

National Current Affairs

2nd Technology and Innovation Support Centre established in Chennai

India's second Technology and Innovation Support Centre (TISC) will be established at Centre for Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR), Anna University, Chennai (Tamil Nadu) under World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) TISC (Technology and Innovation Support Centre) Program.

- In this regard, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry has signed Institutional agreement with Anna University.
- The objective of TISC is to stimulate dynamic, vibrant and balanced Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) system in India to foster creativity and innovation. It will thereby help to promote entrepreneurship and enhancing social, economic and cultural development by establishing network of TISCs in India.
- TISC will give impetus to knowledge sharing, sharing of best practices among TISCs, capacity building, generation and commercialization of Intellectual Properties. It will give the host institutions access to global network.

Haryana signs MoU with Art of Living's institute for yoga

Haryana State Government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Vyakti Vikas Kendra, a training institute of the Art of Living Foundation for helping jail inmates to maintain and improve their health and reduce physical and mental stress.

- This MoU was signed in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and founder of the Art of Living Foundation Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.
- As per the terms and conditions of this MoU, Vyakti Vikas Kendra will regularly conduct yoga, meditation and other programmes for the welfare of prisoners in all the prisons of Haryana.
- No fees will be charges for this programme.
- VVKI and has been conducting 'PRISON SMART' (Stress Management and Rehabilitation Training) courses for prisoners successfully all over the world.

Bombay HC allows woman with abnormal foetus to terminate pregnancy at 25 weeks

On November 6, 2017, Bombay High Court allowed a 28-year-old woman to abort her 25-week foetus with neuro abnormalities.

- This order by Bombay High Court's bench of Justices Shantanu Kemkar and Girish Kulkarni was based on a report by government-run JJ hospital which suggested that it is advisable to terminate pregnancy.
- The JJ hospital panel examined the pregnant woman and foetus and found that there were multiple neuro and skeletal abnormalities.
- The woman had approached Bombay High Court on the grounds that the restriction in law (Medical Termination of Pregnancy is only permissible till 20 weeks of gestation) was causing her mental and physical trauma to know that she would give birth to a baby whose chances of survival were negligible.
- In August 2017, Central Government had directed states pursuant to a Supreme Court order, to constitute permanent medical expert boards to study requests for Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) after the statutorily permissible 20 weeks of gestation.

Prakash Javadekar inaugurates 'Chintan Shivir' in New Delhi

On November 6, 2017, Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Prakash Javadekar inaugurated a two-day National Workshop 'Chintan Shivir' in New Delhi.

- This workshop has been organized by Department of School Education and Literacy, under Union HRD Ministry.
- The objective of this workshop is to provide holistic education relevant for 21st century India and to bring together NGOs, private sector and individuals to deliberate on key themes in the education sector.
- The workshop focused on five themes – Digital education, Experimental learning, Life Skill education, Value education and Physical Education.
- In his speech at the workshop, Mr. Javadekar stated that 'Operation Digital Board' will be fully functional in all the schools of India in the coming years.
- During the course of this workshop, Mr. Javadekar also launched a Compendium on 'Innovations and Best Practices in School Education' and a State-NGO-CSR Portal – 'Shaala Sarathi'.

Panel under M Vinod Kumar begins review of GST laws to remove glitches

A committee headed by M Vinod Kumar, GST chief commissioner for Karnataka has started a review of the laws governing Goods and Services Tax (GST).

- The committee has been set up to provide suggestions for smoothening the GST regime, especially for small businesses who have been complaining of an increase in compliance burden.
- Another committee comprising industry representatives has also been set up to provide external inputs on this matter.

- Besides, group of state finance ministers (GoM) has also suggested some changes to the existing structure.
- Next meeting of GST council is scheduled to be held on November 10, 2017 in Guwahati, Assam. At this meeting, decision will be taken on proposals from a ministerial panel for tax rate cuts on restaurants and for further liberalization of the composition scheme meant for small businesses.

Maharashtra govt to set up village climate resilient committees

The Maharashtra state government has decided to set up a committee for the implementation of a Rs.4,000-crore project on climate resilience agriculture in 5,000 villages of 15 districts in the state. The project would be funded by the World Bank.

- With 82 per cent of the states cultivable area falling under dry farming coupled with consecutive drought, the state government has now decided to push for this project.
- The seven-member panel, headed by the Principal Secretary (Agriculture), has been set up with a target of selecting 4,000 drought-prone villages for the implementation of the project.
- The committee would select 3,000 villages from eight districts of Marathwada region, while the remaining 1,000 will be chosen from six districts of Vidarbha.
- Besides, 932 villages facing the challenge of salinity of water are also included in the project.
- The panel has been asked to select indicators related to weather, agriculture and social status of the villages of these two districts based on which they would be ranked.
- The programme aims to reduce farmers' dependence on unpredictable weather cycles and enhance resilience of agriculture to climate change and vulnerability through research and use of technology.

