

# National Current Affairs

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## **Phase1 of Bharat Net project to be completed by December 2017**

The first phase of national optic fibre network christened as Bharat Net project will be completed by December 2017, thus providing internet access to 100,000 gram panchayats.

- It was announced in 'i-Bharat 2017' conference organised by industry body FICCI in association with Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology based on theme of 'ICT Elucidations for Unserved and Unsolved'.
- So far, Bharat Net has connected 83,000 gram panchayats. But now it is imperative to create fibre-first programme where government, as well as private sector join hands to achieve objective of doubling the reach of telecom fibre network in the country by 2020.
- BharatNet is Union Government's ambitious rural internet connectivity programme which is implemented by Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL). It is world's largest rural broadband connectivity programme using Optical fibre.
- The project is being funded by Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF).

## **Government makes use of Public Finance Management System mandatory for central schemes**

The Union Government has made use of Public Finance Management System (PFMS) mandatory for all central schemes to ensure that benefits of government schemes reach the last mile.

- It will help monitor the flow of funds to beneficiaries of different government welfare schemes.
- So far total of 613 Central Sector Schemes are covered under PFMS having 34.19 crore beneficiaries with help of 21.72 lakh programme registered implementing agencies.
- These schemes with a budgetary outlay of Rs.6, 66,644 crore covers over 31% of total Central Government expenditure during the current financial year 2017-18.
- The PFMS scheme has been rolled out by Controller General of Accounts at behest of Union Finance Ministry, Department of Department of Expenditure. It is an electronic fund tracking mechanism compiles, collates and makes available in real-time, information regarding all government schemes.

## **Indian Railways to revise flexi-fares system on premium trains**

The Indian Railways is planning to revise its flexi-fare system on premium trains such as Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Duronto.

- The Railway Board is considering proposal of selling half the seats (i.e. 50% seats) from existing 10% seats without any surge pricing
- The problem with present flexi-fare system having dynamic pricing is that fares rise soon after first 10% of tickets on a train are sold.
- The fares increase 10% with every 10% of seats sold with a maximum hike of 1.5 times normal fares in sleeper, air-conditioned chair car and two-tier AC classes and 1.4 times in three-tier AC.
- The revised flexi-fare system aims to be passenger-friendly in such way that half of passengers who book early can get advantage of relatively cheaper fare.
- The flexi-fare system introduced in September 2016 aims to generate additional revenues and reduce cross-subsidisation from freight through dynamic pricing of fares based on the demand.

#### **Centre releases Rs 8,698 cr as GST compensation to states**

Central Government has released Rs 8698 crore as compensation to states for revenue loss following implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST).

- All states except Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh have been given compensation for the first two months (July-August) after GST rollout.
- Under GST framework, a cess is levied on top of 28 per cent tax on luxury cars, demerit and sin Goods like aerated drink and tobacco. Compensation to states for any revenue loss on account of GST implementation has been paid from revenue collected through this cess.
- Rs. 8698 crore that has been paid to states as compensation is 58 per cent of the total cess revenue of Rs 15060 crore collected in July and August 2017.
- GST, which was rolled out on July 1, 2017 is a destination-based, single indirect tax that is levied on consumption of goods or use of services across India.

#### **Panel under A. Arumughaswamy begins probe into Former CM J.Jayalalithaa's death**

On 27th October 2017, panel under former Madras High Court judge A.Arumughaswamy started probe into the death of former Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa.

- The commission under the leadership of former Madras High Court judge A.Arumughaswamy was constituted by Tamil Nadu government on 25th September 2017.

- This commission was formed to probe the circumstances leading to the death of former Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa. This commission has called upon the acquainted persons to come forward and provide information before 22nd November 2017.
- The Commission would complete its inquiry and submit its report to the Tamil Nadu Government within three months of its constitution.

### **Army finalises mega Rs 40,000 crore procurement plan to replace ageing weapons**

Indian Army has finalised one of its biggest procurement plans for infantry modernisation at a cost of nearly Rs 40,000 crore to replace its ageing and obsolete weapons.

