

National Current Affairs

India's first mega Coastal Economic Zone to come up at JNPT in Maharashtra

The Union Government has given go-ahead for setting up India's first mega coastal economic zone (CEZ) at Jawaharlal Nehru Port (JNPT) in Maharashtra.

- The first of its kind mega CEZ will stretch along north Konkan region spread across Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Nashik and Raigarh.
- About 45 companies across auto, telecom and IT sectors will soon bid for 200 hectares of land to set up manufacturing units in zone.
- CEZs are spatial economic regions comprising group of coastal districts or districts with strong linkage to ports in region to tap into synergies with planned industrial corridor projects.
- CEZ will be developed as part of plan for developing 14 such industrial clusters to spur manufacturing and generate jobs.
- The idea is to attract large firms interested in serving export markets as they will bring with them capital, technology, good management practices and links to world markets. This in turn will help create ecosystem around them in which productive small and medium firms will emerge and flourish.

Sampriti 2017: Indo-Bangladesh Joint Military Exercise held in Mizoram

Joint Indo-Bangladesh Training Exercise SAMPRITI 2017 was culminated at Counter Insurgency & Jungle Warfare School, Vairengte in Mizoram.

- The exercise was aimed to strengthen and broaden the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies.
- It was 7th edition of exercise in SAMPRITI series which is held alternately in India and Bangladesh every year with aim to build and promote positive relations between armies of two neighbours.
- The 13-day exercise also aimed to enhance interoperability between two nations and enrich from each other's experience while carrying out counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism operations.
- This edition of exercise had two district components which included Command Post Exercise (CPX) and Field Training Exercise (FTX).

Bio-toilets to be installed in all trains by 2018-end: Government

The Union Ministry of Railways has advanced target for 100% completion of installing human waste discharge free Bio-toilets in coaches to December 2018.

- Earlier, the target to install bio-toilets in all its coaches as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission was by September 2019.
- The new target was announced at event titled “Indian Transport Sector: Marching towards sustainable mobility” at Conference of Parties (COP-23), Indian Pavilion at Bonn, Germany. The announcement comes on backdrop of World Toilet Day (observed on 19 November) with the theme Wastewater.
- Bio-toilets evacuate discharge into a biodigester tank, containing anaerobic bacteria, fitted underneath train coach in small space. The bacteria convert human faecal matter into water and small amount of gases (including methane) by process of hydrolysis, acetogenesis, acidogenesis and methanogenesis.

President Ram Nath Kovind launches schemes worth Rs 3,455 crore in Jharkhand

On November 15, 2017, President Ram Nath Kovind launched various schemes and laid the foundation stones of infrastructure projects in Jharkhand. These schemes and projects are to be carried out at an expenditure of Rs 3455 crore.

- Firstly, he launched Rs 290-crore ‘108 Ambulance’ service in the state. This service will have 329 life support system equipped ambulances which will provide free round the clock service across the state.
- Thereafter, President Kovind launched Jharkhand State Government’s JOHAR (Jharkhand’s Opportunities for Harnessing Rural Development) scheme.

Malnutrition Responsible for 15% of India’s Total Disease Burden in 2016 – Report

As per ‘India State-level Disease Burden Initiative Report’, child and maternal malnutrition was responsible for 15 per cent of the total disease burden in 2016 across India.

- The report was released by Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu on November 14, 2017.
- Analysis of disease burden for each Indian state from 1990 to 2016 has been presented in this report.
- Eight less developed states – Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh – are referred to as the Empowered Action Group(EAG) states and they receive special development attention from Central Government.

Hunar Haat inaugurated in IITF 2017

The Union Ministry of Minority Affairs had organised Hunar Haat at India International Trade Fair (IITF) at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

- It displayed exquisite pieces of handicraft and handloom prepared by master artisans from across the country.
- The Union Ministry of Minority Affairs is organising Hunar Haat under Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD) scheme at different parts of country.
- It has become successful mission to provide employment and employment opportunities and national as well international markets for thousands of master artisans, craftsmen and culinary experts.
- It has provided platform to master artisans and craftsmen to display their rich heritage and skills. It is also providing domestic and international markets to these artisans and craftsmen.
- USTTAD scheme of Ministry of Minority Affairs aims at preserving and promoting the rich heritage of traditional arts & crafts of the Minority communities.

5th biennial Hotelivate State Ranking Survey for Tourism – Delhi tops the list

According to the 5th biennial Hotelivate State Ranking Survey for Tourism, Delhi is the top tourist destination of India.

