

National Current Affairs

PM Modi Inaugurates Int'l Conference on Consumer Protection

On October 27, 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated two-day International Conference on Consumer Protection for east, south and Southeast Asian countries in New Delhi.

- This conference is being hosted by the Department of Consumer Affairs under Union Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
- Theme of this conference is 'Empowering Consumers in New Markets'.
- Representatives from 22 countries from East, South and South-East Asia participated in this conference.
- During the course of this conference, six working sessions will be held on subjects of United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection and Implementation, protection of online consumers, stakeholder participation in consumer protection, consumer empowerment through education, fostering consumer inclusion in financial services and protection of vulnerable groups of consumers.

Piyush Goyal launches Railway's first set of solar plants with capacity of 5 MW

On October 27, 2017, Union Railway Minister, Piyush Goyal launched the railways' first set of solar plants with a total capacity of 5 megawatt peak (MWp), an ambitious project aimed at reducing the national transporter's carbon footprint.

- The project is part of the government's National Solar Mission in which Indian Railways plans to commission 1,000 MWp solar plants across its network.
- Mr. Goyal launched these plants at the inauguration of the International Conference on Green Initiatives and Railway Electrification.
- These plants on the roof tops of Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi, Anand Vihar and Delhi railway stations will generate will generate 76.5 lakh units of solar power cumulatively per year.
- 30 per cent of the energy requirement of these stations will be fulfilled by these plants and will thereby result in annual savings of Rs 421.4 lakh for Indian Railways.
- Besides, it will also reduce 6082 tonnes of CO2 emissions.
- This project was awarded in December 2016 and has been set up at a cost of Rs.37.45 crore under government's National Solar Mission.
- Under National Solar Mission, Indian Railways plans to commission 1000 MWp solar plants across its network.

Ministry of External Affairs Launches “#AsktheSpokesperson” for better understanding of foreign policy

On 27th October 2017, the Ministry of External Affairs launched the “#AsktheSpokesperson” initiative on Twitter, to create better awareness and understanding of foreign policy issues to general public.

- The inaugural session of #AsktheSpokesperson initiative was held on 27th October 2017 on the External Affairs Ministry’s official Twitter handle @MEAIndia. The Spokesperson responded to selected questions, live through periscope.
- #AsktheSpokesperson initiative will be a regular feature to engage and educate the public about foreign policy matters in simplified terms. It will be held every 2months.
- The Ministry invites questions from public on India’s foreign policy and selected questions would be responded by the Official Spokesperson. It also launched its LinkedIn profile.

Cabinet approves Rs 7,000 crore for construction of six IIT campuses

Union Cabinet has approved over Rs 7,000 crore for construction of permanent campuses of six new Indian Institute of Technology (IITs).

- Permanent campuses for six new IITs will be constructed at Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh), Palakkad (Kerala), Dharwad (Karnataka), Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir), Bhilai (Chhattisgarh) and Goa.
- Academic sessions of IITs at Tirupati and Palakkad started in 2015-16 and at Dharwad, Bhilai, Jammu and Goa it started in 2016-17.
- These institutions are currently functioning from temporary campuses with a total strength of 1530 students.
- From the academic year 2020-2021, each of the six permanent campuses will have a facility for housing 1,200 students, thereby raising the total strength of students to 7200.
- Amount of Rs 7000 crore sanctioned by the cabinet, is for the first phase of construction. Total estimated cost for complete construction of permanent campuses for all six institutes has been estimated at Rs. 20304 which will be devolved in a period of seven years.

President Ram Nath Kovind launches technocity project in Kerala

On October 27, 2017, President Ram Nath Kovind launched a Technocity in Pallippuram, Kerala and laid foundation stone of Kerala Government’s first Information Technology (IT) building in the campus.

- Technocity in Kerala is spread across 400 acre land in Pallippuram.
- In this Technocity, around 300 acres land has been earmarked for IT and IT-enabled services office spaces and commercial space.
- On the remaining 100 acres, a 'Knowledge City' envisaged as 'Centre of Excellence' (CoE) for future technologies like Cognitive Analytics, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence Block Chain, Cybersecurity and e-Mobility will be set up.
- Once the Technocity is fully operational, it is expected to create 100000 employment opportunities as reputed IT organisations including TCS, SunTec and KASE have already taken land for development at Technocity.

Maharashtra govt makes Aadhar mandatory to avail fertiliser subsidy

Maharashtra Agriculture Minister Pandurang Fundkar has announced that, in order to avail fertiliser subsidy, farmers in Maharashtra will have to provide their Aadhaar number.

