

National Current Affairs

Government launches Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojan

Under the scheme, government will provide free electricity to all households identified under Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data 2011.

- Electricity connections will be given to APL families for Rs 500, which will be payable in 10 equal monthly instalments.
- The BPL cardholders will get free electricity connections.
- The total outlay of scheme is Rs. 16, 320 crore while Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) is Rs. 12,320 crore.
- The States and Union Territories are required to complete works of household electrification by 31st of December 2018. The Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC) will be nodal agency for operationalisation of scheme throughout country.
- Gram Panchayat/Public institutions in rural areas will be authorised to collect application forms along with complete documentation, distribute bills and collect revenue in consultation with Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Government launches Divyang Sarathi Mobile Application

The Ministry for Social Justice and Empowerment has launched Divyang Sarathi - The accessible and comprehensive mobile application for easy dissemination of information to 'Divyangjans'.

- The mobile app aims to empower Divyangjans by providing them easier and convenient access to information pertaining to schemes, scholarships, statutes, institutional support systems, jobs and other crucial information.
- The app is integral part of ICT component of Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) launched in December 2015. It also compliant with principles of UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for Universal Access and provisions of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 which mandates that all information to be made available in accessible form.
- The app has inbuilt unique feature of audio notes (text-to-voice conversion software) which converts written information into audio file as well as the adjustable font size which can be altered as per user's requirement. It has been developed bilingually i.e. information is available in Hindi as well as English.

Government launches Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt System

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution launched web portal of Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA) & Electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (e-NWR) System under Digital India mission.

These initiatives aims at simplifying Warehouse Registration Rules, digitizing entire process of registration, monitoring and surveillance as well as creation and management of NWRs in electronic form through two repositories.

- Negotiable warehouse receipts (NWR) NWRs are documents issued by warehouses to depositors against commodities deposited in warehouses for which warehouse is bailee. They are transferred by endorsement and delivery i.e. either original depositor or holder in due course (transferee) can claim commodities from warehouse.
- NWRs can be traded, sold, swapped and used as collateral to support borrowing or loans from banks. These receipts were made negotiable under Warehouse (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007 and are regulated by Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA).
- These initiatives will revolutionise marketing of agricultural commodities and help farmers realize better price for their produce which will be step towards doubling farmers' income by 2022.
- The whole purpose of simplifying processes and moving towards online system will enhance WDRA's regulatory functions and bring greater fiduciary trust among banks, depositors and trade on e-NWR system.

PENCIL Portal launched for effective implementation of National Child Labour Project

The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment launched Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour (PENCIL) Portal at National Conference on Child Labour.

The PENCIL portal is an electronic platform that aims at involving Centre, State, District, Governments, civil society and general public in achieving the target of child labour free society.

It encompasses various components- Child Tracking System, Complaint Corner, State Government, National Child Labour Project and Convergence. Each district will nominate District Nodal Officers (DNOs) who will receive the complaints. Within 48 hours of receiving complaints, DNOs will check genuineness of complaint and take rescue measures in coordination with police, if complaint is genuine. So far, 7 states have appointed DNOs.

National Child Labour Project (NCLP)

NCLP is central sector scheme launched in in 1988 for rehabilitation of child labour. Under it, special schools/rehabilitation centres for rehabilitation of child labourers are opened so that they can be mainstreamed into formal schooling system. These centres also provide non

formal education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition and stipend to children withdrawn from employment.

Government constitutes Economic Advisory Council headed by Bibek Debroy

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has constituted Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).

- The five member of council are:
 - Niti Aayog member Dr Bibek Debroy who will lead the council.
 - Other members are Dr Surjit Bhalla, Dr Rathin Roy, Dr Ashima Goyal and Ratan Watal.
- The committee will analyse any issue economic or otherwise referred to it by the Prime minister.
- The EAC-PM is an independent body which provides advice on economic issues to the government, specifically to the Prime Minister. It consists of economists of high repute and eminence.

TRIFED organised National Workshop on Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce

Minister of Tribal Affairs Shri Jual Oram inaugurated the National Workshop organized by TRIFED on “Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Minor Forest Produces (MFP) scheme – Taking it to the next level for a Fair and Equitable Deal to the Tribals.

