

National Current Affairs

Government reconstitutes Multi-Agency Group probe into Paradise Papers revelation

The Union Government has reconstituted Multi-Agency Group (MAG) to investigate cases relating to 'Paradise Papers' data disclosure which is also probing the Panama Papers leak.

- It will be led by Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) Chairman and will have representatives from Enforcement Directorate, RBI and Financial Intelligence Unit.
- The MAG was constituted in April 2016 to investigate legality of money stashed in offshore entities by Indians named in Panama Papers by International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ).
- Panama Papers had named several prominent Indian politicians, actors, and businessmen as having offshore undisclosed bank accounts.

Power Ministry sets up panel under P.D. Siwal to probe NTPC's Unchahar plant accident

Union Power Ministry has set up a committee headed by P.D. Siwal, Member of Central Electricity Authority (CEA) to investigate the causes of the boiler blast accident occurred at NTPC's Unchahar plant in Raebareli, Uttar Pradesh and to suggest measures to prevent such incidents in future.

- The committee has been set up under the provision of Electricity Act 2003 and will submit its report within a month.
- NTPC has also set up a committee headed by Executive Director (operations) S.K. Roy to investigate this incident.

International Current Affairs

UN-India Partnership Fund: India to contribute additional \$100 million

India has pledged additional US \$100 million towards UN-India Partnership Fund to significantly scale up its support to sustainable development projects across the developing world.

- This contribution will be in addition to US \$10.582 million, India is contributing to various other UN programmes.
- The first project from fund is being executed in partnership with seven Pacific Island countries.
- India-UN Development Partnership Fund was set up as partnership between India and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) on 9 June 2017 i.e. on occasion of the World Oceans Day. It is managed by UNOSSC.
- It aims to support Southern-owned and led, demand-driven and transformational sustainable development projects across developing world.
- It prioritises projects reducing poverty and hunger, improving health, education and equality, and expanding access to clean water and energy and livelihoods.
- It mainly focuses on transformational sustainable development projects in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States.

COP23 climate change summit held in Bonn, Germany

23rd annual “conference of the parties”(COP) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) begun on November 6, 2017 in Bonn, Germany. This conference will continue till November 17, 2017.

- COP23 was opened on November 6, 2017 by Fiji’s Prime Minister Voreqe ‘Frank’ Bainimarama.
- The India Pavilion at COP 23 was inaugurated by Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan.
- India’s theme for COP 23 is ‘Conserving Now, Preserving Future’.

Guinea becomes new member of International Solar Alliance

On November 6, 2017, Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held a meeting with Guinea’s Foreign Minister, Mamady Toure. During the course of this meeting, Mamady Toure handed over Guinea’s Instrument of Accession to the India-initiated International Solar Alliance (ISA).

- The International Solar Alliance is an alliance of countries which are located completely or partly between Tropic of Cancer and Tropic of Capricorn.
- It was jointly launched by the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and the then President of France Francois Hollande in November 2015 in Paris, on the side lines of COP21.
- Under the ISA, solar rich countries will collaborate to fulfil their objectives and needs pertaining to solar energy by emulating successful practices and setting up common mechanisms and instruments for harnessing solar energy on a huge scale.

Banking & Finance

OHEPEE Project: Government inks \$ 119 Million Loan Agreement with World Bank

The Union Government has inked US\$ 119 million Financing Agreement with World Bank for IBRD loan for the Odisha Higher Education Programme for Excellence & Equity (OHEPEE) Project.

- The OHEPEE Project aims is to improve the quality of 'students' equitable access to selected institutions and enhance governance of the higher education system in Odisha.
- It includes Institutional Development Plan (IDP) Grants (performance-based Financing) Enhancing governance of higher education system. It includes improvement of governance in colleges and improvement of financial and procurement management and accounting in all government and government-aided colleges.

HDFC Bank makes RTGS, NEFT online transactions free

HDFC Bank Ltd has made online transactions through RTGS and NEFT free of cost from 1st November 2017, with an aim to promote a digital economy.

- According to the revised fees and charges for savings and salary accounts, customers will not have to pay any charge for doing online transactions through Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and the National Electronics Funds Transfer (NEFT) from 1st November 2017.
- Also, HDFC Bank has said that, a customer can avail one cheque book of 25 leaves free, only once in a year.
- If a cheque is returned due to insufficient funds, each such cheque will attract a penalty of Rs 500. In cases where cheques deposited are returned unpaid, the charge has been raised to Rs 200 per instance.

