loan was signed between Mr. Baikuntha Aryal, Head of the International Economic Cooperation Coordination Division at the Ministry of Finance, and ADB's Officer-in-charge Mr. Bhandari.
- This loan amount has to be utilized within August 2021.

About Nepal:

- Capital – Kathmandu
- Currency – Nepalese rupee
- President – Ms.Bidhya Devi Bhandari
- Prime Minister – Mr.Sher Bahadur Deuba
- Official language – Nepali

Ms.Sushma Swaraj attended Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia

On 5th September 2017, External Affairs Minister Ms.Sushma Swaraj arrived at Vladivostok, in Russia on a three day visit till 8th September, 2017.

Eastern Economic Forum:

- The Eastern Economic Forum is considered as the biggest international communication platform for co – operation between businesses leaders and senior government representatives from Russia, the Pacific Region and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- Delegates from 24 countries including the US, Japan, China, Australia, Canada, Britain and Germany attended the forum.
- In the forum, important issues related to global trade were discussed.
- Ms.Swaraj attended the India-Russia Business Dialogue at the forum.
- She said that India was interested in its economic ties with Russia's resource-rich Far East.
- Ms.Swaraj said under the 'Make in India' and 'Start-up India' programmes the Indian government has made immense efforts to attract technology and investments from various countries of the world.
- Ms.Sushma Swaraj also met Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergei Lavrov and discussed issues regarding trade, investment and defence co – operation.
- She held bilateral talks with Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Mr.Yury Trutnev, and Governors of some of the Far Eastern Regions.

About Russia:

- Capital – Moscow
- Currency – Russian ruble
- President – Mr.Vladimir Putin
- Prime Minister – Mr.Dmitry Medvedev
- Official language – Russian

Second Indian Worker's Resource centre inaugurated in UAE

On 10th September, 2017, Indian Ambassador in UAE Navdeep Singh Suri inaugurated its second Indian Worker's Resource Centre (IWRC) in Sharjah, UAE to provide support and counselling to Indians particularly blue collar workers in distress on legal, personal and financial matters, free of cost.

70 per cent of Indians in UAE are blue collared workers, who are at times faced with issues involving salaries, fake employment visas or job offers or even matters pertaining to registration of marriages etc.

Core activities of IWRC:

- Manage a 24X7 toll free help line – 800 INDIA (80046342).
- Receive, register and monitor grievance petitions and provide clarification to queries.
- Conduct workers awareness campaigns across the UAE.
- Working with help groups, individuals, social workers and related bodies to offer assistance to Indian community members.
- Verification of genuineness of job offers.

Pakistan PM inaugurates China-backed fifth nuclear power plant

On September 8, 2017 Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi inaugurated the China-backed 340 MegaWatt (MW) nuclear power plant in its Punjab province. The fifth nuclear C-4 plant is located at Chashma in Mianwali district of the Punjab province.

- This nuclear power plant will address the issue of power shortage and it is also a source of cheap energy. Abbasi already promised that there would be no power shortage after November.
- Chashma already has three nuclear power plants known as C-1, C-2 and C-3 which are contributing to the national grid along with a similar plant in Karachi.
- Pakistan is also building two more nuclear power plants in Karachi known as K-2 and K-3 aimed to give a major boost to civil nuclear energy after completion.

Pakistan and China ties:

- Pakistan and China are actively cooperating in many other areas, including construction of roads, motorways, airports and upgradation of Pakistan Railways.
- Many projects were initiated under the USD 50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Adopt tailored solutions to eliminate TB by 2030: WHO

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has given the message to the South East Asian countries to assimilate their national plans and mobilise and utilise resources efficiently to reach the Tuberculosis elimination target of 2030.

Key Points:

- The five-day 70th Regional Committee Session of WHO South East Asia Region concluded in Male on 10th of Sept. 2017.
- The WHO South East Asia Region includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, North Korea, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste.
- According to the global health body there is a need for countries to identify the package of interventions best suited to their challenges.
- It means to focus on strengthening TB services, accelerating case detection or investing in research and development.
- The global health body suggests countries across the Southeast Asia Region can lift TB's significant burden and end the disease as a public health threat once and for all by planning effectively and making smart, high-impact interventions.

