

National Current Affairs

ITBP gets “GSAT-6” communication satellite to monitor Chinese border

In a bid to enhance security after the Doklam standoff with China, Union Government has armed the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) with access to ‘GSAT-6’ communication satellite’s feeds to track activities along Himalayan border.

- Indian Space Research Organisation’s (ISRO) geostationary communication satellite, GSAT-6 was launched in August 2015.
- Besides performing its primary task of communication, it also performs multiple tasks such as aiding in navigation, collecting data and image mapping.
- RK Pachnanda, the Director General of ITBP has stated that ITBP has been designated the nodal agency for obtaining and channelising GSAT-6 communication satellite.
- While supervising the feeds, if ITBP notices anything suspicious or untoward along the Sino-Indian border or along the Jammu and Kashmir border with Pakistan, it will alert the government and security agencies.

Home Ministry eases Arms Rules to woo investments

The Union Home Ministry has liberalised Arms Rules to encourage investments in manufacture of arms, ammunition and weapons systems.

- The rules were liberalised with aim of making India a regional leader in supplying small arms to neighbouring countries as well as become an export hub.
- Under the new rules, licence granted for manufacturing will be valid for life-time of licensee company.
- It does away with requirement of renewal every five years. Now, manufactures will now be able to continue manufacturing on their old licence.
- Similarly, condition that small arms and light weapons produced by manufacturer should be sold to Central government or State governments with prior approval of Home Ministry also has been dispensed with.
- Now, enhancement of capacity up to 15% will also not require any approval of government. Moreover, the licence fee also has been reduced and rules in connection have also been liberalised
- The liberalised rules will apply to licences granted by Home Ministry for small arms and ammunition and those granted by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) for other defence equipment.

India, Japan begins three-day anti-submarine drill

In a bid to deepen operational coordination in the strategically important sea lanes, Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) began a three-day anti-submarine warfare exercise in the Indian Ocean region on October 29, 2017.

- On October 29, 2017, Japan's two P-3C Orion jets, which are anti-submarine warfare aircraft, landed at naval air station Hansa in Goa to take part in the drill.
- In this exercise, Indian Navy is represented by two P-8 I long-range maritime reconnaissance anti-submarine warfare aircrafts.
- During this three-day exercise, personnel from both navies will have extensive interaction to evolve a "concept of joint operations".
- This exercise can also be termed as a measure to counter China's growing presence in the Indo- Pacific region.

India sends first wheat shipment to Afghanistan via Chabahar port

India has flagged off shipment of wheat for Afghanistan through Iran's Chabahar port.

- It was flagged off from Kandla port in Gujarat by External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and her Afghan counterpart Salahuddin Rabbani through video conferencing.
- Chabahar port is strategically located in Sistan-Balochistan province on energy-rich Iran's southern coast in Gulf of Oman near its border with Pakistan and can be easily accessed from India's western coast.
- The first consignment transfer was part of India's commitment to send 1.1 million tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan on grant basis. Afghanistan will receive entire amount in six different instalments over coming months.
- The consignment will be transported to Afghanistan from Chabahar through land route.
- The shipment of wheat is considered as landmark moment as it paves way for operationalisation of Chabahar port as an alternate, reliable and robust connectivity for landlocked Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.
- The operationalisation of Chabahar port will open up new opportunities for trade and transit from and to Afghanistan and enhance trade and commerce between India, Afghanistan and Iran and wider region in wake of Pakistan denying transit access to New Delhi for trade with the two countries.

Home Ministry set to take over Bureau of Civil Aviation Security

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is set to move a proposal before Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for taking over Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS).

- BCAS, currently under the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) is responsible for laying down standards, policies and measures with regard to security of all commercial flights.
- Multiple security agencies working at airports, including immigration officials, Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) security personnel, local police and Intelligence Bureau (IB) are bound by regulations passed by BCAS.
- The decision is based on security audit conducted by team of experts from MHA, IB, CISF and BCAS which had recommended change. Once CCS gives its approval, CISF will assume larger role in airport security.
- The new set-up will help in better coordination and monitoring, since CISF, IB and state intelligence all report to MHA.
- It will also speed up issue of security clearances for airlines and airports as in the past, there have been inordinate delays in granting clearances due to differences between MHA and MoCA on grounds that airlines and airports have not complied with norms despite guidelines.