Paytm introduces BHIM UPI for seamless money transfer

On 7th November 2017, Paytm introduced payments using BHIM UPI through which users can create their own Paytm BHIM UPI ID on the app, using which customers can transfer money.

- Using BHIM UPI users can create their own Paytm BHIM UPI ID on the app, which will be issued by Paytm Payments Bank.

- Users can link any of their savings bank account with this unique Paytm BHIM UPI ID and start sending and accepting money.
- With Paytm BHIM UPI, users can make instant money transfers directly between two bank accounts, with no waiting time to add beneficiary. They don't have to share their bank account details and IFSC code to receive money.
- As per the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) guidelines, users can send up to Rs. 1 lakh a day using BHIM UPI and there is no receiving limit.
- This feature preview is currently available on the Paytm Android app and will soon be available on iOS.

Business

Ola inks partnership with Microsoft for enhanced passenger experience

The transportation network company Ola announced its strategic partnership with Microsoft company, and thereby choosing the microsoft as its preferred cloud provider.

- The merging aimed to transform driver and passenger experiences with vehicle diagnostics, improved in-car productivity, advanced navigation, predictive maintenance of vehicles and more.
- Both the companies will collaborate to take this platform to car manufacturers globally, to integrate with vehicle systems.
- Under this deal, Ola Play customers will be able to use productivity tools such as Office 365 and Skype for Business, as well as voice-assisted controls built using Microsoft Cognitive Services and bot framework, in-car during their rides.
- The advanced telematics platform will transform the car into a high-performing, intelligent vehicle, capable of assessing fuel efficiency, engine performance, and driver performance.
- However, it will also enable smarter navigation and predict breakdowns, enhancing safety and security while creating new business models and opportunities.

Kerala govt inks MOU with Intel, UST Global

On November 6, 2017, Kerala State Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Intel and UST Global for exploring the possibility of transforming the state into an electronic hardware manufacturing hub.

- The MoU was signed between Kerala State IT department, Intel and UST Global in the presence of Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

- In a bid to transform Kerala into electronics hardware manufacturing hub, Kerala State Government has set up the Kerala Electronics and Hardware Mission.
- In August 2017, the mission had submitted a detailed report outlining the potential, challenges and road map for electronics system design and manufacturing and promotion of the State's startup ecosystem.
- Besides, Kerala government has taken an important policy initiative to achieve this goal. It has made budget declarations on setting up hardware parks.

Awards & Recognition

Apollo Munich Health Insurance wins 'General Insurance Company of the Year'

On 1st November 2017, Apollo Munich Health Insurance Company was awarded the 21st Asia Insurance Industry Awards in the "General Insurance Company of the Year" category, at Singapore.

- Apollo Munich Health Insurance Company is a joint venture between integrated healthcare provider, Apollo Hospitals Group, and the Munich Re Group. The Asia Insurance Industry Awards is hosted annually by Asia Insurance Review.
- Apollo Munich Health Insurance was awarded the 'General Insurance Company of the year' in recognition of its market leadership through innovation in products, services, practices etc.
- It has accomplished a number of firsts in India for its products: lifelong renewal, no sub-limits, no claim-based loading and co-payment, portability, restore and multiplier benefits and the first standalone dengue product.

Indian short film 'School Bag' wins award in Montreal

On 5th November 2017, Indian short film 'The School Bag' won the Best Short Film Award at the South Asian Film Festival of Montreal (SAFFM) in Montreal.

- Indian short film 'The School Bag' is about a story based in Pakistan. The plot is based in Peshawar and is about the relationship between a mother and her seven-year-old son who wants a new school bag on his birthday. But fate has something else in store for him.
- The film recreates events that happened in Peshawar in December 2014 when terrorists killed hundreds of school children.

Appointments & Resigns

Binoy Kumar appointed as Special Secretary in Commerce Ministry

On 6th November 2017, senior IAS officer Binoy Kumar was appointed as Special Secretary in the Commerce Ministry.

- Binoy Kumar was the Director General of Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D), the procurement arm of the central government that was closed on 31st October 2017.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved his appointment as the Special Secretary (Logistics), Department of Commerce.

