

National Current Affairs

Shipping ministry offers grant to JNPT, Karwar port under Sagarmala project

On October 26, 2017, Union Shipping Ministry announced that it has sanctioned Rs 25 crore to the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust and another Rs 50 crore to the Karwar port in Karnataka for development of coastal berth under the flagship Sagarmala project.

- These funds have been provided as a part of Coastal Berth Scheme under flagship Sagarmala Project.
- Objective of Coastal Berth Scheme is to provide financial assistance to ports or State Governments in order to create infrastructure for movement of cargo and passengers through sea or national waterways.
- The project at the Jawaharlal Nehru port, involves construction of a coastal berth and port craft jetty, reclamation and capital dredging in coastal berth. It will be completed by March 2019 at an estimated Rs 170 crore.
- Work at Karwar port project, is likely to be completed in three years at an estimated cost 215 crore. It involves construction of a new north breakwater of 1160 metres and extension of the existing southern breakwater by 145 metres.
- Sagarmala project was launched by Union Shipping Ministry in 2015, with an aim to modernize India's Ports which would eventually contribute in country's economic growth.

Karnataka cabinet approves transgender policy

On October 26, 2017, Karnataka state cabinet approved a policy which seeks to safeguard transgender individuals from social, sexual exploitation, and integrate them into mainstream of the society.

- The policy aims to remove the stigma attached to the transgender community, and allow them to be an equal participant in the society, by providing them legal protection.
- In pursuance of the aim, sensitisation of the general public through awareness programmes, as well as at the classroom-level by way of a reformed curriculum, will be implemented.
- The policy also entails provision of reservation to transgender individuals in all levels of education, and setting up of redressal cells for cases of harassment and discrimination of the individuals.

Rajasthan passes bill increasing OBC quota to 26%

On October 26, 2017, Rajasthan State Assembly passed Backward Classes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions in the State and of Appointment and Posts in Services under the State) Bill, 2017 which increases reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the state from 21 per cent to 26 per cent.

- The 5 per cent quota hike will apply to five castes – Gujjar/Gurjar, Banjara/Baldia/Labana, Gadia-Lohar/Gadalia, Raika/Rebari and Gadaria which were earlier grouped as the special backward classes.
- With the passage of this bill, reservation in Rajasthan now stands at 54 per cent which is higher than 50 per cent ceiling set by the Supreme Court.
- However, Rajasthan State Government officials have mentioned that OBC quota is being increased in proportion to the increase in state's OBC population, which is legally permissible.
- It is to be noted that in May 2017, Rajasthan High Court had struck down Rajasthan Special Backward Classes Act, 2015 which granted 5 per cent reservation to above mentioned five castes.

GMR Hyderabad Airport, Malaysia Tourism, MAHB sign pact to promote tourism

On 26th October 2017, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB) and Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) signed a MoU to promote the growth of tourism traffic.

- The MoU was signed to promote tourism from the catchment area of Hyderabad to Malaysia and also to explore new locations for connectivity.
- SGK Kishore, CEO, GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd, Mohd Badlisham Ghazali, MD, MAHB, and Abdul Khani Daud, Deputy Director General (Promotion), MTPB signed, the MoU in the presence of Hidayat Abdul Hamid, High Commissioner of Malaysia.
- At present, 10 domestic carriers connect Hyderabad with 39 domestic destinations. Also, the airport connects 18 international destinations with 16 foreign and 3 Indian carriers. To serve the growing passenger traffic, Hyderabad Airport is to expand the airport terminal and also develop another runway.

International Puppet Festival begins in Kolkata

Six-day 'International Puppet Festival' began in Kolkata, West Bengal on October 26, 2017.

- This festival is christened 'PUN' (Puppets Unite Neighbours).
- The festival is aimed to revive interest in puppet art in India and to bring together puppeteers from different countries.

