

National Current Affairs

Government introduces Daily Drug Regimen for treatment of Tuberculosis

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has launched Daily Drug Regimen for treatment of Tuberculosis (TB) patients across the country under The Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP).

- Under it, Health Ministry is providing thrice weekly regimen for treatment of TB, however it has now decided to change treatment strategy for TB patients from thrice weekly to daily drug regimen using fixed dose combinations (FDC) for treatment.
- This change will bring transformation in approach and intensity to deal with this disease which accounts for about 4.2 lakh deaths every year.
- The daily FDC anti-TB drugs will be made available to private pharmacy or at private practitioners to dispense to TB patients who seek care in private sector, depending upon convenience of patient and practitioner free of cost.
- Health Ministry will take this forward with all major hospitals, Indian Medical Association (IMA), Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) and other professional medical associations to expand access to daily FDC to all TB patients.
- This treatment strategy will use Ethambutol in continuation phase for all patients, drugs to be given daily (as against only 3 times weekly previously), fixed dose combination (FDC) tablets will be used to reduce pill burden (as against separate 7 tablets previously), for children, child friendly formulations as dispersible tablets. Moreover, use of Information Technology (IT) enabled treatment adherence support system will be also undertaken.

Punjab Cabinet approves scheme to compensate acid attack victims

On November 17, 2017, Punjab State Cabinet approved 'Punjab Victim or Their Dependents Compensation Scheme' which stipulates to provide minimum compensation of Rs Three lakh to an acid attack victim.

- Every year, Punjab State Government's department of home affairs and justice, will allocate a separate budget to the department of legal and legislative affairs to provide compensation under this scheme.
- As per the order of Supreme Court, the state government would provide a minimum compensation of Rs three lakh each to the victims of acid attack. In case of death of such victim, the family will be provided an assistance of Rs. 5 lakh.

Delhi government to form 'Mahila Suraksha Dals' to curb crimes against women in national capital

On 17th November 2017, Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi Manish Sisodia said that, the Delhi government would form "Mahila Suraksha Dals" (women protection groups) to curb crimes against women in the national capital.

- Manish Sisodia said that, the government would constitute these teams in coordination with the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW).
- As a pilot project, the MSDs would be formed at three places, which were prone to crimes against women, and then it would be expanded across Delhi.
- These MSDs will comprise representatives of the local community, both men and women, besides civil defence volunteers, and will work at the grassroot-level to address the issue of women's safety.
- The teams will sensitise the people about crimes against women and also help them report such incidents to the police.

12th International Conference of Society of Petroleum Geophysicists, Jaipur

12th Biennial International Conference & Exposition of Society of Petroleum Geophysicists (SPG) -India started in Jaipur, Rajasthan on November 17, 2017. This conference will continue till November 19, 2017.

- The conference was inaugurated by Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Dharmendra Pradhan.
- Theme of the conference was "Energy through Synergy".
- Mr. Pradhan also released a special issue of SPG's half yearly journal, 'GEOHORIZON'.

Steering Committee of SARTTAC held in New Delhi

Interim Meeting of Steering Committee of International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Centre (SARTTAC) was held in New Delhi.

- Officials from all Six SARTTAC Member countries attended the meeting together with Development Partner representatives European Union, United Kingdom, Australia, and USAID along with IMF staff.
- Steering Committee SARTTAC endorsed FY 2018 work plan and also approved new work area in Government Finance and Public Debt Statistics.
- It welcomed progress in securing over 90 percent of the financing for SARTTAC's first five-year (2017-2022) Phase.

- It also approved new work area in Government Finance and Public Debt Statistics, where members have expressed strong demand and work is underway to plan future technical assistance and training.
- The next Steering Committee meeting will take place in Sri Lanka in May, 2018.
- SARTTAC was inaugurated in February 2017. It is first IMF Regional Capacity Development Centre to fully integrate training and technical assistance activities. It is located in New Delhi, India.

24th meeting of the Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency (APRSAF-24) forum held in Bengaluru

On 14 – 17 November 2017, the 24th Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF-24), was held in Bengaluru.