- Under this plan, around 7 lakh rifles, 44,000 light machine guns (LMGs) and nearly 44,600 carbines will be procured.
- Indian Army has been insisting to fast-track the procurement in back drop of evolving security threats along India's borders with Pakistan and China.
- Besides, Union Government has directed Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to expedite its work on various small arms, particularly on Light Machine Guns.
- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), Union Defense Ministry's highest decision making body on procurement will soon give a go-ahead for new 7.62 mm assault rifles.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **India to host UN wildlife summit in 2020**

On 28th October 2017, the UN for Environment Programme announced that, India will host the next United Nations (UN) global wildlife conference on migratory species (CMS COP13) in 2020.

- India will host the thirteenth session of United Nations' global wildlife conference on migratory species (CMS COP13) in 2020. The Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS COP) is held once in three years.
- It is the only international treaty devoted exclusively to migratory wildlife species. The summit aims to conserve terrestrial, marine, and avian migratory species on a global level.

### **Australian court disqualifies deputy PM for dual citizenship**

On 27th October 2017, Australia's High Court disqualified the deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce and four senators to sit in parliament due to a constitutional ban on dual citizens sitting in Parliament.

- This has been done in line with a constitution ban that prevents dual citizens from sitting in the Parliament.
- This decision has made the ruling coalition government lose its one-seat parliamentary majority and lead to a by-election. Disqualified senators are replaced by members of their own parties without an election.
- Barnaby Joyce will be able to stand for re-election, if he withdrew the New Zealand citizenship he unknowingly inherited from his father.

### **India and US hold 11th Trade Policy Forum Meeting in Washington**

On 26th October 2017, the 11th Trade Policy Forum (TPF) Meeting was held in Washington D.C., US.

- In the 11th Trade Policy Forum (TPF) Meeting, Indian Minister for Commerce and Industry, Suresh Prabhu had productive discussions with the United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Robert Lighthizer and his team.
- During the meeting, discussions were held on issues related to bilateral trade between India and US, areas of mutual cooperation, market access in agriculture, non-agricultural goods and services and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).
- Union Minister Suresh Prabhu strongly expressed India's concerns related to problems faced by Indian services companies in obtaining H-1B and L-1 visas.

### **India organises tourism promotion campaign in China's Sanya**

On 26th October 2017, India organised a tourism exchange seminar in China's Sanya city to create awareness about India's tourist destinations.

- Indian Consulate in Guangzhou, China organised 'India-China (Sanya) Tourism Exchange Seminar' at Sanya. The seminar was held to coincide with a 3-day Global Yoga Exchange Conference 2017 organised in Sanya.
- The seminar was attended by senior officials from Sanya Municipal Government, representatives of media organisations, business houses, academia travel agents and representatives from airlines.

### **First batch of Afghan Pilots complete 'Black Hawk' training in U.S.**

The first batch of the Afghan Air Force pilots completed their training in the United States for the newly-deployed modern UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

- The newly-trained batch of four Afghan pilots are expected to start services with the Afghan Air Force soon. The UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter is the U.S. Army's primary medium lift utility transport and air assault aircraft.
- The Afghan Air Force received the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters in October 2017. Afghanistan is expecting to receive around 159 Black Hawk helicopters in the future to transform the Afghan air force.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **SIDBI revamps portal for easy credit access**

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has revamped its portal [udyamimitra.in](http://udyamimitra.in) with enhanced features to provide easy access to credit and hand-holding services for micro small medium enterprises (MSME).

- In the market place, any bank, other than those requested, can also pick up the application for sanction, and this will be one of the best updates. The portal brings transparency and competition among lenders and removes the need to approach several banks individually.
- The portal is mobile-enabled and provides a self-assessment module inbuilt within it.
- It sends various information on registered MSMEs from time to time and also allows loan applications to be perused and picked up by multiple lenders.
- The revamped version of the portal is planned to leverage the experiences to create and implement a much larger platform to transform the digital landscape for MSME loans.

### **AU Small Finance Bank, SIDBI launch Rs. 200-cr fund for MSMEs**

AU Small Finance Bank has entered into a tie-up with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to launch Rs. 200 crore fund for providing loans to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

- As per the terms of this tie-up, AU Small Finance Bank and SIDBI will earmark a corpus of Rs100 crore each for lending in the current financial year.
- Term loans in the range of Rs. 25 lakh to Rs. 2 crore will be extended in the next 12-15 months to nearly 100 MSME units.

- 10% interest rate will be charged on these loans.
- SIDBI will play an advisory role, whereas all the processes including disbursement, monitoring and recovery will be handled by AU Small Finance Bank.