About WHO

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations that is concerned with international public health. It was established on 7 April 1948, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. The WHO is a member of the United Nations Development Group.
- Director General: Tedros Adhanom

Hurricane Irma – World's longest storm to bear 185 mph winds in 30 years

Hurricane Irma has become the first storm in the world to sustain winds of 185 miles per hour for more than 24 hours. It's the longest storm to sustain this speed since the 1970s.

Key Points:

- The hurricane, which has already devastated several islands in the Caribbean, is headed toward south Florida, where the National Hurricane Center has issued evacuation orders.
- It has thrashed several smaller islands with tree-snapping winds, drenching rains and pounding surf on a collision course with Florida.
- The tiny island of Barbuda, which has a population of 1,800 was devastated.
- It's already one of the strongest hurricanes ever recorded in the Atlantic and part of a trio of hurricanes that are building in the region.

China, Pakistan air forces launch joint exercise

The air forces of China and Pakistan has begun a joint training exercise and deployed their latest fighter jets and AWACS aircraft.

Key Points:

- The exercise will run until September 27 in China.
- China has dispatched J-11 fighters, JH-7 fighter-bombers, KJ-200 AWACS aircraft and ground forces including surface-to-air missile and radar troops.
- AWACS is Airborne Warning and Control System, a mobile, long-range radar surveillance and control centre for air defence.
- The Chinese navy's aviation troops are also participating in the training.
- Pakistan has sent JF-17 Thunder fighter jets and early warning aircraft to join the exercise, named "Shaheen VI".
- The Chinese air force will increase international exchanges and sharpen its combat effectiveness.
- The "Shaheen" joint training between the two militaries which maintain close relations was launched in March 2011.

About China

- Capital: Beijing
- President: Xi Jinping
- Currency: Renminbi

UNSC unanimously adopts new sanctions against North Korea

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has unanimously passed new set of tougher sanctions against North Korea over its sixth and most powerful nuclear test (claimed to be Hydrogen bomb).

It was overall the ninth sanctions resolution unanimously adopted by UNSC since 2006 over North Korea's ballistic missile and nuclear programs. The new sanctions imposes ban on North Korea's textile exports and capping imports of crude oil.

New sanctions include

It limits on imports of crude oil and oil products to North Korea. It bans exports of textiles, which is North Korea's second-biggest export worth more than \$700million a year. It also limits North Koreans from working overseas, which may cut off \$500 million of tax revenue per year.

Background

- In recent months, North Korea under the leadership of Kim Jong-un had staged series of missile tests including ICBMs that appeared to bring much of US mainland into

range. It was followed up with sixth nuclear test on September 3, 2017 which was the largest to date, was claimed to be a miniaturized hydrogen bomb.

- The US and its Asian allies argue that tougher sanctions will put pressure on North Korea to come to the negotiation table to discuss end to its nuclear and missile tests. Russia and China, which are close allies of North Korea also are pushing for talks. They have proposed suspension of US-South Korean military drills for freezing North Korea's missile and nuclear tests.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- UNSC is one of six principal organs of the United Nations Organisation (UNO). Its mandate is to maintain international peace and security. UNSC has 15 members, including five permanent viz. China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States.
- Each of the five permanent members has veto power.
- Its powers include establishment of peacekeeping operations, imposing international sanctions, and authorization of collective military action against through resolutions. It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.

London tops in 2017 Global Financial Centres Index

London has topped in the 2017 Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI) among 92 financial centres released by the Z/Yen and China Development Institute. India's financial capital Mumbai was ranked at 60th position, up by three positions compared to previous edition.

Global Financial Centres Index

The index is ranking of the competitiveness of financial centres based on aggregate of indices from five key areas: business environment, financial sector development, infrastructure factors, human capital, reputation and general factors. It is published twice a year. It is widely quoted as a source for ranking financial centres.

Key Facts

- There is little change in top five positions compared to previous year. London and New York remain in first and second places. Hong Kong has moved just ahead of Singapore. Tokyo remains in fifth. New York was 24 points behind London, biggest gap between the two since survey started in 2007 presumably due to fears over US trade.
- The index shows that London is globe's most attractive financial centre despite Britain's looming departure from the European Union. Earlier it was believed that due to Brexit, London will lose its pre-eminent status as a financial centre, but there are very few signs of that happening yet.

