

National Current Affairs

Second meeting of Island Development Agency held in New Delhi

The second meeting of Island Development Agency (IDA) was held in New Delhi. It was chaired by Rajnath Singh. It reviewed concept development plans and detailed master plans for holistic development of 9 islands.

- These 9 islands include four in Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Smith, Ross, Long, Avis) and five in Lakshadweep (Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriya, Suheli).
- In the meeting, it was decided that Naval air station at Shibpur near Diglipur in northern Andaman & Nicobar Islands will be co-used as Joint User Airport. It was also decided to develop PPP package including airport (Joint User Airport) at Minicoy Island, to unlock the tourism potential.
- It was agreed to promote tuna fishing industry for improving livelihoods in Lakshadweep. All concerned agencies were directed to expedite implementation of ongoing key infrastructure projects in islands and develop community based tourism in consultation with local stakeholders.
- NITI Aayog was also asked to drive the formulation of PPP projects and proposed detailed guidelines to boost private sector participation. It aims at promoting and implementing development based on sustainable approach to building thriving maritime economy of project islands.

Radha Mohan Singh inaugurates three-day Organic World Congress – 2017 in Greater Noida

On 9th November 2017, Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister, Radha Mohan Singh inaugurated the three-day Organic World Congress – 2017 at India Expo Centre in Greater Noida.

- 1,400 representatives from 110 countries and 2000 delegates from India participated in the Organic World Congress – 2017. The goal is to move from organic India to the organic world.
- The Organic World Congress (OWC) is organized once every three years in a different country. The International Federation of Organic Farming Movements (IFOAM) and Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) are organizing the event.
- One of the highlights of the event is the exhibition of carefully preserved diverse indigenous seed varieties over generations. 55 seeds group from 15 Indian states showcase 4,000 varieties of seeds in the event.

India slips to 7th position in Global Business Optimism Ranking

India has slipped to 7th position in 'business optimism' index in September-November quarter period from earlier 2nd slot in the previous July-September quarter.

The fall in rank clearly shows clear signs of lag in the economy.

- The index was released as part of Grant Thornton's International Business Report (IBR).
- The IBR provides insight into the views and expectations of more than 10,000 businesses per year across 36 economies.
- In September-November quarter, the index was topped by Indonesia, followed by Finland (2nd), Netherlands (3rd), Philippines (4th), Austria (5th) and Nigeria (6th).
- Globally, overall position for business optimism remains relatively high at 49% in September quarter. It was down by 2 pps in June quarter, and follows five consecutive quarterly increases in business sentiment.

Government doubles import duty on wheat to 20%

The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) under Union Finance Ministry has doubled import duty on wheat to 20% from 10% to curb cheap shipments and give positive price signal to farmers in ongoing Rabi season.

- It also imposed import duty of 50% on peas to check cheaper shipments from countries like Canada to boost domestic prices. The import duty on peas has been imposed to curb shipments and boost domestic prices.
- In the last two years India, world's second biggest wheat producer has been importing wheat after local production fell due to successive droughts.
- India had imported 5.75 million tonnes of wheat in 2016/17 fiscal year ended on March. Doubling of import duty aims to give positive price signal and encourage farmers to grow wheat in more area as farmers have started planting of rabi (winter) wheat crop.
- Moreover, Government does not want wheat growers to follow way of pulses farmers who shifted to other crops this kharif season as prices remained low just before sowing period owing to bumper crop last year.
- India produced record 22 million tonnes of pulses in 2016-17 crop year which led to fall in domestic prices, even below MSP.

First ever Nordic-Baltic youth film festival in India

The Nordic-Baltic embassies are set to host the first ever youth film festival of the European nations at India Habitat Centre in New Delhi from 13 – 18 November 2017.

- The Nordic-Baltic youth film festival is organized by Nordic-Baltic embassies in collaboration with the India Habitat Centre.
- The Nordic-Baltic countries are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden. They are tied together geographically and historically through trade, culture and many other value systems.
- The festival would offer a diverse mix of some of the most celebrated and Oscar nominated movies from the Nordic-Baltic region. Movies would range from action movies to family films to documentaries.

PM Modi flagged off Bandhan Express & Inaugurates two bridges

'Bandhan Express' a passenger train between Kolkata and Bangladesh's southwestern industrial city of Khulna was jointly flagged off (through video conferencing) by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamta Banerjee and Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on November 9, 2017.