- This workshop is a step to expand the horizon of the scheme of providing Minimum Support Price for Minor Forest Produce.
- This scheme is already implemented in 9 States. This workshop will help to expand the scheme Nationwide.

TRIFED Signs MoU with Amazon

In order to have institutional support to marketing initiatives, TRIFED has formally signed an MOU with M/s Amazon Seller Services Pvt. Ltd for sale of tribal products through their Website/App at a mutually agreed terms & conditions.

- As a part of the MOU, exquisite authentic tribal art and craft items crafted and sculpted by tribal artisans from all over the country will be showcased on the online portal for sale.
- The aim is to promote tribal handicrafts like handloom products, cane and bamboo products, tribal jewellery, Dhokra craft, tribal weaves and embroidery, tribal paintings etc by cashing in on the online retail space reach to boost sales.

- TRIFED has established a chain of 42 retail outlets and tie-ups with 13 State level Emporiums. The idea is to provide opportunities to the tribal artisans of the country to market their products on a sustained basis. TRIFED plans to expand this network to other cities as well so as to provide a larger market for tribal products.

India ranks third in nuclear power installations: study

According to World Nuclear Industry Status Report 2017, India with six installed nuclear reactors ranks third in world, while China is leading at 20 installed nuclear reactors.

Key Highlights of Report

Decline in Nuclear Reactors: The number of nuclear reactor units under construction is declining globally for fourth year in a row, from 68 reactors at end of 2013 to 53 by mid-2017. Most nuclear reactor constructions are behind schedule, with delays resulting in increase in project costs and delay in power generation.

Delay in Projects: Globally, there are 37 reactor constructions behind schedule, of which 19 reported further delays over past year. In India itself, five out of six reactors under construction are behind schedule. Eight nuclear power projects have been under construction globally for a decade or more, of which three have been so for over 30 years.

Nuclear power vs Renewable energy: Debate regarding value of nuclear energy “is over” especially nuclear power vs renewable energy development. It reveals that since 1997, worldwide, renewable energy has produced four times as many new kilowatt-hours of electricity than nuclear power.

Power generation: Globally it has increased by 1.4% in 2016 due to a 23% increase in China, but it is stagnated at 10.5%. By comparison, globally, wind power output grew by 16% and solar power by 30%. Wind power increased 3.8 times, and solar power by 2.2 times more than nuclear power respectively. Renewables represented 62% of global power generating capacity additions.

Shutting down of nuclear plants: Russia and US have shut down reactors in 2016. Sweden and South Korea also have closed their oldest units in first half of 2017.

Financial crisis in nuclear Industry: In recent years, financial crisis plaguing nuclear industry. Toshiba has filed for bankruptcy of its US subsidiary Westinghouse, largest nuclear power builder in history. France’s AREVA also has accumulated \$12.3 billion in losses over past six years. French government has provided it \$5.3 billion bailout and continues its break-up strategy.

India, US, Afghanistan join hands for 1st trade show in Delhi

From 27th to 29th September 2017, India, US and Afghanistan will conduct a joint trade and investment show for the first time, in Delhi.

- The event will be inaugurated by Afghanistan CEO Dr. Abdullah.
- The trade event is sponsored by the US and hosted by India.

Infosys Foundation signs Rs 5 cr-MoU with IISc

Infosys Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Infosys has signed a Rs five crore MoU with Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, to enhance infrastructure and broaden research activities at the centre for Infectious Diseases Research (CIDR).

- Rs 5 crore grant will be used towards research, training and creating awareness, about infectious diseases, benefiting 25 faculty members and 250 students at IISc.
- This association will facilitate an interdisciplinary approach, with a focus on research about infectious diseases, leading to the development of new drug targets, drug delivery systems and novel diagnostic tools.

New underground water treatment plant commissioned at Sadhutilla in Agartala

In Tripura, a new underground water treatment plant has been commissioned at Sadhutilla in the southern part of Agartala under the aegis of the state Urban Development department.

