

National Current Affairs

CCEA approves revised price of ethanol under EBP for OMCs

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved revision in price of ethanol under Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme for supply to Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs).

- The revised price was fixed at Rs. 40.85 per litre under EBP and will be applicable for forthcoming sugar season 2017-18. GST and transportation charges will be payable additionally.
- This price was re-examined in context of firming of sugar prices and falling crude prices and consequent under-recoveries of OMCs.
- The approval will facilitate continued policy of Government in providing price stability and remunerative prices for ethanol suppliers.
- It will also help in reducing dependency on crude oil imports, saving in foreign exchange and benefits to environment.

Goa ranks top, Bihar at bottom of Gender Vulnerability Index

Goa ranked at top and Bihar featured at the lowest in the first ever Gender Vulnerability Index (GVI) released by child rights organisation 'Plan India'. GVI provides information on nature and magnitude of various problems affecting children, particularly girls, in difficult circumstances.

- Goa has topped the index with a GVI score of 0.656, whereas Bihar is at the bottom of the table with a GVI score of 0.410
- National average GVI score is 0.5314. On parameter of 'Education', Himachal Pradesh topped the list, whereas Delhi was placed at the bottom.
- Kerala has been adjudged as the best state on 'Health' parameter, while Bihar ranked as the worst state.

Cabinet approves trade Agreement between India and Ethiopia

The Union Cabinet has approved trade Agreement between India and Ethiopia for strengthening and promoting trade and economic co-operation.

- The agreement was signed in October 2017 during state visit of President Ram Nath Kovind to Ethiopia from 4th to 6th October, 2017. T

- The agreement will replace existing trade Agreement signed between both countries in 1982. It will also provide for all necessary measures to encourage trade, economic cooperation, investment and technical co-operation.

Inter-State Council reconstituted with PM Modi as chairman

The Inter-State Council has been reconstituted with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as its Chairman and six Union ministers and all chief ministers as members.

- Inter-State Council investigates and advises on disputes between states.
- The Union ministers who will be members of the reconstituted council are:
 - Rajnath Singh
 - Sushma Swaraj (External Affairs)
 - Arun Jaitley (Finance)
 - Nitin Gadkari (Road Transport)
 - Thaawar Chand Gehlot (Social Justice and Empowerment)
 - Nirmala Sitharaman (Defence)
- Chief Ministers of all states and Union territories having legislative assemblies will also be members of the council.

Assam signs MoUs with Singapore for skilling state's youth

On 1st November 2017, Assam government signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Terms of Reference (ToR) with Singapore for skilling youth of the state.

- The MoU and ToR for North East Skills Centre (NESC) was signed between Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship Department, of Assam and ITE Education Service, Singapore, in Guwahati, Assam.
- A MoU for Guwahati City Greening was signed between the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority and Singapore Corporation Enterprise.
- The Assam government's project for beautification and improvement of quality of life of Guwahati is named 'Guwahati Open Space and Park Integrator (GOPI) Network'.
- This project would be developed on the model of "Park Connector Network" and implemented by National Park Authority in Singapore.

Haryana to give lifetime pensions to 'Hindi Satyagrahis'

On 31st October 2017, the Haryana government announced lifetime monthly pension of Rs 10,000 for Hindi Satyagrahis and few more assistances.

- The announcements were made during closing ceremony of Swarna Jayanti celebrations at Mahabir Stadium, in Hisar, Haryana. Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu was the chief guest.
- The Haryana government would provide lifetime monthly pension of Rs 10,000 for Hindi Satyagrahis which would continue to be provided to their widows after their death.
- It also announced increased monthly assistance to soldiers from Haryana who took part in the World War-II, and their widows, from Rs 4,500 to Rs 10,000.
- Haryana government has identified people imprisoned during emergency and given them free medical treatment and free travel on state buses under Shubrajyotsana programme. The government also announced 10 hours electricity supply to farmers from 1st November 2017.

Karnataka's Mudhol Hound becomes First Indian Dog Breed to be trained for Army Duty

Karnataka's Mudhol Hound, an Indian dog breed, is being trained to serve in the Indian Army, making it the First Indian Dog Breed to be trained for Army Duty.