- This survey was conducted by hospitality consulting firm, Hotelivate in association with World Travel & Tourism Council-India Initiative (WTTC-II).
- States were assessed on eleven parameters, which included state expenditure on tourism, number of branded hotel rooms, aircraft movement, road and rail network and other intangible aspects.
- As per the finding of the survey, Delhi, Maharashtra, Goa, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat are the top five tourism destination states.
- Being a capital city, Delhi scored extremely high on parameters of aircraft movement and hotel rooms, which contributed to its overall top rank.
- Survey findings revealed that none of the Indian states spent more than 1 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product on tourism.

Venkaiah Naidu inaugurates AP AgTech Summit 2017 in Visakhapatnam

On 15th November 2017, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the three-day Andhra Pradesh AgTech Summit 2017 in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

- The summit will discuss on innovative ideas, technologies and global best practices to push agricultural transformation in Andhra Pradesh. More than 50 stalls have been set up to showcase latest agriculture technologies and products of companies.

- Chief Guest for the Valedictory session on 17 November 2017 will be Bill Gates. This summit is organised by the Andhra Pradesh Government in association with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Dalberg Advisors.
- More than 1,500 global leaders from 61 countries including business heads, start-up founders, leading policymakers, progressive farmers, non-governmental organisation (NGOs), agriculture and technology experts attended the summit.

Government to introduce BS-VI auto fuels in Delhi from 2018

The Petroleum Ministry in consultation with Public Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) has decided for preponement of BS-VI grade auto fuels in National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi from 1st April 2018 instead of 1st April 2020.

- This decision was taken into account the serious pollution levels in Delhi and adjoining areas and as part of government's concerted efforts to reduce vehicular emissions and improve fuel efficiency with an aim to reduce the carbon footprints and keep a healthy environment.
- Bharat Stage Norms norms are emission standards instituted by Government to regulate output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles. The standards and timeline for implementation are set by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) under Ministry of Environment & Forests and climate change.
- The standards are based on European regulations and were first introduced in 2000. Since then, various stages Bharat Stage compatible fuel and ungraded and modified vehicles were introduced throughout the country.
- The BS-IV compliant fuels have Sulphur concentration of 50 parts per million (ppm). It will come down to 10 ppm in BS-VI compliant fuels and auto engines. It will result in lower level of harmful emissions and reduced incidence of lung diseases.
- Moreover, switch to BS-VI norms will also reduce concentration of carbon monoxide (CO), unburnt hydrocarbons, nitrous oxide (NO_x) and particulate matter from emissions.

12th North East Business Summit inaugurated in New Delhi

On 16th November 2017, 12th North East Business Summit, a two day event, was inaugurated in New Delhi.

- The summit aims to explore the scope for business opportunities in the North-Eastern region of India. Focus areas are Infrastructure and Connectivity with Public Private Partnerships, Skill Development, Financial Inclusion, Services Sector Development- Particularly in Tourism, Hospitality & Food Processing.

- The Summit is being organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Manipur is the state partner for this event.
- The conference includes technical sessions on development of infrastructure and connectivity in North East (NE): Focus on Regional Air Connectivity, Roads & Highways, Skill development in NE & Financing the services sector, Development of Food Processing Industry in NE with focus on Natural Organic and Super Foods from NE and Promotion of Tourism & Hospitality Sector in NE.

IndiaRAP assessment launched to rate highways on safety features

India Road Assessment Programme (IndiaRAP) was unveiled by Global Charity to rate highways' safety levels and to eliminate the most unsafe roads.

- It aims to make Indian roads safer and curb fatalities.
- The IndiaRAP programme is supported by FedEx Express and will be hosted by Asian Institute of Transport Development.
- It will work with government agencies as well as investors, researchers and NGOs to assess existing highways and promote use of better design to make roads safer.
- The IndiaRAP ratings will range from five-star roads (safest) to one-star roads (least safe). The ratings are assigned on the basis of level of safety which is 'built-in' to a road for vehicle occupants, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Karnataka launches project to install WiFi facilities in gram panchayats

On November 16, 2017, Karnataka State Government unveiled an ambitious project to install Wi-Fi facility in all gram panchayats across the state.

