

National Current Affairs

Odisha passes bill for setting up first Odia language university

On September 14, 2017, the Odisha government passed a bill for starting the first Odia language university for post-graduation in literature, linguistics and epigraphy. After Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, Odisha became the fourth state in country to have a special university for development of its language and literature.

About the University:

- The university would be established in Bhubaneswar.
- It would also administer PG courses in literary criticism, evolution of east Indian language scripts, historical scripts, archaeology, musicology and translation into and from Odia.
- The proposed university also aims at making Odia script more adaptable to computer technology.
- It would work as an education and resource centre for Sanskrit and other ancient languages as well.

India exempts import duty on goods for FIFA U-17 World Cup

On September 17, 2017, the government announced that it has exempted import duty for sports items and a wide range of goods for the upcoming FIFA U-17 World Cup India.

- The following goods will be exempted from the integrated tax levied under the GST.
 - All sports goods, sports equipment and sports requisites; fitness equipment; team uniform/clothing; spares, accessories and consumables of the same.
 - Doping control equipment, first aid kits, satellite phones/GPS, dining/kitchen items, and office consumables, are also among the goods that have been exempted from the import duty.
 - Broadcast equipment and supplies used in organising and during the event imported by FIFA Host Broadcasters too falls in the exemption list.
- But CBEC (Central board of excise and customs) issued a notification that importers will have to furnish undertakings that all the goods, excluding gift items, souvenirs, mementos will be re-exported within three months of conclusion of the World Cup.

About FIFA U-17 World Cup:

- The first FIFA event to be held in India will be spread over six cities including New Delhi, Kochi, Kolkata, Guwahati, Navi Mumbai and Margao.

- It starts on October 6 and have 52 matches. The final football match, on October 28, will be played at Kolkata's Salt Lake Stadium.
- India, as the host country, is automatically qualified for the FIFA U-17 World Cup 2017.
- Brazil, Spain, Germany, France, USA, England, Paraguay, Japan and Korea DPR, are among the nations participating in the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup event.
- The 17th edition of the FIFA U-17 World Cup, has the slogan 'Football takes over'.

Government invites startups for Northeast Venture Fund

The Ministry of Development of Northeast has invited start-ups from all over country to avail benefits of Northeast Venture Fund in a bid to make Northeast India favourite destination for young Startups.

The dedicated Venture fund aims to remove constraints faced by youngster when he sets out to be on his own by providing financial relief. Further it seeks to tap vast unexplored avenues in Northeast for generating livelihood particularly in fruit, food, handicraft and tourism industry.

Northeast Venture Fund (NVF)

- NVF is first dedicated venture capital fund for North-Eastern region.
- It has been set up by North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi).
- Its purpose is to encourage entrepreneurship in North-eastern region, primarily by offering support to first-generation entrepreneurs.
- In addition, NEDFi performs role of hand-holding and capacity building.

Zero Hunger Programme to be launched in October

India's ambitious Zero Hunger Programme through interventions in farm sector will be launched on occasion of World Food Day (October 16) with focus on agriculture, nutrition and health in a symbiotic manner.

The Programme will be initiated by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in association with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), MS Swaminathan Research Foundation and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC).

Key Facts

- The programme consists of organisations of farming system for nutrition, setting up genetic gardens for biofortified plants and initiation of 'Zero Hunger' training. A genetic garden for biofortified plants contains germplasm of naturally biofortified

crops through plant breeding. It has plants and crops that help supplement micro-nutrient deficiencies, including iron, zinc, vitamin A and iodine among others.

- The Programme initially will be launched in three districts – Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh), Koraput (Odisha) and Thane (Maharashtra). These three districts will act as model of integrated approach to deal with hunger and malnutrition by adopting suitable agricultural or horticultural practices.
- The Programme will ensure suitable methods of measuring impact of intervention by identifying the nutritional maladies in each district and applying appropriate agricultural/horticultural and animal husbandry remedies.
- This dedicated farm-based programme is in sync with India's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end hunger by 2030. It will be in addition government's plan to deal with issue of malnutrition through various other initiatives under its goal to make India malnutrition free by 2022.

Law Ministry approves Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2017

The Union Law ministry has approved Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2017 to empower government to confiscate property of economic offenders and defaulters who flee India.

- The Bill seeks to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by fleeing the country.
- It was drafted in pursuance of Finance Minister Arun Jaitley's 2017-18 Budget speech promising legislative changes or even new law to confiscate the assets of such fugitives.
- The Finance Ministry had prepared the draft Cabinet note on the bill and sought the law ministry's opinion on it.