Supreme Court refuses to ban Kambala

The Supreme Court has refused to pass an interim order to stay Ordinance allowing Kambala, the traditional buffalo slush track race in Karnataka.

- However, the apex court will examine the Constitutional validity of the Ordinance. People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), a non-governmental organisation, had challenged the Ordinance.
- Karnataka Assembly had passed an ordinance Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Karnataka Amendment) Bill, 2017 in February 2017 to allow Kambal to circumvent ban imposed by Karnataka High Court.
- The ordinance had received Central Government (Ministry of Law and Justice) and Presidential assent.

- The Karnataka HC had stayed these traditional sports in view of Supreme Court's ban on jallikattu, a traditional bull taming sport of Tamil Nadu.
- Kambala is traditional slush track buffalo race that is held annually in coastal districts of Karnataka to entertain rural people of the area.

SHe-box portal launched for both public and private sector

The Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD) launched comprehensive SHe-Box (sexual harassment e-box) online complaint Management System for women to lodge complaints of sexual harassment at workplace.

- It is mainly be for women working in both public and private organizations to ensure effective implementation of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (SH Act), 2013.
- Earlier the portal was launched in July 2017 for women working in central government offices. Now it can be accessed by all women who are part of workforce in organised sector across the country.
- The new SHe-Box portal offers facility of making online complaints of sexual harassment at workplace to all women employees in country including government and private employees.
- It aims to provide speedier remedy to women facing sexual harassment at workplace. Once complaint is submitted to portal, it will be directly sent to Complaint Committee (ICC) or Local Complaint Committee (LCC) of concerned employer constituted under SHe Act.
- Through this portal, WCD as well as complainant can monitor progress of inquiry conducted by ICC/LCC. Those who have already filed a written complaint with the concerned ICC/LCC are also eligible to file their complaint through this portal.

International Current Affairs

EU launches Election Observation Mission for Nepal polls

On 7th November 2017, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) was launched to monitor the general and provincial polls in Nepal which are scheduled for 26 November and 7 December, 2017.

- Around 100 election observers from member countries of the European Union (EU) have been deployed to oversee the polls in Nepal. The EU has allocated 3.5 million euro for the entire election observation process.

- A 38 member long-term election observers were deployed across Nepal to observe the electoral preparations. A core team of 10 election analysts will be based in Kathmandu.
- The mission will be informed by 20 short-term observers, who will observe the election-day proceedings. Another 24 short-term observers will arrive to observe the second election-day on 7 December 2017.

Banking & Finance

Bank of China begins operations in Pak, opens first branch in Karachi

On November 7, 2017, Bank of China formally launched its operations in Pakistan by opening its first branch in Karachi.

- The opening ceremony took place in presence of Bank of China Chairman Chen Siqing, State Bank of Pakistan Governor Tariq Bajwa and Chinas Acting Ambassador to Pakistan Zhao Lijian.
- With the opening of this branch of Bank of China, it is expected that the benefits of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would soon start reaching the masses.
- Karachi branch of Bank of China is the first in South Asia.

Syndicate Bank forms human chain to fight Corruption

On November 7, 2017, Syndicate Bank formed a human chain to create awareness among the public to fight corruption.

- This human chain was formed by Syndicate Bank in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Syndicate Bank's key people including Managing Director and CEO Melywyn Rego, Executive Directors, SS Mallikarjuna Rao and S Krishnan also took part in this activity along with bank's General Managers, Regional Managers and staff.

Insolvency resolution norms made stringent

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has amended IBBI (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Resolution Process, 2016 to ensure that the corporate insolvency resolution process results in a credible and viable resolution plan.

- As per the norm stipulated in this amendment, the antecedents, credit worthiness and credibility of a resolution applicant, including promoters will be checked by the Committee of Creditors before approving the resolution plan.
- Besides, details pertaining to convictions, criminal proceedings, disqualifications, categorisation as wilful defaulter as per RBI guidelines, debarment imposed by SEBI and any transaction with the corporate debtor in the last two years should also be furnished.
- The amendment also assigns greater responsibility on the resolution professional and the Committee of Creditors.
- The resolution professional will now have to submit details about undervalued transactions and fraudulent transactions.