- Puppeteers from countries like the UK, Germany, Peru, Portugal, Italy, Lithuania, Brazil and Singapore will perform during the course of this six-day festival.
- Through these performances, visitors will get information about various puppet art forms viz. glove, shadow, knee, giant, human, theatre, street, interactive and balloon puppetry.
- Indian puppeteers including Ravi Bhat of 'Kath Putli' (Jaipur), Jitendra Advani of 'Masti Maker Human Puppet' (Jaipur) and Sudip Gupta of 'Dolls Theater' (Kolkata) will also perform at this International Puppet Festival.

Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu inaugurates Tawang festival

On 26th October 2017, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the fifth edition of Tawang festival, at Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh. The NEC (North Eastern Council) secretary Ram Muivah inaugurated the traditional games and sports competition.

- Exhibition stalls were inaugurated by the chief minister. They contain products and materials from horticulture, agriculture, forest and textile departments, NGOs and local community bodies.
- The Tawang festival is held for four days. Street show is held for three days. The show will also have cultural presentation from Adi, Nyishi and Monpa tribe.

Power Minister addresses the 3rd Global Investors' India Forum

Union Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Shri R. K. Singh addressed the 3rd Global Investors' India Forum.

- The event was organized by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM).
- The theme of the event was 'Ideate, Innovate, Implement and Invest in India' and it was attended by global industry stalwarts.
- The Government would extend all possible support and remove all impediments in the path of investments in the power sector.
- The Ministry is in the final stages of codifying laws on a number of fronts including State Governments/DISCOMs honouring of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and penalties for delinquencies; all DISCOMs to have tied up PPAs to cover 100% power requirements including peak loads before licenses are renewed; the Renewable Purchase Obligations to be made statutory; making Smart Meters mandatory and penalties to be imposed for non-payment of electricity bills, inter alia.

Kiren Rijiju inaugurates Special Centre for Disaster Research at JNU

- On October 26, 2017, Minister of State for Home Affairs Shri Kiren Rijiju inaugurated the Special Centre for Disaster Research at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in Delhi.
- The centre will offer Masters and Doctorate programmes in Disaster Risk Management (DRM).
- For the first year, the centre will focus on disaster research in North Eastern states of India.
- At the inauguration ceremony, Mr. Rijiju also launched the website of the Special Centre for Disaster Research.
- He also released the book 'Disaster Law, Emerging Thresholds' by Prof. Amita Singh, who is the first Chairperson of Special Centre for Disaster Research.
- The inauguration took place during the two-day seminar on 'Disasters and Community Resilience in the Northeastern States', organised by JNU.

International Current Affairs

India, France agree to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation

Ms. Florence Parly, the French Minister for the Armed Forces, was on an official visit to India from 26th – 28th October, 2017.

- During Ms Parly's meeting with Indian Defense Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, India and France agreed to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation.
- Ongoing initiatives to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation between India and France were reviewed by both the ministers.
- Regional and international developments of mutual interest were also discussed during this meeting.
- Besides, a range of measures to expand military to military ties, including enhancing the scope of joint exercises, specifically VARUNA (Joint Naval Exercise between India and France – scheduled to be held in early 2018) were agreed upon.
- Developments in defence equipment and industry cooperation were also comprehensively reviewed by both the ministers. It is to be noted that France is India's major supplier of defence equipments.

India, US to implement HOSTAC to strengthen maritime security

In a bid to strengthen maritime security, India and the United States have agreed to implement the programme for Helicopter Operations from Ships other Than Aircraft Carriers (HOSTAC).

- This decision was taken during a meeting between Indian Defense Minister, Ms. Nirmala Sitharama and US Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis.
- The meeting between Ms. Sitharaman and Mr. Mattis was held on October 25, 2017 in Philippines on sidelines of ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting – Plus.
- Besides taking a decision on HOSTAC, range of other initiatives to strengthen US-India defense cooperation and enhance India's leadership role in the Indo-Pacific were also discussed during this meeting.
- It is to be noted that this was second meeting between Ms. Sitharam and Mr. Mattis in less than a month. The first one was held in September 2017, during Mr. Mattis's visit to India.

