

# National Current Affairs

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## **India tops list of pollution-linked deaths: Study**

According to new study published in medical journal The Lancet, India has topped list of countries with pollution-related deaths in 2015.

- In India, 2.51 million people died prematurely in 2015 due to diseases linked to air, water and other forms of pollution.
- Of the 2.51 million deaths in India, 1.81 million were related to air pollution, 0.64 million to water pollution, 0.17 million to occupational exposure and 95,000 linked to lead pollution.
- Globally, air pollution was biggest contributor linked to 6.5 million deaths in 2015, ahead of water pollution (1.8 million) and workplace-related pollution (0.8 million).
- Most of the pollution-related deaths — 92%— were reported in low and middle income countries, and in rapidly industrialising nations such as India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Madagascar and Kenya.
- China, with 1.8 million pollution-linked deaths in 2015, followed India. Most of these deaths were due to non-communicable diseases caused by pollution, such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- India accounted for about 28% of an estimated 9 million pollution-linked deaths worldwide in 2015 and topped list of deaths linked to polluted air (1.81 million) and water (0.64 million).
- China (1.58 million) was placed after India in deaths linked to air-pollution, followed by Pakistan (0.22 million), Bangladesh (0.21 million) and Russia (0.14 million). In deaths linked to water pollution, Nigeria (0.16 million) and Pakistan (74,000) were placed after India.

## **India among five countries responsible for 50% newborn deaths**

As per a report titled “Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2017”, India along with Pakistan, Nigeria, Congo and Ethiopia is responsible for half of all new-born deaths in the world.

- This report, "Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2017" has been authored by United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank Group and United Nations revealed that 5.6 million children died before reaching the age of five in 2016.
- While India was accountable for 24 per cent of these new-born deaths, Pakistan accounted for 10 per cent, Nigeria 9 per cent, the Democratic Republic of Congo 4 per cent and 3 per cent of the deaths occurred in Ethiopia.

- Estimates of under-five, infant and neonatal mortality have been presented in this report. Besides, progress at the country, regional and global levels has also been assessed.

### **NHAI to get power to speed up Bharatmala programme**

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will soon get powers to approve highway projects with construction cost of more than Rs 1,000 crore to ensure faster implementation of Bharatmala programme.

- The programme, along with the proposal to enhance powers of NHAI will soon get Cabinet clearance soon.
- Currently, all highway projects entailing construction cost more than Rs 1,000 crore, excluding land is approved by Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).
- Under the new proposal, only public private partnership (PPP) projects under build-operate-transfer (BOT) model, where viability gap funding (VGF) is to be provided by government, will need CCEA clearance.
- It will allow NHAI board to approve all engineering procurement and construction and hybrid annuity projects.
- Bharatmala envisions 44 economic corridors across country at cost of at least Rs 5 lakh crore. It is aimed at speeding up cargo movement and development of multimodal logistics hubs and parks on periphery of major commercial centres.
- The project involves constructing 24,000km of fresh highways. It also includes construction of feeder routes alongside national highways. The Bharatmala corridors have been mapped as per traffic density and economic relevance of cities that will be connected with help of Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics.

### **Dharmendra Pradhan launches Odisha's first PNG supply in Bhubaneswar**

On October 19, 2017, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Dharmendra Pradhan inaugurated Odisha's first PNG (Piped Natural Gas) project in Bhubaneswar.

- This PNG supply project is a part of 'Pradhan Mantri Urja Ganga' pipeline project.
- It has been inaugurated almost six months ahead of its deadline of March 2018.
- Post this inauguration, PNG supply to 255 houses in Nalco Nagar of Bhubaneswar has been commenced under the first phase of this project.
- The target of the project is to provide one crore PNG connections in the state by 2020, of which, Ministry expects to cover a major portion of the city by the end of year 2019.

### **Gujarati New Year 2017**

On 20th October 2017, the Gujarati New Year was celebrated by the Gujaratis.

- The Gujaratis celebrate their New Year a day after Diwali. The Gujarati New year is also called Bestu Varas. It is celebrated on the first day of the Kartik month in the Shukla Paksha.
- The Gujarati New Year or Bestu Varas is also called Varsha-pratipada or Padwa.
- The most important work of the day was the beginning of the new accounting books for businesspersons.
- They pray to Goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of Wealth) and Lord Ganesha (God of prosperity and well-being) for divine blessings. This puja is called Chopda Puja. Chopda in Gujarati means accounting books.

