

National Current Affairs

Parliamentary panel under BJP MP B C Khanduri to examine operational preparedness of armed forces

A Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, headed by BJP MP B C Khanduri will examine the operational preparedness of the armed forces. Next meeting of this committee is scheduled to be held in November 2017.

The committee will:

- Assess the procurement policy relating to defence equipment.
- Critically review accidents involving strategic defence assets. It is to be noted that recently several accidents have been reported involving Indian Navy ships and Indian Air Force helicopters.
- Look into the quality of ration given to the forces especially in border areas.
- Assess major research and development initiatives, including private sector participation.
- The committee will also discuss measures to revamp training for defence personnel in the light of latest technological advancements.

Need to balance national interest, human rights on Rohingya refugees: SC

The Supreme Court has asked Union Government to strike a balance between humanitarian concern for Rohingya community staying in India and country's economic and national security interests.

- The apex court unlined that both executive and judiciary cannot be totally oblivious to condition of women and children among Rohingya refugees and said that crisis has thrown up an extraordinary situation.
- With this, the status quo held by Government continues even though the court gave the community liberty to approach it in case of any contingency.
- UN has often described Rohingyas as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world.

World's largest combustion research centre inaugurated at IIT Madras

National Centre for Combustion Research and Development (NCCRD) was inaugurated at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras in Tamil Nadu.

It is world's largest combustion research centre and one of best diagnostic centres in the country to understand combustion.

- NCCRD is supported by state-run Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) of Department of Science and Technology (DST), Ministry of Science and Technology.
- It has been established at a total cost of Rs 90 crore. It will develop state-of-the-art capabilities in combustion research involving experts in the country.
- NCCRD's research interests will cover automotive, thermal power and aerospace propulsion, besides fire research and microgravity combustion to minor extent. It will provide impetus to research in 'Alternative Energy and Environmental Protection' by focusing on effective utilisation of combustion as means of thermo-chemical energy conversion.
- NCCRD has been set up as nodal centre in region and any institute and industry can work with it as it is totally IT-enabled and possess a strong simulation facility.

Haryana's Amin village renamed Abhimanyupur

On October 13, 2017, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar gave approval to rename Amin village in Kurukshetra district to Abhimanyupur.

- Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna, was a warrior prince in Mahabharata.
- Amin village is believed by the locals as the site on which Kauravas had resorted to 'Chakravyuh' formation as a part of war strategy.
- Abhimanyupur would be included in the second phase of Krishna Circuit under Central Government's Swadesh Darshan Scheme.
- Mr. Khattar also instructed Kurukshetra Development Board to install a grand statue of Abhimanyu fighting in the battle.
- These measures were announced as a part of Haryana Government's efforts to promote an organised tourism circuit in the ancient region of Kurukshetra comprising Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Karnal and Panipat districts.

Union Bank launches Union Sahyog app

On 13th October 2017, Union Bank of India launched an Android app named, 'Union Sahyog', as a part of its efforts to digitise customer-facing banking services.

- This App is bilingual, offered in both English and Hindi.
- The Union Sahyog App consists of: all mobile-based banking applications, missed call/SMS-based services, Internet banking login and self-user creation, deposit and loan product information, online account opening, online loan application, online

complaints, RTI (Right To Information), branch locator, EMI calculator, social media links and digital banking information.

- Union Sahyog is currently available for download on the Google Play Store. An iOS version is in development process.

Mitra Shakti 2017: India-Sri Lanka Joint Military Exercise held in Pune

On 13th – 25th October 2017, Mitra Shakti 2017, a joint exercise between India and Sri Lanka for military co-operation and interoperability, is conducted at the Aundh Military Camp, in Pune. Mitra Shakti 2017.

- The Mitra Shakti training exercises started in India's response to China's growing influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region.
- Its aim is to exchange the best military practices of the two countries and build a strong military-to-military relation between the two armies and develop joint strategies mainly in the counter-insurgency and counter terrorism (CI and CT) environment.
- The training module includes weapons training, basic military tactics and complex battle strategies.

NITI Aayog working with states for agri market reforms

On 13th October 2017, NITI Aayog said that, it is working with states to adopt first set of agri market reforms, like contract farming, online spot and futures trading, encouraging private investment.

- Main emphasis is given on bringing marketing reforms to facilitate and encourage the private sector to invest in agri logistics, cold chains etc.
- In the first set of reforms, contract farming is to be promoted. Regarding this a model law has been framed both by NITI Aayog and the Agriculture Ministry.
- To promote derivative trading in farm commodities, the Finance Ministry has set up a panel. The NITI Aayog has also proposed discarding of the 'Essential Commodities Act' that is destabilising prices instead of keeping them stable.

48th Conference of Governors concludes at Rashtrapati Bhavan

48th Conference of Governors was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi from 12th and 13th October 13, 2017.

- During the Conference, Governors shared useful experiences about issues pertaining to cleanliness, environment, conservation of energy and cutting down of wasteful expenditure in their respective states.
- Sessions on 'Infrastructure for New India 2022', 'Public Services for New India 2022' and 'Higher Education in States and Skill Development' were also held during this two-day conference.
- Tradition of holding Conference of Governors dates back to 1949, when first such conference was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan. At that time it was presided over by the Governor General of India, C. Rajagopalachari.

