

National Current Affairs

India, Philippines ink four agreements in various fields

India and Philippines have signed four agreements in areas of defence, agriculture, small and medium enterprises and tie-up between think-tanks.

- The defence agreement is to have private and public enterprises to cooperate in the defence sector, including on the off-shore patrolling vessels.
- It was first bilateral visit by Indian PM to Philippines in 36 years after visit of then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981, though Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had visited the southeast Asian country in 2007 for ASEAN summit.
- PM Modi contributed two Indian rice seed varieties to gene bank of International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Philippines which is working towards mitigating global poverty and hunger by improving cultivation of key grain.
- He also visited IRRI in Los Banos, an urban locality around 65 km from Manila and interacted with several Indian scientists working there.
- He also inaugurated 'rice field laboratory' named after him as Narendra Modi Resilient Rice Field Laboratory.

NCERT conducts largest ever survey to assess learning levels

National Achievement Survey (NAS), the largest ever assessment survey on national level was conducted by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) across India on November 13, 2017 to ascertain learning level of students.

- This survey has been amongst the largest national level surveys in the world.
- NAS was conducted for the Classes 3, 5 and 8 in government and government aided schools.
- Survey Tools: Multiple test booklets with 45 questions in Classes III and V related to language, mathematics and 60 questions in Class VIII in Mathematics, Language, Sciences and Social Sciences.
- Questionnaires pertaining to students, teachers and schools were also used.

India's 1st Tribal Entrepreneurship Summit to be organised at Dantewada

India's first Tribal Entrepreneurship Summit was organised at Dantewada in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh. The summit is part of 8th Global Entrepreneurship Summit being held in India.

- The event was organized by National Institute of Transforming India (NITI) Aayog in partnership with Government of United States of America (USA).
- Tribal Entrepreneurship Summit in Dantewada was organised with motive to inspire, nurture and promote spirit of entrepreneurship in tribal youth. I
- It aims to ensure another step towards tribal-centric sustainable and inclusive development. The summit saw participation of tribal entrepreneurs from various sectors across country and abroad. It was addressed by eminent speakers from NITI Aayog, health and agri-pharma sectors.
- The summit not only provided platform to tribal youth but also addressed issues faced by tribal community in pragmatic and progressive ways.

President inaugurates 37th International Trade Fair (ITTF) in New Delhi

The 37th India International Trade Fair (IITF) was held at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi. The 14-day annual event was inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind. It is organised by India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO).

- The theme of fair is “Startup India Standup India”.
- Vietnam is partner country, while Kyrgyzstan is focus country for this edition of fair Jharkhand is participating as partner state in the event.
- As many as 7,000 participants from 22 countries will showcase their products ranging from electronics to textiles.
- Thirty-two of India’s states and Union territories will be also represented. Institutions that will be participate range from self-help groups to big business houses, and from small and medium manufacturing enterprises (SMEs) to digital start-ups.
- This year number of business days has been reduced from five to four days to accommodate more visitors from general public during the fair.

Government releases India Youth Development Index and Report 2017

The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports released India Youth Development Index (IYDI) and Report 2017 to track the trends in Youth Development across the States.

- The Index has been developed by Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu.
- The India Youth Development Index will enable to recognize high and low performing states, identify weak domains and inform the policy makers the priority areas of intervention for youth development in the states.
- It was constructed using latest definition of youth as used in National Youth Policy 2014 and World Youth Development Report of Commonwealth (15–29 years) as well as using the Commonwealth Indicators in order to facilitate Global comparison.

- As an effective decision support tool, YDI-2017 will enable policy makers track national and regional progress as well setbacks in youth development policies, planning, priority identification and implementation strategies. It will also provide insights to suggest alternatives and options and also aid in judicious allocation of resources.

15th Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team Conference held in India...

The 15th Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference was held in New Delhi. It is first ever conference to be held in India and South Asia.

- It was organised by Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) under the aegis of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- The theme of conference was “Building Trust in the Digital Economy”. 300 delegates from 21 economies especially from Asia Pacific region, USA, Europe, Industry, Academia, Government and Media attended the conference.
- This conference covered contemporary topics around strategies of CERTs, Technology and Instruments for building trust in digitally evolving economies and best practices for handling cyber security in mobile and social media.
- APCERT is coalition of CERTs (Computer Emergency Response Team) and CSIRTs (Computer Security Incident Response Teams) located in Asia Pacific region. Its operational mandate is to contribute to the Internet security within the region, based on information sharing, trust and cooperation.

Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference held in New Delhi

On 12 – 15th November 2017, the Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference will be held in New Delhi.

- The APCERT conference is organized by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) under the control of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- This is the 15th Conference of APCERT and first ever conference in India and South Asia. It is attended by 21 economies.
- The conference theme is “Building Trust in the Digital Economy”.
- The open session including industry, academia, civil society and Government stakeholders will be held on 15 November 2017.
- The open session will be inaugurated by Ravi Shankar Prasad, Minister of Electronics & Information Technology.

International Lavi Fair begins in Himachal Pradesh

- Traditional International 'Lavi fair' was held from 11th -14th November, 2017 in Rampur, Himachal Pradesh.
- The fair was inaugurated by Himachal Pradesh Governor, Acharya Dev Vrat.
- The governor also inaugurated the 'Kinnauri market' and exhibition put up by various Government departments.
- Lavi Fair has been an important point of trade between India and Tibet for centuries.
- The fair is visited by tourist and traders from distant places. It provides a good opportunity for promotion and sale of woollens, dry fruits and other traditional crafts and products.
- Currently, it also provides a platform for social and cultural events.

4th India-Canada Annual Ministerial Dialogue in New Delhi

4th India-Canada Annual Ministerial Dialogue (AMD) begun in New Delhi on November 14, 2017.

- Canadian delegation was led by the Canadian International Trade Minister, François-Philippe Champagne, whereas Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Suresh Prabhu led the Indian side.
- Discussions at the Dialogue focused on some of the key commercial drivers to enhance the India-Canada partnership.
- Considering the high potential for bilateral trade between India and Canada, efforts were made to work towards the expeditious conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA).
- Besides, both the sides also explored options to address India's concerns for Temporary Foreign Workers Programme (TWFP) of Canada, which is affecting the movement of Indian professionals seeking short term visas to Canada.

IEAG-MR group commends India on MR vaccination progress

The India Expert Advisory Group on Measles & Rubella (IEAG-MR) has commended India on progress of measles and rubella vaccination campaign.

- It reviewed existing strategies and efforts towards measles elimination and control of rubella. It concluded that India is on the right track.
- MR vaccination campaign is the largest ever in any campaign against MR, targeting around 41 crore children across country.
- Under it, children are given single shot of MR vaccination free-of cost irrespective of their previous vaccination status or disease status.

- The target group covered under it are all children aged between 9 months and less than 15 years.
- Measles and Rubella Measles is a deadly disease and one of the important causes of death in children.

IORA to set up Centre of Excellence in Kochi

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is to set up a Centre of Excellence in Kochi, Kerala.

- This centre will facilitate the exchange of research findings and studies in the field of fisheries and ocean studies among IORA member countries.
- With the establishment of a dedicated centre for research, there will be no duplication of research by different member countries.
- IORA Centre of Excellence in Kochi will be digitally connected to IORA's member countries, and researchers in member countries would be provided access to data and information stored in the centre.
- Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) is being considered as a partner to set up the centre in Kochi.

Delhi Cabinet okays setting up Delhi Village Development Board for civic works

On November 13, 2017, Delhi Cabinet approved to set up Delhi Village Development Board (DVDB) for civic works in rural and urban villages of Delhi.

- All 300 villages in the national capital will come under the purview of the board and it will subsume the Delhi Rural Development Board (DRDB) that so far, carried out development works only in rural villages.
- DVDB will look after construction of approach roads, link roads, village roads, development of cremation grounds, ponds, water bodies, cremation grounds, parks and other facilities.
- Delhi's Development Minister will be the chairperson of DVDB. Besides, two MLAs nominated by Delhi Government will be vice-chairpersons of the board.
- Village Development Committees (VDCs) will be set up to assist in carrying out survey of the villages for assessing the current state of facilities and identifying priority areas for development works.

NGT restricts number of pilgrims visiting Vaishno Devi shrine to 50,000 a day

On 13th November 2017, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed that, only 50,000 pilgrims will be allowed to visit the Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu to avoid any unwanted incidents.

- NGT has made clear that, if the number of pilgrims exceeds the prescribed 50,000 count, they will be stopped at Ardhkuwari or Katra town, and will not be allowed to visit the Vaishno Devi shrine.
- It also said that, a new path to the shrine exclusively for pedestrians and battery-operated cars will be opened from 24 November 2017. No horses or mules shall be allowed on the new route to the shrine and these animals shall be removed slowly from the old path also.
- It also directed the authorities to impose a fine of Rs. 2,000 on anyone found littering the roads and the bus stop at the nearby Katra town.