Asia now has more billionaires than the US for first time

As per a report by UBS AG and Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Asia now has more billionaires than US, for the first time.

- In 2016, combined wealth of billionaires across the world increased 17 percent to \$6 trillion.
- During 2016, 117 Asians entered the billionaire club for the first time, taking the total of billionaires in Asia to 637. Billionaire headcount for US stands at 563.
- Although Asia has surpassed U.S. in terms of number of billionaires, US billionaires still possess the greatest amount of wealth at \$2.8 trillion.
- Only three new billionaires were added in Europe during 2016. Including the three, Europe lagged far behind with 342 billionaires.
- The report has outlined that if the economic pace in Asian regions sustains, then in next four years Asia would overtake the U.S. as the world's largest concentration of wealth.

India to assist Sri Lanka in construction of 1,200 houses

On October 26, 2017, India and Sri Lanka signed two agreements for construction of 1,200 houses through 50 model villages in Sri Lanka.

- Two MoUs were signed by Indian High Commissioner Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Secretary to the Ministry of Housing and Construction W K K Athukorala signed two Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) in Hambantota, Sri Lanka.
- 1200 houses will be constructed with Indian grant assistance of 600 million rupees.

- 600 out of the 1200 houses will be constructed in the Southern Province, while another 600 will be constructed across Sri Lanka.
- These houses will be specifically allocated to low income landless and homeless beneficiaries.
- Indian Government had committed 50000 houses for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the war-affected Northern and Eastern part of Sri Lanka. Nearly 46,000 houses have already been constructed.

4th ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus held in Clark, Philippines

On 24th October 2017, the 4th ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus was held in Clark, Philippines.

- The 4th ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus was hosted by the Philippine Department of National Defence. The meeting was chaired by Secretary of National Defence of the Philippines Delfin Lorenzana.
- Defence department leaders from 10 ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) nations and 8 dialog partners participated. They delivered speeches on regional security situations and issues of common concern.
- Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman represented India. This is her first foreign visit after taking charge as Defence Minister.
- At the ADMM-Plus, Chinese State Councilor and Defense Minister Gen. Chang Wanquan held bilateral talks with the defence ministers of Russia, Singapore, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea.
- Also, Philippines and Russia signed two agreements: Agreement for Military-Technical Cooperation between the two countries and a contract for the Philippines' procurement of defence articles from Rosoboronexport, a Russian company.

Banking & Finance

SEBI revises block deal norms, minimum order size hiked to Rs10 crore

On October 26, 2017, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) revised the framework for 'block deals' on stock exchanges by providing two separate trading windows of 15 minutes each and increasing the minimum order size to Rs 10 crore.

- Before the revised framework issued by SEBI on October 6, 2017, a trade with a minimum quantity of 5 lakh shares or minimum value of Rs. 5 crore, executed through a single transaction was referred to as 'Block Deal'.

- Buyers and seller were allowed to enter the Block Deal Orders only during the first 35 minutes of the continuous trading session i.e. from 9:15 am to 9:50 am.
- New Framework of 'Block Deals':
 - Firstly, the minimum order size has been raised to Rs. 10 crore.
 - Besides, two separate trading windows of 15 minutes each (before market opening and during market hours) will be provided for executing block deals.
 - Views of market participants and recommendations of Secondary Market Advisory Committee (SMAC) have been taken into consideration for finalising these norms.
 - These norms will ensure confidentiality of the large trades and stable prices for such transactions.

Asian Development Bank signs \$65.5 mn Loan with GOI to support Coastal Protection in Karnataka

International financial institution, Asian Development Bank has signed a USD 65.5 million loan agreement with Government of India for checking coastal erosion on the western coast of Karnataka.