West Bengal to set up Scheduled Caste advisory council

On October 13, 2017, West Bengal State Cabinet took a decision to set up its scheduled caste advisory council. As per West Bengal State Government, it is the first Indian state to have such council.

- The council will help state government in formulating policies as well as identify the loopholes in existing policy which is affecting the development of the schedule caste population in the state.
- The council will regularly interact with the different departments of state government and guide them on how to align their activities for development of schedule castes.

For dowry-linked cruelty, Supreme Court restores 'immediate arrest'

On October 13, 2017, three-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra disagreed with a recent judgment which diluted the rigour of Section 498A of Indian Penal Code (IPC) in dealing with dowry related complaints of cruelty.

- Section 498A of IPC warrants immediate arrest of a husband and his relatives in a dowry-linked complaint of cruelty.
- In July 2017, a bench of Justices Adarsh Kumar Goel and U U Lalit had cited data from the National Crime Records Bureau which indicated widespread misuse of Section 498A by women.
- As a part of decision in July 2017, the bench had ordered setting up of family welfare committees in every district which would examine whether the complaints received under Section 498A are genuine or not and arrests were to be made only on endorsement by the committee.
- However, Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Dipak Misra has maintained that abuse of Section 498A (by women) cannot be considered as a reason to curtail the ambit and scope of the section which has been enacted to protect women from cruelty in matrimonial homes.

Bureau of Indian Standards Act 2016 comes into effect

Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has brought into effect new Bureau of Indian standards (BIS) Act 2016 which was notified in March 2016. The Act replaced Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986.

- It aims to help in ease of doing business in country, enhance 'Make In India' campaign and ensure availability of quality products and services to the consumers.
- The BIS Act, 2016 establishes the BIS as the National Standards Body of India for the purpose of standardization, marking and certification of articles and processes. It has broadened BIS's ambit and allows central government to make it mandatory for certain notified goods, articles, processes, etc to carry the standard mark.

Odisha government department signs MOU with SBI

On 14th October 2017, the Odisha government's Directorate of Treasuries and Inspection signed a MoU with SBI, for integration of SBI e-Pay with cyber treasury.

- The MoU was signed by Bhabani Prasad Nanda, Director, Treasuries & Inspection, Odisha and Goutam Roy, DGM, SBI. This MoU is an initiative by the Odisha government to facilitate revenue collection from citizens through digital banking platform.
- The SBI e-Pay is the payment aggregator service wing of SBI. It facilitates on-line payment of government dues by the customers of any public or private sector banks.
- Any mode like debit card, credit card, mobile banking, net banking facility provided by approximately 42 partner banks can be used by the payers for paying dues. Also, facility of cash deposit at any branch of SBI in Odisha can be used.
- All revenue generating departments of Odisha can integrate with this Gateway through state treasuries. Right now, industries and revenue department have been integrated with this gateway.

IWAI raises Rs. 660 crore through Bonds

On October 13, 2017, Union Shipping Ministry stated that Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has raised Rs 660 crore through bonds.

- Funds raised through these bonds will be deployed as capital expenditure for development of National Waterways (NWs) under the National Waterway Act, 2016 during 2017-18.
- e-bidding for these bonds was held on Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) portal on October 11, 2017.

- The bonds carry a coupon rate of 7.47%. Interest will be paid on semi-annual basis.
- It is to be noted that the fund raised through these bonds is in addition to the budgetary support from the Government of India (GOI) and interest obligation on these bonds too shall be financed by GOI.

International Current Affairs

Indian Accent features in Asia's top 10 restaurants

On 13th October 2017, Indian Accent restaurant in New Delhi featured among the top 10 best restaurants in Asia Travellers' Choice in TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice awards 2017.

- Indian Accent has secured the second position among the top 10 restaurants in Asia in TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice awards 2017. Indian Accent is known for introducing innovative cuisine by involving Indian flavours with global ingredients and techniques.
- This year's awards recognise nearly 400 fine dining restaurants, including the top 25 in the world. It also had a dedicated lists for Asia, Europe, India, Canada, Mexico, Australia, South America, South Pacific, the UK and the US.
- Award winners were determined by the quantity and quality of reviews for restaurants around the world, gathered over a 12-month period. Globally, The Black Swan at Oldstead, UK was ranked number 1.

IMF favours three structural reforms in India

Kenneth Kang Deputy Director Asia Pacific Department of International Monetary Fund (IMF) has suggested three policy priorities for India in the area of structural reforms.

- Addressing the corporate and banking sector weaknesses: This is to be done by accelerating the resolution of non-performing loans, rebuilding the capital buffers for the public sector banks, and enhancing banks' debt recovery mechanisms.
- Continued fiscal consolidation through revenue measure: Mr. Kang is of the view that India should continue with the fiscal consolidation through revenue measures, as well as further reductions in subsidies.
- Improving the efficiency of labour and product markets: Strong momentum for structural reforms is to be maintained in addressing the infrastructure gaps, improving

the efficiency of labour and product markets as well as furthering agricultural reforms.