- There is overall drop in confidence amongst leading centres. Of the top 25 centres, 23 fell in ratings and only two rose. At lower end of table, 20 of 25 lowest rated centres actually rose in the GFCI ratings.
- Western European financial centres are still volatile. Frankfurt, Dublin, Paris and Amsterdam all rose in rankings, but Geneva, Zurich and Luxembourg fell in rankings. European centres continued to fluctuate as people speculate about which centres might benefit from London leaving U. Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Vienna all showing strong rises.
- The leading financial centres in Asia/Pacific region fell in ratings. All of top ten centres in region fell in ratings with Singapore, Tokyo, and Osaka all showing fall in ratings. These are reverses of strong gains made in the year 2015-16.

Appointments & Resigns

Pat Hickey resigns from International Olympic Committee Board after ticket-selling scandal

On 10th September 2017, Mr.Pat Hickey resigned from the International Olympic Committee Board.

About the resignation:

- He resigned after he was accused in a ticket selling scandal in Rio Olympics 2016, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- Mr.Hickey has stated in the letter that once he proves his innocence against all charges he wishes to rejoin the committee as a member.

About International Olympic Committee:

- Motto – Faster, Higher, Stronger
- Headquarters – Lausanne, Switzerland
- Official languages – French and English
- President – Mr.Thomas Bach

Awards & Recognition

Sikkim CM Pawan Chamling honoured at international event for work in organic farming

During a ceremony at Germany's Lagau on the occasion of the One World Festival Sikkim Chief Minister Pawan Chamling was honoured for his pioneering work in the field of organic farming.

Key Points:

- The award was given by Gerd Muller, the Federal Minister of Bavaria, and Joseph Wilhelm, German Organic Pioneer and Managing Director of Rupenzel.
- The OWA Grand Prix was conferred on representatives of the United World Colleges (UWC) from Freiburg (Germany) and Pune (India).
- Each of the two winners received prize money of 15,000 Euro and an OWA statue created by Vietnamese-German artist Dao Droste.
- The award is presented every three years by Rapunzel and IFOAM – Organics International to people and initiatives that have an outstanding impact on the international organic movement and its ideas.
- This year the winners were from India, Palestine, Azerbaijan, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Germany.

About Sikkim

- Capital: Gangtok
- CM: Pawan Chamling
- Governor: Shrinivas Dadasaheb Patil

Prince Charles Becomes the longest-serving Prince of Wales

On 9th September 2017, Prince Charles became the longest-serving Prince of Wales in history.

About Prince Charles:

- Prince Charles has broken the record of Edward VII who held the title for more than 59 years before becoming king.
- Prince Charles was designated the Prince of Wales when he was nine years old, on 26 July 1958.
- Prince Charles is the 21st Prince of Wales in the current line.
- Prince Charles is also the longest-serving heir in the British history.
- Prince Charles is now 68 year old.
- The Prince of Wales is the title given to the heir to Britain's throne.

About the United Kingdom of Great Britain:

- Capital – London
- Official language – English
- Currency – Pound sterling
- Prime Minister – Ms. Theresa May
- President – Mr. David Neuberger

Science & Technology

Reliance Energy launched digital assistance robot-ELEKTRA

Reliance Energy has launched a digital assistance robot named ELEKTRA. This system provides automated responses to customers for their queries and requests.

Key Points:

- It is powered by Artificial Intelligence. This robot comes into action whenever a customer logs in to Reliance Energy's Facebook page or website.
- This digital assistance robot takes help of SCADA and GIS systems to provide real-time responses to the customers.
- The introduction of this digital assistance robot has made bill payments, registering complaints and requests for new connections quick and hassle free.
- During peak hours, consumers will get an immediate response to their queries from ELEKTRA without any waiting time.
- Integration of CRM and ERP also facilitates commercial interactions with customers in real-time.
- It also prohibits human error and saves time.
- ELEKTRA is serving 500 customers with 3,000 interactions per day and is very well appreciated for its prompt responses.

Factbox: Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria Biopharmaceutical Accelerator

Recently Bugworks Research, a Bengaluru-based biotech startup, became India's and Asia's first to receive the international CARB-X (Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria Biopharmaceutical Accelerator) grant for its antibiotic research and development.

Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotic resistance has become global crisis that threatens management of infections, both in community and in hospital practice. The major reasons are indiscriminate use of antibiotics, including against viral infections, prolonged use in patients admitted to hospitals and their abuse in animal husbandry as growth promoters. In hospital critical care units, more than 50% organisms are now resistant even to these drugs.