International Current Affairs

India, UAE second strategic talks held in Abu Dhabi

On October 29, 2017, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) held second round of strategic dialogue in Abu Dhabi.

- India-UAE Second Strategic Dialogue was held with an objective to deepen bilateral cooperation in various areas such as trade and investment.
- M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs led the Indian delegation, whereas UAE side was represented by Dr. Anwar Gargash, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.
- Both Ministers held discussions on a range of bilateral, regional and international matters of mutual interest.
- First strategic dialogue between India and UAE was held in January 2017 in New Delhi, India.
- U AE is India's third largest trading partner and also one of the top investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments.

Banking & Finance

Transcorp launches pre-paid card in association with Yes Bank

Foreign Exchange and inward remittance service provider company Transcorp International has launched a platinum pre-paid card in association with Yes Bank.

- This card can be used for transactions in stores and ATMs across the country.
- It can even be used by companies/organisation to disburse wages and salaries to those employees who do not have a bank account.
- Transcorp-Yes Bank pre-paid card has been launched in association with RUPAY, powered by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- This card can either be prefunded or money can be loaded in by the employer or by the card holder himself.
- Maximum limit for KYC (Know Your Customer) compliant cards is Rs. 100000, whereas for non- KYC compliant cards, maximum amount that can be loaded is Rs. 10000.

Business

APAI launches membership cards – Flysecure

On October 25, 2017, Air Passengers Association of India (APAI) launched its unique membership card titled “Flysecure”, which provides insurance cover related to air travel.

- APAI card “Flysecure” is available in three variants – Annual price of Rs. 1500 for Silver, Rs 3000 for Gold and Rs 5000 for Platinum.
- Under ‘Flysecure’, passenger can avail insurance cover for every possible loss/damage while travelling, such as medical reimbursement, theft of identity, wallet loss, burglary at home while travelling etc.
- All variants of ‘Flysecure’ will cover unlimited flights during the 365 days validity period. Conventional travel insurance plans provide cover only for a specific flight.
- Any Indian citizen between the age of 18 and 70 years can buy ‘Flysecure’ during domestic and international travel.
- APAI has collaborated with TATA-AIG, a renowned name in travel insurance segment and a US based company ‘Refundme’ for designing and launching the membership card.

Dassault to invest \$116 mn in venture with Reliance Aerospace

French Aircraft manufacturer, Dassault Aviation will invest over USD 116 million in a joint venture with Anil Ambani-led Reliance Aerospace to manufacture aircraft components of 36 Rafale fighter jets, which India has agreed to purchase from France.

- As per the offset obligation under the India-France deal for 36 Rafale Fighter Jets signed in 2016, Dassault Aviation is under an obligation to manufacture several components of the fighter jets in collaboration with an Indian company.
- Thus, it has entered into a joint venture with Reliance Aerospace and formed an entity named Dassault Reliance Aerospace Limited (DRAL) for this purpose.
- Foundation stone laying ceremony of the Dassault Reliance Aerospace Limited's (DRAL's) manufacturing facility was held on October 28, 2017 at Dhirubhai Ambani Aerospace Park in Mihan Special Economic Zone (SEZ) near Nagpur airport, Maharashtra.
- It is to be noted that this joint venture is the largest ever foreign direct investment in the defence sector in India.

Awards & Recognition

Anupam Kher receives Parmod Mahajan Smriti Award

On October 29, 2017, veteran Bollywood actor Anupam Kher received Parmod Mahajan Smriti Award in Pune.

- Saira Banu, who moved Supreme Court seeking a ban on instantaneous 'Triple Talaq' among Muslims is the second recipient of Pramod Mahjan Smriti Award.
- The awards were presented by Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar.
- The award was instituted by Pune-based organisation 'Muktachhand' in memory of Late Pramod Mahajan, who was the leader from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a former Union Cabinet Minister.

Venezuela's opposition awarded European Union's Sakharov Prize for human rights

The democratic opposition and political prisoners in Venezuela won the European Union's Sakharov Prize for human rights on October 26th 2017. The prize amount of this award is 50,000euros (\$59,000).