- During this year itself, Wi-Fi facility will be installed in 2500 gram panchayats.
- At Bengaluru Tech Summit 2017, Karnataka Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah stated that the objective of this project is to bridge the digital divide.
- Through this project, each and every entrepreneur from the cities and towns across Karnataka, will be provided an opportunity to benefit from the enabling eco-system.
- This project is a part of Karnataka State Government's efforts to strengthen the Information Technology sector in the state.
- As per data released by Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, 44 per cent of the total investment intentions in India in 2017 are for setting up projects/businesses in Karnataka.

NGT pulls up Amarnath Shrine Board for lack of infrastructure for pilgrims

On November 15, 2017, National Green Tribunal (NGT) rapped the Amarnath Shrine Board for not providing proper infrastructure facilities to pilgrims travelling to Amarnath Shrine.

- NGT has directed the board to submit a status report on the same by first week of December 2017.
- Besides, NGT has formed a committee of experts, headed by Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, to recommend an action plan to the board on providing facilities to pilgrims.
- In 2012, media reports had claimed that casualties during Amarnath Yatra had gone up due to lack of infrastructure and medical facilities. In wake of these claims, Supreme Court had set up a high-powered committee to recommend measures to prevent casualties.
- Based on the recommendations of this committee, Supreme Court had directed Amarnath Shrine Board to improve infrastructure to prevent casualties during the pilgrimage.

Nagaland becomes first North East state to launch PoS for electricity bill payments

On 16th November 2017, Nagaland became the first among the North Eastern states to launch Point of Sale (PoS) for electricity bill payment.

- The PoS facility was formally launched by State Chief Secretary, Pankaj Kumar, at Kohima Electrical Sub-division-1 in Kohima on 16th November 2017.
- Pankaj Kumar said that, the department has been losing around Rs 150 crore annually due to non-payment of bills by consumers and asked the citizens to pay sincerely.
- Through the PoS, a consumer can make cashless payment of the electricity bills, which is in line with India's digitisation. Chief Engineer of Power Department, Khose Sale said that, PoS services will be extended to other major cities and districts of Nagaland.

International Current Affairs

China launches world's first fully electric cargo ship

China launched world's first fully electric cargo ship in Guangzhou, capital city of Guangdong province. It is the first ship in the world to use lithium ion battery.

- The ship will be mainly used to run in inland section of Pearl River for carrying coal for generation of electric power.

- The 2000-metric-ton ship was manufactured by the Guangzhou Shipyard International Company Ltd.
- It is 70.5 meters long and is powered by 26-tonne lithium battery.
- It has battery energy of about 2400 kilowatt (kw) hours which is same energy of 40 new energy cars. It can run 80 kilometers after being charged for two hours.
- Its highest speed is 12.8 kilometers per hour.
- This all-electric ship will help in reducing shipping costs for electric power operators.
- As the ship does not use fossil fuels, it has zero emission, including carbon, sulphur and PM2.5 which will help to protect water quality and marine life. It can be used as passenger liner or a working ship.

Climate Change Performance Index 2018 – India ranks 14th, Sweden ranks highest

India has ranked 14th out of 56 nations and European Union on Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2018 released by environmental organisation Germanwatch. This marks an improvement from its 20th rank in CCPI 2017.

- China, which is one of the highest GHG emitting country, ranks 41st. Similar to last year's rankings, top three rankings are still unoccupied as no country has adhered to commitments made in 2015 Paris Climate Accord that aims to keep the average global temperature rise below two degrees Celsius and as close as possible to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- The bottom three countries in the index are Korea (58), Iran (59) and Saudi Arabia (rank 60).

4th Global Conference on Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, Argentina

Plenary session of 4th Global Conference on Sustained Eradication of Child Labour was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina on November 15, 2017.

- This Conference was jointly organised by Government of Argentina and International Labour Organization (ILO).
- Ms. Gandhi highlighted the specific provisions of amendment in the Child Labour Act of 1986, provisions of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, National Food Security Act 2013 and Mahatama Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranty Act 2005 which are direct and indirect steps taken by Indian Government in this direction.
- Ms. Gandhi also provided information about Child helpline (Childline-1098), which is the world's biggest facility to rescue children in distressed situation.

Banking & Finance

BSE Institute sets up India's first in-house Block Chain Lab in Mumbai

BSE Institute Limited (BIL), a wholly owned subsidiary of BSE Limited has signed an Memorandum of Understanding with DLT Labs to set up the India's first state-of-the-art Block Chain Lab in Mumbai.

