

National Current Affairs

Two-Day Regional Conference on Good Governance and Replication of Best Practices begins in Goa

On September 14th 2017 the two-day Regional Conference on 'Good Governance and Replication of Best Practices' began in Goa. It was organised by Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Government of India. It was presided over by dignitaries from 25 states and UT's.

The two-day Conference is an effort to create a common platform to share experiences in the formulation and implementation of citizen centric governance, improved public service delivery through e-Governance, transparent, accountable and citizen friendly effective administration.

Highlights of the conference:

- Good governance is an aid to ensure speedy delivery of services to the people. So bureaucracy must change its mindset for effective good governance.
- To encourage the works of bureaucrats civil service day is celebrated that gives recognition to best bureaucrats in the country.
- To enhance the performance of bureaucracy, a Group of Secretaries has been formed to decide on the Good Governance Index. The Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad has been roped in as knowledge partner. So, Good Governance Index is going to become a reality very soon
- By implementing Good Governance Index, there will be a healthy competition among the States for reforms.
- e-governance is a best way to ensure good governance . The success of various e-government was discussed in the conference.

Kiren Rijiju inaugurates first National Conference on "Uniformed Women in Prison Administration" in NewDelhi

On September 14th 2017, the Minister of State for Home Affairs Shri Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the Conference. Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam, Chairperson, National Commission for Women (NCW) addressed the Valedictory Session. She insisted on improving the prison infrastructure and 50% reservation for women in recruitment in prison and correctional services.

Details discussed in the conference:

- Bangkok Rules and Role of Woman Prison Officers (The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders are called Bangkok rules)
- Role of Woman Prison Officers in Rehabilitation of Prisoners.
- Gender Neutrality among Prison Officers -A Woman's Perspective
- Prisoners with Special Needs (Juvenile, Transgender and Senior Citizen):
- It advocated separate toilets and changing rooms, creches and child support facilities and appropriate accommodation in prison premises.
- Flexibility of working hours was recommended for pregnant women officers and in other special cases.
- The syndicate group on Training recommended detailed SOPs for handling emergency situations, like – Medical emergency, Escape, Murder, Riot, Hunger Strike etc.

NRDC, Andhra Pradesh Innovation Society (APIS) ink pact for start-up

The National Research Development Corporation (NRDC) has signed an MoU with the Andhra Pradesh Innovation Society (APIS).

Key Points:

- The pact has been signed to encourage start-up in the manufacturing & technology driven sectors.
- The fair was organised by IIA in collaboration with APIS and International Federation of Inverters' Associations (IFIA).
- The APIS has created four 'plug & play' technology business incubators in Visakhapatnam, Tirupathi, Anantapur and Kakinada to promote innovation and start-ups.

Rajasthan announces farm loan waiver of up to Rs 50,000

After a two-week-long protest by farmers, the Rajasthan government has announced a Rs 20,000 crore farm-loan waiver.

Key Points:

Rajasthan has now become the fifth state, after Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Karnataka to waive farm loans.

Farmers were assured that the government would purchase crops at minimum support price (MSP), increasing farmers' pension from Rs 500 to Rs 5,000, removing the ban on the sale of cattle imposed by the state government and implementation of the Swaminathan commission recommendations.

ATAGS: Indigenous artillery gun sets new record in range

The advanced towed artillery gun system (ATAGS) has set a world record in terms of range by hitting targets at distance of 48 km during trial firings at Pokhran, Rajasthan.

The record of longest ever distance of 48.074 km was achieved by ATAGS with special ammunition high explosive – base bleed” (HE – BB) developed by Kalyani Group.

ATAGS

- ATAGS is fully indigenously developed by DRDO and private sector consortium consisting of Bharat Forge Limited of Kalyani Group, Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division and Mahindra Defence Naval System along with Ordnance Factory Board. in mission mode as a part of the Army’s artillery modernisation programme. It is a 155mm, 52 calibre towed artillery gun.
- The Armament system of ATAGS mainly comprises a barrel, muzzle brake, breech mechanism and recoil mechanism to fire 155 mm calibre ammunitions. It has a longer firing range of 40 Kms with accuracy and precision and provides greater fire power. It is also has night firing capability in direct fire mode.
- ATAGS has several significant advance features, including an all-electric drive, high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communication system, and automated command and control system. It has a six round magazine, instead of a standard three round one. It weighs slightly more than normal due to the larger chamber.