- This is the second tranche of a USD 250 million financing facility under the Sustainable Coastal Protection and Management Investment Programme.
- The loan agreement was signed on October 26, 2017 in Bengaluru by Sameer Kumar Khare, Joint Secretary (Multilateral Institutions), Union Finance Ministry and ADB's country director Kenichi Yokoyama.
- Funds procured through this loan will be deployed for immediate coastal protection needs and for strengthening institutional capacity of Karnataka's public works, ports and inland water transport department.
- Coastal erosion in Karnataka is turning out to be a high risk to human wellbeing, economic development and ecological integrity.

Business

India has 3rd highest number of family-owned businesses

As per "CS Family 1000" report by Credit Suisse Research Institute, India has 3rd highest number of family-owned businesses in the world.

- As per the report, there are 108 publicly-listed family-owned businesses in India, which is the third highest in the world.

- With 167 family-owned businesses, China is at the top followed by US, which has 121 such businesses.
- Average market capitalisation of family-owned companies of India is USD 6.5. On this parameter, India ranks 22nd globally.
- Family-owned companies in Spain have highest average market capitalisation – USD 30 billion.
- In context of this report, companies in which family or founder owns minimum shareholding of 20 per cent and/or minimum voting rights of 20 per cent is referred to as family-owned business.
- The report has outlined that financial performance of family-owned companies is also superior to that of non- family-owned peers.

SAP launches Asia Pacific Japan region's first Leonardo Centre in Bengaluru

On 26th October 2017, SAP launched the Asia Pacific Japan (APJ) region's first SAP Leonardo Center, in Bengaluru.

- The Leonardo Centre in Bengaluru is the first in Asia Pacific Japan region and the fourth SAP Leonardo Center globally.
- The centre is located in the SAP Labs India, Bengaluru campus. Other SAP Leonardo Centers are located in New York, Paris and Sao Leopoldo.
- SAP's Leonardo Centers are a global network of connected, physical locations that are the go-to places for digital inspiration and co-innovation, while also being the delivery mechanism of SAP Leonardo Services.
- The Leonardo Centre in Bengaluru will consist of digital transformation elements like IoT, Blockchain, Analytics, Machine Learning, Big Data, Data Intelligence and SAP Cloud Platform.

TCS, National University ink pact to train nearly 5,000 in Philippines

Indian software company, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has signed a pact with the National University in the Philippines to launch a comprehensive training programme aimed at enhancing the skills of university graduates for the job market.

- Under this scheme, 5000 students of National University, Philippines will have access to digital courses, updated curriculum, faculty training, workshops and internships which will train them to acquire skills required in Information Technology (IT) and ITeS (IT Enabled Services) sector.
- This agreement is part of TCS's Academic Interface Programme (AIP) aimed at collaboration with institutes of higher education for imparting training and skill development.

- Inaugural batch of 40 students will undergo training under this programme from November 2017.
- The course on Digital Marketing will train students in online marketing, content development and website creation.

Awards & Recognition

Indian-Origin Gina Miller named Britain's most influential black person

Indian-origin campaigner, Gina Miller, became the UK's most influential black person, by topping the 2018 'Powerlist' of 100 people of African and African Caribbean heritage.

- On 25th October 2017, the 2018 'Powerlist' of 100 people of African and African Caribbean heritage, was published by Powerful Media in London
- Gina Miller is 52 years old. She has been ranked the Britain's most influential black person for winning a legal challenge that prevented British Prime Minister Theresa May from triggering Brexit without Parliament's approval.
- Gina Miller has been a vocal campaigner as part of a 'Best for Britain' drive. She lives under 24-hour security with her husband and three children in London after being targeted on social media for her stance against Britain's exit from the European Union (EU).
- The 'Powerlist' is picked by an independent panel of judges. Editor of 'Powerlist' 2018 is Eva Simpson. Its publisher is Michael Eboda.

