

National Current Affairs

IIP rises to 9-month high of 4.3% in August 2017

According to data released by Central Statistics Office (CSO), factory output measured in terms of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) has grown nine-month high to 4.3% in August.

- The manufacturing sector output grew 3.1% in August 2017, mining sector output surged 9.4% and electricity generation increased 8.3%. Production of capital good rose 5.4% in August 2017. Consumer durables output increased 1.6% and consumer non-durables output rose 6.9% in August 2017.
- The IIP is composite indicator that measures short-term changes in volume of production of basket of industrial products during given period with respect to chosen base period.
- It is compiled and published monthly by Central Statistical Organization (CSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- The CSO had revised base year of IIP from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in May 2017 to capture structural changes in economy and improve quality and representativeness of indices.

Kolkata to host international puppet festival

From 26th – 31st October 2017, Kolkata is to host an international Puppet festival named 'PUN (Puppets Unite Neighbours) International Puppet Festival' at Mohorkunj, Kolkata.

- The festival will be conducted for 6 days.
- Artists from the UK, Germany, Peru, Portugal, Italy, Lithuania, Brazil, Singapore and India would participate in the festival.
- This is the first time Kolkata would host such a festival. The puppet festival is aimed at regenerating the emotions attached to puppetry.
- This event is organized by RGV Events and Gems Akademia. They have been carrying out the preparations since 6 months for this festival.

Committee formed to commemorate Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary

On 12th October 2017, the Ministry of Culture announced that, a government committee has been formed to coordinate year-long celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary from 2nd October, 2019.

- The government committee will be headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The committee includes the chief ministers of all the states, representatives from political sector, Gandhians, thinkers, and important persons from different fields.
- The Committee will guide and approve policies, programmes, activities for the celebrations. It will also supervise implementation of the decisions taken by the committee.
- The event would be celebrated at both national and international levels. The focus would be, to propagate the message of Mahatma Gandhi.

Government launches Sampoorna Bima Gram Yojana

The Union Government has launched Sampoorna Bima Gram (SBG) Yojana and expanded coverage of Postal Life Insurance (PLI) in a bid to provide affordable life insurance services to people particularly those living in rural areas.

- Under SBG Yojana, at least one village (having a minimum of 100 households) will be identified in each of revenue districts of country to cover all households of identified village with minimum of one RPLI (Rural Postal Life Insurance) policy each.
- Coverage of all households in identified Sampoorna Bima Gram village is primary objective of this scheme.
- Benefits of PLI will no more be confined to government and semi-government employees only, but will also be available to professionals such as doctors, engineers, management consultants, chartered accountants, architects, lawyers, bankers etc. and to employees of listed companies of NSE (National Stock Exchange) and BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange).
- It will enlarge cover of social security and bring maximum number of people under protection of PLI.

Union Textiles Minister inaugurates world's largest B2B handicraft & gifts fair

On October 12, 2017, Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani inaugurated the 44th edition of Indian Handicrafts and Gift Fair (IHGF) 2017 at India Expo Centre and Mart in Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

- The exhibition started on October 12, 2017 and will continue till October 16, 2017.
- Nearly 2980 exhibitors will be showcasing their products and buyers from around 100 countries including China, Australia, the US and the UK are expected to visit this exhibition.
- It is to be noted that IHGF-Delhi Fair has been recognised by Limca Book of World Records as world's largest congregation of handicrafts exhibitors under one roof.

Dilli seminar on India & southeast Asia maritime trade begins in Kerala

The annual Dilli seminar on 'India and Southeast Asia – Maritime Trade, Expedition and Civilisation Linkages' began on October 13, 2017 at the Indian Naval Academy (INA) in Kerala.

- Delegation of serving senior naval and coast guard officers, academicians, representatives from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and cadets of INA are taking part in this two-day seminar.
- Five papers, providing a detailed insight on the multifaceted impact of historic maritime trade that existed between India and Southeast Asian countries were presented on the inaugural day.

Himachal Pradesh to go to polls on 9th November in single phase

On 12th October 2017, the Election Commission announced that, Assembly elections in Himachal Pradesh will be held in a single phase on 9th November 2017 and the results will be declared on 18th December 2017.

- After the announcement of the election schedule, the model code of conduct for Himachal Pradesh came into force immediately. It will be applicable for all the political parties and the State and the Central governments on decisions related to the State.
- Himachal Pradesh will be the second state after Goa with 100 % VVPAT (Voter-verified paper audit trail) coverage. The paper trail machines will be deployed along with EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) in all the 7,521 polling stations.
- For the first time ever, the Election Commission will set up 136 all-woman managed polling booths in Himachal Pradesh, with each constituency having two women.