- As per this announcement, farmers won't need to have a debit or credit card to purchase fertilisers. They can pay in cash, but their Aadhaar will be entered in the Point of Sale (PoS) machines.
- The subsidy will be deposited to farmers' account only if Aadhaar number has been provided.
- This rule will be implemented from November 1, 2017.
- Those farmers whose Aadhaar application is in the process can provide enrolment number.
- This decision has been taken to curb diversion of subsidised fertiliser (which is meant for agriculture) for industrial use or exports.
- It has been estimated that around 20% of subsidised fertiliser is currently being diverted by dealers for industrial use.

UP declares Vrindavan, Barsana as sacred sites

On October 27, 2017, Uttar Pradesh State Government issued an order notifying Vrindavan and Barsana towns in Mathura district as "pavitra teerth sthals" (sacred pilgrimage sites).

- Due to this notification, no meat and liquor shops will be allowed in these towns anymore.
- Departments of urban development, excise, food and drug administration, general administration and home have been directed by the State Government to ensure that necessary steps are taken in this regard within three months.
- It is to be noted that, Vrindavan and Barsana are the first two places to be notified as teerth sthal in Uttar Pradesh Government records.
- Earlier, when Uttarakhand was a part of Uttar Pradesh, a similar order was passed to notify Haridwar as 'teerth sthal'.

11th World Congress on Adolescent Health held in New Delhi

On 27th – 29th October 2017, the 11th World Congress on Adolescent Health is held in New Delhi.

- The theme for World Congress on Adolescent Health 2017 is ‘Investing in Adolescent Health—the Future is Now’. This year’s event is focused on lowering mortality rates for adolescents.
- This event is hosted by MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child and the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) with support of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- This event is held by the International Association for Adolescent Health (IAAH) every four years. Around 800 international and national delegates participate in this year’s event.
- This year’s event consists of discussions on mental health and adolescents, gendered approached to adolescent health, opportunities and challenges etc.

International Current Affairs

Burundi becomes first country to leave International Criminal Court

African country Burundi has withdrawn from International Criminal Court (ICC) with effect from October 27, 2017 and has thus become the first nation to do so.

- International Criminal Court is an international tribunal (located in Hague, Netherlands) having authority to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
- In recent years, governments of three African countries, South Africa, Gambia and Burundi expressed their intent to leave ICC citing the reason that it focuses too much on African nations.
- Out of these, Gambia’s new government reversed its withdrawal in February 2017 and South Africa’s withdrawal was revoked in March 2017. Only Burundi went ahead with the withdrawal.
- It is to be noted that, Burundi has been facing deadly political turmoil since 2015, when incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza sought third term and ultimately won.
- A recent UN commission of inquiry report revealed that crimes against humanity, including murder and sexual violence are still being inflicted in Burundi.

14th South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law Conference begins in Colombo

14th South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation in Law (SAARCLAW) Conference is being held from 27th -29th October, 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, along with the 11th SAARC Chief Justices Conference.

- Theme of 14th SAARCLAW Conference is “Emerging Legal Trends in SAARC Countries”.
- The conference is being attended by South Asia’s top Judges, legal practitioners and academics.
- During the course of this three-day conference, discussion will be held on several subjects such as artificial intelligence, human trafficking, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and environmental protection concerns.
- SAARCLAW has served as a platform for legal professionals across South Asian region to discuss issues pertaining to justice, legal reforms, good governance and enforcement. It was established in year 1991 in Sri Lanka.

Catalonia declares independence from Spain

On 27th October 2017, Catalonia declared independence from Spain after lawmakers in the autonomous region voted to declare independence.

- The parliament of Catalonia has voted to declare independence from Spain. The decision was made during a secret vote in Barcelona on 27th October 2017.
- After the declaration, the Spanish government dismissed the Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and his cabinet. It allowed Madrid to directly administer the region. The Spanish Prime Minister also suspended top officials of Catalonia’s regional police.
- During the vote for independence, two right-wing parties, Citizens (Cs) and People’s Party (PP), along with the centre-left Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC), left the Catalan parliament before the vote in protest.

Banking & Finance

Star Health Insurance Launches First-ever Insurance Policy for Persons Diagnosed with Cancer

Star Health and Allied Insurance (SHAI) has introduced first-ever health insurance cover for people already diagnosed with cancer.