### **Government to organise Global Ayurveda meet in Kochi**

Health Minister KK Shailaja told that, the State government will organise a four days international seminar and Global Ayurveda meet in Kochi on February 2018 .

- This meet includes seminars, road shows, awareness campaigns, free health camps for women and children.
- The main focus of this seminar will be showcasing Kerala's achievements in health tourism, healthcare and ayurveda.

### **NRCB signs agreement with Andhra Pradesh government**

National Research Centre for Banana (NRCB) has signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Andhra Pradesh State Government to develop technologies relating to banana production.

- MoC was signed between Andhra Pradesh's Industries and Commerce Department Secretary M.Girija Shankar and NRCB Director S. Uma in presence of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.
- As per the terms of MoC, NRCB will serve as a 'knowledge partner' to Andhra Pradesh State Government in developing technologies towards value chain management, supporting banana export, organic production and waste utilisation.
- NRCB will also provide necessary training and will support growers and entrepreneurs in initial phase to promote indigenous and commercial varieties of banana for domestic and export markets.

### **Punjab CM restores special family pension for widows of govt employees killed by terrorists**

On October 19, 2017, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh restored the Special Family Pension for widows of government employees killed by extremists.

- The scheme was revoked in 2016 by the erstwhile Shiromani Akali Dal Government.
- Restoring this scheme was one of the pre-poll promises made by Captain Amarinder Singh before the February 2017 State elections.
- Captain Amrinder has not only restored the scheme but has also announced that pension under the scheme would be made available to the widow till her death. As per earlier provision of the scheme, widow was to be provided the pension only until her remarriage.
- Another noteworthy decision of Punjab Government has been to extend the Red Card scheme to families of police personnel killed during the militancy period. Till now, Red Cards were issued only to civilian victims of terrorism.

### **Section 247 of the Companies Act 2013, related to Valuation by Registered Valuers comes into force**

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has issued a notification on commencement of Section 247 of the Companies Act, 2013 (Valuation by Registered Valuers) with effect from 18th October, 2017. Section 247 of the Companies Act 2013

- The Rules, provide regulations for Registration of Valuers, and to conduct valuation, under the Companies Act, 2013.
- Individuals, partnership entities and companies can act as valuers under the Companies Act after getting registered with an authority specified by the government.
- The Registered Valuers are also required to be members of the Registered Valuers Organisations (RVOs). The eligibility norms for RVOs have also been provided in the Rules.
- The Rules specify the mechanism to prescribe valuation standards, syllabus for conduct of valuation education courses and requirements related to the contents of the valuation report.
- Entities that are already carrying out valuation activities, have time till 31st March, 2018 to get registered with the specified authority.
- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has been proposed to be the authority with respect to registration, recognition and other matters related to valuers.

### **Kerala govt prohibits using 'Dalit', 'Harijan' in official communications**

As per an internal circular of Kerala Information and Public Relations Department, words 'Dalit' and 'Harijan' will not be used in its official communications.

- This circular is based on the directive from Kerala State Commission for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) Chairman Justice PN Vijayakumar.
- This directive has been issued to curb the growing influence of casteism in the state.
- It is believed that usage of words 'Dalit' and 'Harijan' promotes discrimination for the lower castes.
- Usage of word 'Keezhalar' has also been banned. 'Keezhalar' refers to scheduled communities.
- During british rule, prior to 1935, the term Dalit was used as a translation for depressed classes in Census classification.

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## International Current Affairs

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### **India, Brazil, South Africa sign IBSA Trust Fund agreement...**

India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) have signed the IBSA Trust Fund Agreement that seeks to fight poverty in developing countries.

- It was signed at the 8th IBSA trilateral Ministerial Commission Meeting in Durban, South Africa.
- IBSA Trust Fund brings together the three emerging economies of India, Brazil and South Africa to combat poverty in other developing countries.
- Each country will contribute US \$1 million annually to this fund which is managed by the UN Development Programme's (UNDP) Special Unit for South-South Cooperation.
- The IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Dialogue Forum is an international tripartite grouping for promoting international cooperation among these countries. It was launched in June 2003.
- It brings together three large democracies and major economies from three different continents namely, Africa, Asia and South America that represents three important poles for galvanizing South-South cooperation.