Features of Bill

- It defines fugitive economic offender as any individual against whom warrant for arrest in relation to economic offence has been issued and person has left the country and refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution. The burden of proof for establishing that an individual is fugitive economic offender will be on authorities.
- The proposed bill will be applicable in cases where the value of offences is over Rs 100 crore. It will allow Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), the premier technical snoop wing under the finance ministry, to file an application for declaration of fugitive economic offender for confiscation of their assets.
- The bill entrusts responsibility to try such cases to the courts under Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). The bill has provision for appointment of an administrator to dispose off property of fugitive offender to pay off the creditors. Besides, it has provisions to override provisions of other existing laws.

Law Ministry Suggestions

- It wants Saving Clause to be incorporated in the Bill before it is introduced in Parliament. Saving clause provides for certain exception(s) in a statute. It enables repealed law to be in force with respect to some existing rights as provisions of the proposed bill has bearing on the provisions of existing laws.
- The existing laws under which such fugitive economic offender are tried include Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act (RDDBFI), Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, (SARFESI) and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

SEBI allows REITs, InvITs to raise funds via debt securities

Capital markets regulator SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) amended guidelines of Real Estate Investment Trusts (Reits) and Infrastructure Investments Trusts (InvITs) in order to broaden scope of fund raising by such instruments.

Amended Guidelines

- It allows REITs and InvITs to raise capital by issuing debt securities. REITs now require to have 50% stake in holding company marginally less from earlier limit of 51%.
- Like InvITs, REITs are now allowed to invest in single assets and can also lend to an underlying holding company. REITs have been allowed to lend to an underlying holding company or a special purpose vehicle

Estate Investment Trusts (Reits)

- Reits are investment vehicles that can be used by real estate players to attract private investment, while investors (both retail and institutional) can gain dividends generated from income-producing real estate assets like office buildings, shopping malls, etc. They are similar to mutual funds which provide opportunity to invest in equity stocks, whereas REITs allow one to invest in income-generating real estate assets.
- In REITs, most of the earnings via sale / rent of such investments are distributed to its shareholders. Its purpose is to improve the liquidity position of Real Estate developers and give a secure avenue to investors to invest in long term. REITs are only for completed projects not the under-construction projects. They are primarily for commercial projects and mainly serve as an alternative investment.

Jharkhand Government launches Shaheed Gram Vikas Yojana

Jharkhand Government has launched Shaheed Gram Vikas Yojana aimed at developing villages of freedom fighters in the state. It was launched from Ulihatu Village, birth place of freedom fighter Birsa Munda.

- Under this scheme, villages of many tribal freedom fighters will be developed and their habitants will be provided basic amenities.
- These villages had remained inaccessible for long time after Independence because of Left-wing extremism. Now they will be provided with 136 pucca houses.

Birsa Munda

- Birsa Munda was tribal, freedom fighter, religious leader, and folk hero who belonged to Munda tribe from Chhotanagpur area.
- He had led Munda rebellion towards end of 19th century against British Raj. Starting in 1895, revolt was against interference by British administration which transformed tribal agrarian system into feudal state around Chhotanagpur area, as well as interference in their religious matters from Missionary activities.
- Birsa Munda had adopted Guerilla Warfare techniques to launch surprise attacks in which many police officials were killed.
- The revolt was brutally suppressed by Britishers. Birsa Munda was arrested and was sentenced to death and died in jail of Cholera.

International Current Affairs

Russia, Iraq restore air travel after 13-years

Russia and Iraq restored scheduled commercial airline services on 17th of September for the first time since 2004.

Key Points:

- According to the Russia's civil aviation authority the first commercial flight arrives on 17th of September.
- The two countries may also later agree on air travel to the Iraqi city of Basra.
- Russia suspended regular flights to Iraq in 2004 after the US-led invasion in 2003 flinged the Arab country into war.

About Iraq:

- Capital: Baghdad
- President: Fuad Masum
- PM: Haider al-Abadi
- Currency: Iraqi Dinar

Japan releases postage stamps on Indian Yoga experts

On 17th September 2017, Japanese postal department released postage stamps on Yoga Expert Mr.Bishnu Charan Ghosh and his family members, in Kolkata.