- This insurance policy has been named 'Star Cancer Care Gold'.
- It covers the risk of recurrence, the spread of cancer (metastasis) and second cancer (second malignancy).
- There are two sum-insured options – Rs. 3 lakh and Rs. 5 lakh.
- Any individual between the age of 5 months and 65 years, who already had stage I and II cancer can subscribe to this policy.
- On diagnosis of recurrence, metastasis or second malignancy, a lumpsum amount of half the entire sum insured is paid to the policy holder.
- This policy also works as a routine medi-claim cover, providing for surgical, non-surgical as well as interventional treatment for non-cancer-related diseases, accident cover, etc.
- Depending on the age band, the premium amount varies from Rs. 12000 – Rs. 36000

Business

India emerges as biggest source for digital talent – Survey by Capgemini and LinkedIn

According to a survey by global consulting firm Capgemini and LinkedIn, India has the highest proportion of Digital Talent among the countries surveyed.

- At 76%, India had the highest proportion of Digital Talent among all the countries that were surveyed. The global average stood at 56%.
- 64 per cent organisations in India cited that digital talent gap has widened over the past few years.

Karnataka govt signs MoU with Microsoft for technology oriented solutions to farmers

On October 27, 2017, Karnataka State Government announced signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Microsoft Corporation India Private Limited with an objective to provide technology-oriented solutions to small farmers for helping them to increase their income.

- As per the terms of this MoU, Microsoft India along with Karnataka Agricultural Price Commission and Department of Agriculture will conduct experiments to improve price forecasting practices to benefit farmers.
- Karnataka Agricultural Price Commission will guide Microsoft to develop a multi-variant agricultural commodity price forecasting model and will provide the required historical data for the same.
- Turcrop has been identified for this forecasting model during the current season.
- Cloudbased technologies, machine learning and advanced analytics will be used to

India overtakes US to become 2nd largest smartphone market

India has overtaken the United States and become the 2nd largest smartphone market in the world, according to independent analyst Canalsys.

- Canalsys has released a report recently that states, India has become the second largest smartphone market in the world. The 1st position is occupied by China.
- India's mobile phone shipments have increased by 23% compared to 2016. Mobile brands Xiaomi and Samsung account for almost half of the total market.
- Samsung has reported a growth of nearly 30% compared to 2016 and Xiaomi has faced a 290% increase in its sales.
- Samsung, Xiaomi, Vivo, Oppo, and Lenovo are considered the top five vendors in India. They account for 75% of India's total smartphone shipments.

RIL becomes first Indian company to cross Rs6 trillion market cap

Mukesh Ambani's company Reliance Industries Limited has reached yet another milestone by becoming the first Indian company ever to cross a market capitalization of Rs. 6-trillion.

- The recent tariff hike by Reliance Jio also contributed to RIL's stock price rise.
- RIL stock got a further push as Jio, its telecom arm, recently hiked tariffs earlier than anticipated.
- RIL's 15-20 per cent hike in telecom tariffs raises confidence in our bullish (rising share prices) earnings estimates.
- Jio increased its tariff by 15 per cent for its popular 84-day plan at ₹459 from 19 October, under which subscribers get 1GB 4G data at high speed a day.
- On October 13, Jio reported a profit at earnings before interest and tax (EBIT) level, though at the net level it still made a loss of Rs.271 crores. The telecom unit reported revenue of Rs.6,147 crore and EBIT of Rs.260 crore.
- The stock added nearly Rs.3 trillion market-cap since April after its telecom arm Reliance Jio started charging its customers.
- Jio recently reduced validity on the most popular Rs.399 plan to 70 days from 84 days, which analysts feel will result in effective ARPU increase by 15-20 percent.
- The earlier Rs.399 plan with 84 days validity is now available for Rs.459 entailing a 15 per cent ARPU increase.
- Thus effective ARPU will rise by 15-20 percent for Jio subscribers on most popular plans.

Awards & Recognition

Sharmila Tagore honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award

On 24th October 2017, Sharmila Tagore was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, at a ceremony held at Siri Fort Auditorium, in New Delhi.

- Sharmila Tagore was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by Minister of State for Prime Minister's Office Jitendra Singh and Delhi BJP chief Manoj Tiwari for her contribution in the field of cinema.
- Filmmaker-poet Muzaffar Ali was awarded with a Special Award for his outstanding contribution to promote arts, fine arts and literature.
- Singers Usha Mangeshkar, Prem Bhatia, Kavita Seth, Ankit Tiwari, Rahul Vaidya, Akriti Kakar, Manmeet and actor Sukhmani Lamba were also honoured at the event.

EDII bags AICTE award for supporting start-ups

Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) has received an award from All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), at the International Science Festival's Start-up Summit – 2017, at Chennai.

- Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII) received the award from AICTE for supporting, promoting and mentoring technology start-ups.
- The AICTE awards recognise outstanding achievement by academic and research institutes of India in promoting innovation and start-ups in their campuses.
- EDII has a business incubation centre, Centre for Advancing and Launching Enterprises (CrAdLE), to mentor new start-ups and enable speedy commercialisation of technologies for faster growth.
- The International Science Festival's Start-up Summit – 2017 also acknowledged various upcoming start-ups through nationwide start-up contest.

Madame Tussauds unveils Justin Bieber's wax figure in Delhi

At Madame Tussauds Delhi, wax figures of famous personalities including sports, history, politics and glamour will be displayed under one roof.

- Visitors will have the opportunity to interact with the figures of celebrities, which is a unique part of the show.

- He is the first among all figures which have been unveiled straight to the public at such a platform, meeting the audience demands of the international stars.
- Apart from Bieber's wax statue, the statues of singer Jennifer Lopez and Indian actor Hrithik Roshan were also unveiled which were a hit among the crowd present in the Jawaharlal Nehru
- The final display of all statues at the wax museum will take place on December 1 here with wax figures of celebrities like actress Madhubala, singer Asha Bhosle, and cricketer Kapil Dev.

Appointments & Resigns

N.J.Gangte appointed as High Commissioner of India to Republic of Zambia

On 27th October 2017, N.J.Gangte was appointed as High Commissioner of India to Republic of Zambia.

- N.J.Gangte is an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) Officer of 1994 batch. He is presently Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.
- He has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Zambia. He would take up this assignment shortly.

Science & Technology

Assam CM launches a new web portal "Assam Darpan" to provide data to people on government projects

On 27th October 2017, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched a web portal 'Assam Darpan' where details of government schemes and projects would be available to the people.

- The Assam Darpan platform has been developed by the National Informatics Centre, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, as a part of the Digital India Programme.
- In the first phase, progress indicators of 15 government schemes have been made available in the web portal in English and Assamese.

- The schemes includes National Food Security Act, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Deendayal Gram Jyoti Yojana, MGNREGS, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and Chief Ministers Free Diagnostic Services.

Swiss researchers break record for shortest-ever light pulse

Swiss researchers have generated the world's shortest laser pulse, a 43-attosecond X-ray flash, beating the 53-attosecond record set by the US earlier in 2017.

- Scientists at the ETH Zurich have demonstrated the fastest light pulse ever developed, beating the 53-attosecond record set by the US. The newly developed laser pulse is a 43-attosecond X-ray flash.
- Light travelling at 3 lakh km/sec covers less than one-thousandth of hair-width during 43 attoseconds. This makes the 43-attosecond pulse as the shortest man-made controlled event.
- These lasers allow observing electron movement during chemical reactions in slow motion.

Environment

Skull found in Papua New Guinea was world's 'oldest-known tsunami victim'

Scientists have declared a 6,000-year-old human skull that was discovered in Papua New Guinea in 1929, as the world's oldest tsunami victim's skull.

- The study published in the journal PLOS ONE, states that, Papua New Guinea has experienced repeated tsunamis. The human skull that was discovered in Papua New Guinea in 1929 is declared as the skull of the world's oldest tsunami victim.
- The Aitape Skull was discovered 90 years ago by Australian geologist Paul Hossfeld near the northern coast of Papua New Guinea, near Aitape town.
- Scientists visited the site in 2014 and collected samples from the geological deposits for analysis in the laboratory. They studied details of the sediment.
- They identified microscopic organisms from the ocean in the sediment similar to those found in soil after the 1998 tsunami.

Books & Authors

Nirmala Sitharaman releases coffee table book on the DDP – A journey towards self-reliance

On 27th October 2017, Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman released a coffee table book on the Department of Defence Production (DDP), titled 'A journey towards self-reliance'.

- A journey towards self-reliance is the first ever coffee table book on the Department of Defence Production (DDP). It narrates the post-independence years of development, production of arms, ammunition and defence equipment, with a view to achieve self-reliance for the Armed Forces of India.
- The book mentions about the Government of India's effort to establish India as a global manufacturing hub, under the 'Make in India' initiative.
- It honours the sincere efforts made by thousands of people, to mould the Indian defence industry.

Important Days

International Animation Day – October 28

On 28th October 2017, International Animation Day was observed all over the world.

28th October was declared as the International Animation Day by ASIFA (International Animated Film Association) in 2002. Each year, ASIFA groups around the world celebrate International Animation Day.

- They celebrate International Animation Day by screening animated films, organizing workshops, exhibiting artwork and stills, providing technical demonstrations, and helping to promote the art of animation.
- In India, International Animation Day is being celebrated every year since 2002 in various cities.