### **INDRA 2017: First tri-services military exercise between India-Russia begins**

The first tri-service armed Forces (Army, Navy, & Air Force) exercise INDRA 2017 between India and Russia began at the 249th Combined Army Range Sergeevskiy and in Sea of Japan near Vladivostok.

- It is overall 10th edition of INDRA exercise and India's first bilateral military exercise with any country involving all three services.
- The scope of 11-day exercise includes professional interactions, establishment of joint command and control structures between Indian and Russian forces and elimination of terrorist threat in multinational environment under UN mandate.
- The Indian contingent comprises 350 personnel from Army, 80 from Air Force, two IL 76 aircraft and one frigate and corvette each from the Navy. Russia is represented by approximately 1000 troops of 5th Army, marines and ships of Pacific Fleet and aircraft from Eastern Military District.
- Exercise INDRA in its previous nine avatars was conducted as single service exercise alternately between two countries. For India, the major emphasis during exercise is to enhance inter-service cooperation and synergizing jointness.

### **Lebanon's parliament approves country's first budget since 2005**

On October 19, 2017, Lebanon's parliament approved country's first budget in 12 years.

- This budget is aimed towards reforming the fragile economy and preventing rising debt from becoming a crisis-like situation. Political crisis gripped Lebanon since assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri in 2005, thereby preventing successive government from passing the budget.
- Politicians had blocked the current budget as well as previous budgets as they wanted to carry out an audit of extra-budgetary spending from previous years.
- However, Lebanese Parliament approved a law allowing the budget to be passed before such an audit is completed. The law also gave one year time to Finance Minister to carry out the audit.
- This year's budget was considered a necessity to bring the Lebanese economy on track which has been negatively affected by inaction of previous Governments and also by six years of war in neighbouring Syria.

### **World's first floating wind farm in Scotland starts generating electricity**

World's first floating wind farm located over 15 miles off the coast of Peterhead, Aberdeenshire in Scotland has started generating electricity.

- Work of setting up this wind farm started in July 2017. The turbines used in this wind farm have been towed all the way from Norway by Norwegian multinational company named Statoil which has developed this wind farm.

- The farm consists five 6MW turbines. It is expected that this floating wind farm will generate 135GWh of electricity each year.
- In floating wind farms, turbines are installed in much deeper waters than conventional offshore wind farms.
- This is done by mounting the turbines on top of a ballasted steel cylinder that is anchored to the sea floor using three anchored mooring lines.

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## Business

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### **Nasscom to set up centres of excellence to better learn AI**

Software industry association National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) is setting up centres of excellence on artificial intelligence (AI) and data sciences for a better understanding on the emerging technologies.

- These centres of excellence are being set up in Bengaluru and Hyderabad.
- Work related to mapping the resources available in India for developing AI will be carried out at these centres.
- These centres will also promote AI-based start-ups and will enlist global best practices including regulatory aspects.
- In the current scenario, where the stalwarts of the technology industry are divided between whether or not to regulate AI, NASSCOM's President R Chandrasekhar has stated that technologies should first be allowed to mature freely before any regulations are imposed.

### **US starts antidumping probe against PTFE resin from India**

The US has initiated an antidumping duty investigations against the import of polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) resin from India and China, according to the US Department of Commerce.

- These investigations were started based on petitions filed by the Chemours Company on September 28.
- The U.S. Department of Commerce said had done the investigation into whether imports of Polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE) resin from India and China were being dumped on the U.S. market.
- The department said it was also initiating a countervailing duty (CVD) investigation to determine whether producers of PTFE resin in India are receiving unfair subsidies.

- The department has stated that the estimated dumping margins alleged by the petitioner ranges from 23.4 per cent- 408.9 per cent for China and 15.8 per cent to 128.1 per cent for India.
- In the antidumping investigations, it said the department would determine whether imports of the resin from China and India are being dumped in the American market at less than fair value.
- Anti-dumping measures are taken to ensure fair trade and provide a level-playing field to the domestic industry.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **Adesina Receives 2017 World Food Prize Laureate Award**

Dr. Akinwumi Ayodeji Adesina, the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), will be recognized as the 2017 World Food Prize Laureate.

- He was Nigeria's former Minister of Agriculture and rural development
- Through his roles over the past two decades with the Rockefeller Foundation, at the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), and as Minister of Agriculture of Nigeria, Dr. Adesina has been at the forefront of galvanizing political will to transform African agriculture through initiatives to: expand agricultural production, thwart corruption in the Nigerian fertilizer industry and exponentially increase the availability of credit for smallholder farmers across the African continent.
- The award event had participants from 50 countries in the world's agriculture community.
- The honour is being bestowed on Adesina for inspiring young people and promoting food security.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Ranjit Kumar resigns as Solicitor General of India**

On 20th October 2017, Ranjit Kumar resigned as the Solicitor General of India.