- The Army's Remount and Veterinary Corps (RVC) centre is training the Mudhol Hound dogs. It has almost completed training six hounds.
- After their training, the dogs will be posted in Jammu and Kashmir at the end of 2017. The dogs were native to Karnataka. They were sent to Meerut centre. They have been undergoing intense training for a year.

Government unveils draft norms for drones, proposes unique IDs

On 1st November 2017, the Civil Aviation Ministry released draft norms for the unmanned aircraft systems that stated that, drones for civilian use will require a Unique Identification Number and Radio Frequency tags.

- As per the draft norms, Drones require Unique Identification Numbers Drones, Radio Frequency tags and return to home option and anti-collision lights.
- Nano drones (weighing below 250 g) are exempted from seeking one-time approval, including the unique number requirement. Mini Drones (weighing between 2 kg and 25 kg) need to comply with remote pilot approval requirement.
- All drones are proposed to be operated in visual line of sight, during day time only and below 200 feet. Drones are barred to be operated within 5 km of an airport.
- They are restricted from within 50 km from international border and beyond 500 m (horizontal) into sea along the coastline.
- Drones are not allowed within 5 km radius from Vijay Chowk (in national capital) and also from a mobile platform such as a moving vehicle, ship or aircraft.

Odisha imposes 7-month ban on fishing to protect Olive Ridley turtles

The Odisha Government has imposed seven-months ban i.e. til May 2018, on fishing in the Puri coast in order to protect the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtle.

- This ban comes prior to arrival of Olive Ridley turtles for nesting in the winter season along the east coast of Odisha.
- Every year 5 lakh to 10 lakh Olive Ridley turtles come to the state during winters for mass nesting in Rushikulya river mouth and Gahirmatha marine sanctuary along Odisha coast.
- The restriction is imposed in accordance with provisions of Orissa Marine Fishing Regulation Act (OMFRA), 1982 and provisions of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- Due to this ban, around 26,000 traditional marine fishermen in coastal Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts are likely to be affected.
- State Forest Department has set up turtle protection camps including 3 offshore camps in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary. It also has set up on-shore camp in Gahirmatha marine sanctuary.

International Current Affairs

US approves \$1 billion deal to service Qatar's F-15 fighter jets

US has approved \$1.1 billion contract to service Qatar's F-15 fighter jets despite diplomatic stand-off between Gulf emirate and its neighbours.

- The contract will service Qatar's F-15QA jets and build them ground facilities and hardened bunkers.
- The new maintenance and training facilities will also come with improved cyber security services, mission critical computer resources, support services, force protection services.
- In recent times, Qatar has been locked in a bitter dispute with US's other Arab allies in the region, led by Saudi Arabia.

World's third largest book fair opens in Sharjah

World's third largest book fair, Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF) 2017, opened pm November 1, 2017 in Sharjah, UAE.

- SIBF 2017 has been organised by Sharjah Book Authority (SBA). The fair will continue for 11 days.
- Theme of SIBF 2017 is 'A World in My Book'.
- As United Kingdom is SIBF 2017 'Country of Honour', a special programme will be held featuring elite British authors and prominent literary figures.
- The fair showcases more than 1.5 million book titles and 1650 publishing houses from 60 countries.
- It is to be noted that Sharjah has been declared as the 'World Book Capital 2019' by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

7th Asia Ministerial Energy Roundtable held in Bangkok

The 7th Asian Ministerial Energy Roundtable (AMER7) was held in Bangkok, Thailand from 1-3 November 2017. It was hosted by Government of Thailand.

- The event was key feature of global energy dialogue promoted under the neutral banner of the International Energy Forum. India is the current chair of IEF which is promoting the AMER – a biennial event bringing together Energy Ministers and experts from Asian countries.

Indiana, Karnataka in pact for sister-state ties

Indiana, a State in the US, and Karnataka have signed an agreement to establish sister-state ties for cooperation in economic, educational and cultural fields.

