

National Current Affairs

Five-member committee to select RSTV's next editor-in-chief

As per an order from Rajya Sabha secretariat, a five-member committee has been formed to select the candidate for the post of editor-in-chief of Rajya Sabha TV (RSTV).

- This committee is headed by Prasar Bharati Chairman A Surya Prakash.
- Rajya Sabha MP Swapan Dasgupta, Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati, Additional Secretary (Personnel) in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat P P K Ramacharyulu and journalist Rahul Srivastava are the other members of this search-cum-selection committee.
- The committee will invite applications for the post and will conduct interviews of suitable candidates. Based on the interviews, recommendation for final selection will be submitted to Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, the ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
- The post of RSTV's editor-in-chief felt vacant when Gurdeep Singh Sappal resigned after Hamid Ansari's term as vice-president came to an end in August 2017.

Rajasthan limits probes against public servants

Rajasthan State Government under Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje has passed Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 which seeks to protect serving judges, former judges, magistrates and public servants in Rajasthan from being investigated for on-duty action without Government's prior sanction.

- The ordinance also seeks to bar the media from reporting on accusations till the sanction to proceed with the probe is obtained.
- The ordinance provides 180 days immunity to the officers, during which no investigation could be ordered nor could any investigation be carried out against serving judges, former judges, magistrates and public servants in Rajasthan.
- No decision on request to sanction investigation till the end of immunity period would automatically mean that sanction has been granted.
- Violators of the clauses of this ordinance could face two years of imprisonment.

UP Government doubles ex-gratia amount for police officials

On October 21, 2017, Uttar Pradesh State Government under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced to double the ex-gratia amount for police officials martyred on duty.

- Post this announcement, the ex-gratia amount for Police officials martyred on duty stands, revised to Rs. 40 lakh from Rs. 20 lakh earlier.
- Mr. Adityanath also announced that number of medals awarded to police personnel in all the units of Uttar Pradesh's Police Department has been increased from 200 to 950.
- Uttar Pradesh State Government has given jobs to 400 families of deceased police officials.
- These measures are aimed to boost the morale of the police force which will in turn help in strengthening the law and order situation in the state.

Centre asks states to name toilets as 'izzat ghar' in rural areas

The Central Government has asked each state to name the toilets in their rural households as "izzat ghar", or to use a phrase in regional language equivalent to "house of dignity".

- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has asked the state government's principal secretaries, to name toilets in rural areas as "izzat ghar", after observing the name being used in many parts of Uttar Pradesh.
- Hindi-speaking areas may continue using the name "izzat ghar". Other regions could use a name in the local language with the same meaning as that of "house of dignity".
- With the aim of making India open defecation free by 2nd October 2019, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation is looking over the implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission in villages.

Dasna Jail to rename its dental clinic after Aarushi Talwar

As a gesture to acknowledge the Talwar couple's services, the Uttar Pradesh government has decided to rename the dental clinic at Dasna Jail in Ghaziabad after Aarushi Talwar, who was murdered at the age of 14 at her residence in 2008.

- The prison clinic was almost dysfunctional when the Talwar couple came in four years ago. But it became operational again after the couple were sent to jail.
- During their stay at the Dasna Jail, the Talwars treated hundreds of prisoners and several other prison employees at the dental clinic. Also, it is quite noteworthy that Rajesh Talwar has been recognised as a well-known dentist before the 2008 incident.
- However, things started improving with the dentist couple working on the inmates' health issues. While Rajesh Talwar used to treat male inmates, Nupur Talwar used to take care of the female inmates.
- The jail authorities also co-operated with the duo and procured necessary equipment to run the facility.

ACI ranks Hyderabad airport No. 1 in 5 to 15 million category

Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) has ranked No. 1 in the Airports Council International's (ACI) service quality survey in the category of 5 to 15 million passengers per annum.

- On a scale of 1 to 5, Hyderabad airport's score improved from 4.4 in 2009 to 4.9 in 2016.
- RGIA was opened in year 2008 and is operated by GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd. (GHIAL).
- A trophy for this accomplishment for the year 2016 was handed over to GHIAL CEO, S G K Kishore during the 27th ACI Africa/world annual general assembly at Port Louis in Mauritius on October 18, 2017.
- Mr. Kishore received the trophy from ACI's Director General Angela Gittens and CEO of Airports Company South Africa, Bongani Maseko.

