

# National Current Affairs

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## **Government to adopt land-pooling method for airport expansion**

The Union Government is working on adopting land-pooling methodology as an alternative mechanism for development and expansion of airports.

- This is being done to overcome challenges that come with unavailability of land due to surge in land compensation cost after Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (or Land Acquisition Act, 2013) came in to force.
- If this proposal receives Government approval then states will probably have to adopt some of features of land-pooling in their respective state acts to give it legal teeth.
- Under land pooling mechanism, group of land-owners pool their land and hand it over to government agency for development of infrastructure projects. After the development of land, the agency redistributes the land after deducting some portion as compensation towards infrastructure costs.
- Generally, people who part with their land parcels get 60-70% of their holdings back after infrastructure is developed on it. This is done to develop potential infrastructure to reduce the load on the existing congested and saturated areas. This method already has been used in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

## **Telangana passes three bills including one on prevention of dangerous activities**

Telangana State Assembly has passed three key bills including Telangana Prevention of Dangerous Activities of Bootleggers, Dacoits, Drug Offenders, Goondas, Immoral traffic offenders and Land grabbers (Amendment) Bill, 2017.

- The amendment to Prevention of Dangerous Activities Bill has been brought in to replace a Government ordinance that was passed about 6 months ago to curb illegal activities.
- 'Telangana Road Development Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2017' is the second bill that was passed. This bill seeks development of roads and highways by securing funds from financial institutions.
- 'Shops and Establishments (Amendment) Act, 2017' is the third bill that was passed. As per the provisions of this bill, shops and commercial establishments will be given instant licences. Objective of this provision is to enhance Ease of Doing Business in Telangana.

### **Environment ministry forms 7-member panel under CK Mishra for air pollution in Delhi**

As Delhi's air is turning toxic over recent weeks and reaching crisis levels, the Centre stepped in and decided to set up a 7-member-committee of secretaries from the Centre, Delhi Government and experts to continuously monitor and implement a Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) that would include control of road and construction of dust garbage burning, control of power plants and industrial emissions, entry of vehicles and several other related factors.

- The committee will include the secretary, department of science & technology, secretary, department of biotechnology, the additional secretary of the Niti Aayog, chief secretary of Delhi, the chairman, Central Pollution Control Board and a representative of Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy.
- The committee will meet at least every 10 days and in the future at least once a month.
- The committee formed by the environment ministry will look to formulate short-term and long-term plans.
- Short-term plans are to tackle the current problem of Delhi and the long-term plan will handle the issues on a country-wide basis in the future.
- The environment ministry's plans to tackle the pollution issue comes right after the announcement of AAP government's Odd-Even rule in Delhi to tackle air pollution crisis there.
- The rule will be in place in Delhi from November 13 to November 17.

### **Facebook launches Disaster Maps in India for better response to disasters**

The social networking giant Facebook Inc. has rolled out Disaster Maps for India in a bid to help communities recover and rebuild faster in aftermath of natural disasters.

- It was launched at Facebook's first Disaster Response Summit in India along with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to improve disaster response and disaster management in India.
- Government has claimed that India will be first country to partner with Facebook on disaster response.
- Facebook will initially join hands with NDMA and SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society) in India to share data about its users with them in times of disasters. Globally Facebook has partnered with organizations like Red Cross for such initiative.
- Disaster Maps, powered by Facebook's technology and intensive research will help to address the critical gap in information (data) that government organizations face when responding to crisis or disasters.

- It aims to help communities across country recover and rebuild from natural disasters faster by sharing critical pieces of data sets with humanitarian agencies in timely manner.
- It provides multiple types of maps during disaster response efforts, which include aggregated location information chosen by people to share with Facebook.
- During the Summit, Facebook introduced a Disaster Information Volunteers (DIV) programme. Under DIV, a network of trained volunteers would provide supplementary information on disasters in their local communities. This information would assist Government in carrying out relief work.

### **Haryana becomes first state to treat Hepatitis-C patients through oral medicine**

Haryana has emerged as the first state in India to treat Hepatitis-C patients through oral medicine.

- This announcement was made by Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij, during a training workshop organised by the health department.
- The market cost of medicine and treatment for hepatitis C is about Rs 28,000 to Rs 30,000. However, Haryana State Government will provide it free of cost.
- Mr. Vij also mentioned that Haryana will be the first state where 35 to 40 health tests would be conducted for everyone by visiting houses of all residents. The state health department will also maintain the record of these tests.

