

# National Current Affairs

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## India registers significant decline in Infant Mortality Rate

According to Sample Registration System, SRS bulletin, India has recorded a major drop in birth cohort, which has for the first time come down to below 25 million.

- India has registered 90000 fewer infant deaths in 2016 as compared to 2015. The total number of estimated infant deaths have come down from 930000 (9.3 Lakhs) in 2015 to 840000 (8.4 lakhs) in 2016.
- According to the SRS Bulletin the gender gap in India for child survival is reducing steadily. The gender difference between female and male IMR has now reduced to more than 10%, giving a major boost to the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' scheme of the Government.
- The results signify that the strategic approach of the government has started yielding dividends and the efforts of focusing on low performing States is paying off.
- Among the Empowered Action Group (EAG) States and Assam, all States except Uttarakhand have reported decline in IMR in comparison to 2015.

## Government notifies Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has notified new Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules 2017 to prohibit range of activities in wetlands. The new rules will replace earlier rules notified in 2010.

Wetlands are threatened by reclamation and degradation due to activities like drainage and landfill, pollution, hydrological alteration, over-exploitation resulting in loss of biodiversity and disruption in ecosystem services provided by them.

### **Highlights of new rules**

- **State Wetlands Authority (SWA):** It stipulates setting up of SWA in each State/UTs headed by State's environment minister and include range of government officials. State government will also nominate one expert each in fields of wetland ecology, hydrology, fisheries, landscape planning and socioeconomics.
- **Functions of SWA:** It will develop comprehensive list of activities to be regulated and permitted within notified wetlands and their zone of influence. It will also recommend additional prohibited activities for specific wetlands, define strategies wise use of wetlands and its conservation and undertake measures to enhance awareness within stakeholders and local communities on values and functions of wetlands. In this case,

wise use has been defined as principle of sustainable uses that is compatible with conservation.

- **Prohibited Activities:** The rules prohibit activities like conversion of wetland for non-wetland uses including encroachment of any kind, setting up and expansion of industries, waste dumping and discharge of untreated wastes and effluents from industries, cities, towns, villages and other human settlements.
- **Digital inventory of all wetlands:** Mandatory for state authorities to prepare list of all wetlands and list of wetlands to be notified within six months. Based on it, a comprehensive digital inventory of all wetlands will be created and will be updated every ten years.
- **National Wetlands Committee (NWC):** The rules stipulates for setting up of NWC, headed by MoEFCC Secretary, to monitor implementation of these rules and oversee work carried out by States. NWC will also advise Central Government on appropriate policies and action programmes for conservation and wise use of wetlands, recommend designation of wetlands of international importance under Ramsar Convention, advise on collaboration with international agencies on issues related to wetlands etc.

### **TK Viswanathan Committee Recommendations to deal with hate speech on internet**

An expert committee headed by former Lok Sabha secretary general TK Viswanathan to deal with cybercrimes especially online hate speech has submitted its report to Union Home Ministry.

- The Viswanathan committee has recommended appointment of cybercrime coordinators in every state as well as setting up of cybercrime cells in each district.
- They will deal with those fomenting trouble or spreading hate against anybody on the grounds of religion, race, caste or community, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, place of birth or residence, language, disability, or tribe through any means of communication.
- The punishment under the amended clause dealing with prohibiting incitement to hatred has been recommended to be two years imprisonment or a fine of Rs 5,000 or both.
- The committee has suggested that offences under the amended Section 505A be punishable with imprisonment of up to one year or fine or Rs 5,000 or both.
- The amended Section would also deal with instances of anybody “causing fear, alarm or provocation of violence” on grounds of religion, etc.
- The committee suggested that the state cybercrime coordinator should be an officer not below the rank of Inspector General of Police.
- It also suggested that the district cybercrime cell should be headed by an officer not below the rank of sub-inspector of police.

### **India and the United States Renew Commitment to Joint Collaboration on Health**

India and US have committed to work together in the areas of health, for better addressing the health challenges faced by our people in both countries, such as cancer, R&D, communicable and non-communicable diseases, traditional medicines, access to medicines, food and drug regulation, antimicrobial resistance, etc.