Awards & Recognition

Namita Gokhale bags Centenary National Award for Literature

Eminent writer Namita Gokhale has been nominated for the first Centenary National Award for Literature, for her outstanding literary contributions.

- The award has been conferred by the Asam Sahitya Sabha, which is regarded as one of the most prestigious literary bodies in India.
- This award has been instituted as part Asam Sahitya Sabha's centenary celebrations.
- Namita Gokhale is a writer, publisher, and festival director who has authored 16 works of fiction and non-fiction.
- Her debut novel was "Paro: Dreams of Passion," which was published in 1984.
- "A Himalayan Love Story," "The Book of Shadows" and "Things to Leave Behind" are her other memorable works.

Appointments & Resigns

France's Audrey Azoulay to be next UNESCO chief

On 13th October 2017, UNESCO's executive board voted to make former French government minister, Audrey Azoulay, the U.N. cultural agency, UNESCO's next chief.

- UNESCO board's selection of Audrey Azoulay as its chief, has been done a day after the United States announced its withdrawal from UNESCO because of its alleged anti-Israel bias.
- This selection would be confirmed by UNESCO's general assembly's next assembly in November 2017. Azoulay would succeed outgoing Director-General Irina Bokova of Bulgaria.
- Azoulay narrowly beat Qatar's Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kawari in the final 30-28 vote on 13th October 2017. She will be UNESCO's second female chief and its second French chief after Rene Maheu, UNESCO's director general from 1961-74.

Acquisitions & Mergers

IndusInd bank seals deal to buy Bharat Financial

On 14th October 2017, India's IndusInd Bank Ltd agreed an all-share deal to buy Micro-lender Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd.

- IndusInd Bank has sealed the deal for \$2.4 billion to buy Bharat Financial. This acquisition would boost IndusInd's presence in microfinance lending and rural banking.
- IndusInd will give Bharat Financial's shareholders 639 of its shares for every 1,000 shares they own in Bharat Financial.
- Deutsche Bank analysts had previously said that, the deal would help IndusInd become a dominant player in the microfinance industry and boost its earnings by 2019.
- Bharat Financial, a for-profit group that focuses on lending small sums to poorer women in rural areas, has 6.8 million borrowers. IndusInd is the sixth-largest Indian private sector bank by assets.
- Morgan Stanley and Arpwood Capital advised IndusInd Bank while Credit Suisse advised Bharat Financial on the deal.

Science & Technology

World's largest combustion research centre inaugurated at IIT Madras

National Centre for Combustion Research and Development (NCCRD), world's largest combustion research centre was inaugurated at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras on October 13, 2017.

- It has largest infrastructure facilities for any combustion research centre in an academic setting globally.
- Automotive, thermal power and aerospace propulsion will be the primary research areas at NCCRD. Fire research and microgravity combustion are also the areas of research interest, but to a minor extent.

- NCCRD has been established at a total cost of Rs 90 crore and is expected to provide a boost to research in 'Alternative Energy and Environmental Protection' by focusing on effective utilisation of combustion as a means of thermo-chemical energy conversion.

Sports

ICC approves South Africa-Zimbabwe 4 day test on trial basis

On 13th October 2017, The International Cricket Council (ICC) approved four-day Tests on a trial basis between South Africa and Zimbabwe from 26-29 December, 2017.

- ICC Chief Executive David Richardson made the announcement after an ICC meeting in Auckland, New Zealand. He stated that, members are free to organise bilateral four-day matches as an experiment till the 2019 World Cup.
- The ICC Board also approved a revised draft of Player Eligibility Regulations which will come into effect soon.
- Eligibility on the basis of nationality (residency) has changed to the player needing to reside in country for a three-year period in both the men's and women's games.

Books & Authors

An Insignificant Man: Movie on Arvind Kejriwal

A documentary on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, titled 'An Insignificant Man', is to be released on 17th November 2017 in theatres.

- Vice Media is presenting the movie 'An Insignificant Man'. It was produced by Memesys Lab. It was directed by Khushboo Ranka and Vina Shukla.
- An Insignificant Man, is a non-fiction political thriller that portrays the rise of Arvind Kejriwal from a social activist to the Chief Minister of Delhi.
- The film will be shown in over 22 countries in theatres and on television and digitally. The film is 95 minutes long. It has been cut and edited from 400 hours of real, behind-the-scenes footage shot through a year.

Obituary

Historian Satish Chandra passes away at 95

On 13th October 2017, Veteran historian of medieval India and noted educational administrator, Satish Chandra passed away, in New Delhi.

- Professor Satish Chandra was the author of the NCERT's Medieval India textbook that was in circulation in the 1970s till the early 2000s. It was considered as the most comprehensive textbook of that period. It was a two volume book loaded with information.
- His Medieval India book was a highly appreciated reference book on history. His specialty was his comprehensive writing.
- He was Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) from 1976 to 1981, and Vice-Chairman of UGC from 1973 to 1976.

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