- Objective behind signing this MoU is to provide knowledge driven, in class education and training in the field of financial technology, with a special emphasis on Block Chain.
- Both the entities expect Block Chain to be the next big disruptive financial technology.
- All students of BIL, who have enrolled for classroom training as well as online training will be able to access this Block Chain Lab.
- Block Chain technology has multiple utility in various sectors including global supply chains and financial transactions.

Awards & Recognition

Kevin Lilliana of Indonesia won Miss International 2017

On 14th November 2017, Indonesia's Kevin Lilliana was crowned Miss International 2017 by the Philippines' Kylie Verzosa at the Tokyo Dome City Hall in Japan.

- The coronation night was held at the Tokyo Dome City Hall in Japan. This is the first Miss International title for Indonesia.
- Kevin Lilliana is 21 years old. She is a model. She has won the crown beating 68 candidates from across the world.
- All candidates competed in the national costume, swimsuit and evening gown competitions before the Top 15, Top 8, and Top 5 were selected.
- Following special awards were also given:
 - Miss National Costume: Natsuki Tsutsui (Japan)
 - Miss Perfect Body: Amber Dew (Australia)
 - Miss Best Dresser: Kevin Lilliana (Indonesia)

Ambani family tops Forbes list of Asia's Richest Families

On 15th November 2017, Forbes said that, India's Ambani family has topped the Forbes list of Asia's Richest Families for the first time with a net worth of \$44.8 billion, up \$19 billion from the previous year.

- The collective wealth of Asia's 50 richest families on the list is a record \$699 billion. The 2nd position was secured by, South Korea's Lee family with \$40.8 billion wealth. Hong Kong's Kwok family ranks 3rd with a net worth of \$40.4 billion.
- For the third time, India enjoys the biggest presence on the list, with 18 families. Hong Kong follows with nine families on the list.
- The second richest family in India is the Premji family (Rank 11; \$19.2 billion net worth), followed by the Mittal family (Rank 14; \$17.2 billion).

Baahubali: The Beginning wins big at Nandi awards; Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan win NTR honour

On 14th November 2017, the Andhra Pradesh government announced Nandi Awards of the year 2014, 2015 and 2016. .

- Nandi Awards are considered Andhra Pradesh's most prestigious honour. The main ceremony is scheduled to be held in December 2017.
- Baahubali has become the only film to collect fourteen awards in different categories. The Baahubali team collected awards for the best film, director, supporting actress, villain, cinematographer, playback singer (male), music, choreographer, fight master, dubbing and special effects.
- Ramya Krishnan was named the Best Supporting Actress for her role as Sivagami in Baahubali. Rana Daggubati, who played Bhalladeva in Baahubali, won the best villain award.
- Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan won the NTR National Award for the year 2014 and 2015, respectively.

Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC) bags ADI PEC Excellency in Energy Awards 2017

On 13th November 2017, the Andhra Pradesh Mineral Development Corporation (APMDC) bagged the ADI PEC (Abu Dhabi Intl Petroleum Exhibition and Conference) Excellency in Energy Awards 2017 as runner-up, in Abu Dhabi.

- The ADI PEC (Abu Dhabi Intl Petroleum Exhibition and Conference) Excellency in Energy Awards 2017 has honoured the APMDC as the winner for the second position in the category of "social contribution in country value."

- The Managing Director Venkaiah Chowdhary of APMDC said that, APMDC was given the award for setting new benchmarks in the particular area which would further boost the performance of the corporation.
- The award was received by T. Venkatesh, General Manager (Marketing) on 13th November 2017, in Abu Dhabi.

Appointments & Resigns

RBI Governor Urjit Patel appointed to Financial Stability Institute Advisory Board

RBI Governor Urjit Patel was appointed to Financial Stability Institute Advisory Board (FSAB) or Bank of International Settlement (BIS).

- BIS is international financial organisation owned by 60 member central banks across the world.
- The Financial Stability Institute (FSI) of BIS assists financial sector authorities worldwide in strengthening their financial systems.
- The FSI was jointly established by BIS and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision in 1998. Its mandate is to promote cross- sectoral and cross-border supervisory contacts and cooperation.
- The advisory Board will provide strategic advice to help FSI continue to meet its mandate in way that is responsive to changing needs of its key stakeholders around the world.
- It will comprise small diverse group of central bank Governors, heads of financial sector supervision and chairs of standard-setting bodies and regional supervisory groups.

Science & Technology

R.K. Singh launches ‘Saubhagya’ Web-Portal – a Platform for Monitoring Universal Household Electrification

On 16th November 2017, R.K. Singh, Minister of State (IC) for Power and New & Renewable Energy, launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – ‘Saubhagya’ Web Portal.