International Current Affairs

Peru passes legislation to legalize medical marijuana

- On October 19, 2017, Peru's conservative Congress passed a bill to legalize medical uses of marijuana with 68-5 vote in favour.
- This legislation was proposed by Peru's President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski after police cracked down on a group of mothers making cannabis oil in a makeshift laboratory to treat their children suffering from epilepsy, a neurological disorder.
- In next 60 days, Peruvian lawmakers will finalise the regulations for producing and commercializing cannabis oil.
- It is to be noted that Peru's neighbouring countries, Chile and Colombia have already legalized marijuana for medical purposes.
- Another South American country, Uruguay has fully legalized growing and selling marijuana for any use.

Banking & Finance

Govt permits banks to sell more small savings schemes

- In order to encourage savings, Central Government has issued a notification allowing all public sector banks and top three private sector banks (ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank) to accept deposits under various small savings schemes, which until now, were only sold through post offices.
- As per current interest rates, investments in the public provident fund (PPF) scheme will fetch 7.8 per cent return while Kisan Vikas Patra (KVP) investments will yield 7.5 per cent and mature in 115 months.
- Sukanya Samriddhi Account Scheme, the scheme related to girl child savings offers 8.3 per cent annually, whereas investment on 5-year Senior Citizens Savings Scheme will yield 8.3 per cent, with the interest being paid quarterly.

RBI clarifies linking of Aadhaar with bank account mandatory

On 21st October 2017, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) clarified that linking of Aadhaar to bank account is mandatory under the Prevention of Money-Laundering (Maintenance of Records).

- The clarification has been made after a section of the media reported, while giving a reply to a Right to Information Act application, that linking of bank accounts with Aadhaar is not mandatory.
- Reserve Bank of India has clarified that linking of Aadhaar to bank account is mandatory under the Prevention of Money-Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules, 2017, published in the Official Gazette on 1st June, 2017.
- RBI had not issued any separate directions to banks for linking of Aadhaar with bank accounts after the government revised the Prevention of Money-Laundering Act.

Business

APEDA to promote NE products in Bangladesh and Myanmar

Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) an apex organisation under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry will conduct programmes to promote products of north eastern India in Bangladesh and Myanmar.

- Programme in Myanmar will be organised in association with Indian High Commission in Yangon and is scheduled to be held in November 2017.

- Programme in Bangladesh will be organised in association with Indian High Commission in Dhaka and is scheduled to be held in first week of December 2017. In Bangladesh the programme will be held in Dhaka as well as in Sylhet.
- APEDA scheduled products worth \$396.44 million comprising rice, vegetables, fruits, wheat, maize, dairy products and pulses were exported to Bangladesh during 2016-17.
- APEDA scheduled products worth \$24.15 million comprising rice, maize, cereal preparations, fruits, rice and vegetable seeds were exported to Myanmar during 2016-17.

Indian companies top global list on reporting CSR

According to 10th KPMG Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting, India has emerged as the top country for reporting corporate social responsibility information in the annual financial report of companies.

- The survey was carried out by studying annual financial reports and corporate responsibility reports of top 100 companies (by revenue) in each 49 countries it covered.
- India's emergence as top country for reporting corporate responsibility information can be ascribed to steps taken by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) asking top 500 listed companies to adopt integrated reporting on a voluntary basis.
- 95 of the 100 Indian companies in the survey acknowledged human rights as an issue to their business. This figure is considerably above the global average.
- Only 34 of the 100 Indian companies in the survey acknowledged business risks of climate change in their non-financial disclosure.
- Among Indian companies, only 18 companies linked their business activities to UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Australia closes its last car factory

On 20th October 2017, Australia's last car factory was shut down, as GM Holden Ltd, a unit of US carmaker General Motors Co, closed its plant in South Australia.

- GM Holden would shift production to Germany where advanced automation will help to keep manufacturing costs low. Similarly, last year Toyota Motor Corp and Ford Motor Co moved out of Australia.
- This has made thousands of Australians jobless, particularly in South Australia. Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has decided to make South Australia a defense industry hub, in order to provide increase job opportunities and tackle this situation.