- The agreement was signed between Indiana Governor Eric J Holcomb and Priyank Khage, Karnataka Minister for IT, BT and Tourism. The Indiana delegation is on a tour in India and visited a few US companies.
- Indiana and Karnataka will focus on workforce development, academic co-operation, information and communications technologies, advanced manufacturing and materials, life sciences, agriculture and agriculture technology, automotive and aerospace and aviation.
- Through partnerships with companies like Infosys and Wipro, Indiana has become closely linked to Karnataka.

India, Kazakhstan joint exercise "Prabal Dostyk- 2017" begins in Himachal Pradesh

On 2nd November 2017, Indian and Kazakhstan armies began a 14-day joint exercise "Prabal Dostyk- 2017" in Himachal Pradesh, to strengthen bilateral relations and exchange skills and experience.

- This is the second joint military exercise between India and Kazakhstan. The first edition of “Prabal Dostyk” was held in Kazakhstan in 2016.
- The joint exercise is aimed at improving the military relationship between India and Kazakhstan and achieving interoperability between the two armies.
- The joint exercise aims to acquaint the forces with each other’s operating procedures with focus on counter- insurgency and counter-terrorism operations under the UN’s mandate.
- Senior military observers of India and Kazakhstan would witness the validation phase of the joint exercise.

Banking & Finance

Yes Bank Unveils Bhim Yes Pay

Private sector bank, Yes Bank has unveiled BHIM YES PAY which is being termed as India’s 1st wallet that is fully integrated with all the IndiaStack APIs and National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) products.

- BHIM YES PAY is currently available for Android Users and will soon be available for iOS users.
- Around 5.5 lakh customers of Yes Bank are currently registered on BHIM YES PAY.
- In addition to other payment infrastructure like Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), BHIM YES PAY has been integrated with three other products of National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) viz. RuPay Virtual Card, BharatQR and Bharat Bill Payment Service (BBPS).

Science & Technology

BadRabbit ransomware

Mass attacks of ransomware called Bad Rabbit were observed recently in Russia.

The BadRabbit attack mainly had affected Russia but also caused flight delays at Odessa airport in southern Ukraine and disrupted electronic payments in Kiev metro.

NASA spots 20 planets that may host alien life

Scientists using data from NASA's Kepler telescope have discovered 20 new potentially habitable exoplanets that may host alien life.

- Some of these planets take relatively long time to complete single orbit, with longest taking 395 Earth days. The fastest orbit is 18 Earth days.

Indian Army releases Integrated Quarter Master Package Software Application

Indian Army has formally launched Integrated Quarter Master Package (IQMP) software application for automating various logistics related functions of an Army Unit.

- IQMP is web based software developed by Army Software Development Centre in association with TCS Ltd. It will replace numerous legacy applications such as 'Vastra' and 'Quarter Master Package'.
- It can be dynamically configured to meet specific requirements of various types of Army units.
- It is capable of sharing information and data with other software applications in domain of logistics management.
- The IQMP software has been developed with aim of bringing speed, accuracy and transparency in handling logistics aspects in unit.
- It will help in effective logistics management and decision making, thereby assisting Indian Army units to be battle ready all time.
- It will also play an important role in achieving automation of Indian Army and play important role towards 'Digital Army' in consonance with Government's 'Digital India initiative'.

Business

EESL receives \$454 mn funding from Global Environment Facility for energy efficiency programs

Global Environment Facility (GEF), an international partnership of 183 countries, International development banks, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will provide \$454 million funding for energy-efficiency projects run by Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL).

- Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) is leading implementation of energy efficiency projects across India. It is promoted by four public sector firms in the

energy sector viz. NTPC Ltd, Power Grid Corp. of India Ltd., Rural Electrification Corp. Ltd and Power Finance Corp. Ltd

- \$454 million funding to EESL comprises of a GEF grant of \$20 million and co-financing of \$434 million in the form of loans and equity. The loan component also includes \$200 million loan from the Asian Development Bank.

Walmart India launched its first fulfillment centre in Mumbai

After signing a memorandum of understanding with the Maharashtra government, Walmart India on 2nd Nov 2017 has announced its plans to launch its Cash and Carry business in Mumbai to enable small businesses.