- The Saubhagya portal can be accessed at <http://saubhagya.gov.in>. This is a platform for monitoring household electrification progress.
- Through this online platform every State would feed in the current status of progress of electrification works, hence enabling the creation of a system of accountability for the State utility.
- All States have been asked to announce the schedules of the village camps to be held and create awareness among the people about the one-stop facility for getting electricity connections.

Environment

Govt advances BS-VI fuel roll out in Delhi to cut pollution

On November 15, 2017, Union Petroleum Ministry announced that Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) fuel will be introduced in Delhi from April 1, 2018, much ahead of the earlier deadline of 2020. WHO - Report Information about BS-VI fuel roll out in Delhi

- BS-VI – equivalent to Euro-VI grade, is the cleanest fuel. Thus, advancing its introduction will help to curb air pollution in Delhi that has reached alarming levels.
- Earlier, Government had decided to leapfrog straight to BS-VI emission norm complaint petrol and diesel from April 2020 from current BS-IV grade.
- BS-VI grade fuel contains 10 parts per million (ppm) of sulphur as against 50 ppm in BS-IV fuels.
- This decision will have direct implications for auto manufacturers because if BS-VI compliant vehicles are not rolled out by next year and the existing BS-IV engine operates on the new BS-VI fuel, it will not lead to any reduction in pollution.

Sports

France named as host of 2023 Rugby World Cup

On 15th November 2017, France was announced as the surprise host of the 2023 Rugby World Cup.

- Ireland got eight votes in the first round, compared to 18 for France and 13 for South Africa. In the second round, France won by 24 votes to 15.

- Ireland's bid was rated as the weakest of the three nations in contention by World Rugby's technical review group. Its report said that, South Africa was its preferred candidate.
- It was the first time the Board's recommendation has been ignored and the decision was immediately followed by questions over the selection process and the point of running a transparent evaluation process.

Obituary

Former SC Judge Justice V Khalid Passes Away

On 15th November 2017, retired Supreme Court judge V. Khalid died in Kannur.

- Justice Khalid had served as judge in the Kerala High Court and as Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.
- He began his career as a lawyer at the Kannur munsiff court in 1948 and moved to the Thalassery bar in 1949.
- He served at the District Court at Thalassery till 1964 and then he moved to the High Court. After retirement, he had served in many government bodies.

Legendary Hindi Poet Kunwar Narain passes away at 90

On 15th November 2017, eminent Hindi poet and Jnanpith awardee Kunwar Narayan passed away at his home in New Delhi.

- Kunwar Narayan was known for his poetry, stories and critiques.
- His first poetry collection was "Chakravayuh". It is considered as a landmark in Hindi literature. His other works include Atmajayee, Apne Samne, Koi Dusra Nahi, and In Dinon.

Important Days

World Philosophy Day – November 16

On 16th November 2017, World Philosophy Day was celebrated all over the world.

- World Philosophy Day was introduced in 2002 by UNESCO (the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). In 2005 the UNESCO General Conference declared that World Philosophy Day would be celebrated every third Thursday of November.
- The Dvaita Philosophy Resource Centre (DPRC), Manipal University, celebrated the World Philosophy Day 2017 with a special seminar. The seminar was on “The intellectual duties of the King: An Indian perspective”.
- World Philosophy Day celebrates the importance of philosophical reflection, and encourages people all over the world to share their philosophical heritage with each other.

International Day for Endurance or Tolerance – November 16

On 16th November 2017, International Day for Endurance or Tolerance was observed all over the world.

- The International Day for Tolerance is observed every year on 16 November. It was declared by UNESCO in 1995 to generate public awareness of the dangers of intolerance.
- In 1995, to mark the United Nations Year for Tolerance and the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, UNESCO created a prize for the promotion of tolerance and non-violence.
- The UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence rewards significant activities in the scientific, artistic, cultural or communication fields aimed at the promotion of a spirit of tolerance and non-violence. The prize is awarded every two years on 16 November.

National Press Day – November 16

On 16th November 2017, National Press Day was observed in India.

- National Press Day is symbolic of a free and responsible press in India. This was the day on which the Press Council of India started functioning in 1966.
- The Press Council is a moral watchdog to ensure that if the press maintain the high standards expected from this powerful medium and also that it was not affected by the influence or threats of any extraneous factors.
- Since the year 1997 Seminars have been organized by the Press Council on the occasion of National Press Day