- Ranjit Kumar submitted his resignation to the law ministry. He has mentioned “personal reasons” as the factor behind his resignation. He stated that, he has resigned from his post to give more time to family members.
- He is considered as an expert on constitutional laws. He was appointed as Solicitor General of India in 2014. He has represented the Central government in many high-profile cases in the Supreme Court.
- Ranjit Kumar’s second term as the Solicitor General of India was renewed in June 2017. Prior to his appointment as Solicitor General of India, he had been a counsel for the Gujarat government.

### **Jacinda Ardern to become New Zealand Prime Minister**

New Zealand Labour Party’s leader Jacinda Ardern is set to become youngest-ever female Prime Minister of New Zealand.

- 37 year old Jacinda Ardern will become New Zealand’s third female prime minister (after Jenny Shipley and Helen Clark). She will also be the second-youngest Prime Minister of New Zealand after Edward Stafford.

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## **Science & Technology**

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### **Hemidactylus kangerensis: New species of large gecko discovered in Eastern Ghats**

Researchers have discovered new species of gecko at Chhattisgarh’s Kanger Ghati National Park in Eastern Ghats.

- Its common name is the Kanger valley rock gecko and scientific name is Hemidactylus kangerensis, named after the valley where it was discovered.
- Kanger valley rock gecko is fairly large and can grow to over eight inches long. It is also found in Jagdalpur and Sukma districts in Chhattisgarh and in Khamman in Telangana, which are part of Eastern Ghats.
- The discovery of new gecko species highlights need for dedicated surveys across Eastern Ghats, where biodiversity has not been quantified too well and need for protection from various anthropogenic pressures.

### **WhatsApp introduces live location sharing**

On 18th October 2017, WhatsApp rolled out the option to share “live location” for its users.

- The “live location” sharing feature of WhatsApp enables a user to let a contact or a group trace his/her location or movement on a map in real time for a defined window of time.
- This is different from the current “share location” feature which shares a static location. Like the static location, live location also will be visible only to the contacts or groups the user chooses to share it with.
- Other apps like Uber and Snapchat also offer location sharing feature. With Uber, the user can share trip status with a contact, which lets them track the cab’s movement in real time. Snapchat has a location-sharing feature called Snap Map.

### **World’s oldest warship “USS Constitution” sailing again**

The refurbished “USS Constitution” which is world’s oldest commissioned warship sailed again on October 20, 2017.

- This will be its first sail since October 2014.
- ‘USS Constitution’ was named by the first President of United States, George Washington.
- USS Constitution’s nickname is “Old Ironsides”. It got this nickname during the War of 1812 with Britain in which it captured numerous merchant ships and defeated five British warships.

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## **Environment**

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### **World’s Deepest Lake “Baikal” is in Deep Trouble**

Experts have said that, the world’s deepest lake, Siberia’s Lake Baikal, containing 22–23% of the world’s fresh surface water, is in deep trouble.

- One-fifth of all non-frozen fresh water in the world is located in a single Russian lake, Baikal. It is a UNESCO world heritage site.
- It is home to more than 3,600 species of plants and animals. It is the only source of the omul fish, a type of salmon fish.
- UNESCO has said that the ecosystem of the lake is under significant stress. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced the preservation of Baikal as a “government priority” in August 2017.
- Over the past 15 years, the count of omul fish in Lake Baikal has reduced to half. Also, Baikal is struggling to absorb human pollution and sewage.

### **New species of large gecko discovered from Eastern Ghats**

According to a paper published in the taxonomic journal Comptes Rendus Biologies, a team of scientists have discovered a new species of gecko (lizard) from the Eastern Ghats. New species of large gecko discovered from Eastern Ghats. More information about new species of Gecko:

- This new species of gecko is being referred to as Kanger valley rock gecko. Its scientific name is Hemidactylus kangerensis.
- It was discovered at Chhattisgarh's Kanger Ghati National Park by a team led by Zeeshan Mirza of the National Centre for Biological Sciences.
- Besides Kanger Ghati National Park, this species is also found in Jagdalpur and Sukma in Chhattisgarh and Khamman in Telangana. All these places are part of Eastern Ghats.
- The Kanger Valley rock gecko grows over eight inches long and has a distinct black-bordered beige bands right from its neck to the tip of the tail.