- They also committed to strengthen scientific, regulatory, and health cooperation between the two nations and the global community; highlight priorities and ongoing activities, and exchange information on policies, regulations, research, technologies, programs, activities, and practices.
- The final goal is to identify emerging areas of mutual interest and facilitate the development of new collaborations.
- Collaboration on research, global health security and access to medicines will benefit both countries.

### **India Japan Cooperation in Rail Safety**

Taking the technical cooperation in Rail Safety ahead, a team/ Mission of Safety experts from Japan concluded its second visit early this month.

- This mission discussed detailed scope of cooperation. This Mission visited Indian Railway's (IR) coach/wagon/loco maintenance facilities. The Mission also observed rail welding and track maintenance practices followed by IR.
- A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on Railway safety was signed between Ministry of Railways, Government of India (GoI) and MLIT, Japan to cover the area adequately.
- The cooperation will facilitate exchange of information and visit of experts from both sides.

### **India, Norway sign Letter of Intent to extend health cooperation**

The Government of India has signed a Letter of Intent with Norway to extend the cooperation within health sector.

- The cooperation between the two countries will continue to be aligned with the development goals of the Indian Government as outlined in its National Health Policy 2017 for achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The cooperation shall focus on global health issues of common interest.
- The partnership shall also include areas related to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, adolescent health and health system strengthening.

- The cooperation will also focus on innovative, catalytic and strategic support, taking the Indian Government's Intensification Plan for Accelerated Maternal and Child Survival in India as the starting point.

### **Government finalising Electoral Bonds Scheme**

The Union Government is finalising electoral bonds scheme in order to bring greater transparency in funding of political parties.

- The scheme was announced in 2017-18 Union Budget as part of certain electoral funding reforms.
- It will make India first country in the world to have such unique bonds for electoral funding.
- According to Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), most political parties use lax regime on donations to accept cash donations from anonymous sources.
- Nearly 70% of Rs. 11,300 crore in party funding over an 11-year period came from unknown sources. The electoral bonds will prompt donors to take banking route to donate, with their identity captured by the issuing authority.

### **Electoral Bonds Scheme**

- Under the scheme, proposed electoral bonds will resemble promissory note and not an interest-paying debt instrument.
- These bonds will only be issued by notified authorised bank and can only be bought using cheques or digital payments.
- These bonds purchased by donor will be given to political party for fixed period of time.
- The electoral bonds will not carry name of donor and routing of money through banks will ensure that only tax paid money comes into political system.
- To avail benefit of this scheme, it is mandatory for all political parties to notify their bank account to the Election Commission of India. Political party using their notified bank account can convert these donated electoral bonds into money.

### **TN inks pact with German firm for land use planning project**

Tamil Nadu today signed a joint technical cooperation agreement with Germany-based GIZ for taking up land use planning and management project in the state.

- According to the Indo-German development agreement, India has been taking up land use planning and management projects with support of German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.

- As part of the agreement, a scheme would be developed for tapping unplanned land in Coimbatore which would also cover Nilgiris and Tirupur districts in the State.
- GIZ would provide technical assistance to State agencies involved in formulating land use policies.
- The scheme would be implemented by different agencies under the State Planning Commission, Housing and Urban Development department.

### **Karnataka Cabinet approves Bio-Tech Policy and Anti-Superstition Bill**

The State Cabinet on Wednesday approved the much-delayed and debated Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill, 2017 — better known as the anti-superstition Bill — which seeks to ban among other practices the controversial ‘made snana’ ritual (devotees rolling over plantain leaves having food leftovers) in public/religious places.

- However, the Bill does not cover regulations for astrology and vastu practice, piercing of ears and nose of children in accordance with certain rituals, and performance of religious rituals such as ‘Keshlochan’ by the Jains.
- But, it proposes to ban evil practices such as killing an animal by biting its neck (gaavu).
- The approval of the Bill is being seen as fulfilling the commitment made by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to rationalists, writers, and activists who fought for a ban on superstitious practices.

### **Haryana government scraps Dadupur Nalvi canal scheme**

The Haryana government today decided to scrap the Dadupur Nalvi Irrigation scheme.