- The Australian government has planned to increase defense spending by nearly \$23.52 billion by 2022. It has planned to manufacture of a fleet of frigates, armoured personnel carriers and submarines in South Australia.

Awards & Recognition

Alka Yagnik and Udit Narayan to get Lata Mangeshkar Award

The very popular playback singers Alka Yagnik and Udit Narayan and music composers Usha Khanna, Bappi Lahiri, Anu Malik and have been selected for the Madhya Pradesh state government's prestigious National Lata Mangeshkar Award.

- The artistes will be honoured for their contribution in the field of singing and composition of music.
- The award, in the honour of Mangeshkar, will be presented on October 26 at a function in Indore, the birthplace of the 88-year-old legendary singer.
- Noted playback singer Sudesh Bhonsle and his team will perform at the event.
- The award is alternatively given to music directors and playback singers every year.
- Each award winner will get a cash prize of Rs. Two lakh, shawl, shreephal (coconut) and a citation.

Cristiano Ronaldo tops the Forbes Rich List of sport stars

According to the latest Forbes' Rich List, Cristiano Ronaldo is the richest sports personality in the world,

- The Real Madrid striker has earned an incredible £70million in the last year, along with picking up another Champions League medal and becoming the inaugural winner of The Best FIFA Men's Player award.
- Elsewhere on the list, Roger Federer comes in at No 5 having taken £48m in the last 12 months, while Sebastian Vettel is 14th on the list.
- World number two tennis player Serena Williams is the only woman on the list, in 51st, with \$27m (£20.92m) made last year.
- Meanwhile, Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli is the only cricketer to feature in the Top 100 list.
- The Top 5 are
 - Cristiano Ronaldo – football (\$93m/£72.05m)

- LeBron James – basketball (\$86.2m/£66.79m)
- Lionel Messi – football (\$80m/£61.98m)
- Roger Federer – tennis (\$64m/£49.58m)
- Kevin Durant – basketball (\$60.6m/£46.95m)

Appointments & Resigns

Oxford University college drops Suu Kyi from common room name

On 19th October 2017, students at the St Hugh's College voted to remove Aung San Suu Kyi's name from the title of their Junior Common Room, in North Oxford, England.

- St Hugh's College is one of the constituent colleges of the University of Oxford. Aung San Suu Kyi had graduated from St. Hugh's College in 1967 and was granted an honorary doctorate from the university in 2012.
- Students of St Hugh's College have voted to remove Suu Kyi's name from the junior common room owing to her inability to stop severe human rights abuses against Rohingyas in Myanmar.
- Aung San Suu Kyi spent several years under house arrest in Yangon as a campaigner for democracy while Myanmar was ruled by a military dictatorship. She is the first State Counsellor of Myanmar.

Sibi George appointed as the Ambassador of India to Switzerland

On 21st October 2017, Sibi George was appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Switzerland.

- Sibi George also served as deputy chief of mission of Indian embassy in Saudi Arabia.
- Sibi George will replace Smita Purushottam as the ambassador of India to Switzerland. He is presently serving as Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. He would take up this assignment shortly.

Malaysia Airlines names Izham Ismail as new CEO

On 20th October 2017, Malaysia Airlines (MAS) announced that, it has appointed its current chief operating officer, former pilot Captain, Izham Ismail as its new Group CEO.

- Izham Ismail would replace Peter Bellew as CEO of Malaysia Airlines (MAS). Peter Bellew is returning to Ryanair airlines.
- Izham has 38 years of experience in the aviation industry. He started his career with Malaysia Airlines as a pilot in 1979.
- He has served in roles such as senior instructor pilot, fleet manager and director of operations. Prior to becoming COO in 2016, he served as CEO of MASwings, Malaysia Airlines' sister company.

Science & Technology

Mumbai civic body opens online portal for business approvals

The Brihan mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has introduced an online single window system to issue permissions for new businesses and factories, in Mumbai.

- All new business permissions will now be available through the online portal and the BMC will stop accepting physical applications. This system will also display real-time status of the application, from all the departments handling the request.
- The system has been started on a trial basis between 17th and 30th October 2017. It will be fully operational from 31st October 2017. The system will make it simpler to get up to nine permissions online.
- The common link on the website will provide access to applications for shops and establishment registration, health licence, trade licence, neon sign board licence and a factory permit.