### **Gadkari announces Rs 6000 crore World Bank-backed irrigation scheme**

On 9th November 2017, Union minister Nitin Gadkari announced World Bank-supported Rs 6,000 crore scheme to improve the irrigation facilities and water accessibility capacity in several states.

- The states which will benefit from the irrigation scheme are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.
- Gadkari also announced Rs 25,000 crore-worth Daman Ganga-Pinjar river connectivity project, which is 90 per cent funded by the Centre. Its first phase will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi within the next three months

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **India re-elected member of UNESCO's executive board**

India was re-elected as member of executive board of United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO). Executive board is UNESCO's top decision-making body.

- The election was held at 39th session of General Conference of UNESCO in Paris, France.
- UNESCO's General Conference consists of representatives of States Members of organisation. It meets every two years.
- The General Conference determines policies and main lines of work of organisation. Its duty is to set programmes and budget of UNESCO.
- It also elects members of executive board and appoints, every four years, director-general. Each country has one vote, irrespective of its size or extent of its contribution.

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## **Banking & Finance**

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### **RBI eases FEMA norms to spur investment from overseas**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has simplified Foreign Exchange Management (Transfer or Issue of Security by a Person Resident outside India) Regulations to make it easier for foreign investors to invest in the country. It was done by putting all 93 amendments under one notification.

- The new regulation combines earlier two regulations on foreign investments.
- They are FEMA 20 (investment in Indian company or partnership or in a limited liability partnership) or FEMA 24 (investment in a partnership firm).
- It also introduces late submission fee that could allow investor to regularise any contravention due to non-reporting, by paying the fee.
- FEMA aims at facilitating external trade and payments and for promoting the orderly development and maintenance of foreign exchange market in India.
- It makes offenses related to foreign exchange civil offenses. It enables new foreign exchange management regime consistent with emerging framework of World Trade Organisation (WTO).

### **IFAD approves USD 30 million for north east project**

International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), an international financial institution and a specialised agency of the United Nations has approved a USD 30 million soft loans for

fourth phase of the North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP).

- NERCORMP is a livelihood and rural development project aimed to transform the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in several districts of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.
- It is jointly administered by North Eastern Council (NEC) under Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- During the first phase of NERCORMP (1999-2008), two districts each in Assam (Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao), Manipur (Ukhrul and Senapati) and Meghalaya (West Khasi Hills and West Garo Hills district) were covered.
- Under the fourth phase, the reach of the project will be extended to new districts.

### **Government triples home loan limit for central government employees to Rs 25 lakh**

The government raised the maximum amount that a central government employee can borrow from the government to Rs 25 lakh for new construction/purchase of new house/flat.

- The limit for home loan borrowing has been tripled for central government employees as per the 7th pay commission recommendations.
- Earlier this limit was only Rs 7.50 lakh. This move is going to benefit about 50 lakh central government employees all over India.
- The employee can borrow up to 34 months of the basic pay to a maximum of Rs 25 lakh, or cost of the house/flat, or the amount according to repaying capacity, whichever is the least.
- If both spouses are central government employees, they can take Housing Building Advance (HBA) either jointly, or separately. Also, the rate of Interest on HBA will be only 8.50% at simple interest.

### **RBI releases new outsourcing norms for NBFC**

On November 9, 2017, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a notification outlining norms for NBFC

- As per the new norms, NBFCs cannot outsource core management functions like internal audit, management of investment portfolio, strategic and compliance functions for know your customer (KYC) norms and sanction of loans.
- Staff of service providers should have access to customer information only up to an extent which is required to perform the outsourced function.

- Boards of NBFCs should approve a code of conduct for direct sales and recovery agents. For debt collection, NBFCs and their outsourced agents should not resort to intimidation or harassment of any kind.
- All NBFCs' have been directed to set up grievance redressal machinery, which will also deal with the issues relating to services provided by the outsourced agency.

### **Federal Bank gets RBI nod to open offices in Kuwait, Singapore**

Federal Bank has obtained Reserve Bank of India (RBI's) approval to open representative offices in Kuwait and Singapore.