- Dadupur Nalvi scheme was initiated in the year 1985 and the project was approved by the then government for Rs 13 crore for irrigation and recharging of ground water in the Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra and Ambala districts.
- Of the total 2,246.53 acre land required for construction 1019.2994 acre land was acquired for construction of main channels--Shahbad Feeder, Shahbad Disty and Nalvi Disty. The other channels which were to irrigate 92,532 hectare area of Yamunanagar, Kurukshetra and Ambala districts could not be taken up due to resistance of land owners as farmers were not interested to give their land for construction of minor due to the fact that water would be available to them only during rainy season when they do not require water.
- Thus, the Haryana Cabinet approved a proposal of Irrigation and Water Resources Department to denotify the 1,019.2994 acres of land that was acquired for construction of Dadupur Nalvi Irrigation Scheme.

### **Himachal Pradesh raises paid maternity leave to 180 days**

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet has raised paid maternity leaves for women employees from 135 days to 180 days.

- It also approved appointment of Indian women cricket team wicketkeeper Sushma Verma of Shimla rural constituency as DSP as a special case against 3% reservation under direct recruitment for distinguished sportspersons.
- The cabinet also decided to reserve one seat for single girl child in PG (MD/MS) courses in government medical colleges under the state quota seats.
- A three-tier system of 'dispute, resolution, process' will be established in the irrigation and public health department to settle disputes between contractors and department concerned or between two or more parties.
- The cabinet approved framing of policy for special educator under school management committee to bring him on par with JBT teachers appointed on contract basis.
- A decision was taken to convert 530 gram panchayat veterinary assistants on contract basis working under Mukhya Mantri Arogya Pashudhan Yojna and who have been in service for five years.
- The cabinet decided to fill 9 posts of assistant engineers (civil) and one post of assistant engineer (mechanical) in irrigation and public health department, 50 posts of junior office assistant (IT) in treasury, accounts and lottery department on contract basis.
- It gave its approval to create and fill 18 posts under various categories in Government Degree College, Thachi in Mandi district.

### **ADB approves USD 80 mn loan for modernisation of TVET in Himachal Pradesh**

Multilateral lending agency Asian Development Banks (ADB) has approved a loan of USD 80 million (about Rs 524 crore) for modernisation of Himachal Pradesh's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutes.

- The total cost of the project is USD 100 million, with the Centre contributing USD 20 million. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.
- The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) board of directors approved the loan to modernise TVET institutes and programmes to enhance job prospects of the state's youth.
- The project will establish a polytechnic for women, six city livelihood centres, and seven rural livelihood centres, upgrade 11 employment and exchanges into model career centres to build TVET awareness among youth.
- Modernisation of training equipment, forging partnerships with the private sector, and expand market-relevant training and livelihood development opportunities will also be taken up as part of the project.

### **PFC to provide Rs 4,000 crore for 4 GW power plant in Telangana**

State-run Power Finance Corp (PFC) has committed financial assistance of Rs 4,009 crore to TSGENCO (Telangana Power Generation Corporation Ltd) for setting up a 5X800 MW, coal based Yadadri Thermal Power Plant using super-critical technology in Nalgonda district of Telangana. The Yadadri Thermal Power Plant will generate approximately 29,784 million units of energy to meet the future power requirement of Telangana.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **Russia completes Chemical Weapons Destruction**

Russia has completely destroyed its chemical military weapons, in the southwest of Russia.

- This has been done in a move to make the modern world more balanced and secure.
- Russia was among the first to sign the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).
- The CWC came to act in 1997, under the supervision of the Organization of Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).
- Over 96 % of all chemical weapons declared by the convention has been destroyed under OPCW verification.

### **India launches Access India Programme (AIP) to attract UK investments**

On 27th September 2017, India launched the Access India Programme (AIP) along with knowledge partner UK India Business Council (UKIBC), at India House in London to attract investments from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the UK.

- AIP will work as a market entry support system for smaller companies with a potential to expand into the Indian market.
- The new AIP initiative will be geared towards implementing the 'Make in India' concept by facilitating investments from the UK but will not be limited to just 'Make in India'.
- The AIP will include six annual workshops and mentoring programmes to encourage a flow of SMEs into India. A group of about 50 companies will be initially identified by the end of this year to begin their entry process from early 2018.

### **Palestine joins Interpol as full member**



The International Police Organization or Interpol, as it is commonly known, has decided to accept the state of Palestine as a member country.