AP CM Naidu receives 'Golden Peacock Award' in London

On 25th October 2017, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu received the Golden Peacock Award, at the 17th London Global Convention, held in London.

- Chandrababu Naidu received the 'Golden Peacock Award' under the category, Global Leadership in Public Service and Economic Transformation.
- Nara Bhuvaneshwari, Chandrababu Naidu's wife and managing director of the Heritage Foods received 'Golden Peacock Award' under the category Corporate Governance and Sustainability.
- The Golden Peacock Award was instituted by the Institute of Directors (IOD) of India in 1991. This award is regarded as a benchmark of corporate excellence worldwide.
- Earlier recipients of this award are anti-corruption activist Anna Hazare, agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit.

Appointments & Resigns

USISPF announces Richard Verma as new board member

On 26th October 2017, the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) announced the addition of Richard Verma, former U.S. Ambassador to India and current Vice Chairman of The Asia Group, as its Board member.

- Richard Verma has been added as a board member of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF). He is the 25th U.S. Ambassador to India. He was the first U.S. Ambassador to India to visit all Indian states during his tenure.
- He is currently the Vice Chairman of The Asia Group, where he leads the firm in South Asia. In addition, he is a Centennial Fellow at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, and he co-chairs the Center for American Progress' U.S.-India Task Force.

Science & Technology

First 3D printed wearable 'battery' developed by Brunel University researchers

Researchers from Brunel University in the UK have developed the first 3D printed wearable 'battery'.

- The 3D printing method of the wearable 'battery' stacks silicone, glue and gel electrolyte, layer by layer to make a supercapacitor. The supercapacitor stores energy on its surface without chemical reactions.
- The wristbands could be used in the future to power smartphones, electric cars, medical implants like pacemakers etc. They have also passed stress tests without losing power.
- The research was published in the journal Materials Science and Engineering. It shows that, the power wristband can be made using cheap products from a household shop instead of sophisticated expensive metals or semiconductors.

Environment

Supreme Court Fined Rs. 2 Lakh Fine On Environment Ministry

On October 24th 2017, the Supreme Court has fined of Rs 2 lakh on the Union Environment Ministry for not fixing the pollution emission standards of Sulphur Dioxide and Nitrogen Oxide for 34 categories of industries as per May 2 order and also SC banned of using pet coke and furnace oil in Delhi and the NCR to control the air pollution.

- The bench of Justice Madan B Lokur and Justice Deepak Gupta noted that in its May 2 order had directed the ministry and Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to fix sulphur oxides and nitrogen oxides standards for these industries and had said that standards should be fixed on or before June 30 in view of the provisions of the Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- The bench observed that four months have passed since the order was passed, but still the emission standards have not been finalised by the ministry.
- The CPCB in its confirmation to the court said the emission norms for SO₂ and NO_x for nine categories of industries had already been notified.
- These industries include thermal power plants (in 2015), Dye and Dye Intermediate (2010), Cement (2016), Copper, Lead or Zinc Smelter (2011), Iron and Steel (2012), Coke oven (covered under Iron and Steel sector) (2012), Sulphuric Acid (2008), Petrochemicals (2012) and Pesticides (2011).

Central Pollution Control Board Eases Norms for Sewage Treatment Plants

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has eased standards for sewage treatment plants (STP) coming up after June 2019.

- As per 2015 proposal of Government, biochemical oxygen demand (BoD) in water treated by upcoming STPs should not be more than 10 mg/litre. BoD is a marker for organic pollutants in the water.
- This requirement has been eased and now upcoming STPs will have to conform only to 30 mg/litre of BoD (permitted by the current law).
- This norm will apply to all proposed STPs to treat sewage along the polluted stretches of River Ganga in Haridwar, Kanpur and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh.
- However for STPs in State capitals, BoD has to be capped at 20 mg/litre.
- The stricter norm of 10 mg/litre has been eased citing the reason that it is impractical and requires advanced technology which most of the States cannot afford.