Gujarat Cadre IAS Officer Hasmukh Adhia named New Finance Secretary

On 6th November 2017, the government named Revenue Secretary Hasmukh Adhia as the new Finance Secretary of India.

- Hasmukh Adhia replaces Ashok Lavasa whose term ended on 31st October 2017.
- It's a convention in Finance Ministry to appoint the senior most secretary as the Finance Secretary. Hasmukh Adhia joined the revenue department in 2015 from the Department of Financial Services.
- He has played a key role in implementing demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- There are five departments in Finance Ministry: Expenditure, Economic Affairs, Financial Services, Revenue and Department of Investment and Public Asset management (DIPAM).

Science & Technology

DRDO Conducts Successful Flight Trial of 'NIRBHAY' Sub-Sonic Cruise Missile

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) achieved yet another feat with the successful test flight of 'NIRBHAY' - India's first indigenously designed and developed Long Range Sub-Sonic Cruise Missile which can be deployed from multiple platforms.

- It was successfully test fired from the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha.
- The missile has the capability to loiter and cruise at 0.7 Mach, at altitudes as low as 100 m.
- The flight test achieved all the mission objectives completely from lift-off till the final splash, boosting the confidence of all scientists associated with the trial.
- The missile took-off in the programmed manner and all critical operations viz. launch phase, booster deployment, engine start, wing deployment and other operational parameters demonstrated through autonomous way point navigation.
- The guidance, control and navigation system of the missile is configured around the indigenously designed Ring Laser Gyroscope (RLG) and MEMS based Inertial Navigation System (INS) along with GPS system.
- The missile majestically cruised for a total time duration of 50 minutes, achieving the range of 647 km. The missile was tracked with the help of ground based radars and other parameters were monitored by indigenous telemetry stations developed by DRDO.

Proxima Centauri may host planetary system: Study

Scientists have detected dust belts around Proxima Centauri, a finding that indicates presence of elaborate planetary system hosted by closest star to solar system.

- These new observations were made by Atacama Large Millimeter Array (ALMA) observatory in Chile.
- The new observations reveal emission from clouds of cold cosmic dust surrounding star. It revealed glow coming from cold dust in region between one to four times as far from Proxima Centauri as Earth is from Sun.
- It also reveals presence of even cooler outer dust belt and may indicate presence of system of planets.
- These structures are similar to much larger belts in solar system and are also expected to be made from particles of rock and ice that failed to form planets.
- Proxima Centauri is closest star to Sun around 4.25 light years away from the Earth. It is faint red dwarf lying just four light years away in southern constellation of Centaurus.
- It hosts an Earth-like habitable planet — Proxima Centaur b — orbiting within (Proxima Centauri) its habitable zone which was discovered in 2016.

Tata Steel sets up country's largest coke dry quenching facility in Odisha plant

Tata Steel has set up India's largest Coke Dry Quenching (CDQ) facility at its steel plant located in Kalinganagar, Odisha.

- CDQ is an energy-efficient and environment-friendly heat recovery system used in steel production to cool the hot coke from coke ovens.
- CDQ has comparative advantages over conventional wet quenching. CDQ not only reduces dust emission and improves coke quality, but also save significant amount of water
- Project for setting up CDQ facility at Tata Steel's Kalinganagar plant has been executed by Essar Projects whereas Nippon Steel and Sumkin Engineering (NSENGI) of Japan were the supplier and technology partner.

WorkoLab launches India's first co-working space with research facility

On November 6, 2017, independent workplace provider WorkoLab unveiled its first co-working space in Gurgaon, Haryana and in Pusa Road, New Delhi.

- Co-working spaces offered by WorkoLab also provide research guidance by India's youngest scientific minds with an aim to infuse innovation into the start-up idea.
- WorkoLab is planning to launch 100+ centres in next three years across the globe.
- In the first phase, WorkoLab will expand to other cities like Mumbai, Pune, Kota, Chandigarh, Hyderabad and Jaipur by March 2018.
- Thereafter it will foray into international markets starting with Malaysia and Singapore.
- Co-working segment is projected to grow by 50 percent in 2017 and is expected to receive over USD 400 million in investment by 2018.