- Some 75 countries voted in favor, with 24 voting against and 34 abstaining. The State of Palestine and the Solomon Islands are now INTERPOL member countries.
- Israel had contended that Palestine is not a state and that it is ineligible for Interpol membership.
- Interpol membership will bring several benefits to Palestinian police. They'll get access to information that other police agencies around the world have shared about criminal activity and will be able to issue red notices, which function as international nonbinding warrants requesting the extradition of criminal fugitives.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **IDBI Bank sells 9 % stake in SIDBI**

On 27th September 2017, IDBI Bank said that it has sold 9 % stake in Small Industries

- The amount for which the 9 % stake was sold and the name of the buyer has also not been disclosed. This has been done in a move to mobilise funds by exiting non-core business.
- IDBI has planned to reduce stake in some non-core businesses to increase its capital base.
- IDBI Bank has sold further 4,80,41,092 equity shares constituting 9.03 % of the paid up capital of SIDBI on 26th and 27th September 2017.
- Earlier this week, IDBI sold 1 % stake in SIDBI.

### **SEBI bans Jeevan Suraksha Energy and Industries from markets**

SEBI has barred Jeevan Suraksha Energy and Industries Ltd (JSEIL) from the capital markets for not complying with public issue norms.

- The step has been taken after SEBI received a complaint against the company about alleged fund mobilisation by way of issuance of Redeemable Preference Shares (RPS) and inability to recover investments and promised returns.
- It has been found that the company allotted redeemable preference shares worth about Rs 25.82 lakh to 125 persons during 2012-13.



- In a short period of four months (from April to July 2012) the total number of allottees exceeds 49 and cumulatively the RPS were issued to 125 persons thereby raising Rs 25.82 lakh.
- As per SEBI, JSEIL and its promoters and directors have been prohibited from disposing of their assets as well as diverting any funds raised from public through the allotment of preference shares.

### **Karnataka Bank opened its first Aadhaar centre at Sanjaynagar branch in Bengaluru**

Karnataka Bank has opened its first Aadhar Enrollment and Updation Centre at Sanjaynagar Branch Bengaluru. The Bank will be coming out with eighty such Aadhar Enrollment cum modification centres across India in a phased manner.

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## **Business**

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### **NeSL gets final nod to become India's first Information Utility**

On 27th September 2017, National e-Governance Services Ltd. (NeSL) received the final approval to become India's first Information Utility (IU).

- It had received an in-principle approval in June for establishing an information utility (IU).
- IUs will be a one-step repository for all information related to lending and borrowing activities of financial institutions. These information will be maintained in an electronic format.
- It will also provide retrieval facilities for Insolvency Professionals, Debt Recovery Tribunal, and the National Company Law Tribunal so as to enable the proceedings to be completed in a time-bound manner.
- Suvan Law Advisors along with SNG & Partners are the law firms advising NeSL while Indra Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) is the knowledge partner.

### **Air India ties up with PNB, IndusInd Bank for Rs.3,250 crore loan**

Air India has tied up with public sector lender Punjab National Bank and private lender IndusInd to secure loans to the tune of over Rs 3,000 crore for meeting working capital requirements.

- The funding will be used for repayment of dues to the airport operators, oil companies and other vendors.

- On 27th September 2017, Air India tied up with Punjab National Bank (PNB) and IndusInd Bank to secure loans of Rs.3,250 crore.
- Also, an administrative panel under Finance Minister Arun Jaitley is working on disinvestment of Air India and its five subsidiaries, which is currently under loss.

### **Amazon India launches 'Amazon Business' for SMBs**

Amazon India has launched Amazon Business, a B2B marketplace on Amazon.in, to enable small and medium businesses to procure products through the platform. The platform, which will be available on the Amazon website, is registered under the main entity Amazon Seller Services.

- The new B2B marketplace will feature additional “convenience and value offering” by providing business-only pricing, discounts on bulk quantity purchase, and GST invoices to SMB buyers to claim GST credit.
- It will provide its business sellers with easy access to over 10 crore (100 million) products in a range of categories including laptops, network storage solutions, electronics, office supplies among others.
- SMBs can register for the business account at no charge.
- Amazon Business will also offer reporting and analytics features, giving customers with insight on purchasing patterns.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **10 young scientists selected for Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award 2017**

On 26th September 2017, ten scientists were awarded Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, at a function held at Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), in New Delhi.