- The plant has fulfilled long cherished aspiration of people looking for drinking water free from iron and other contamination.
- The plant has started functioning with supply of quality treated water initially to 565 households through pipe line. It has treatment capacity of 4 point 8 million litre per day and will supply potable water to 2500 connections at households, schools, markets and institutions of 13 hamlets.
- The Sadhutilla water treatment plant is designed to treat surface water and deep tube wells.
- It has two Over Head Storage Reservoirs with capacities of 1,130 Kilo Liter and 450 Kilo Liter.
- The specialty of the plant is that it would be treating water at higher standards with minimizing turbidity and iron in water much below the permissible level. The plant has also the provisions of recycling of sludge water and rain water harvesting.
- It has been funded jointly by the Asian Development Bank with 70% share of assistance and the Union Government with 30 % share of assistance.

Government celebrates 'Bharat ke Kaushalzaade' on Antyodaya Diwas

On 24th September 2017, Ministry of Rural Development conducted an event named 'Bharat ke Kaushalzaade', to honour beneficiaries of its skill development programmes, at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

- The event was conducted on 24th September 2017, which is observed as 'Antyodaya Diwas'.
- Beneficiaries of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) and Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETI) were honoured.
- Under DDU-GKY scheme 5.05 lakh rural candidates have been given skill development.
- Under RSETI scheme 14.09 lakh candidates have been given skill development.
- A new scheme named 'Kaushal Panjee' (Skill Register) was launched at the event.
- It helps candidates to get quality training and jobs.
- A new logo for RSETI was launched. The logo depicted 'reaching for the stars'.

International Current Affairs

DRUZBA 2017: Pakistan, Russia hold joint military drill

The second edition of DRUZBA 2017 (Friendship-2017), a joint military exercise between special forces of Pakistan and Russia was held in Minralney Vody, Russia.

- The exercise set the stage for translating political goodwill between both countries into a substantial partnership especially in the field of defence.
- The joint exercise DRUZBA 2017 focused on counter-terrorism operations, hostage and rescue, cordon and search operation.
- It aimed to enhance and further strengthen military ties between two countries and share Pakistan Army's experience in war against terrorism.
- It also involved experience sharing and develop coordination in carrying out practice combat tasks in a mountainous environment, including operations against illegal armed groups.

Saudi Arabia allows women into sports stadium for the first time

Saudi Arabia has allowed women into the national stadium for the first time as it launched celebrations to mark the 87th anniversary of its founding with an unprecedented array of concerts and performances.

- The festivities are part of a government bid to boost national pride and improve the quality of life for Saudis timed to coincide with Saturday's national day.
- The events are part of the government's Vision 2030 reform programme launched two years ago to diversify the economy away from oil, create new sectors to employ young citizens and open up Saudis' cloistered lifestyles.

- The celebrations took place at King Fahd stadium in Riyadh and included events like concerts, folk dance and fireworks.

Banking & Finance

SBI launches Chabot to help customers in banking activities

The chat assistant, known as SBI Intelligent Assistant, or SIA, will help customers with everyday banking tasks just like a bank representative.

- SIA has been set up to handle nearly 10,000 enquiries per second, or 864 million in a day, which is nearly 25 per cent of the queries processed by Google every day.
- "SIA will enhance customer service several notches above. Payjo's expertise in the conversational banking domain helped us build SIA as a superior chatbot in the global banking space.

SBI opens new branch in Singapore

On 25th September 2017, State Bank of India (SBI) opened its sixth branch in Ang Mo Kio area of Singapore.

- SBI already has branches in Marine Parade, Jurong, Little India etc. in Singapore.
- About 80 % of SBI's Singapore customers are Chinese and the rest are high network Indians.
- SBI offers the highest interest rates on deposits compared to other banks in Singapore.
- SBI also offers services like wealth management, insurance and rupee remittances.

Interest Subsidy Scheme on home loans for MIG extended to March 2019

The central government has extended the validity of interest subsidy benefit of about Rs.2.60 lakh on home loans under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) for beneficiaries belonging to Middle Income Groups (MIG) by 15 more months beyond earlier stipulated one year period ending December this year.

- Under CLSS (Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme), MIG beneficiaries with annual income of above Rs 6 lakhs and up to Rs 12 lakhs would get an interest subsidy of 4% on a 20 year loan component of Rs 9 lakhs.
- Those with annual income exceeding Rs 12.00 lakhs and up to Rs 18 lakhs would get interest subsidy of 3%.

Awards & Recognition

Banaj Devi to receive Sarala award for 'Kathapua'

Noted Odia poet and short story writer Banaj Devi will be honoured with the 38th edition of the prestigious Sarala award for her short story compilation *Kathapua*.