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## Business

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### **RCom to shut down its 2G mobile business in about a month**

The telecom company owned by Anil Ambani, The Reliance Communications, is planning to shut down its 2G mobile business by the end of November because the company is running under a debt of nearly Rs 45,000 crore. As a result 1,200 employees will lose their jobs.

- The company has not made any official announcement on the job cut yet but has released a statement on shutting down of its 2G business.
- The decision to the wind-up 2G mobile business comes days after the company also announced to wind-up DTH services after the license expires.
- In June 2017, RCom had signed a standstill agreement with the banks, under which it need not pay any interest or principal amount to banks till December 2018.
- The company has been given a reprieve by its lenders on loan repayments until the end of 2017, and the decision to wind up of businesses seems to be taken to meet the deadline for loan repayments.
- The company decided to adopt a 4G-focussed strategy for profitable growth of its wireless business.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **Cleartrip named 'Best Mobile App for Travel and Leisure' at Mobexx Awards 2017**

On 27th October 2017, online travel solutions provider Cleartrip was named the 'Best Mobile App for Travel and Leisure' at the Mobexx Awards 2017.

- The award was given to Cleartrip for the success it has had on the mobile platform. It is seen by many as the future of advertising and brand marketing.
- The Mobexx Awards recognise excellence in mobile marketing & advertising. The Mobexx Awards aims to set industry-wide benchmark in mobile engagement.

### **Jeff Bezos replaces Gates as world's richest person with \$90.6 billion fortune**

On 27th October 2017, Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder, replaced Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates as the richest person in the world.

- According to Forbes magazine, the wealth of Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder reached \$90.6 billion, compared to the \$90.1 billion of Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates.
- Jeff Bezos has been on the Forbes list of the richest billionaires since 1998, after his e-commerce business Amazon.com, Inc. went public.
- Forbes started tracking billionaires around the world in 1987. Jeff Bezos is the seventh person to hold the title of the world's richest person and the third American to top the global ranks apart from Bill Gates and Berkshire Hathaway's CEO Warren Buffett.

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## **Appointments & Resigns**

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### **Satya Gopal appointed chief secretary of Arunchal Pradesh**

Delhi Principal Home Secretary Satya Gopal has been transferred to Arunchal Pradesh as the chief secretary.

- The transfer of Satya Gopal has been made one-and-a-half months after he was appointed as the principal home secretary in the Delhi government.
- Delhi PWD's Principal Secretary Ashwani Kumar has been appointed as a link officer for the post of Delhi's principal home secretary till further order.

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## **Science & Technology**

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### **Scientists link new virus to kala-azar**

Scientists have found that parasite called *Leptomonas seymouri* hosting virus called Lepsey NLV1 may be also responsible for spread of kala-azar (visceral leishmaniasis).

- Earlier it was believed that parasite *Leishmania donovani* (sandfly) alone is responsible for spread of the dreaded infection.
- However, scientists are still not clear how parasites cause infection and how it manages to hide within body.



- The discovery portends new kind of treatment regime and may aid attempts to eradicating disease.
- Kala-azar or visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as black fever and Dumdum fever is most severe form of leishmaniasis.
- If untreated, kala-azar can kill within two years of onset of ailment.

### **OPV Vikram: L&T hand overs first defence vessel built in private shipyard to Coast Guard**

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) handed over offshore patrol vessel (OPV) named “Vikram” to the Indian Coast Guard.

- It is country’s first-ever such defence vessel to be built in a private shipyard.
- The vessel was indigenously developed in-house at L&T’s Kattupalli shipyard.
- Its entire design and construction processes have undergone dual certification from American Bureau of Shipping and Indian Registrar of Shipping.
- OPV Vikram is first of seven vessels for which by Ministry of Defence had awarded Rs. 1,432-crore contract to L&T in March 2015.
- It will be inducted into service by April 2018 after completion of extensive trials of equipment and machineries.

### **REPAIR: Scientists develop RNA editing tool to combat genetic disease**

Scientists from The Broad Institute and Massachusetts Institute of Technology in US have developed RNA Editing for Programmable A to I Replacement (REPAIR), a new gene editing tool therapies that can reverse disease-causing mutations in humans.