- The event was conducted by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). President Mr. Ram Nath Kovind presided over the function.
- Every year Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) selects 8-10 scientists, below the age of 45, from various institutions and honours them with Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award.
- This is India's highest science award. The scientists are recognised for outstanding scientific work in the last five years.

### **Gujarat bags comprehensive development of tourism award**

Gujarat was named the best state for Comprehensive Development of Tourism at the National Tourism Awards presented by President Ram Nath Kovind on 27th Sept. 2017.

- The Hall of Fame Awards were introduced in 2017 and given to states, organisations and agencies which have won the National Tourism Award in the same category for three consecutive years.
- Madhya Pradesh also bagged best state for Comprehensive Development of Tourism at the National Tourism Awards.
- The other states which have made it to the awards list for their contribution to tourism are Kerala, Rajasthan, Goa and Andhra Pradesh.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Mridul Kumar appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to Malaysia**

Shri Mridul Kumar an IFS of 1992 batch presently Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to Malaysia.

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## Science & Technology

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### **NASA and Russia Partner Up for Crewed Deep-Space Missions**

NASA and the Russian space agency Roscosmos have announced a new partnership for human exploration of the moon and deep space on 27th Sept. 2017.

- Both agencies signed a joint statement on cooperation at the 68th International Astronautical Congress in Adelaide, Australia.
- NASA has partnered with Russia to flesh out ideas for its “deep-space gateway” concept, a mission architecture designed to send astronauts into cislunar space — or lunar orbit — by the 2020s.
- It will help NASA and its partners to gain the knowledge and experience necessary to venture beyond the moon and into deep space.
- The new partnership would develop international technical standards for the establishment of the station in the near-moon orbit.

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# Sports

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## **Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games 2017 held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan**

On 17th – 27th September 2017, the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games 2017, was held at Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. This is the 5th edition of the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games.

- India finishes 11th in Asian Indoor Games with 40 medals:
- India secured 11th place in the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games 2017.
- Indians won a total of 40 medals. This consists of 9 gold, 12 silver and 19 bronze medals. India was represented by more than 200 athletes in 15 disciplines.
- 1st -Turkmenistan topped the games with 89 gold, 70 silver and 86 bronze medals.
- 2nd – China with 42 gold, 32 silver and 23 bronze medals.
- 3rd – Iran with 36 gold, 23 bronze and 59 bronze medals.
- Gold medal winners:-
- Purnima Hembram bagged gold medal in the women's pentathlon event
- Govindan Lakshmanan won gold in men's 5000m race
- Ajay Kumar Saroj won the gold in men's 1500m race
- PU Chitra clinched Gold in women's 1500m race
- Wrestler Bajrang Punia won gold in men's freestyle 65kg event
- Arpinder Singh won gold medal in the men's Triple Jump event
- Sumit Nagal clinched Gold in men's tennis.

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# Obituary

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## **Former National women's hockey coach Antony passes away**

P P Antony, former national women's hockey coach, who also trained and taught coaches at the SAI, Bengaluru campus passed away in Thrissur on 27th Sept. 2017. Under Antony, the Indian junior women had won the four- nation tournament in 1999 and a bronze medal at the Junior Asia Cup. He took over the senior team as coach in 2001.

## **Veteran freedom fighter Suryamani Panda dies**

Veteran freedom fighter Suryamani Panda had passed away at the age of 96 on 26th of Sept. 2017.

- Panda was vice-president of All India Freedom Fighters Samity and working president of the State Freedom Fighters Samity.
- He was imprisoned for participating in freedom movement against British Raj. During Quit India movement, he took part in the agitation.

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## Important Days

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### World Maritime Day – September 28

Maritime Day is celebrated across the world on 28 September.

- The theme for 2017 World Maritime Day is ‘Connecting Ships, Ports and People’.
- The main aim is to do so by focusing on helping International Maritime Organization (IMO) member states to develop and implement maritime strategies to invest in a joined-up, interagency approach.
- The day also gives various UN entities the chance to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a broad response to the challenges facing the world today.
- The promotion of sustainable shipping and sustainable maritime development is one of the major priorities of IMO in the upcoming future.

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