International Current Affairs

10th South Asia Economic Summit held in Nepal

The 10th South Asia Economic Summit (SAES-2017) was held in Kathmandu, Nepal with theme “Deepening Economic Integration for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in South Asia”.

- The 3-day summit was organised by National Planning Commission and Ministry of Commerce of Nepal and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment, Nepal.
- Approx 200 participants including ministers, members of parliament, former MPs, ambassadors, government officials, researchers, eminent experts and thinkers will attend the summit.
- The summit is a regional platform for discussing and analyzing economic and development issues and challenges faced by South Asian countries and advancing the cause of regional integration and cooperation.

Founding Ceremony of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) held at Bonn

A Curtain Raiser Event for the Founding Ceremony of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was held at Bonn, Germany on November 13, 2017.

- ISA will become a treaty-based international intergovernmental organisation on December 6 2017.
- Three programmes of ISA that are currently underway include, Facilitating affordable finance for solar energy, Scaling up solar applications for agriculture and Promoting solar mini-grids in Member Nations.

- During the event, discussions were also held on ISA's Common Risk Mitigation Mechanism (CRMM) project, aimed at de-risking investments into solar energy projects.

Banking & Finance

India not to pursue Islamic banking: RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided not to pursue a proposal to introduce Islamic banking in India.

- Decision in this regard was taken after considering wider and equal opportunities available to all citizens to access banking and financial services.
- Islamic banking means banking activity that is consistent with the principles of sharia and its practical application through the development of Islamic economics. Sharia prohibits the fixed or floating payment or acceptance of specific interest of fee for loan of money. It is different from regular banking in that it prohibits earning of interest (or riba) through the business of lending.
- The proposal to introduce Islamic banking was first made in 2008 by a committee on financial sector reforms chaired by former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan. The committee had recommended that interest-free banking techniques should be operated on larger scale to give access to those who are unable to access banking services, including those belong to economically disadvantaged section of society.

India to overtake Japan as third largest economy by 2028: BofAML

As per a recent report by Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BofA-ML), by 2028, India is likely to overtake Japan as world's third largest economy, in terms of nominal gross domestic product (GDP).

- This projection is based on the assumption that Indian economy will grow at 10% rate in US dollar terms over the next 10 years, ahead of Japan's 1.6% growth rate.
- Besides, the report has forecasted that India will become a world's fifth largest economy (ahead of France and United Kingdom) by 2019.
- The report has outlined three strong growth drivers for Indian economy which will significantly increase the size of Indian economy.
- First one being falling dependency ratio (unproductive population in the 0-14 and over-65 age group), which should raise saving and investment rates.

Business

Crisil, Sidbi tie up to launch MSME sentiment index – CriSidEx

Ratings firm CRISIL (Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited) and Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to launch CriSidEx, a sentiment Index for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

- This index will provide insights into employment, business environment and foreign trade trends in the MSME sector.
- It is to be noted that currently, relevant and actionable data on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) in India comes with a significant lag, which cannot be used effectively to assess the ground situation in MSME ecosystem

Awards & Recognition

West Bengal gets GI Tag for ‘Rosogolla’

On 14th November 2017, the Geographical Indications (GI) Registry announced that, West Bengal has been awarded the Geographical Indications (GI) status for ‘Rosogolla’.

- The Geographical Indications (GI) Registry has said that, the ‘Rosogolla’ originated in West Bengal and not Odisha.
West Bengal and Odisha have been fighting a legal battle over the origin of the sweet meat ‘Rosogolla’ since June 2015.
- The GI announcement has come months after the Odisha government formed a panel to formally lay claims on ‘Rosogolla’.
- West Bengal government too had set up a committee and decided to fight the Odisha government’s claims legally.
- West Bengal had argued that, Rosogolla was created by Nabin Chandra Das, a famous sweetmeat-maker in 1868.

Mithali Raj named Sportswoman of the Year (Team Sports) at the Indian Sports Honours 2017

On 11th November 2017, Indian women's cricket team captain Mithali Raj bagged the Indian Sportswoman of the Year (Team Sports) award at the Indian Sports Honours (ISH) 2017 event held in Mumbai.

- Also, Mithali-led Indian woman's cricket team, which ended as runners-up in the ICC world Cup 2017, won the Team of the Year award.
- The Indian Sports Honours was launched jointly by Indian cricketer Virat Kohli and business person Sanjeev Goenka, with the idea of honouring persons who brought glory to the nation.
- The jury deciding the winners were Pullela Gopichand, Mahesh Bhupathi, PT Usha, Anjali Bhagwat, Arjun Halappa, along with Sanjiv Goenka. The awards were announced by Virat Kohli and Sanjiv Goenka.