International Current Affairs

India, Japan ink MoU set up India-Japan Act East Forum

India and Japan have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to set up India Japan Act East Forum to enhance connectivity and promote developmental projects in Northeast India.

It was one of the 15 major agreements signed between both countries during Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to India for the 12th Indo-Japan annual summit.

Key Facts

- The purpose of forum is to converge India’s Act East Policy with Japan’s Free and Open Asia-Pacific strategy in the backdrop of China’s One Belt One Road initiative.

- It will enhance connectivity and promote developmental projects in India's Northeast region in an efficient and effective manner.
- It can complement India's connectivity initiatives in Bangladesh, Myanmar and beyond, besides BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) and BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Motor Vehicle Agreements.

Background

Japan has cooperated with variety of development projects in Northeast, ranging from connectivity infrastructure such as roads and electricity, water supply and sewage and environmental conservation such as forest resource management and biodiversity.

Japanese Contribution to North East

India and Japan have signed document on Japanese loan and aid for highway development in Northeast which can complement India's connectivity initiatives in Bangladesh, Myanmar and beyond. Japan is also extending loan of Rs.2,239 crore to India for 'North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project' to improve National Highway 40 (NH-40) and construct a bypass on NH-54 in Northeast. These projects are expected to improve intra-regional and international connectivity through regional economic development.

Chinese Opposition

China has expressed dissatisfaction over proposed Japanese investments in India's North-East states. China warned that third-party should not meddle in border disputes between India and China. It held that negotiations are still on to settle eastern section of China-India border, so it is opposing involvement of any third party in region in whatsoever form.

2017 Global least and most stressful cities: Stuttgart, Germany at the top, Bangalore 130th

On 13th September 2017, Global ranking for the least and most stressful cities of the world was released, by a firm called Zipjet, in London. Stuttgart, Germany is at the top, Bangalore 130th and, New Delhi 142nd.

Global ranking for stressful cities and stress-free cities 2017:

- The ranking was done based on the following factors:
Density, Green Spaces, Public Transport, Traffic, Perception of Security, Sunshine Hours, Air Pollution, Noise Pollution, Light Pollution, Unemployment, Debt per Capita, Social Security, Family Purchase Power, Mental Health, Physical Health, Gender Equality, Race, Equality.
- 500 locations were studied and 150 cities were ranked.
- Delhi ranks number 8 in the most stressful cities list.

China displays its first unmanned attack helicopter

On 15th September 2017, China displayed its first unmanned combat helicopter AV500W for foreign buyers in the north eastern Tianjin city, China.

China's first unmanned helicopter:

- Aviation Industry Corp of China (AVIC), state-owned aircraft manufacturer, displayed the military observation cum combat helicopter at the fourth China Helicopter Expo, in China.
- This has been done in a move to enlarge its market of military drones abroad.
- The AV500W was designed and produced by AVIC Helicopter Research and Development Institute in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province of China.
- The aircraft's length is 7.2 meters.
- Its maximum take-off weight is 450 kg.
- It can carry 120 kg of weapons and equipment.
- Its maximum speed is 170 km per hour.
- It has a flight ceiling of 4,000 meters.
- It can stay in observation mode for 8 hours in the air.
- Whereas in observation cum combat mode it can fly up to 4 hours.

German Nationality Ranked Highest in the World

According to the Henley & Partners – Kochenov Quality of Nationality Index (QNI) Germany's quality of nationality is ranked first in the world. It was launched in London on 13th of Sept. 2017.

Key Points:

- Germany scored 82.7% out of a possible 100% on the index while Afghanistan sitting at the bottom of the index with a score of 14.6%.
- India was ranked 101 among 159 countries.
- The index takes into account various factors including the country's economic growth and level of human development.
- Behind Germany are France and Denmark who secured second place on the index with a score of 82.4%.
- Iceland ranks third overall at 81.3% and the US ranked only 29th on the QNI with a score of 68.8%.