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## **Sports**

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### **South Africa displaces India from top of ODI rankings**

On 19th October 2017, India lost its number 1 status in ICC ODI rankings to South Africa, following South Africa's win over Bangladesh in an ODI match.

- According to the updated ICC ODI rankings, after South Africa's 104-run win over Bangladesh in the second ODI in Paarl, South Africa has occupied the number 1 rank in ODI. It has pushed India to the second place.
- India and South Africa have identical 120 points. India has been placed second on the basis of decimal points.
- India had secured the 1st rank in the ICC rankings following its 4-1 win over Australia recently.
- India has a chance to regain its top rank, as it is scheduled to play a three-match ODI series against New Zealand beginning on 22nd October 2017, in Mumbai.

### **Playboy features first transgender model as its playmate**

Men's magazine Playboy has featured its first ever transgender model as 'playmate' centerfold in its November 2017 issue.

- This has been done in a move to create way for all women including transgenders in fashion and other sectors.
- Ines Rau, a French fashion model has become the first transgender model to appear as a centerfold in the Playboy magazine's 64-year history.
- In March 2017, the French edition of Vogue magazine featured a transgender model for the first time on its cover. Rights groups celebrated the feature as a positive step.

### **Park Ji-Sung to be first South Korean to carry Olympic Games flame**

On 19th October 2017, the Greek Olympic committee announced that, Champions League winner Park Ji-sung will be the first South Korean to carry the flame for the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.

- Park Ji-Sung has won several titles with Manchester United and Eindhoven before retiring.
- He will be the second torchbearer in Olympia, after Greece's Nordic skier Apostolos Aggelis at the start of the Greek relay. The ceremony is on 24th October 2017.
- At the ceremony, a torch will be lit by the sun's rays using a parabolic mirror. It will start the countdown to the 2018 Winter Olympic Games.
- South Korean organisers will receive the flame in a handover ceremony in Athens on 31st October 2017. The flame will then travel to South Korea for the Games torch relay run across the country.

### **Mohit Dudeja, Kiran bag medals at World skills competition**

Indians Mohit Dudeja and Kiran bagged a silver and a bronze medal respectively at the World skills competition 2017 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

- World skills competition 2017 was held in Abu Dhabi. Over 1,300 candidates from 59 countries participated. Competitions were conducted in 51 skill categories.
- The results were announced in a closing ceremony on 18th October 2017. The Indian team consisting of 28 competitors won 2 medals and nine Medallions of Excellence in key skills.
- Mohit Dudeja won a silver for Patisserie and Confectionery and Kiran won a bronze for Prototype Modelling. Nine Medallions for Excellence were won in skills like mechatronics, brick-laying, restaurant service, automobile technology, jewellery, graphic design technology, mobile robotics, beauty therapy and car painting.

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## **Obituary**

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### **French film legend Danielle Darrieux dies aged 100**

On 19th October 2017, Danielle Darrieux, one of France's long time and glamorous film stars died, at the age of 100, at her home near Paris.

- Danielle Darrieux became unwell recently, after she had fell down. She died at her home in Bois-le-Roi, near Paris in France.
- Danielle Darrieux was born in Bordeaux in 1917. Her first movie was "Le Bal". She was only 14 years old at that time.
- She won a National Board of Review Best Actress prize for the movie Mayerling by Anatole Litvak in 1936. She became a huge international star in the 1930s, through the Hollywood romance "The Rage of Paris" in 1938.
- She has acted more than 140 movies and television dramas throughout her career. Darrieux was still working at 99 years.

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## **Important Days**

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### **World Statistics Day – October 20**

On 20th October 2017, World Statistics Day was observed all over the world.

- World Statistics Day was celebrated for the first time on 20th October 2010 throughout the world. The United Nations Statistical Commission declared 20th October as World Statistics Day.
- Around 103 countries celebrate a National Statistics Day, including 51 African countries that jointly celebrate African Statistics Day annually on 18 November.
- UN urged all Member States to organize related activities not only in cooperation with all institutes of the national statistical systems, but also with researchers, academia, media and other users of statistics on World Statistics Day.
- World Statistics Day highlights the importance of reliable and timely data for informed decision-making by governments and individuals.