Vijay Prasad Dimri appointed as president of 36th International Geological Congress

On 13th November 2017, scientist Vijay Prasad Dimri was appointed as the president of the 36th International Geological Congress (IGC), a global platform for advancement of earth science, to be held in New Delhi in 2020.

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved Vijay Prasad Dimri's appointment in place of Shailesh Nayak. This was stated in the order issued by Department of Personnel and Training, without citing any reasons.
- Shailesh Nayak had been the secretary of ministry of earth sciences and also the chairman of earth commission in India.
- India, along with its co-host neighbouring countries – Bangladesh, Nepal, Srilanka and Pakistan won the bid to host the 36th IGC in New Delhi from March 2 – 8, 2020.

Appointments & Resigns

Slovenia's President Borut Pahor Wins Second Term in Runoff Election

On 12th November 2017, Slovenian President Borut Pahor was re-elected for a second term in a runoff vote.

- According to the Slovenian Election Commission, Borut Pahor had won about 53 % of the vote and opponent Marjan Sarec had 47 % with 99.9 % of the votes counted.

- Borut Pahor was forced into a second-round run-off after falling short of securing a majority in the first round in October 2017.
- In the first round three weeks ago, Pahor won about 47 % of the vote among nine candidates, with Sarec coming in second with almost 25 %.
- Pahor was a long-serving leader of the center-left Social Democrats but ran for president both times as an independent candidate. He was Slovenian
- prime minister from 2008 to 2012.

Ganga Kumari becomes first transgender to be appointed in Rajasthan Police

On 14th November 2017, Ganga Kumari became the first transgender to be inducted into Rajasthan Police.

- The Rajasthan High Court has directed the police department to appoint Ganga Kumari as a constable, after officials denied her a post due to her gender and reported lack of clarity of rules in 2015.
- Justice Dinesh Mehta has asked the Rajasthan police force to appoint Ganga Kumari within six weeks from the date of the order along with the notional benefits from year 2015.
- Ganga Kumari is a resident of Raniwara in Jalore district of Rajasthan. She was selected in the police recruitment examination for constables in 2013.
- However, her appointment was held up following the medical examination, which brought to the recruiters' notice that she was a transgender.

Science & Technology

India to become world's largest Sulphur Dioxide emitter: Study

As per study published by researchers at University of Maryland, US, India is overtaking China to become world's largest emitter of anthropogenic Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂). SO₂ is an air pollutant that causes acid rain, haze and many health-related problems.

- It is produced predominantly during burning of coal to generate electricity and vehicular emissions.
Researchers had combined emissions data generated by using two different methods in order to generate an accurate profile of emissions over India and China.
- The first method is based on collection of estimated emission amounts from inventories of number of factories, power plants, automobiles and other contributors to SO₂ emissions.

- The second method is based on data obtained from Ozone Monitoring Instrument (OMI) on NASA's Aura satellite, which detects a variety of atmospheric pollutants including sulphur dioxide.
- India's emissions of SO₂ has increased by 50% since 2007 India opened its largest coal-fired power plant in 2012 and has yet to implement emission controls, while China's fell by 75%.
- The rapid decrease of emissions in China far exceeds expectations and projections. It can be attributed to emission control measures undertaken by China. While, India is yet to implement emission control measures.
- India's increased SO₂ emissions are not causing as health or haze problems as in China because largest emission sources are not in most densely populated area of India. However, with growing demand for electricity in India, impact may worsen.

NIOT to build India's first offshore desalination plant near Chennai coast

Scientists from NIOT will build India's first offshore desalination plant about 40km from the Chennai coast.

- This desalination plant is estimated to cost Rs. 2,000 crore. It will be designed and built by NIOT scientists off the shores of Ennore. The capacity of the plant will be 10 million litres of water per day.
- The plant will operate on Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD), a low cost and environment friendly technology to get potable water. The technology is based on the temperature difference in seawater at different depths.
- At the beginning, the plant will be diesel powered. Eventually, scientists are hoping to operate the plant with electricity generated through Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Technology (OTEC).

India's first wave-powered navigational buoy launched in Chennai

On 13th November 2017, India's first wave-powered navigational buoy, developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), to guide ships in and out of ports was launched in Chennai.