- The global chain recently signed an MoU with the Maharashtra government to build 15 Cash and Carry stores under the brand 'Best Price' in the state. Of these, two stores have already been set up.
- As part of the growth plans in Maharashtra and with the objective of catering to the business needs of small businesses, resellers, kirana stores, office and institutions and HoReCa members of Mumbai city and neighbouring areas, Walmart India is planning to open a Fulfillment Center (FC) in the city.
- This FC will bring in almost 1,500 direct and indirect jobs to the city and help develop SME suppliers in the state.
- The FC will contribute to the State and local economy by creating over 1,500 direct and indirect local jobs, developing SME suppliers, enhancing women's economic empowerment and empowering local communities.
- Members will be able to shop from the comforts of their premises in four ways – by browsing and placing orders through its website www.bestprice.in ; through Best Price mobile app; by dialling the Call Centre (0120-4878888 and 180030101911) and through various Kirana Relationship Managers.

Asia Index launches S&P BSE 100 ESG Index

Asia Index Pvt Ltd, a joint venture of S&P Dow Jones Indices and BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange), has launched an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) index.

- The ESG Index has been launched to measure the exposure to securities meeting sustainability investing criteria. Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD & CEO of BSE, said that, this index would help to attract ESG-Focused investors.
- The S&P BSE 100 ESG Index uses the S&P BSE 100 as its universe. It excludes all tobacco producing companies, and companies with tobacco sales greater than 10 %.
- It also excludes all companies producing controversial weapons and all companies at or below the bottom 5 % of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) score.

- The index is rebalanced annually in June and is weighted by float adjusted market capitalisation and is calculated in Indian rupees and US dollars.

Awards & Recognition

Girish Karnad awarded 2017 Tata Literature Live! Lifetime Achievement

Award Veteran actor and playwright Girish Karnad will be honoured by Tata Literature Live! Lifetime Achievement Award 2017 at literature festival's annual awards ceremony to be held in Mumbai.

- His critically acclaimed plays in era of 1960s are 'Yayati' (1961), The Historical 'Tughlaq' (1964).
- His three seminal works 'Hayavadana' (1971), 'Naga-mandala' (1988) and 'Taledanda' (1990) have earned international praise. He is also the recipient of Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awards.

Chanda kochhar, Priyanka Chopra featured on Forbes 100 most powerful women in the world

ICICI Bank Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD) Chanda Kochhar and Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra have featured on the list of the world's 100 most powerful women compiled by Forbes.

- The overall list was topped by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. She has retained the top position for the seventh consecutive year and 12 times in total.
- Second position is occupied by UK Prime Minister Theresa May. Third place was secured by Melinda Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.
- PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi is at the 11th position. Chanda Kochhar, CEO & MD of ICICI was ranked 32 on the list. HCL Corp. CEO Roshni Nadar Malhotra took the 57th position.
- Other Indians on the list are Shobhana Bhartia, chairperson and editorial director for HT Media, at the 92nd place and Priyanka Chopra, at 97. The list covered four metrics—money, media presence, spheres of influence and impact.

Mumbai's restored Royal Opera House bags UNESCO heritage award

On 1st November 2017, Royal Opera House in Charni Road, Mumbai, was awarded the 2017 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

- The Royal Opera House was closed to the public in 1993. It was reopened in 2016 after restoration
- It was originally inaugurated by Britain's King George V in 1911 and completed in 1916. It is currently owned by Maharaja Joytendrasinhji Jadeja and Maharani Kumud Kumari Jadeja of Gondal, Gujarat.
- Honorary director of the heritage site, Ashish Doshi, said pictures taken by an Australian journalist in 1914 helped them replicate the structure.
- While restoring the building, architect Abha Narain Lambah provided facilities such as modern acoustics, sound, lighting and air conditioning to visitors.

Appointments & Resigns

Ajay Bisaria appointed India's high commissioner to Pakistan

Senior diplomat Ajay Bisaria was appointed India's High Commissioner to Pakistan.