Meet of physiologists, pharmacologists – APPICON 2017

On 12th – 14th October 2017, APPICON 2017, the 63rd Annual National Conference of Association of Physiologists and Pharmacologists of India, was held at Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), in Puducherry.

- The APPICON 2017 was hosted by the Department of Physiology, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER).
- Chief Minister of Puducherry V.Narayanasamy inaugurated the event and released a souvenir. He presented the APPI awards under various categories.

- Theme of APPICON 2017 was 'Physiology beyond Academics in the Era of Translational Research'. Various conferences were conducted related to physiology and pharmacology.

International Current Affairs

Five Telangana students selected for NASA rover challenge

Five students from SR Engineering College in Warangal, Telangana have been selected to take part in the 5th annual NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge. The challenge has been scheduled to be held in April 2018 in the US.

- For selection in the final challenge, these student had to submit a moon buggy design report that make their buggy work on the surface of moon, ensuring the safety of its passengers.
- The five students are P Paul Vineeth, Prakash Raineni, P Sravan Rao, R Dilip Reddy and V Sneha. At the final challenge in April 2018, the team will be led by their faculty Manoj Chaudhary.
- Students from 23 countries will participate in the final challenge for which they will have to design and create rovers capable of traversing a challenging expolanetary-like landscape.

The Economist Intelligence Unit announces the Safe Cities Index 2017 – Tokyo 1st, Delhi ranked 43rd

Japan's capital Tokyo has topped Economist Intelligence Unit's Safe Cities Index 2017 of 60 cities. Indian cities Delhi and Mumbai have ranked 43rd and 45th respectively

Top 3 Cities -Tokyo, Japan; Singapore; and Osaka, Japan.

G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) Meeting held in Washington D.C

On 13th October 2017, the G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) Meeting was held in Washington D.C., US, in which Finance Minister Arun Jaitley participated.

- The discussion focused on the agenda items like Global Economy and Framework for Growth, Compact with Africa and International Financial Architecture.

- As co-chairs of G20 Framework Working Group (FWG), India took the lead during the Second Round of the Session on ‘Global Economy and Framework for Growth’, which discussed the IMF’s G-20 Report on ‘Strong, Sustainable, and Balanced Growth (SSBG)’.

US and Israel withdraw from UNESCO

On 12th October 2017, US quit from the UN’s cultural agency UNESCO, after US accusing UNESCO of “anti-Israeli bias”.

- Following US, Israel has also quit from UNESCO.
- The withdrawal of the US, which is supposed to provide one fifth of UNESCO’s funding, is a great blow for UNESCO. As per UNESCO rules, the US and Israel withdrawal will become effective at the end of December 2018.
- US had already withheld its funding for UNESCO since 2011, when the body admitted Palestine as a full member. The US and Israel were among just 14 of 194 members that voted against admitting the Palestinians.

Hamas, Fatah sign deal on Palestinian reconciliation

On 12th October 2017, Palestinian political parties Hamas and Fatah signed a reconciliation deal in, Cairo, Egypt.

- Reconciliation deal between Hamas and Fatah has been signed in an effort to end a decade-long rift. Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority (PA) assembled in Cairo to implement a unity agreement that was signed in 2011, but not put into action.
- Head of the PA delegation Azzam al-Ahmad said that, the two sides agreed that the Rafah border crossing between Egypt and Gaza would be operated by the presidential guards of PA President Mahmoud Abbas by 1st November 2017.
- The agreement states that legislative, presidential and national council elections should be conducted within one year of its signing. Details of the reconciliation deal have not yet been made public.

India rules out joining NPT as non-nuclear weapon state

On October 13, 2017, Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, Amandeep Singh Gill told the UN General Assembly that there is no possibility of India joining Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as non-nuclear weapon state.

- As per NPT, those countries that have built and tested a nuclear explosive device before January 1, 1967 have been defined as nuclear-weapon states, whereas those

countries which agree never to acquire nuclear weapons and in return get the benefits of peaceful use of nuclear technology from nuclear-weapon states are referred to as non-nuclear weapon states.

- Although India has ruled out the possibility of joining NPT as non-nuclear weapon state, it has reiterated its commitment to a unilateral voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing.
- In context of use of nuclear weapons, India advocates maintaining a credible minimum deterrence based on a No-First Use policy. India has also committed to not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.

Banking & Finance

RBI Introduces Strict KYC Norms to Keep E-Wallets Safe

Through its latest set of guidelines for E-Wallets, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced strict know your customer (KYC) norms which has evoked mixed response from digital wallet companies.