- REPAIR gene editing tool can tweak an individual RNA ‘letters’ in human cells without making changes to entire genome and can have profound potential as a tool for both research and disease treatment.
- The new tool can change single RNA nucleosides in mammalian cells in a programmable and precise fashion.
- To create REPAIR, scientists had systematically profiled CRISPR-Cas13 enzyme family for potential editor candidates. They had selected enzyme called PspCas13b from Prevotella bacteria which was most effective at inactivating RNA.
- REPAIR has ability to reverse disease-causing mutations at RNA level, as well as other potential therapeutic and basic science applications. It paves way for therapies that can reverse mutations and has profound potential as tool for both research and disease treatment
- RNA editing using REPAIR offers safer, more flexible way to make corrections in cell unlike permanent changes to genome required for DNA editing using CRISPR-



Cas9 gene editing technology. REPAIR can also fix mutations without tampering with genome as RNA naturally degrades making it potentially reversible fix.

### **Gadkari digitally flags off RORO ship from Chennai Port to Bangladesh**

On October 28, 2017, Union Minister of Shipping, Road Transport & Highways and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Nitin Gadkari digitally flagged off a Roll-On/Roll-Off (RoRo) ship from Chennai Port to Mongla port in Bangladesh.

- M.V. IDM DOODLE, a RoRo cum general cargo vessel carried an export consignment of 185 trucks by Ashok Leyland to Bangladesh.
- Export of these trucks was earlier done through land route by covering a distance of about 1500 km. Transport through the sea route will not only save about 15-20 days of travel time but will also be more cost effective.
- As the fuel consumption in terms of per tonne cargo is much lower via sea route, transportation by sea will also reduce carbon footprints on the environment.
- Roll-on/roll-off (RORO or ro-ro) ships are designed to carry wheeled cargo, such as cars, trucks, semi-trailer trucks, trailers, and railroad cars, that are driven on and off the ship on their own wheels or by using a platform.

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## **Sports**

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### **FIFA U-17 World Cup 2017 – Overview**

17th edition of FIFA U-17 World Cup took place in India from 6th – 28th October 2017. FIFA U-17 is a biennial international football tournament of men's under-17 national teams organised by Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).

- England has won the FIFA U-17 World Cup. In the final match, England defeated Spain by 5-2.
- Phil Foden of England has been adjudged tournament's best player and has been awarded 'Golden Ball'

### **Patna Pirates clinch third consecutive Pro Kabaddi title**

On 28th October 2017, Patna Pirates defeated Gujarat Fortune giants by 55-38 at the finals in Chennai and won the fifth edition of Pro Kabaddi, for the third consecutive time.

- Patna Pirates' Raider Pardeep Narwal won the Most Valuable Player and Best Raider awards in the 2017 Vivo Pro Kabaddi League season.
- Pardeep Narwal secured top score in the final with 19 points. Patna Pirates' Defender Jaideep also played an important role securing 5 points in the finals.
- Patna Pirates is led by Pardeep Narwal and coached by Ram Mehar Singh. It is owned by Rajesh V. Shah. 2017 Vivo Pro Kabaddi League season is the fifth season of Pro Kabaddi League.

### **Rwanda gets first cricket stadium**

Rwanda's first cricket stadium was inaugurated on 29th Oct 2017 by President Paul Kagame as a permanent home for developing the sport in the country.

- The Rwandan Cricket Stadium Foundation was set up by Alby Shale, the son of a late British politician and cricket lover who visited Rwanda to do aid work.
- Rwanda also holds the world record for women after Cathia Uwamahoro, a national team cricket player, became the first woman to bat for 26 hours.
- Rwanda's national cricket association estimates that only around 4,000 people currently play cricket.
- The new stadium has been built to international standards, making it a rarity in east Africa.

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## **Important Days**

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### **World Stroke Day – October 29**

On 29th October 2017, World Stroke Day was observed all over the world.

- The theme for World Stroke Day 2017 is: What's your reason for preventing stroke?  
". Stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Without blood, brain cells can be damaged or die.
- On the World Stroke day, organizations around the world conduct events emphasizing education, testing, and initiatives to improve the damaging effects of stroke worldwide.
- World Stroke Organization (WSO) conducts Stroke awareness campaigns every year. The World Stroke Campaign's goodwill ambassadors include Indian actress Rani Mukerji, former Miss Egypt Dalia El Behery and cyclist Alberto Contador.