- 'Bandhan Express' is a fully air-conditioned passenger train and will run every Thursday from both Kolkata and Khulna.
- 'Bandhan Express' will cover 172 kms distance between Kolkata and Khulna in four hours. It will have two stoppages, one at Petrapole (on the India side) and other at Benapole (in Bangladesh).
- It is the second Indo-Bangla train service after the Maitree Express, which runs between Dhaka and Kolkata.
- The three leaders also inaugurated two bridges over the rivers Meghna and Titas in Bangladesh to provide an end-to-end immigration facility to ease Dhaka-Kolkata Maitree train services.

Delhi govt signs twin city agreement with Seoul

On November 8, 2017, Delhi Government signed a twin city agreement with the Seoul (South Korea) Metropolitan Government with an objective to strengthen cooperation between two cities in the fields of smart city, e-governance, climate change and transportation.

- This agreement, referred to as 'Establishment of Friendship City Relationship' was signed between Park Won Soon, Mayor of Seoul (South Korea) Metropolitan Government and Delhi and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.
- It also envisages cooperation in the areas of environment, education, solid waste management, waste water management, public health, culture & tourism, and youth exchange.
- The twin city agreement between Delhi and Seoul will come into effect after being approved by Union Government.

International Current Affairs

Bengaluru outranks San Francisco in Confidence to Go Digital

According to a report based on a survey by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), published on November 7, 2017, India's Silicon Valley – Bengaluru has been adjudged as the best city among 45 cities for the confidence of its businesses in their ability to go digital.

- Economist Intelligence Unit's 'Confidence to go Digital' survey – Top 10 cities
 - Bengaluru, India
 - San Francisco, US
 - Mumbai, India
 - New Delhi, India
 - Beijing, China

Hong Kong becomes World's Top City for International Visits

On 7th November 2017, a report published by Euromonitor International, said that, Hong Kong remains the world's most visited city by international travelers.

- The report on top 100 city destinations was published by market research firm Euromonitor International. It said that, 25.7 million arrivals are expected in Hong Kong this year, making it the World's top city for international visits.
- The Thai capital Bangkok retains second place, but its popularity has grown faster than Hong Kong's, with arrivals at 21.3 million.
- London is Europe's top city, in third place with 19.8 million arrivals. The report was authored by Wouter Geerts, Euromonitor's senior travel analyst. The report highlights the growth in Asian tourism.

India jumps to 3rd spot in global gaming installs: Unity Tech

On 9th November 2017, Unity Technologies, said that, India is now ranked third in global gaming installs, surpassing Brazil and Russia.

- Unity Technologies, said that, the latest market research shows that, India has risen from the 9th position in January 2017 to the 3rd spot in global gaming install rankings.
- It has surpassed Brazil and Russia in the global rankings. This is due to a drastic increase in India's adoption of high-end mobile devices with larger RAM size.

- Unity Technologies analysed and studied the ongoing market trends and development in the Indian mobile industry. It said that, in one year, mobile device count with 1GB RAM has grown from 31.6 million to 100 million in October 2017.

International Energy Agency (IEA) Ministerial meeting held in Paris

International Energy Agency (IEA) Ministerial meeting was held in Paris, France on 7th and 8th November, 2017.

- Energy security, clean energy technology and government-industry dialogue on investment and digitalization were the key focus areas for this meeting.
- Indian delegation to IEA Ministerial Meeting, Paris was led by Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, Raj Kumar Singh.
- During the course of this event, India signed joint work programmes with IEA and other member countries of IEA viz. Brazil, Chile, Indonesia and Thailand.
- Mr. Raj Kumar Singh also had a delegate level discussion with the French Minister of State for Ecological and Inclusive Transition, Ms. Brune Poirson on the side lines of this event.
- He also held discussion with US Secretary of Energy, Mr. James Richard Perry on various issues of Power and New & Renewable Energy.

Banking & Finance

IPPB Bank to become operational in 650 districts by April 2018

The Union Government has announced that India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) will become operational in all 650 districts of the country by April 2018 to facilitate financial inclusion.

- These banks will be linked to 1.55 lakh rural post offices for its operations and carry out banking services. This will be largest banking network in the country.
- Two such banks are already operational in Ranchi (Jharkhand) and Raipur (Chhattisgarh).
- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been set up as a Public Limited Company under Department of Posts with 100% Government of India (GOI) equity.
- It leverages DoP's network, resources and reach to make low-cost, quality and simple financial services easily accessible to customers in the country.
- Its purpose is to further cause of financial inclusion by providing basic banking, remittance services and payments services to customers. It will facilitate spread of

financial services like insurance, pensions, mutual funds to customers especially from rural areas and the unbanked and under-banked segments.

SBI releases economic report on oil price hike, impact on CAD

The Economic Research Department of State Bank of India (SBI) has released a report on oil price hike and how unlikely it is to impact the Current account deficit (CAD) and how inflation could stretch fiscal.