- Japan has released postage stamps on Indian Yoga experts Mr.Bishnu Charan Ghosh, his son Mr.Biswanath Ghosh, daughter Ms.Karuna Ghosh and Karuna's father in law Mr.Asutosh Ghosh.
- This is to honour their contribution in spreading awareness about Yoga.
- This is the first time Japan has released postal stamps on Yoga Experts.
- These stamps were officially displayed in Kolkata by the Japanese Consul General in Kolkata, Masayuki Taga.
- Mr.Bishnu Charan Gosh was a Bengali bodybuilder and a Yoga expert. He lived in 1903 – 1970.

China opens dual-use highway to Nepal through Tibet

On 15th September 2017, China opened a dual use highway in Tibet to the Nepal border which could be used for civilian and defence purposes, in China.

Dual-use highway:

- The highway is 40.4 km long and 25 m wide.
- It has 4 double lanes. It is classified a first-tier highway.
- It connects Xigaze airport and Xigaze city centre in Tibet.
- It has a short section linking the national highway to the Nepal border. This could be used for both civilian and defence purposes.
- The highway will reduce half of the journey time between the Xigaze airport and Xigaze city.

About China:

- Capital – Beijing
- Currency – Renminbi
- Official language – Standard Chinese
- President – Mr. Xi Jinping

Iron Union 5: Joint military exercise of US and UAE started in Abu Dhabi

On 16th September 2017, the US and UAE's joint military exercise, named as Iron Union 5, began in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Iron Union 5:

- It is carried out in order to maintain bilateral relations and exchange training and military expertise between the two countries.
- The focus of the exercise is to upgrade and boost the readiness of the UAE's armed forces and to improve both the armies' international co-operation.
- The Iron Union 5, is an extension of Iron Claw exercises.
- Iron Claw exercises are organised by the UAE with friendly countries to exchange and develop their skills according to the latest advanced military systems.

About UAE (United Arab Emirates):

- Capital – Abu Dhabi
- Currency – UAE dirham
- Official language – Arabic
- President – Mr.Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan
- Vice President & Prime Minister – Mr.Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Business

Ola ties up with Karnataka Tourism Department to launch tourism campaign

On September 16 2017, Ola and the Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation initiated a campaign to promote and raise awareness about responsible tourism named “GhoomoResponsibly”.

- Tourism and IT-BT Minister Priyank M. Kharge flagged off this campaign in Bangalore. Ola aims to raise awareness about being a responsible tourist, respecting local culture and promoting environmentally-conscious tourism in Karnataka.
- Shenaz Treasury, popular actress and travel blogger becomes a part of this campaign embarked on an exciting road trip that span across seven states, 14 days and cover 21 lesser-known locations across India with Ola Outstation, Ola's smart mobility solution for inter-city travel.
- Shenaz will plan to encourage people to take road trips and will travel around some breathtaking architecture, ancient ruins and temples in locations such as Hampi, Aihole, Badami and Pattadakal, before heading to Andhra Pradesh.

About Ola:

- ANI Technologies Pvt. Ltd., operating under the trade name Ola, is an Indian online transportation network company. It was founded as an online cab aggregator in Mumbai, but is now based in Bangalore.
- Founded: 3 December 2010

- Founder: Bhavish Aggarwal, Ankit Bhati
- Headquarters: Bangalore, Karnataka,

Appointments & Resigns

YC Modi appointed as DG of NIA

The Appointment Committee of Cabinet (ACC) has appointed senior IPS officer YC Modi as Director-General (DG) of National Investigation Agency (NIA). He will succeed Sharad Kumar.

- Prior to this appointment he was special director in the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
- He was part of special investigation team on 2002 Gujarat riot cases appointed by Supreme Court when incumbent Prime Minister Narendra Modi was Chief Minister of State.

National Investigation Agency (NIA)

- NIA is Central Counter terrorism Law Enforcement Agency established to combat terrorism and terror financing. It was established with enactment of NIA Act, 2008 after 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. It aims to match best international standards in counter terrorism and other national security related investigations at national level by developing into a highly trained, partnership oriented workforce.
- The agency has concurrent jurisdiction to deal with terror related crimes across states without obtaining special permission from states. Apart from covering terror offences that threatens sovereignty and integrity of country, it also probes offences counterfeit currency, human trafficking, organized crime, violations of atomic energy act etc.
- **Special Courts:** Various Special Courts have been established under Section 11 and 22 of NIA Act 2008 for speedy trial of cases registered at various police stations of NIA. Central government decides any question as to jurisdiction of these courts. These special courts are capable of trying only those offences committed under its jurisdiction.

Rajni Kant Mishra appointed new DG of SSB

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed senior IPS officer Rajni Kant Mishra (58) as new Director General of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). He will succeed

Archana Ramasundaram, who holds distinction of being first woman IPS officer to head a para-military force in the country.

Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)

- SSB is one of India's Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs). It is entrusted with guarding the country's frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan. It was established in 1963 following Sino-Indian War. It was formerly known as Special Service Bureau. It is under administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Its headquarters are in New Delhi and motto is "Service, Security and Brotherhood". It has specialist jurisdictions for national border patrol, security, and integrity.

Awards & Recognition

President's medal for former DIG D Roopa who exposed alleged jail irregularities

On 16th September 2017, former DIG D Roopa, who revealed alleged irregularities at the central jail in Bengaluru, was awarded the President's medal, in Bengaluru.

- DIG Roopa was awarded the medal by Governor Vajubhai Vala at a ceremony at Raj Bhavan in the presence of Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister Ramalinga Reddy.
- In July 2017, D Roopa, DIG of Prisons (at that time), submitted a report to the Director General of Prisons mentioning that Sasikala, who was serving a 4 year sentence in the disproportionate assets case at Parapanna Agrahara Central Prison, was given preferential treatment and there was 'a talk' that Rs.2 crore was involved in the deal.
- Following that D Roopa was posted as Deputy Inspector General of Police and Commissioner for Traffic and Road Safety in Bengaluru.

Science & Technology

Airtel Payments Bank – First payments bank in India to integrate the UPI on its digital platform.

Airtel Payments Bank has become the first payments bank in India to integrate the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) on its digital platform announced on 17th of September 2017.

Key Points:

- It will help in making instant money transfers to any bank account in India and will add to customer choice and convenience for making secure digital payments to online and offline merchants.
- It will allow all 20 million bank customers to create their personalised UPI handles on the Airtel app.
- It would also be able to link their bank accounts on BHIM app and make UPI payments.
- For UPI-based payments and transfers, customers are not required to furnish their bank details to enable transactions and can create easy to remember IDs, ensuring optimal data security.
- Customers can also use MyAirtel app (Bank section) to scan any UPI QR code for making merchant payments.
- Customers can also link their Airtel Payments Bank savings accounts to any of their UPI handles on popular apps such as BHIM or UPI apps of other banks.
- This can be done by selecting Airtel Payments Bank from the link or change account section and select airtel payments bank from the listpost which customer details will be linked.

Sports

Lewis Hamilton wins Singapore Grand Prix 2017

On 17th September 2017, Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton won the Formula 1 Singapore Grand Prix, in Singapore.

- Lewis Hamilton finished the race first and won the Singapore Grand Prix.
- He was followed by Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo in the 2nd position and Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas in the 3rd.
- Lewis Hamilton finished 4.5 s ahead of Daniel Ricciardo.
- Hamilton's rival Sebastian Vettel withdrew in the middle of the race due to his damaged Ferrari car.
- Hamilton scored 263 points.
- The race was reduced to 58 laps out of 61 due to safety reasons.

Chris Gayle becomes first batsman to hit 100 sixes in T20Is

West Indies legend Chris Gayle has become the first batsman to hit 100 sixes in the shortest format of the game during their Twenty20 International match.

The match was played against hosts England at Chester-le-Street on 17th of Sept. 2017.

About Chris Gayle

- Christopher Henry Gayle is a Jamaican cricketer and a former captain, who plays international cricket for the West Indies.
- Batting Left-handed
- Bowling Right-arm off Spin
- Role Batting All-rounder, Opening batsman

Obituary

'Father of nephrology in India' Dr.K.S.Chugh dies of cancer at 85

On 17th September 2017, Dr.K.S.Chugh, the “father of nephrology in India”, died at the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh.

- Dr.Chugh was professor and former head of department of nephrology at the PGIMER.
- He has received the Padma Shri award.
- He was presently working with Fortis Hospital at Mohali.
- The International Society of Nephrology listed him among 50 legends in nephrology.
- Dr.Chugh had 413 papers, including 38 chapters, published in national and international journals and books.

RJD leader and former Union minister Mohammed Taslimuddin passed away

On September 17 2017, former Union minister and senior Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Mohammed Taslimuddin,74 died in a Chennai Appollo hospital. He had visited Chennai for a parliamentary committee meeting.

- Taslimuddin was a prominent Muslim leader. He hailed from Seemanchal area in Bihar, was a seven-time MLA and five-time MP. He was the Union minister of state for home in the UPA I government at the Centre.
- Taslimuddin started his political career as a sarpanch. In 1969 for the first time, he became a mukhiya before being elected to the Bihar Assembly.