- The award was created in the name after Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov in 1988 to honour individuals or groups who defend human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- The European Parliament wished to reward the courage of students and politicians fighting for freedom in the face of a repressive government.
- The two other nominees for the prize were Guatemalan human rights activist Aura Lolita Chavez Izcaquic and journalist Dawit Isaak, imprisoned without trial in Eritrea since 2001.

Appointments & Resigns

Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar assumes charge as the Vice Chief of Naval Staff (VCNS)

On 30th October 2017, Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar took charge as the Vice Chief of Naval Staff (VCNS) from Vice Admiral Karambir Singh at a formal ceremony held at South Block, New Delhi.

- Vice Admiral Karambir Singh would take charge as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Eastern Naval Command in Vishakapatnam. Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar has taken charge as Vice Chief of Naval Staff (VCNS).
- Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar is an alumni of the National Defence Academy. He is a specialist in Missiles & Gunnery. He has done the Naval Higher Command Course. He is also an alumni of the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, USA.

Suresh Raina appointed as brand ambassador of Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation

On 29th October 2017, cricketer Suresh Raina was appointed as the brand ambassador of the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation (GMC) at a programme at Ghaziabad.

- Suresh Raina is a cricketer and a resident of Ghaziabad. He has been appointed as the brand ambassador of the Ghaziabad Municipal Corporation (GMC).
- Ghaziabad is the only city among 16 municipal corporations in Uttar Pradesh which has been declared open defecation free.
- This programme will help the municipal corporation in spreading awareness about sanitation. V.K. Jindal, Joint Secretary and Director of Swachh Bharat Mission, and Ghaziabad Municipal Commissioner C.P. Singh were present during the occasion.

Environment

Four Asian vulture species from India gets highest protection under CMS

Several species of vultures including four from India on their migratory routes were awarded highest protection by the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).

- They were among 34 species which were awarded highest protection during CMS Summit held in Manila in submissions made by 24 countries from Asia, Africa, Americas, Europe and Oceania.
- Species awarded highest protection are Asian vultures are red-headed vulture, white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture and slender-billed vulture.
- They are faced with threats such as poisoning, hunting, collision with electricity cables and habitat degradation.
- A subspecies of black noddy, yellow bunting and lesser and great grey shrike are other avians listed on CMS protected list.
- Whale shark, which inhabits the Indian Ocean also got global protection.
- Blue shark and common guitarfish also was awarded highest protection.
- Widespread over-fishing is driving many shark species, including whale shark to extinction. India is among 121 nations whose waters are home to sharks threatened with near extinction. The summit held in Manila was largest in the 38-year history of the Convention, which is also known as Bonn Convention after German city in which it was signed. Delegates from 91 countries had attended the summit.
- Manila summit adopted resolution to develop and manage protected area networks within the ASEAN region.

Science & Technology

NASA's GRACE-1 and GRACE-2 satellites end operations

On 27th October 2017, NASA's GRACE-1 and GRACE-2 satellites ended operations after experiencing problems due to failure of several battery cells.

- NASA said that, the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) mission, carried out in cooperation with the German space agency DLR, had ended science operations after the retirement of one of its twin spacecraft GRACE-1 and GRACE-2.
- The satellites had been experiencing problems due to failure of several battery cells, which caused a loss of contact recently. GRACE-2 is expected to reenter in December 2017 or January 2018.
- GRACE-1's batteries remain healthy. It will reenter in the start of 2018 and operate for the remainder of 2018 to collect calibration data.

- NASA and DLR had launched the two GRACE spacecrafts in March 2002 on a five-year mission. Scientists use measurements from these satellites to track motions of water around the Earth.

Sports

Yonex French Open Badminton 2017 – Overview

Yonex French Open 2017 Badminton tournament was held from 24th – 29th October, 2017 in Paris, France.