About Germany

- Capital: Berlin
- Chancellor: Angela Merkel
- President: Frank-Walter Steinmeier

- Currency: Euro

“Sweden hosts huge war games exercise “Aurora” with NATO

Sweden hosts huge war games exercise with NATO. It is the biggest military exercise in more than 20 years with support from NATO countries.

Key Points:

- Sweden is not a member of NATO but the exercise, called “Aurora”, involves 19,000 troops and will replicate an attack from the east on the Baltic island of Gotland, near the Swedish mainland.
- Around 1,500 of the military personnel are from the United States, France, Norway and other NATO allies.

About Sweden

- Capital: Stockholm
- PM: Stefan Lofven
- Currency: Swedish Krona

Third meeting of India–Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation held in Kuwait

From 18th September to 20th September 2017, the third Meeting of India–Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, would be held in Kuwait.

About the meeting:

- Mr.M.J.Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs would lead an Indian delegation for the Meeting in Kuwait.
- He is leaving to Kuwait at the invitation of the Kuwait Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Mr. Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.
- During the meeting bilateral discussions would be carried on and priorities would be decided for future cooperation.
- Kuwait is an important trading partner for India.

About Kuwait:

- Capital – Kuwait City
- Currency – Kuwaiti dinar
- Official language – Arabic
- Prime Minister – Mr.Jaber Mubarak al-Sabah

Banking & Finance

India's GDP growth likely to slip below 7 % this fiscal year: DBS

On 15th September 2017, a report by DBS, a multinational banking and financial services corporation, said that India's GDP growth is likely to reduce below 7 % this financial year.

Predicted fall in India's GDP:

- According to DBS, two main reasons for the downfall are demonetisation in November 2016 and GST implementation in July 2017. These added to the already slow growth in manufacturing and investment sectors.
- Also note ban reduced cash availability, affecting heavily the cash sensitive businesses like construction, logistics, and small and medium size enterprises.
- The report also said that, the second half of this financial year is expected to see an improvement in trend growth. As a result of demonetisation's impact slowing fading out.
- This GDP downfall would be the lowest in three years. Recovery would be gradual. Much of recovery could not be expected in 2017 and 2018.
- Government investment on infrastructure and capital expenditure is necessary to bring back the GDP above 7 %.

About DBS:

- Type – multinational banking and financial services corporation
- Headquarters – Singapore
- Chairman – Mr. Peter Seah Lim Huat

HSBC in tie-up with Sa-Dhan to develop digital ecosystem for India's unbanked segment

HSBC Bank has entered into an agreement with Sa-Dhan to develop ecosystem for the unbanked segment in the country.

Key Points:

- HSBC Bank is providing technology expertise to train and educate micro-finance consumers at grass-root level and introduce digital banking.
- It has to be undertaken in West Bengal, Punjab, Karnataka and Maharashtra and it is expected to benefit 1,200 consumers.

- The pilot will be creating digital hubs with POS machines and internet connectivity.

About HSBC

- Founder: Thomas Sutherland
- HQ: HSBC Tower London England UK
- Group Chief Executive: Stuart Gulliver

Business

Force Motors ties up with Rolls Royce to set up engine plant

Commercial vehicle maker Force Motors has tied up with Rolls Royce Power Systems (joint Venture) to produce engines for multiple applications like railways and power generation.

Key Points:

- Under the partnership, the Pune-based firm will set up a manufacturing facility which will meet the standards and specifications laid down by Rolls Royce at Chakan near Pune.
- The companies will produce complete power generation systems including associated spare parts for Indian as well as global markets.
- Force Motors is the only company in the world that produces engines for two of the leading European premium car makers Mercedes and BMW.

About Rolls Royce Power Systems

- Rolls Royce Power Systems portfolio includes high speed engines and propulsion systems for ships, power generation, heavy land, rail and defense vehicles.
- The company has customers in more than 150 countries, including 400 airlines, 160 armed forces, 70 navies and more than 4,000 power and nuclear customers.