- Year-on-year, Federal Bank has been handling increasing inflow of foreign remittances and has now emerged as a preferred banker for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).
- Opening up of representative offices in Kuwait and Singapore will facilitate liaising with NRIs for catering to their various financial requirements.
- Federal Bank already has its representative offices in Abu Dhabi and Dubai and has received approval from RBI for opening a representative office in Bahrain.
- It is to be noted that during last financial year, around 15 per cent of the total personal inward remittances to India were handled by Federal Bank.

### **RBI directed banks to provide banking Services at Home for those above 70**

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks to provide doorstep banking facilities to senior citizens of more than 70 years of age and differently-abled persons including the visually-impaired.

- The facilities that are to be extended include basic banking services like pick-up of cash and instruments against receipt, delivery of cash against withdrawal from accounts, delivery of demand drafts, chequebooks and submission of Know Your Customer (KYC) documents.
- Besides, banks have been asked to provide a minimum of 25 cheque leaves every year for a savings bank account free of charge, for which physical presence of any customer, including senior citizens and differently-abled persons, should not be insisted.
- Moreover, a fully KYC compliant account should automatically be converted into a 'Senior Citizen Account' based on the date of birth available in the bank's records.
- These instructions are to be implemented by December 31, 2017. These instructions are not only for public and private sector banks but also for small finance banks and payments banks.

### **PayPal launches domestic operations in India**

American Digital payments company PayPal has launched its domestic operations in India and will now provide digital payment solutions for merchants and customers in India.

- In the Indian market, PayPal has been offering cross border payments since last ten years. It claims to control a third of India's Business to Customer (B2C) export payments.
- Senior officials of PayPal have stated that PayPal's brand is basically based on three pillars viz. reliability, safety and security. Adhering to this ideology, PayPal will offer its services with 'Buyer and Seller protection' as a differentiating factor to create its presence in the highly competitive digital payments space of India.
- This feature will include a 180-days dispute resolution window, wherein PayPal will refund the money if an online seller does not send the goods purchased by the customer.
- Similarly, PayPal will also pay the merchant in case the customer does not end up paying for the goods. Besides, for the merchants, PayPal will also provide back end data which should help them grow their business.

### **SEBI Imposes Fine on Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani's Family for Manipulative Trading**

India's securities market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has penalised 22 entities for involvement in manipulative trading.

- One of these 22 entities is Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani's Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) that was found to be involved in manipulative trading through a listed firm called Sarang Chemicals.
- The alleged manipulative transactions by Mr. Rupani's firm were done between January and June, 2011.
- Mr. Rupani's firm has been asked to pay Rs 15 lakh fine within 45 days.
- Mr. Vijay Rupani took charge as Chief Minister of Gujarat in August 2016.

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## **Business**

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### **PSFMC under Avinash K Srivastava decides to import onions through Govt agency**



A panel led by India's consumer affairs ministry under Avinash K Srivastava has decided to import the onions through a government agency to increase the availability of the same, in the market on moderate prices.

- The meeting of Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee (PSFMC) headed by Secretary, Consumer Affairs, Shri Avinash K Srivastava was held in New Delhi on 09.11.2017.
- Additionally, it was also decided that the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation Of India Limited (NAFED) and Small Farmers' Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) would obtain 10,000 MT and 2,000 MT onions respectively from producing areas, including Delhi, and supply it to consuming areas to enhance its availability and thus to control the high price.
- Onion prices have long been a sensitive political issue in India. A sharp rise in their prices in the past in India has even resulted in the government being toppled.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **UNHCR to get Mother Teresa Award 2017 for social justice**

On 9th November 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was named as the recipient of the Mother Teresa Memorial Award for Social Justice, 2017 as an acknowledgement of its exceptional work worldwide.

- The UNHCR provides humanitarian aid to innumerable people internally displaced by conflicts and helping stateless people all over the world.
- Mother Teresa Memorial Award for Social Justice was instituted by Harmony Foundation in 2005. This is the only official award in memory of Mother Teresa, who attained sainthood in September 2016.
- Harmony Foundation's theme for 2017 is 'Compassion Beyond Borders'. The Mother Teresa Memorial Award for Social Justice will be presented to the UNHCR at a function on 10th December 2017.

### **National Entrepreneurship Awards 2017 hosted by MSDE**

On 9th November 2017, the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) hosted the National Entrepreneurship Awards 2017 marking the completion of three years of its inception.