CARB X

CARB-X is a public-private international partnership set up in 2016 to focus on innovations to improve diagnosis and treatment of drug-resistant infections. It had grown out of US President Barack Obama's 2015 Combating Antibiotic Resistant Bacteria (CARB) initiative. It is funded by London-based biomedical research charity Wellcome Trust and US Health Department's Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA).

The purpose of CARB X is to provide a new, collaborative approach to speed R&D and delivery of new antibiotics, vaccines, diagnostics, and other innovative products to address urgent global problem of drug-resistant bacterial infections. It will provide grants up to \$455 million over a five-year period to firms across globe for antibiotics R&D. All of its funding so far is focused on projects to address most resistant "Gram-negative" bacteria.

Gram-negative bacteria

Bacteria are classified as Gram-positive and Gram-negative, based on a structural difference in their cell walls. Gram-negative bacteria are responsible for 20-25% of bacterial infections and are multi drug resistant i.e. have ability to defend themselves against drugs that try to kill them.

Environment

3,500-Year-Old Royal Tomb Discovered in Egypt

On 9th September 2017, Egypt announced the discovery of a tomb belonging to a royal goldsmith who lived more than 3,500 years ago, in Luxor, Egypt.

About the discovery:

- The tomb is located on the west bank of the river Nile in Draa Abul-Naga, a cemetery where noblemen and top government officials were buried.
- The tomb belongs to a royal goldsmith named Amenemhat.
- He had dedicated his work to to Amon-Re, an Egyptian God.
- The tomb had statues of Amenemhat and his wife seated on chairs.
- One statue showed her wearing a long dress and wig.

- A smaller statue, discovered between the couple, depicted one of their sons.
- Mummies of a woman and her two children were found.
- The woman appeared to have died at the age of 50 and tests showed she had suffered from a bacterial bone disease.
- The chamber also contained – pottery, wooden funerary masks, Ushabti figurines, 150 small funerary statues carved in wood, clay and limestone.
- Figurines are small blue, black or white statues that ancient Egyptians placed in tombs to serve the dead in the afterlife.

About Egypt:

- Capital – Cairo
- Official Language – Arabic
- President – Mr. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
- Prime Minister – Mr. Sherif Ismail
- Currency – Egyptian pound

Sports

Joyciline Jepkosgei smashes 10 km road world record

On 9th September 2017, Joyciline Jepkosgei of Kenya broke her own 10 km road world record, in Prague, Czech Republic.

- She has become the first woman to run 10 km distance under 30 minutes on road.
- She ran for 29 minutes 43 seconds at the Birell Prague Grand Prix and broke her previous record of 30 minutes 4 seconds.
- Track and road racing records are maintained separately by the IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations)
- Jepkosgei has broken a total of five records this year.
- She has set new marks for the 10km, 15km, 20km and half-marathon.

About Kenya:

- Capital – Nairobi
- Official languages – English, Kiswahili
- Currency – Kenyan shilling
- President – Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta

BWF World Senior Badminton Championships begins in Kochi

Kochi is all set to host the BWF World Senior Badminton Championships from September 11 to 17 2017. The championship will be held in India for the first time.

- The week-long tournament will see a total of 665 players from 40 countries battle it out in eight different age groups — plus-35, plus- 40, plus-45, plus-50, plus-55, plus-60, plus-65 and plus-70 and will be played in all the five categories.
- A total of 175 players will represent India including Olympians — Abhinav Shyam Gupta, Nikhil Kanetkar and V Diju — along with three times Asian Games team bronze medallist Partho Ganguly and 1982 Asian Games bronze medallist Leroy D'sa.
- The Indian contingent will also have Arjuna awardee and Kerala player George Thomas and Commonwealth medallist and former India doubles players Sanave Thomas and Roopesh Kumar.

Obituary

Former Odisha Health Minister Syed Mustafiz Ahmed passes away

On September 11, 2017, former Odisha Health Minister Syed Mustafiz Ahmed (76) passed away following a prolonged illness.

- A popular leader, Ahmed had served as health minister between 1990 and 1995 when Biju Patnaik was the chief minister.
- Patnaik described Ahmed as “a simple man who stood by the people through thick and thin”.
- He was an able organiser and social worker. He had played a significant role for the development of Cuttack.