Appointments & Resigns

UN chief appoints Peter Thomson as first UN envoy for oceans

- On September 13th 2017, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed the outgoing president of the General Assembly Peter Thomson as the first special envoy for the oceans. This action will stimulate the efforts to protect world's oceans.
- Peter Thomson played a lead role at the first-ever UN conference on oceans in June.
- The 193 UN member states issued an urgent call for action to reverse the decline in the health and productivity of the world's oceans.
- In Thomson's view the major challenge threatening the oceans is the climate change, which affects the seas and the air that all people breathe.

About UN:

- Headquarters: New York, United States
- Secretary general: António Guterres

Harsh Kumar Jain appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Slovak Republic

On 14th September 2017, Mr. Harsh Kumar Jain was appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Slovak Republic, in New Delhi.

About the appointment:

Mr. Harsh Kumar Jain, Indian Foreign Service, of batch 1993 is currently the Ambassador of India to the Republic of Kazakhstan.

About:

- Capital – Bratislava
- Currency – Euro
- Official language – Slovak
- President – Mr. Andrej Kiska
- Prime Minister – Mr. Robert Fico

Awards & Recognition

Vijaya Bank bags Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar award

On 14th September 2017, Vijaya Bank was awarded the first prize under the Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar (Region C) for the year 2016-2017.

Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar:

- Vijaya Bank was given this award to honour its work in implementing Hindi as a language in its day-to-day activities.
- President Mr. Ram Nath Kovind handed the award to the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Vijaya Bank, Mr. R. A. Sankara Narayanan.

About Vijaya Bank:

- Type – Public Sector Bank
- Headquarters – Bengaluru
- MD & CEO – Mr. A. Sankara Narayanan

Science & Technology

Uttar Pradesh tax department launches webpage for GST related complaints

- On September 14 2017, the Uttar Pradesh tax department has launched a web page to allow traders and others to submit their complaints and feedback related to the GST.
- About the page comtax.up.nic.in/feedback.htm:
- It facilitates uploading of supporting documents for any complaint and will help the tax department to address GST related issues.
- Traders can raise queries related to migration, registration, return, payment/challan, composition scheme, backend issue, connectivity, eway Bill.

Uttar Pradesh:-

- Capital : Lucknow
- Governor : Ram Naik
- Chief Minister : Yogi Adityanath

Sports

14 year old Indian Rishabh Shah wins two bronze medals at Western Asia Youth Chess Championship

On 13th September 2017, Rishabh Shah of Mumbai, bagged two bronze medals in the Under-14 Rapid and Blitz formats of the 2nd Western Asia Youth Chess Championship in Sri Lanka.

Bronze medal winner:

- The 2nd Western Asia Youth Chess Championship was held from 4th September 2017 to 11th September 2017 in Sri Lanka.
- Rishabh Shah, 14 year old chess player from Mumbai, with rank 3, scored 5 points and 4.5 points respectively in Rapid format and Blitz format and won two Bronze medals in the under 14 category.
- Rishabh trains at trains at the South Mumbai Chess Academy.
- Gold medal was won by GMH Thilakarathne, a Srilankan player.
- Silver medal was won by Mohammad Fahad Rahman of Bangladesh.

About 2nd Western Asia Youth Chess Championship:

- Conducted by – Chess Federation of Sri Lanka
- Venue – Waskaduwa, Sri Lanka
- Date – 04.09.2017 to 11.09.2017

Devendra Fadnavis launches 'Maharashtra Mission 1 Million'

On 15th September 2017, Maharashtra Chief Minister Mr.Devendra Fadnavis launched the 'Maharashtra Mission 1 Million' initiative through which 10 lakh (1 million) students across the state would play football, in Mumbai.

About Mission 1 Million:

- The FIFA U-17 World Cup 2017 is to happen for the first time in India and in Maharashtra.
- In a move to support it, Mission 1 Million was planned by Maharashtra Sports Minister Mr.Vinod Tawde.
- This mission would not only create football players, but also help in the overall development of Maharashtra.