GSTN launches excel-based offline tool to file initial GSTR-3B returns

GST Network (GSTN) has launched an excel-based offline tool for businesses to file initial GSTR-3B returns.

- Taxpayers can download excel-based offline tool from the GSTN portal under the download section and later fill in the data. Following this, the file can be uploaded on GST portal.
- After uploading of the return to the GST Portal, the taxpayer has to preview the form, complete formalities like submit, offset the liability and file their GSTR-3B Return using digital signature or electronic verification code.
- This facility has been introduced to provide an opportunity to the taxpayer to verify details of GSTR 3B before filing and minimise chances of error.

Astronomers discover Sun-like star 'Kronos' that was devourer of planets

Astronomers have discovered a Sun-like star, a planet-eater that's currently 350 light years away. This Sun-like star has consumed the rocky equivalent of 15 Earths.

- Initially, Scientist Semyeong Oh and her team were not trying to find a planet-eating star and its thin twin. Instead, they were using new stellar data collected by the European Space Agency's Gaia spacecraft to simply identify co-moving stars that formed together from the same materials around the same time.
- The lead author of the study, Oh, explained in a press release that Kronos, named after the mythological Greek Titan who ate his own children is the most obvious and dramatic example yet of a Sun-like star consuming its own planets. And, "because Kronos has a stellar companion to compare it to, it makes the case a little stronger," she said.
- The analysis ultimately led to the identification of Kronos and its lesser known brother Krios. Their official designations are HD 240430 and HD 240429.
- Other co-moving star pairs have had different chemistries, Oh explained, but none as dramatic as Kronos and Krios.
- Most stars that are as metal-rich as Kronos "have all the other elements enhanced at a similar level," she said, "whereas Kronos has volatile elements suppressed, which makes it really weird in the general context of stellar abundance patterns."
- In other words, Kronos had an unusually high level of rock-forming minerals, including magnesium, aluminium, silicon, iron, chromium and yttrium, without an equally high level of volatile compounds, those that are most often found in gas form, like oxygen, carbon, nitrogen and potassium, the study said.

Sports

Veda Krishnamurthy signs for Big Bash League, to play for Hobart Hurricanes

Veda Krishnamurthy, Indian cricketer, has signed a 1 year contract with Hobart Hurricanes and will be available for their 10 league games of the third season, starting on 9th December 2017.

- Veda Krishnamurthy has become the third Indian cricketer to sign a Women's Big Bash League (WBBL) contract. In 2016, Harmanpreet Kaur became the first Indian women's cricket team player to be signed by an overseas Twenty20 franchise.
- Veda Krishnamurthy was an important player of the India team at the 2017 Women's World Cup. She had scored 70 runs in 45 balls against New Zealand and remained unbeaten.

- She has featured in 77 internationals across various formats.

Obituary

Former MP Amal Datta passes away

On 20th October 2017, former Lok Sabha member Amal Datta died at a private city hospital due to cardiac arrest, in Kolkata.

- Amal Datta represented the Diamond Harbour constituency in the Lok Sabha for 14 years.
- He entered the Lok Sabha in 1982 as a CPI-M member after winning a by-election from Diamond Harbour constituency. He was re-elected in 1984, 1989 and 1991.
- He was also the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament for two consecutive terms from 1987 to 1989.

Important Days

Police Commemoration Day – October 21

On 21st October 2017, the Police Commemoration Day was observed all over India.

- The Police Commemoration Day is observed on 21st October every year. The Union Home Minister, Rajnath Singh attended the Police Commemoration Day Parade at the Police Memorial Ground, in New Delhi.
- The Annual Conference of Inspectors General of Police of States and Union Territories held in January 1960 decided that 21st October would be observed as 'Police Commemoration Day'.
- This day remembers the sacrifice of ten policemen who died in Chinese firing in 1959. Ten policemen were killed in the incident, seven were injured and taken as prisoners.
- Three weeks later, China returned the bodies of the ten policemen. They were later cremated with full police honours at Hot Springs in North Eastern Ladakh.