- The report is authored by Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser of SBI. The report depicts oil price hike and its impact on the Current account deficit (CAD) and inflation.
- The report said that, with this rate and assuming oil price reduces to reasonable levels, the Government could receive budgeted Rs 1 lakh crore in small savings in financial year 2018, and would be able to do a buyback of Rs 75000 crore.
- It further said that, an average annual one dollar increase in oil price can lead to an increase in oil imports by 1561 million dollars annually.

US grants \$500k to promote religious freedom in India, Sri Lanka

The US has announced a grant of nearly USD 500,000 for organisations which can come up with ideas and projects to promote religious freedom in India and Sri Lanka.

- The Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, US, has said that, it aims to reduce religiously-motivated violence and discrimination in India through its USD 493,827 programme.
- For Sri Lanka, it aims to ensure that, authorities at all levels of government in Sri Lanka effectively implement national laws and policies protecting religious freedom.
- For India, the applying organisation has to come up with proposals to develop and implement early warning systems to prevent large-scale violence and implement conflict mitigation programs between minority and majority groups.

IDFC Bank partners MobiKwik for co-branded virtual Visa prepaid card

On November 8, 2017, IDFC Bank entered into a strategic partnership with digital payments solution company MobiKwik to launch a co-branded virtual Visa prepaid card for customers of MobiKwik.

- By next week, IDFC Bank – Mobikwik Visa virtual pre-paid card facility will be available to all MobiKwik users on Android as well as iOS platform.

- To use the co-branded pre-paid card, the Mobikiwk user need not be a customer of IDFC Bank.
- This tie-up will enhance the brand visibility of IDFC Bank as Mobikwik's current user base stands at 65 million. From Mobikwik's perspective, this tie-up will extend the buying power of Mobikwik's users at more locations.

IRDA makes linking of Aadhaar with insurance policy mandatory

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDA) has announced that linking of Aadhaar number to insurance policies is now a mandatory requirement under Prevention of Money-laundering (Maintenance of Records) Second Amendment Rules, 2017.

- This norm of linking Aadhaar number to insurance policies will apply to new customers as well as existing policy holders.
- Besides, it will apply not only to life insurance policies but also to general insurance policies.
- Insurance industry experts believe that this norm will be helpful during claims settlement.
- Aadhaar Number-Insurance Policy linkage will help in establishing the unique identity of the claimant thus reducing fraudulent claims. Moreover it will also increase the speed of settlement.

Dubai based Emirates NBD bank begins operations in India

United Arab Emirates (UAE's) second largest bank, Emirates NBD has started operations in India by opening a branch in Mumbai.

- Emirates NBD, has a plan to invest USD 100 million capital into its Indian operations over a period of time.
- The Mumbai branch is Emirates NBD's fifth international branch outside of its UAE.
- Emirates NBD's Mumbai branch will offer a range of services to corporate, institutional clients and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- It will not only offer trade finance, treasury services, bilateral and syndicated loans but will also cater to NRI (non-resident Indian) customers looking for cross-border wealth management solutions.

Business

China to shut down steel plants for 5 months to curb Beijing winter pollution

A report by non-governmental environmental organisation Greenpeace has stated that, China will either shut down or reduce operations at several steel plants for the next 5 months to reduce pollution in Beijing.

- A number of steel plants in northern China, which usually faces heavy to severe winter pollution every year, will be shut down before Christmas as part of the green strategy.
- The new measures will come to effect in mid-November 2017, and will continue through the winter. This move aims to cut wintertime particulate pollution by 15%.
- The five-month shutdown of steel factories is temporary. But the plan aims at a new joint environmental protection bureau covering Beijing and two surrounding provinces to enforce industrial emission norms.

Adani Power inks PPA with Bangladesh Power Development Board

Adani Power has announced that its wholly-owned subsidiary Adani Power (Jharkhand) has inked long-term pact with Bangladesh Power Development Board to supply electricity from its upcoming 1,600 MW plant at Godda in Jharkhand.

- Adani Power (Jharkhand) Limited has signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) for net capacity of 1,496 MW with Bangladesh Power Development Board for 25 year.
- Adani Power (Jharkhand) will set up a new 1,600 MW (2X800 MW) ultra—supercritical, coal based power plant at Godda, Jharkhand.

Awards & Recognition

Natalie Portman has been awarded Israel's 2018 Genesis Prize

On 7th November 2017, organisers announced that, Natalie Portman has been awarded Israel's 2018 Genesis Prize in recognition of her commitment to social causes and deep connection to her Jewish and Israeli roots.