- The National Entrepreneurship Awards (NEA) was instituted by MSDE in 2016 to encourage entrepreneurship in India. This year 15 winners across various categories were awarded.
- Winners were given a cash award of Rs 5 lakh (enterprises and individuals) and Rs. 10 lakhs (organizations/institutes) along with a certificate and trophy recognizing their efforts of being the change agents in India's development.
- Few of the awardees are mentioned below:
  - Mentor (Government) Category awarded to – Dr. Renu Swarup
  - Best State Engaging Apprentices awarded to – Haryana
  - Champion Sector Skill Council awarded to – Textile Sector Skill Council
  - Champion Corporate (Special Recognition) awarded to – ICICI Bank

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Union minister Alphons elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan**

On 9th November 2017, Union minister of state for tourism, Alphons Kannanthanam, was elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan in a bypoll.

- The Rajya Sabha seat had fallen vacant after former Union minister Venkaiah Naidu was elected as the Vice-President in August 2017.
- Returning officer at the Rajasthan legislative assembly, Prithvi Raj, declared Alphons Kannanthanam elected unopposed after no other candidate submitted papers even on the last day of filing.
- With Alphons' election to Rajya Sabha, Rajasthan's representation in the union council of ministers is back to six, which had come down by one after Venkaiah Naidu took over as Vice-President.

### **Tulsi Gabbard named chairperson of World Hindu Congress 2018**

On 9th November 2017, Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu lawmaker in the US Congress, was named as the chairperson of the World Hindu Congress (WHC) to be held in Chicago in 2018.

- The World Hindu Congress (WHC) is a global platform for Hindus to connect, share ideas, inspire one another and impact the common good. The World Hindu Congress is held once in every four years.
- It is organised by the World Hindu Foundation. The second World Hindu Congress will take place in Illinois in Chicago from 7 to 9 September 2018.

- Abhaya Asthana is the coordinator of WHC.
- Tulsi Gabbard is an Iraq war veteran and a member of the powerful House Foreign Relations Committee.

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## Environment

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### **India becoming world's top sulphur dioxide emitter: Study**

A study led by researchers at the University of Maryland in the US suggests that India is becoming, if it is not already, the world's top sulphur dioxide emitter.

- India's emissions of the air pollutant sulphur dioxide increased by 50 % since 2007, while China's fell by 75 %.
- Sulphur dioxide is an air pollutant that causes acid rain, haze and many health-related problems. It is produced predominantly when coal is burned to generate electricity.
- China and India are the world's top consumers of coal, which typically contains up to 3% sulphur. India opened its largest coal-fired power plant in 2012 and has yet to implement emission controls like China.

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## Sports

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### **Indians set 2 world records on para world cup**

On 9th November 2017, Indian para shooters Deepender Singh and Manish Narwal set 2 world records in the Shooting Para Sport World Cup 2017, in Bangkok.

- Indian para shooters Deepender Singh and Manish Narwal won gold and silver respectively in the P1 10m Air Pistol SH1 category in the Shooting Para Sport World Cup 2017.
- Deepender Singh with 238.3 points broke the world record set by Iran's Mahdi Zamanishurabi (235 points). 16-year-old Manish Narwal set a junior world record with 236.6 points.

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# Obituary

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## **Padma Shri awardee author Manu Sharma passes away**

On 8th November 2017, noted author and Padma Shri awardee Manu Sharma died in Varanasi following prolonged illness.

- Manu Sharma also called as Hanuman Prasad Sharma.
- He was nominated as one of the navratna of the Swachha Bharat Abhiyan by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Varanasi in 2014.
- Sharma had donated his lifetime savings of Rs 20 lakh for the renovation of a ghat in Varanasi to carry out a cleanliness campaign.
- He was also the recipient of the prestigious Yash Bharti Award of the Uttar Pradesh government. He has authored several Hindi books including Krishna Ki Atmakatha.

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# Important Days

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## **World science day for peace and development – November 10**

On 10th November 2017, World science day for peace and development was celebrated all over the world.

- World Science Day for peace and development was coined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2001 and was celebrated for the first time in 2002.
- It highlights the important role that science has in society. It also highlights the need to engage the public in debates on emerging scientific issues.
- The theme for World Science Day for peace and development 2017 is 'Science for Global Understanding'.
- The purpose of this day is to renew the national, as well as the international commitment to science for peace and development and to stress the responsible use of science for the benefit of society.