- E-Wallet firms have been instructed to ensure KYC compliance of existing users by December 31, 2017.
- Users who do not have stipulated KYC in place, will be allowed to keep only up to Rs 10,000 in wallets post the deadline. No credit facility will be provided to such users, if KYC is not completed within next 12 months.

HDFC Bank launches SmartUp zones to nurture, collaborate with start-ups

In a bid to become preferred banker for the start-up community in India, HDFC Bank has announced the launch of SmartUp zones in its branches across India.

- An exclusive area inside the branch premises of HDFC Bank (to be referred as SmartUp Zones) will be dedicated to start-ups.
- Specially trained HDFC bank staff will be present in these Smartup Zones, who will offer tailor-made banking and advisory solutions to entrepreneurs.
- To start with, SmartUp zones will be launched in over 65 HDFC Bank branches in 30 cities including Tier-2 and-3 cities that are emerging as start-up hubs.
- In the context of this news, it is important to know that HDFC Bank has added a number of value-added services like SmartUp portal, advanced legal advisories, and industry-academia interaction, among others to its existing product called 'SmartUp' which was launched in 2016.

Business

Hyperloop One rebrands itself as 'Virgin Hyperloop One'

On 12th October 2017, Hyperloop One has announced to rebrand itself as 'Virgin Hyperloop One' after Richard Branson's Virgin Group invested in the firm.

- The Virgin investment group has taken an undisclosed stake in Hyperloop One. Hyperloop One is a company trying to create a pod-based transport system. Its pods use electromagnetic propulsion and magnetic levitation to travel in near-vacuum tubes.
- In August 2017, it achieved a record speed of 309 kmph.
- Virgin's founder, Sir Richard Branson, is joining Hyperloop's board as part of a deal, and Hyperloop is rebranding itself as Virgin Hyperloop One.

HPCL becomes first Indian oil company to trade lubricants in Myanmar

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), a public sector oil company has started selling lubricants in Myanmar.

- HPCL has started operations in Myanmar's commercial hubs of Yangon and Mandalay.
- Post lifting of international sanctions on Myanmar, there has been a rapid surge in consumption of fuel and its government is exploring options to tie up with foreign companies for catering to fuel and infrastructure requirements.
- Other public sector oil companies of India such as Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. (BPCL) and Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) are evaluating opportunities of fuel retailing in Myanmar.

Awards & Recognition

M K Sanu chosen for Mathrubhumi Literary Award

On 12th October 2017, Mathrubhumi Managing Director M P Veerendra Kumar announced that, famous critic, biographer and orator M K Sanu has been chosen for the Mathrubhumi Literary Award for 2016.

- M K Sanu has been chosen for the Mathrubhumi Literary Award for 2016 to honour his contribution to the Malayalam literature.
- ii. The award consists of a cash prize of Rs.2 lakh, a citation and a statuette. A jury headed by eminent poet Vishnu Narayanan Namboothiri has selected Sanu for the award.
- Sanu is a recipient of several awards including the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award, Vayalar Award, Padmaprabha Award, Kendra Sahitya Adademi Award and Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award.
- His important works are “Changampuzha Krishnapilla”, “Nakshtrangalude Snehabhajanam”, “Narayanaguru Swami”, “Mruthyunjayam” “Kavyajeevitham”, “Viswasathilek Veendum American Sahityam” and “Prabhatha Darshanam”. M K Sanu chosen for Mathrubhumi Literary Award.

Appointments & Resigns

Samsung CEO Kwon Oh-hyun resigns

On 13th October 2017, Samsung Electronics Co Ltd announced that, its Vice Chairman and CEO, Oh-Hyun Kwon, had decided to step down from management.

- Kwon Oh-hyun announced his resignation after Samsung announced its expected record operating profits of about 14.5 trillion Korean won (\$12.8 billion) for the quarter ending in September 2017.
- The company has said that, Kwon will not opt for re-election to the Samsung's board, once his current term ends in March, 2018. He will also resign as CEO of Samsung Display, a position he held since 2016.
- Kwon told Samsung employees in a letter that, the time was right for him to step down, and that it was in the best interest of the company. He joined Samsung in 1985 as a researcher and was made CEO in 2012.

Rukaiya Rangwala appointed as head of MobiKwik Payment Gateway

On 13th October 2017, MobiKwik, mobile wallet service and payment gateway provider, announced the appointment of Rukaiya Rangwala as the Business Head of 'MobiKwik Payment Gateway'.

- Rukaiya Rangwala would lead the Payment Gateway business of MobiKwik.
- Rukaiya has 15 years of experience in the technology and e-commerce industry. Prior to joining MobiKwik, she spent two years working on entrepreneurial ventures.