- The Genesis Prize is granted each year to a person recognised as an inspiration to the next generation of Jews through professional achievement and commitment to Jewish values. It consists of \$1 million cash.
- Natalie Portman is an Oscar award winning actress. She was born in Israel and moved to the United States as a young girl. She won the 2011 Best Actress Academy Award.

Appointments & Resigns

Ravinder Singh elected first Sikh mayor of US city

Ravinder Singh Bhalla has become the first ever Sikh mayor of New Jersey's Hoboken city.

- He is the first Sikh to hold elected office in New Jersey.
- Within days of being associated with "terrorism" in a flyer during the run up to the mayoral election, Ravinder Singh Bhalla has become the first Sikh mayor of Hoboken city of New Jersey in the US.
- Bhalla was supported by the current Mayor Dawn Zimmer, who as a surprising decision announced not to go with the re-election in the month of June.
- Bhalla, who has been in the city council for more than seven years, claimed the victory at Moran's Pub on Garden Street yesterday with dozens of his supporters, as well as his friends and family.

Science & Technology

Uber joins forces with NASA to develop flying taxis

On 9th November 2017, Uber unveiled a partnership with NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) to develop flying taxis priced competitively with standard Uber journeys.

- Uber has also announced that, Los Angeles will join two other previously revealed "UberAIR" pilot schemes in Dallas Fort-Worth, Texas, and Dubai.
- The first demonstration flights are expected in 2020 and will move into commercial operations by 2023, with plenty of time for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.
- The flights will have a pilot during initial flights. But it could be automated in the future. An UberAir journey would take three times less time than the same journey by car.

Sports

Mary Kom wins gold medal in Asian Women's Boxing Championships

Five time world champion Mary Kom won gold medal in Asian Women's Boxing Championships in Light Flyweight (48 kg) category.

- In the final match held at Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, she defeated North Korea's Kim Hyang Mi in the final bout 5-0 by unanimous judges decision.
- It was her fifth gold medal in 48 kg category in Asian Women's Boxing Championships (earlier won in 2003, 2005, 2010 and 2012) in only six appearances (in 2008 final she won silver), making her unbeaten in summit clash of continental championship.
- This was also Mary Kom's first international gold medal since 2014 Asian Games and her first medal in over year.
- MC Mary Kom is five time World Amateur Boxing champion. She is the only woman boxer to have won a medal in each one of the six world championships.

S Prannoy, Saina Nehwal win 82nd Senior National Championship titles

HS Prannoy (World no 11) won the 82nd Senior National Championship title of Badminton in men's single category by defeating Kidambi Srikanth (World No 2) by 21-15, 16-21, 21-7 score.

- The women's single title was won by Saina Nehwal (World No 11). She defeated PV Sindhu (World No 2) by 21-17, 27-25 score.
- The mixed doubles title was won by Satwik Sai Raj R and Ashwini Ponnappa by defeating Pranaav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy pair by 21-9, 20-22, 21-17 score.
- Senior National Badminton Championships is an annual tournament organized to crown the best badminton players in India.

Obituary

Actor Karin Dor dies at 79

Karin Dor, who played the red-haired villainess Helga Brandt in the 1967 James died on 06th Nov 2017 in a nursing home in Munich.

- Dor became popular in the 1960's for playing heroines in Karl May and Edgar Wallace films but is best remembered for playing an assassin sent to kill James Bond, played by Sean Connery – in 1967 film You Only Live Twice.

- Karin also appeared in the Alfred Hitchcock movie Topaz in 1969 as Juanita de Cordoba. She also starred alongside Christopher Lee in The Invisible Dr, Mabuse in 1962.

Important Days

Uttarakhand celebrates its 17th formation day

On 9th November 2017, Uttarakhand celebrated its 17th formation day.

- Uttarakhand was formed on 9th November 2000 as the 27th state. It was separated from Uttar Pradesh.
- Numbers of events were organized across the state to celebrate the 17th formulation day. The main event was held at Police line in Dehradun, where ceremonial parade was presented by Uttarakhand police.
- Governor K. K. Paul reviewed the ceremonial parade at Police line. He praised the law and order situation in the state. He also honored police personnel for rendering excellent service to the state.

Legal Service Day – November 9

On 9th November 2017, Legal Service Day was observed all over India.

- Legal Services Day is celebrated every year on 9th of November in all states and authorities of India. At this day variety of legal literacy camps and functions are organized at many places in New Delhi.
- This day was first coined by the Supreme Court in the year 1995 to offer help and support to the weaker and poor group of sections of people which may be women, disabled persons, Scheduled Tribes, children, Scheduled Castes, human trafficking victims and natural calamities victims.
- People from government as well as non government organizations take part in the functions and camps related to the Legal Services Day.