- The annual Sarala Puraskar, recognised as one of the foremost literary awards of the State, comprises a cash award of ₹5 lakh along with a citation.
- Besides Banaj Devi, Pandeet Guru Dr Ghasiram Mishra will be awarded 'Ila Panda Sangeet Samman' and Dr Durga Prasad Das will receive 'Ila Panda Chitrakala Samman'. They will receive a cash award of ₹1,50,000 each and citations.
- The Sarala Puraskar, instituted by Odia industrialist Dr Bansidhar Panda and Late Ila Pnada in 1979, has been continuously awarded by IMPaCT, the charitable wing of IMFA Group.

Appointments & Resigns

Angela Merkel wins 4th term as Chancellor of Germany

Angela Merkel won a fourth term as chancellor in Germany elections that lifted the far-right party Alternative for Germany into parliament for the first time since the immediate aftermath World War II.

- Her nearest rivals, the Social Democrats, and their candidate Martin Schulz came in the second position with a post-war record low 20.8%.
- Merkel's party Christian Democrat-led picked up 32.5% of the votes to defeat Martin Schulz's Social Democrats.
- The chancellor's main competitor, the Social Democrats' Martin Schulz, has failed to inspire the public.

Industrialist Rajinder Gupta elected PCA president

Leading industrialist Rajinder Gupta was elected as the president of the Punjab Cricket Association.

- R P Singla was elected as the honorary secretary.

- Rakesh Rathour, Prof S M Verma and Amarinder Bindra were unanimously elected as the vice presidents of the PCA.
- Arun Sharma and Dr A G S Bawa were elected to the post of honorary joint secretary and Ajay Tyagi was elected as the treasurer.
- Rajiv Mittal, R S Sachdeva, B K Bassi and P M S Banga were among the four individual members who were elected while 10 members of the executive were also elected.

Science & Technology

INS TARASA commissioned into Indian Navy

INS Tarasa (T94), the fourth and last ship in series of Water Jet Fast Attack Craft (WJFAC) was commissioned into Indian Navy at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai.

- It is an improved variant of Car Nicobar-class high-speed offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) built indigenously by Kolkata (West Bengal) based Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd (GRSE), for the Indian Navy.
- INS Tarasa has been named after the picturesque island in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago in Bay of Bengal.
- It is powered by the latest 4,000-series MTU engines and has displacement capacity of 315 tonnes.
- It is fitted with advanced machinery control system.
- The ship will also have the latest communication equipment and radars to enable effective surveillance.
- INS Tarasa will be based at Mumbai under operational control of Western Naval Command.
- It will be used for missions like coastal and off-shore surveillance, EEZ Patrol, law enforcement.
- It will also conduct non-military missions such as Search and Rescue, humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission completes 3 years in orbit

ISRO's globally acclaimed Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) also known as Mangalyaan completed three years in Martian orbit. It has outlived its original lifespan and is still in good health and continues to work as expected.

- On the occasion of completion of three years, ISRO released MOM second year science data from September 24, 2014 to September 23, 2016.
- Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) Mangalyaan spacecraft was launched on board of PSLV C25 rocket from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on November 5, 2013 with aim of studying Martian surface and mineral composition as well as scan its atmosphere for methane (an indicator of life on Mars). It had entered Mar's orbit on September 24, 2014, in its first attempt. It was nine-month-long mission.
- The spacecraft was indigenously designed, built and launched by ISRO in record period of less than two years in Rs.450 crore (\$73 million US) budget, making it cheapest inter-planetary mission till date to reach Mars.
- The spacecraft has five instruments mounted on it for collecting scientific data of Mar's morphology, atmospheric processes, surface temperature, surface geology and atmospheric escape process. These five instruments are Lyman-Alpha Photometer (LAP), Methane Sensor for Mars (MSM), Mars Exospheric Neutral Composition Analyser (MENCA), Thermal Infrared Imaging Spectrometer (TIS) and Mars Colour Camera (MCC)

Stratolaunch: World's largest aircraft successfully passes first engine tests

The world's largest all-composite airplane Stratolaunch in terms of wingspan successfully completed its initial engine tests.