- She has worked with Rocket Internet and helped to establish the Rocket Internet's services in India.
- She was also responsible for the Marketplace division at Jabong. She helped to make it the fastest growing and most profitable division at Jabong.

Bambawale appointed as next Indian ambassador to China

On 12th October 2017, India's High Commissioner to Pakistan, Gautam H. Bambawale was appointed as next ambassador to People's Republic of China.

- Gautam H. Bambawale is presently the High Commissioner of India to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
- Bambawale will replace Vijay Gokhale in China as ambassador. He would take up the assignment shortly.

Science & Technology

INS Satpura, Kadmatt to participate in PASSEX with Japan

Indian Naval Ships Satpura and Kadmatt are visiting Sasebo, Japan from 12th to 15th October 2017. The visit of these ships is in line with India's Act East Policy and reiterating of India's commitment to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific Region.

- During this visit, INS Satpura and INS Kadmatt will engage with Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) in formal calls, as well as social and sporting interactions.
- The two Indian naval ships will also take part in Passage Exercise (PASSEX) with the Murusame Class destroyer, JS Kirisame.

Experimental Ebola vaccines found safe & effective in human trial

- On 12th October 2017, two experimental vaccines against the Ebola virus proved safe and efficient to produce an immune response that would last for at least one year, through a clinical trial in Liberia.
- The results of the clinical trial were, published in the New England Journal of Medicine. They are based on a study of 1,500 adults, that began during the West Africa Ebola outbreak.

- The trial included men and women aged 18 and older with no reported history of Ebola virus disease at Redemption Hospital in Monrovia, Liberia. Three groups of 500 volunteers received one of the vaccine candidates or a placebo (saline injection).
- Participants provided blood samples before vaccination and again at one week, one month, six months and one year post-vaccination.
- Investigators then tested each of these samples for antibodies to the Ebola virus. By one month, 71 % of cAd3-EBOZ recipients and 84 % of rVSV-ZEBOV recipients developed an antibody response compared to 3 % of placebo recipients.
- At one year, antibody responses were largely maintained in both groups: 64 % of cAd3-EBOZ recipients and 80 % of rVSV-ZEBOV recipients had an antibody response compared to 7 % of placebo recipients.

Indian Air Force launched mobile health App 'MedWatch'

On 12th October 2017, the Indian Air Force (IAF) launched an innovative mobile health App named 'MedWatch' on the occasion of its 85th anniversary.

- The concept and content of the App were developed by the Directorate General of Medical Services (Air). It was developed in-house without any financial support by the Directorate of Information Technology (DIT).
- 'MedWatch' is available on the IAF's AFCEL (Air Force Cellular) network. It consists of features that will provide authentic health information to all IAF personnel.
- A Reminder Tool to enable timely immunization for the children of all Air Warriors is incorporated in the App. This will directly enable 'Mission Indradhanush' of the Government of India.

Sports

Staubli to become first female referee to officiate at U-17 World Cup

Switzerland's Esther Staubli is set to become the first female football referee to officiate a match at the FIFA U-17 World Cup when Japan takes on New Caledonia in the final round group E match on October 14, 2017 at Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata.

- 38-year-old Esther Staubli has been on the FIFA International Referees List since 2006.
- She is one of seven women referees invited by FIFA's Referees Committee to U-17 World Cup tournament in India.

- This decision of inviting female referees is a part of education programme that FIFA's Refereeing Department started in 2016. It will also help to develop and promote women's football.
- Moreover, it will give an opportunity to women referees to gain more experience and enhance their preparation for the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2019.

Test championship & ODI league approved by International Cricket Council

On Oct.13 2017, International Cricket Council approved to conduct Test championship and one-day international league.

- Nine teams will be participated and will play six series of Test matches over a two-year period .This will be three series at home and three series away in a world Test championship final.
- The ODI league will be conducted with 13- team , contested by the 12 Full Members plus the winners of the current ICC World Cricket League Championship.
- It will be used to qualify for the ICC Cricket World Cup and this expected to start from 2021 after the World Cup in 2019.

Important Days

International Day for Disaster Reduction – October 13

The International Day for Disaster Reduction was observed on 13th October 2017 all over the world.

- The International Day for Disaster Reduction was started in 1989. The United Nations General Assembly decided to declare a day to promote a global culture of risk-awareness and disaster reduction.
- This day celebrates how people and communities around the world are reducing their exposure to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of preventing the risks they face.
- 'Home Safe Home: Reducing Exposure, Reducing Displacement' is the slogan for International Day for Disaster Reduction 2017.
- The 2017 campaign aims to raise global awareness about effective actions, policies and practices taken to reduce exposure to disaster risk at the community level, to save homes and livelihoods.