Business

ICEX completes first diamond futures contract of Rs 173.32 crore

On 8th November 2017, Indian Commodity Exchange (ICEX) said that, it has successfully completed first-ever diamond futures contracts settlement with the total traded quantity in November expiry for 5,382.08 carats valued at Rs 173.32 crore.

- ICEX had commenced operations on 28th August 2017 with the launch of three monthly diamond futures contracts – of November 2017, December 2017 and January 2018 expiry.
- The total traded quantity in November expiry since the launch of the contracts is 5,382.08 carats, valuing at Rs 173.32 crore. Percentage of delivery against the total traded quantity is 0.53 %.
- Both buyers and sellers completed their obligation towards settlement within the time frame as per the exchange process. All the open interests during the period have resulted in delivery.

Govt notifies tax avoidance protocol between India-New Zealand

Indian government has notified the third protocol with New Zealand for the avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

- This protocol updates the existing protocol by incorporating new provisions about sharing of tax-related information as per the latest international standard.
- It entered into force in India on September 7, 2017, and has been notified in the official gazette on November 2, 2017.

- This protocol will not only help curb tax evasion and tax avoidance between India and New Zealand but will also enable mutual assistance in collection of taxes.
- Tax avoidance convention between India and New Zealand came into force in December 1986. It was amended by a first protocol in 1997 and the second protocol in 2000.

Awards & Recognition

Chennai included in UNESCO's Creative Cities Network for Contribution in Music

Chennai, capital city of Tamil Nadu was recently included in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO's) Creative Cities Network for Contribution in Music.

- It was among 64 cities from 44 countries that were designated as UNESCO Creative Cities. With inclusion of these cities, total count of UNESCO Creative Cities Network has now gone up to 180 cities in 72 countries.
- Chennai is the third Indian city on the list of UNESCO Creative Cities list after Jaipur (added as City of Music) and Varanasi (City of Crafts and Folk Art) were added last year
- UNESCO's Creative Cities Network aims to foster international cooperation with and between cities committed to investing in creativity as a driver for sustainable urban development, social inclusion and cultural vibrancy.

Novel on Hitler's rise wins France's top book award

On 6th November 2017, Eric Vuillard's novel L'ordre du jour (in English 'Agenda'), story of how German industry and finance backed Adolf Hitler, won the top Goncourt Prize 2017 award, at the restaurant Drouant in Paris.

- L'ordre du jour has been among the favourites for the Goncourt prize. The Goncourt Prize is the most prestigious award in the French-speaking world. L'ordre du jour is a 160-page book.
- It depicts how the financial support of German industrialists was crucial to Hitler's rise. The author Eric Vuillard is 49 years old.
- Eric Vuillard gets only 10 euros (\$11) in prize money, but the Goncourt almost guarantees a boost in sales of 4,50,000 copies or more, placing it instantly among the year's top best-sellers.

Appointments & Resigns

Indian Origin Priti Patel resigns as British Minister

On 8th November 2017, Britain's first Indian-origin Cabinet Minister Priti Patel resigned as International Development Secretary due to controversies over her unauthorised secret meetings with Israeli politicians.

- Priti Patel's resignation is followed by controversies around a dozen undisclosed meetings she had with other Israelis, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for which she had been forced to apologise.
- She was promoted as secretary of state in the department for international development in 2016.
- She was among the most active supporters of Brexit and had supported the 'Vote Leave' campaign in the lead in favour of Britain's exit from the European Union (EU).

Sanjeev Kaushik appointed as whole-time member of SEBI

Sanjeev Kaushik, a Kerala cadre IAS officer, has been appointed as whole-time member of SEBI for a period of three years or till the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved Kaushik's appointment. Kaushik replaces S Raman, who retired from the post of a whole-time member in September 2017.
- Kaushik has an MBA in finance from London Business School and over two decades of experience in the financial sector. Prior to this appointment, he was Chairman and Managing Director of India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL).

Science & Technology

Twitter officially doubles character limit to 280

On 08th Nov 2017, the social media giant, Twitter announced that it is extending the 140 character limit to 280 characters in all languages where cramming was an issue.

- For India and the Indian diaspora, this update will apply to the six regional languages and those languages are Tamil, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Marathi and Bengali.
- Last month Twitter had launched a test version, that expanded the 140 character limit to 280 characters which enabled every person around the world to express themselves easily in a tweet.
- Twitter saw when people needed to use more than 140 characters, they Tweeted more easily and more often.
- During the first few days of the test, many people Tweeted the full 280 limit because it was new and novel, but soon after, the behavior normalized.

Maneka Gandhi launches 'first of its kind' portal for sexual harassment complaints

On 7th November 2017, Union Minister for Women and Child Development Maneka Gandhi launched an online portal for registering complaint related to sexual harassment in non-government and government organisations named 'SHe-box'.