- It is designed for launching for sending satellite-carrying rockets into low-Earth orbit
- The plane has biggest wingspan ever built, measuring 118 m from one end to the other, longer than a professional football field. It weighs about 227,000 kg.
- Stratolaunch plane is fitted with six 747 turbofan engines.
- It is designed to carry nearly 250,000 kg between the two fuselages. It can hold more than 113,000 kg of fuel.
- It has operational range of approximately 2,000 nautical plane is designed for runway-style takeoff.
- Once it reaches cruising altitude of 11,000 metres, it can detach rockets carrying small satellites into low-Earth orbit.
- It is capable of delivering payloads to multiple orbits and inclinations in a single mission.

Sports

East Bengal wins 8th consecutive Calcutta Football League Title

On 24th September 2017, East Bengal won the Calcutta Football League (CFL) title for the 8th consecutive time at the Kanchenjunga Stadium, in Siliguri, West Bengal.

- East Bengal has created a new record by winning the Calcutta Football League (CFL) title for the 8th consecutive time.
- It has won all the CFL titles since 2010. It has a total of 39 CFL titles making a tournament record.
- East Bengal Club won the title in a 2-2 draw against Mohun Bagan Club in the final Premier Division 'A' match of the 2017 season.

Vaishnavi clinches Belgian Junior Open; Arjun MR and Ramchandran Shlok win in Ethiopia

Indian shuttler Vaishnavi Reddy clinched up the women's singles U-19 title at the Belgian Junior Open.

- Reddy defeated Vivien Sandorhazi in a three-game final at Herstal, Belgium on 24th of Sept. 2017.
- At Ethiopia, International in Men's doubles pair of Arjun MR and Ramchandran Shlok won 21-6 21-19 against Jordanian pair of Bahaedeen Ahmad Alshannik and Mohd Naser Mansour in the finals at the Ethiopian Youth Academy Gymnasium Hall to clinch the title.
- In Indian women's doubles combination of Maneesha K and Arathi Sara Sunil suffered a 19-21 22-24 loss from English pair of Jenny Moore and Victoria Williams in the finals to settle for silver at the Polish International at Bierun, Poland.

India becomes World No. 1 in both ODIs and Tests

India beat Australia by 5 wickets in the third ODI played between the two sides at Indore. Now India is the no. 1 spot in the International Cricket Council (ICC) One-Day International (ODI) rankings.

- This is India's ninth consecutive ODI win while it is Australia 11th successive defeat.
- The three Top three teams in ODI are India, South Africa, and Australia.
- Australia, on the other hand, are six rating points behind India on third.
- South Africa can reclaim the top spot if they beat Bangladesh in the upcoming three-match series that will be preceded by a Test series.

Obituary

Legendary soul singer Charles Bradley dies aged 68

Charles Bradley, the legendary soul singer and a late-in-life headliner, died on 23rd Sept. in Brooklyn New York. He was 68.

- He started his solo career relatively late in life when he was signed to Daptone Records in 2002 after being spotted as “Black Velvet.
- He released three albums, No Time for Dreaming, Victim of Love, and Changes.

Renowned Marathi writer, journalist Arun Sadhu passes away at 76

Noted writer Arun Sadhu, who straddled the worlds of literature and journalism with equal élan, passed away on Sep 25 2017.

- He was known for his work in Mumbai Dinank, which was his first novel, and the book Simhasan, which was adapted into a Marathi film.
- Sadhu, who worked with several newspapers, also wrote various novels in Hindi, English and Marathi for which he received a Sahitya Akademi award.
- He was conferred with the Bharatiya Bhasha Parishad, NC Kelkar and Acharya Atrre awards also.
- The veteran scribe wrote on the rise of Shiv Sena, the Vietnam war and the Chinese revolution, besides several short stories.

Former world’s heaviest woman Eman Abd El Aty dies

Eman Ahmed, the world’s heaviest woman who made news when she arrived in Mumbai earlier this year for a weight-loss surgery, passed away in Abu Dhabi on 25th Sept. 2017.

- She had lost more than 300kg (660lb) of her 500kg but had died from complications from other health conditions.
- By 2016, Ahmed weighed about 500kg and was diagnosed with severe lymphedema and water retention, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and hypothyroidism.
- She has severe obstructive and restrictive lung disease, gout and was at a very high risk of pulmonary embolism.