CIL launches Grahak Sadak Koyla Vitaran App

The Coal India Limited (CIL) launched Grahak Sadak Koyla Vitaran application for smooth delivery of coal through road for benefiting customers.

- The app aims to bring transparency in the system of loading programme and despatch of coal through road mode.
- The app will provide date-wise, truck-wise quantity of coal delivered against Sale Orders and information related to scheme-wise, Grade-wise, Colliery-wise, customer-wise details of Sale Orders issued during a period. In terms of loading, it will provide allotment verses lifting status in details from different sources truck by truck and summary of the despatch.
- It will help to achieve transparency in despatch operations as tool to monitor to despatches so that they are made on fair principle of 'First in First Out (FIFO)' and keeps track of all activities from issuance of Sale Order to physical delivery of coal by road.
- The app will benefit customers by providing easy accessibility of the information at the click of the button against the Sale Orders issued.

- It will also bring transparency in the system of loading programme and despatch.
- It will also help in logistics planning for lifting of coal in tune with loading programmes.
- It will also help to improve planning of procurement, production and stock management by the customers.

ISRO's AstroSat accomplishes X-ray polarisation for the first time

ISRO's "AstroSat" accomplished the difficult task of measuring X-ray polarisation of Crab pulsar in the Taurus constellation during 18-months of its study for the first time.

- ISRO launched its first dedicated space observatory AstroSat on a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (rocket) on September 28, 2015, from its spaceport at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.
- The telescope measured the variations of polarisation as the magnetised object (pulsar) spins 30 times per second.
- The CZT-Imager was built by a consortium of Indian academic and research institutes, including ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre at Thiruvananthapuram and the Satellite Application Centre in Bengaluru, the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) at Pune and the Space Application Centre at Ahmedabad.
- A pulsar is a rotating neutron star or white dwarf, which emits electromagnetic radiation. Neutron stars and black holes are examples of such objects.
- Taurus is the second astrological sign in the present zodiac. It spans the 30-60th degree of the zodiac.
- Indian scientists using data from the CZT (Cadmium-Zinc-Telluride) Imager have performed the most sensitive measurement of X-ray polarisation of the Crab pulsar, the rotating neutron star which is the main energy source of the nebula.

Sports

India unveil logo, mascot and song for AIBA Youth Women's World Boxing Championship 2017

On 6th November 2017, the official logo, mascot and anthem for 2017 AIBA Youth Women's World Boxing Championship was unveiled in a ceremony at Guwahati, Assam.

- Chief Minister of Assam, Sarbananda Sonowal and Boxing Federation of India (BFI) President Ajay Singh released the championship's official mascot, logo and anthem.

- The official mascot, named Guppy, is a female version of Assam's one-horned rhino. The official anthem is 'Make Some Noise'. The anthem was composed by Shaan and sung by Sunidhi Chauhan.
- The logo consists of two key elements – the strength of an Indian woman in the form of a female boxer and the culture of Assam through the 'gamosa', a cherished hand-woven piece of cloth in Assam. It has integrated the national flag's three main colours – saffron, green and white.

Commonwealth Shooting Championships 2017 in Australia

Commonwealth Shooting Championships 2017 was held in Gold Coast, Australia from 28th October, 2017 to 8th November, 2017.

- This Championship is held among Commonwealth countries and is considered as a test event for the Commonwealth Games.
- Commonwealth Shooting Championship 2017 was held in conjunction with the 2017 Oceania Shooting Championships.
- The Indian squad won a total of 20 medals which included six gold, seven silver and seven bronze medals.
- 18 medals were won from the Rifle and Pistol discipline, whereas 2 medals (one gold and one silver) were won in shotgun events.

Punjab government to organise village-level tournaments to curb drug menace

On 4th November 2017, Rural Development and Panchayat Minister of Punjab, Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa said that, to rule out the problem of drugs from Punjab, the Punjab government would organise village-level sports tournaments.

- The announcement was made at a sports tournament to mark the Parkash Utsav of Guru Nanak Dev at Sultanpur Lodhi. The minister said that, these tournaments would be organised at the village level to promote sportsmanship among the youth.
- Also, this will help channelise their energy in a positive direction. The minister said that, dope tests would be made mandatory in the tournaments. These tournaments would be conducted all over Punjab.