About FIFA U-17 World Cup 2017:

- Host country – India
- Date – 6.10.2017 to 28.10.2017
- Venues – Kolkata, Kochi, New Delhi, Navi Mumbai, Guwahati, Margao

Obituary

Veteran actor and ‘Sopranos’ mobster Frank Vincent dies at 80

On 13th September 2017, Frank Vincent, an American actor died in New Jersey, United States.

About Frank Vincent’s death:

- American veteran actor Frank Vincent died peacefully at the age of 80 on 13th September 2017, in New Jersey.
- He has played numerous roles throughout his career. Out of which, many were tough guy characters.
- One of his famous roles is mob boss Phil Leotardo on “The Sopranos” television series.
- He has played dominant roles in many HBO series.

About Frank Vincent:

- Occupation – Actor, musician, author
- Lived – 1976 – 2017
- Nationality – American

Important Days

International Day of Democracy – September 15, 2017

On September 15th 2017, the international day on democracy was celebrated on United Nations Headquarters on New York, US. It was organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union of UN. This year’s theme is “In defence of democracy: The 20th anniversary of IPU’s Universal Declaration on Democracy”

The discussed details at the forum

- To set an international standard to guide governments, parliaments and citizens through today’s many challenges to democracy around the world.
- To explore various hindrances of democracy and discussing concrete ways to support democracy.

Engineers Day – September 15, 2017

Engineers day is celebrated all over India on 15th September every year by engineering community. It is celebrated as a tribute to the greatest Indian Engineer Bharat Ratna

Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya. This year's theme is "Role of Engineers in a developing India"

Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya:-

- He is India's most renowned civil engineer, dam builder, economist, statesman.
- After topping the Poona College of Engineering recruited by Government of Bombay as Assistant Engineer in Public Works Department, he created automatic sluice gates which was later reused for Tigma Dam (in Madhya Pradesh) and KRS Dam (in Karnataka) as well.
- In Hyderabad, he improved the drainage system, in Bombay, he introduced block system of irrigation and water weir flood gates.
- In Bihar and Orissa, he was a part of the building railway bridges project and water supply schemes. In Mysore, he supervised the construction of KRS dam, the then Asia's biggest dam.
- He became Dewan of Mysore in 1908. Under his Dewanship, Mysore saw major transformation in the realms of Agriculture, Irrigation, Industrialization, Education, Banking and Commerce.
- He was conferred with India's highest civilian award, Bharat Ratna in 1955 for his contribution towards engineering.

16 September: International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer

The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer (or World Ozone Day) is observed every year on September 16 for the preservation of the Ozone Layer. This year, the theme for the Day is 'Caring for all life under the sun'.

The day was designated by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 19, 1994. Its observance commemorates the date in 1987 on which the Montreal Protocol was signed on substances that deplete the ozone layer. It also is intended to spread awareness of the depletion of the Ozone Layer and search for solutions to preserve it.

Ozone Layer

The Ozone layer is fragile shield of gas which protects Earth from harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation of Sun and thus helping preserve life on the planet. It contains high concentrations of ozone (O₃) in relation to other parts of the atmosphere. Stratospheric Ozone is not harmful, but its presence on land it is harmful. Substances like Chlorofluorocarbons, halons, Carbontetrachloride are responsible for ozone layer depletion.

Montreal Protocol

It is an international treaty designed to protect ozone layer by phasing out production of numerous Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs) that are responsible for ozone depletion. It was agreed on 26 August 1987 in Montreal, Canada and entered into force on 26 August

1989. It was followed by a first meeting in Helsinki, May 1989. Due to its universality, Montreal Protocol has helped in recovering the ozone hole in Antarctica. Under it production and consumption of key ODSs like chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs), Methyl Chloroform, CTC halons and Methyl Bromide have been phased-out globally.

Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer

It is multilateral environmental agreement agreed upon at the 1985 Vienna Conference and entered into force in 1988. It is one of the most successful treaties of all time in terms of universality. It has been ratified by 197 states (all UN members as well as the Niue, Holy See and the Cook Islands) as well as European Union.

It acts as a framework for the international efforts to protect the ozone layer. These are laid out in the accompanying Montreal Protocol. However, it does not include legally binding reduction goals for the use of CFCs, the main chemical agents causing ozone depletion