Sports

China secure maiden Hockey World Cup qualifications

The International Hockey Federation (FIH) declared that China have qualified for the Hockey World Cup for the first time.

- China's place was confirmed when South Korea drew 1-1 with Malaysia, a result which put the Malaysians into the final against India.
- While China created history, it was a dark day for the South Korean team which will not be part of the World Cup for the first time since 1998 event in Utrecht, Netherlands.
- Winning the Hero Asia Cup 2017 was Korea's final chance to achieve World Cup qualification, but that dream was ended.
- China is the 15th team to qualify for the World Cup, joining host India, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, Germany, Ireland, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Spain and France at the prestigious 16 nation event.

Amanpreet wins bronze at ISSF World Cup Final

India's Amanpreet Singh secured third place in the 50-metre pistol final at the International Shooting Sport Federation World Cup Final in Delhi on October 27, 2017.

- He shot 76 out of 80 targets, three behind gold medallist Hu Binyuan (79).
- This is Sangram's first-ever medal in senior level, earlier he had won a gold at the Asian Shooting Championship for junior back in 2009 and silver in World cup.
- Amanpreet shot 202.2 to win the bronze in the final of men's 50m pistol at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting ranges.
- Rai could manage only 123.2 to finish last in the seven- man final.
- This was India's first individual medal in the ongoing edition of the prestigious tournament.
- Overall, this was the host nation's second medal in the tournament following Jitu Rai and Heena Sidhu's gold in 10m mixed air pistol on the opening day.

Obituary

Manikchand Group chairman Rasiklal Dhariwal dies of cancer

On 24th October 2017, Rasiklal Dhariwal, an industrialist popularly known as the 'guthka baron', died due to parotid gland cancer, at Ruby Hall Clinic, in Pune.

- Rasiklal Dhariwal was the chairman of Manikchand group of companies. He was born in Shirur tehsil of Pune district.
- Dhariwal started his business as a tobacco trader. He inherited the beedi business from his father. Later, he became a manufacturer of guthka and one of the biggest producers of the tobacco product in India.

Punathil Kunjabdulla, Distinguished Malayalam Writer, Passes Away

On 27th October 2017, Malayalam writer Punathil Kunjabdulla passed away at a private hospital, in Kozhikode, Kerala.

- Kunjabdulla was born in Badagara near Kozhikode, in Kerala. He was a doctor by profession. He did his MBBS from the Aligarh Muslim University.
- He was a well-known Malayalam writer. He had published more than 45 books, including 7 novels, 15 short story collections, memoirs, an autobiography and travelogues.
- He had received both the state and national-level Sahitya Akademi awards for his works. Some of his well-known works are 'Aligadhile Tadavukaran' and 'Marunnu'.

Important Days

Infantry Day – October 27

On 27th October 2017, Infantry Day was celebrated by the Indian Army.

- Wellington Military Station celebrated the 71st Infantry Day on 27th October 2017. A wreath laying ceremony (laying flowers at a memorial site) was organized at the war memorial of the Madras Regimental Centre.
- Wreaths were laid in the honour of infantry men who made sacrifice for India. 27th October is celebrated as Infantry Day, since, on this day in 1947, the first contingent of infantry landed at Srinagar Airfield. They fought against intruders to save the Kashmir Valley.

World Day for Audiovisual Heritage – October 27

On 27th October 2017, World Day for Audiovisual Heritage was observed all over the world.

- The World Day for Audiovisual Heritage is celebrated to mark the adoption, of the Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images, by the 21st General Conference, in 1980.
- Theme for The World Day for Audiovisual Heritage 2017 is “Discover, remember and share”. This day aims to create awareness to preserve and acknowledge the importance of audiovisual documents.
- The World Day for Audiovisual Heritage is an initiative taken mainly by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the CCAAA (Coordinating Council of Audiovisual Archives Associations).