- French Open Badminton Tournament is held annually since 1909 in France.
- Winners of Yonex French Open Badminton 2017 – Summary:

Category	Winner	Runner-up
Men's Singles	Kidambi Srikanth (India)	Kenta Nishimoto (Japan)
Women's Singles	Tai Tzu Ying (Chinese Taipei)	Akane Yamaguchi (Japan)
Men's Doubles	Lee Jhe-Huei & Lee Yang (Chinese Taipei)	Mathias Boe & Carsten Mogensen (Denmark)
Women's Doubles	Apriyani Rahayu & Greysia Polii (Indonesia)	Lee So Hee & Shin Seung Chan (South Korea)
Mixed Doubles	Tontowi Ahmad & Liliyana Natsir (Indonesia)	Zheng Siwei & Chen Quingchen (China)

Saudi to allow women into sports stadiums from 2018

Women in Saudi Arabia have been allowed to attend matches at sports stadiums from 2018.

- This decision is a part of economic and social reforms implemented by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.
- Saudi Arabia is considered as one of the countries having tightest restrictions on women. As per the current rules, women are not allowed in sports stadiums.
- Earlier, Saudi Arabian Royal declaration permitted women to drive, starting from June 2018.
- Mohammed bin Salman is implementing reforms under 'Vision 2030' plan which seeks to prepare Saudi Arabia for the post-oil era.

- In order to accommodate families from early 2018, Saudi Arabian authorities have started preparation to set up restaurants, cafes and video screens at three stadiums in Riyadh, Jeddah and Damman.

Virat Kohli becomes fastest to score 9,000 runs in ODIs

On 29th October 2017, Virat Kohli became the sixth Indian and the fastest to score 9000 runs in ODI, during a match against New Zealand in Kanpur.

- Virat Kohli became the fastest player to score 9000 runs in ODI during the 3rd ODI against New Zealand in Kanpur.
- It took Virat Kohli 194 innings to achieve this milestone. He has broken the record of South African batsman AB de Villiers as the fastest cricketer to reach this milestone.
- Mahendra Singh Dhoni had reached this milestone of 9000 ODI runs in 2016. Other Indians who have achieved this milestone are Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, Sourav Ganguly and Mohammad Azharuddin.

Italy top medal tally, Chinese crowned 'Champion of Champions'

On 29th October 2017, Italy topped the medal count and Chinese were crowned 'Champion of Champions', in the ISSF World Cup Final 2017, in New Delhi.

- Italy topped the medal count by winning 2 gold, 3 silver, 1 bronze medals. It was followed by China in 2nd position with 2 gold, 2 silver and 5 bronze medals.
- India, which hosted the event, finished in the 7th position overall. It won 1 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze medal.
- India's Jitu Rai and Heena Sidhu pair won gold in mixed team 10m air pistol. Sangram Dahiya won silver in men's double trap. Amanpreet Singh won bronze in men's 50m pistol.
- China's Mengxue Zhang and Gengcheng Sui were crowned as 'Champion of Champions' in pistol and rifle respectively.

Max Verstappen wins Mexican GP, Lewis Hamilton wins the 2017 Formula One championship title

On 29th October 2017, Max Verstappen won the Mexican Grand Prix title and Lewis Hamilton won the 2017 Formula One championship title

- On 29th October 2017, Max Verstappen of Red Bull team won the Mexican Grand Prix, at Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez race track, in Mexico. This is his third victory in Formula 1.

- Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes finished in the 9th place in the Mexican Grand Prix. He won the Formula One Drivers Championship 2017 title. He has won this title for the fourth time.
- The Constructor's Championship was won by Mercedes team this year. It has retained the Constructors' Championship for the fourth consecutive year.

Obituary

Former BCCI GM M.V. Sridhar passes away

On October 30 2017, Dr. M.V. Sridhar, 51 a Former Hyderabad Ranji Trophy star and ex-secretary of the Hyderabad Cricket Association passed away.

- He has the distinction of the third-highest individual score in the history of the Ranji Trophy against Andhra in January 1994.
- He was also serving as the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) General Manager from 2013.

Gautam Adhikari, co-founder of SAB TV dies at 67

On 27th October 2017, Gautam Adhikari, Chairman and whole time Director of the SAB group, passed away after suffering a heart attack.

- He was the Chairman and whole time Director of the SAB group.
- The SAB group started as a small venture between Gautam and his brother Markand Adhikari in 1985. It became the first publicly-listed television production company in India in 1995.