- He will succeed Gautam Bambawale, who was posted to China. He is a 1987-batch IFS officer. Presently, he is India's Ambassador to Poland.
- He had, earlier, held the position of Private Secretary to Prime Minister from 1999 to 2004.

Paytm Payments Bank appoints Sudhanshu Jain as CFO

On 1st November 2017, Paytm Payments Bank appointed former ICICI Bank executive Sudhanshu Jain as its Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

- Sudhanshu Jain has 14 years of experience across internal audit, finance and borrowing roles. He was earlier assistant general manager and head of borrowing at the foreign exchange desk at ICICI Bank.
- At Paytm, Jain will be in charge of all financial and regulatory management functions for the Paytm Payments Bank and oversee its finances and expansion plans.
- Jain graduated in commerce from St. Xavier's College, Kolkata, and holds degrees in chartered accountancy and company secretaryship.

Rajesh Vaishnaw appointed as High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Malta

Shri Rajesh Vaishnaw who was an IFS Officer in the year 1996, presently Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs has been appointed as the next High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Malta.

Gatorade signs Neeraj Chopra as Brand Ambassador

On 1st November 2017, junior world record holder javelin thrower, Neeraj Chopra was appointed as brand ambassador for Gatorade, sports drinks giant, in a partnership up to 2021.

- Neeraj Chopra is a 19 year old javelin thrower. He has been signed as brand ambassador for Gatorade.
- He would work with Gatorade India's Gatorade Sports Science Institute during the period of the partnership till 2021 to better understand his training and match day nutrition.
- Gatorade is currently manufactured by PepsiCo and is distributed in over 80 countries. Gatorade is the official sports drink of various athletic organizations and also provides supplies of the drinks to sponsored teams.

Environment

Allahabad to get India's first black buck conservation reserve

On October 31, 2017, Uttar Pradesh State cabinet took a decision to make India's first conservation reserve for black buck in Meja Forest Division of Allahabad.

- Among five major decisions taken by Uttar Pradesh State Government during cabinet meeting on October 31, 2017, decision on black buck conservation reserve in Meja, Allahabad is considered as the most important one.
- Uttar Pradesh State Government believes that this decision will not only protect black bucks but will also attract tourists.
- The blackbuck is also known as the Indian antelope. It is found in India, Nepal and Pakistan.
- As per Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, hunting black bucks is prohibited in India.
- On October 31, 2017, Uttar Pradesh State Government also took a decision to develop eco-tourism in nearly two dozen places across the state.

Sports

Federer fights back to win 8th Basel title

On 29th October 2017, Roger Federer won 8th Swiss Indoors title, in Basel, Switzerland.

- Roger Federer defeated Argentina's Juan Martin Del Potro by 6-7(5) 6-4 6-3 and won the eighth Swiss Indoors title, in Basel, Switzerland.
- This is Roger Federer's 95th Overall title. Earlier Federer was beaten by Del Potro in consecutive Basel finals in 2012 and 2013.
- Federer trails Nadal by 1,460 points in the rankings. He has skipped the Paris tournament to prepare for next month's ATP Finals in London.

Hong Kong to be first Asian host of Gay Games

Hong Kong has become the first Asian city to host the Gay Games in 2022.

- Hong Kong beat Mexico's Guadalajara and Washington DC to host the 11th edition of Gay Games. The event is expected to attract 15,000 participants.
- It is organised by the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) community. The Gay Games was founded by former Olympic decathlete Tom Waddell and first held in San Francisco in 1982.
- The next edition will be held in Paris in August 2018, featuring 36 sports, from mountain biking to fencing and athletics.

Virender Sehwag Gate inaugurated at Feroz Shah Kotla

On 31st October 2017, the Delhi District Cricket Association inaugurated the Virender Sehwag Gate at the Feroz Shah Kotla.

- A gate at the Feroz Shah Kotla dedicated to cricket legend Virender Sehwag was inaugurated by the Delhi and District Cricket Association.
- Sehwag said it was a huge honour for him to have a gate named after him at the Kotla – the ground where he started his journey to become a great. He also said that, this gate will act as a source of inspiration for young cricketers.