- The wave-powered navigation buoy has been deployed at Ennore Kamarajar Port, in Chennai. It would help ships, moving in and out of the harbour, navigate through a designated channel.
- The wave-powered navigational buoy would record data on wind speed and direction, which would be relayed to port authorities. It gets energy from waves to power its beacon. Whereas, conventional buoys are solar-powered.
- The buoy was launched by Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences M Rajeevan at the 33rd executive committee meeting of International Energy Agency-Ocean Energy

Systems Collaboration Programme (IEA-OES) and as part of a workshop 'Harnessing Energy from the Oceans — A global Scenario'.

Virtual nation Asgardia launched its first satellite 'Asgardia-1' into space

On 12th November 2017, the Space Kingdom of Asgardia (virtual nation) launched its first satellite 'Asgardia-1' into space from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

- The Asgardia – so-called 'virtual nation' is the project of Russian scientist and billionaire Igor Ashurbeyli. In 2016, he proposed a new nation which would be based in space in order to be outside of the control of nations on Earth.
- The Asgardia-1 satellite, which is about the size of a loaf of bread, contains half a terabyte of data. It holds the foundations of the project – the nation's constitution, its national symbols, and data from its 115,000 citizens.
- It was launched aboard a Cygnus spacecraft on an Orbital ATK Antares rocket. The Cygnus craft docked with the International Space Station on 14 November 2017. After a month, it will release Asgardia's satellite into orbit.

China launches world's first fully electric cargo ship

China has launched the world's first all-electric ship, which can travel up to 80 km with 2000-tonnes cargo after a two-hour charge.

- The ship is 70.5-metre-long and weighs about 600 tonnes. It was launched in Guangzhou in South China's Guangdong Province.
- The ship has been manufactured by the Guangzhou Shipyard International Company Ltd.
- It is powered by a 26-tonne lithium battery and can cruise at the top speed of 12.8 km per hour.

Sports

Sebastian Vettel wins Brazilian Grand Prix

On 12th November 2017, Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel won the Brazilian Grand Prix, a Formula One championship race, in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

- Valtteri Bottas started the race at the pole position.

- Vettel controlled the race after taking the lead from Valtteri Bottas.
- The Formula One world championship title had already been decided at the Mexican Grand Prix, two weeks earlier.
- Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton, already having won his fourth Formula One championship in Mexico two weeks ago, finished fourth in the race. Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas finished second in the race. Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen came third in the race.

Pakistan's Saeed Ajmal retires from all forms of cricket

On 13th November 2017, Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal announced his retirement from all forms of cricket.

- Saeed Ajmal has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket two years after his bowling action was remarked as illegal for the second time.
- During a successful but controversial career, Saeed Ajmal was once celebrated as the world's number one bowler in one-day internationals (ODIs) and Twenty20 cricket, and was almost as successful in Tests.
- His last match was at Galle in Sri Lanka in 2014, where his bowling action was reported for a second time. It was first reported during an ODI series against Australia in the UAE in 2009.

Italy fail to qualify for Football World Cup 2018 for first time since 1958

On 13th November 2017, Italy failed to qualify for the Football World Cup 2018 for the first time since 1958 at San Siro, Italy.

- Italy was disqualified for Football World Cup 2018, as they were held to a 0-0 draw in the second leg of their play-off by Sweden, who qualified with a 1-0 aggregate victory.
- Italy is the 2006 Football World Cup winner. It is the third time that the Italians will not compete at the Football World Cup, after not going to the first edition in 1930 and not qualifying for the 1958 finals in Sweden. Italy has won the Football World Cup title four times in 1934, 1938, 1982 and 2006.

Important Days

4 November: World Diabetes Day

- The World Diabetes Day was observed every year across the world on 14 November to raise awareness about diabetes.
- Observance of day aims to pursue multilateral efforts to promote and improve human health and provide access to health-care treatment and education.
- The theme for year 2017 is “Women and diabetes – Our right to a healthy future”. It aims to promote affordable access to essential diabetes medicines and technologies for all women with diabetes to achieve optimal diabetes outcomes and strengthen their capacity to prevent

Children’s Day – November 14

On 14th November 2017, Children’s Day was celebrated all over India.

- Children’s Day is celebrated across India to increase awareness of the rights, care and education of children. It is celebrated on 14 November every year on the birth anniversary of the first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru also called ‘Chacha Nehru’.
- On this day, chocolates and gifts are distributed among children and schools organize different events such as debates, music and dance performances.
- Prior to 1964, India celebrated Children’s Day on 20 November, which was observed as the universal Children’s Day by the United Nations. But after Jawaharlal Nehru’s death in 1964, it was decided to celebrate his birthday as Children’s Day.