- The comprehensive online complaint system 'SHe-box' (sexual harassment electronic box) will be hosted on the website of the Ministry Of Women and Child Development.
- Maneka Gandhi said that, the SHe-box is the first of its kind in the world. Any complaint by any women who have faced sexual harassment at workplace anywhere in India will be responded and action will be taken.
- A unit in the Women and Child Development Ministry will look into every complaint filed online.

Environment

Musa paramjitiana: New species of wild banana discovered in Andaman and Nicobar

Botanists have discovered new species of wild banana named *Musa paramjitiana* in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It has been named in honour of Paramjit Singh, director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI). *Musa paramjitiana* species was discovered in North Andaman's Krishnapuri forest, 6 kilometres from any human habitation.

- *Musa paramjitiana* species grows to height of nine metres and bears an edible, sweet-and-sour tasting fruit that is boat-shaped and has numerous bulb-shaped seeds.
- The fruit of *Musa paramjitiana* is part of diet of local tribes.
- Its fruits and seeds have ethno-medicinal importance. Pseudo-stem and leaves of these species are also used during religious and cultural ceremonies.

- Its conservation status has been declared as 'Critically Endangered' as it has so far been spotted in only two locations on islands, each with 6 to 18 plants in a clump. No population has been located in other regions of Islands.

Tyrannomyrmex alii: New ant species discovered in the Western Ghats

Researchers have discovered new species of ant in the Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala in Western Ghats, as one of the world's 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity.

- It has been named *Tyrannomyrmex alii* (or *T. alii*), after eminent myrmecologist Musthak Ali, who is regarded as the India's 'ant man'.
- *Tyrannomyrmex alii* belongs to *Tyrannomyrmex*, a rare tropical genus of ants.
- It was discovered from Vallakadavu range of Western Ghats. It can be distinguished from other species of same genus through its morphological characteristics. It has petiolar shape.
- *Tyrannomyrmex* is a rare myrmicine (subfamily of ants) ant genus that is distributed in Indomalayan bio-region that extends from southern India and Sri Lanka to southeast Asia.
- *T. alii* has is fourth species of the rare genus *Tyrannomyrmex* and the second one from India.
- The first species of genus was *Tyrannomyrmex rex* Fernández, was discovered in 2003 in Pasoh Forest Reserve, Malaysia.

Fossils of oldest mammal ancestor discovered in UK

Palaeontologists from University of Portsmouth, UK have discovered remains of humankind's oldest mammal ancestor — a tiny rat-like creature that lived 145 million years ago.

- The fossils of nocturnal mammal were discovered on Jurassic Coast of Dorset.
- The mammal is earliest in line that evolved into humans and branched off into creatures as diverse as blue whales and pigmy shrews.
- The new species of fossilized nocturnal mammal was named *Durlstotherim newmani* after an amateur palaeontologist and pub owner Charlie Newman, who helped scientists collect the new specimens.
- Its teeth had evolved over time from very simple ones that were not very efficient to molar-like ridged teeth which could tear, chew and grind food very easily.
- The fossilized teeth as well-evolved as *Durlstotherim newmani* previously were found only in rock layers from, late Cretaceous between 86 and 66 million years ago.

Sports

Mitchell Starc makes history with two hat-tricks in one game

On 7th November 2017, Strike bowler Mitchell Starc took two hat-tricks in the same first-class game in Australia.

- Mitchell Starc became only the eighth player in first-class cricket history and the first in 39 years to achieve the feat as he headed New South Wales (NSW) to victory over Western Australia in the Sheffield Shield.
- He removed Jason Behrendorff, David Moody and Simon Mackin in first innings to complete his first career hat-trick. He then got both Behrendorff and Moody again off the final two deliveries of his 15th over.
- Jono Wells then edged Starc on the first ball of his next over to Australia and NSW captain Steve Smith at first slip to end the match.

Important Days

World Radiology Day – November 8

On 8th November 2017, World Radiology Day was observed all over the world. The International Day of Radiology is an annual event promoting the role of medical imaging in modern healthcare. It is celebrated on November 8 each year.

- It coincides with the anniversary of the discovery of x-rays by Wilhelm Roentgen in 1895. Theme of World Radiology Day 2017 is Emergency Radiology.
- It was first introduced in 2012, as a joint initiative, by the European Society of Radiology (ESR), the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), and the American College of Radiology (ACR).
- The International Society of Radiographers and Radiological Technologists have celebrated 8 November as World Radiography Day since 2007, along with other national radiographers associations.