- The theme for the 24th Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF-24) was 'Space Technology for Enhanced Governance and Development'.
- The event was co-organised by India's Department of Space (DOS), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).
- The General Co-chairs were Mr. A. S. Kiran Kumar, Secretary of DOS & Chairman of ISRO and Ms. Mami Oyama, Deputy Director General, Research and Development Bureau, Japan.
- A S Kiran Kumar and JAXA director Naoki Okumura said that, ISRO and JAXA have begun exploring the possibility of combining forces for a joint lunar mission.

First Namami Barak festival held in Assam

The first ever Namami Barak festival was held at Silchar in Assam. It was inaugurated by Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

- The event was organised at 3 locations in Barak Valley also known as Southern Assam. Silchar is main event area while other two locations are Hailakand and Karimganj district.
- The 3-day river festival aimed to pay tribute to River Barak and to showcase of Barak's potential & possibilities to emerge as hub of trade and commerce.
- The festival showcased cultural heritage of valley together with its cuisine, fauna and flora, socio-economic and civic splendor before global audience.
- Barak River is one of major rivers of South Assam. The 564 kilometres long river is part of Surma-Meghna River System.

Karnataka assembly passes SC/ST promotions bill

On November 17, 2017, Karnataka State Legislative Assembly passed 'Karnataka Extension of Consequential Seniority to Government Servants Promoted on the Basis of Reservation (To the posts in the Civil Services of the State) Bill 2017'.

- Prior to introduction of this bill, Supreme Court had struck down Karnataka Govt.'s provision for providing reservation in promotion for SC/ST employees. This decision of Supreme Court was passed in response to a civil appeal filed in 2011.
- Supreme Court had struck down the provision citing that inadequacy of representation, backwardness and overall efficiency should be determined through proper exercise before providing such reservation.
- In wake of this decision, Karnataka State Government formed a committee led by Additional Chief Secretary Ratnaprabha to collate scientific, quantifiable and relevant data. This committee confirmed the backwardness of SC/STs, inadequacy of their representation in the state civil services and that the overall efficiency of administration has not been affected because of reservation in promotions.

International Current Affairs

Moscow declaration adopted for co-ordinated action on TB, end of HIV co-infection deaths

Health ministers, NGOs, and private sector representatives from 120 countries have adopted Moscow Declaration on the sidelines of the first WHO Global Ministerial Conference.

- The declaration calls for eliminating additional deaths from HIV co-infection by 2030 and achieving synergy in coordinated action against Tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
India is among signatories to the declaration. A co-infection is when a person suffers from two infections at same time.
- Moscow declaration emphasis need for fixing multisectoral responsibility towards ending TB by 2035, the global target.
- It recognises need for multisectoral accountability framework to end TB, which is both political and technical.

Qatar named as world's richest country according to IMF's GDP data

As per rankings released by business magazine 'Fortune', Qatar is World's Richest Country in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Per Capita.

- GDP Per Capita is a measure of the total output of a country computed by dividing gross domestic product (GDP) by the number of people in the country. In theoretical terms, higher per capita GDP results in to a higher standard of living.
- Qatar owns world's third largest natural gas reserves and is widely perceived to be a prominent power center in the Arab world.
- Richest Countries in the World – Top 5
 1. Qatar
 2. Luxembourg
 3. Singapore
 4. Brunei
 5. Ireland

IFFCO retains global seat in International Cooperative Alliance

Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has retained the prestigious seat of the Director on Global Board of International Co-operative Alliance (ICA).

- This is the second time in a row that IFFCO has retained the seat of the Director on Global Board of ICA.
- IFFCO's candidate, Aditya Yadav retained his position on the ICA's Board of Directors, by securing 627 out of 696 votes. Candidates from Japan, US, Canada, UK, Australia, Italy and Brazil were also contesting for this post.
- Voting took place at ICA's Global Conference and General Assembly 2017, that was held from November 14 to 17, 2017 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- It is to be noted that IFFCO has leaped up to 105th place from 155th in World Cooperative Monitor which ranks top global 300 cooperatives.

China opens world's coolest library

China has opened the world's coolest library in the Binhai Cultural District in Tianjin, China.

- The library has been designed by Dutch design firm MVRDV in collaboration with the Tianjin Urban Planning and Design Institute (TUPDI). It covers 33,700 square meters.
- It is a five-story library. It can hold up to 1.2 million books. It took three years to complete the construction.
- It has been dubbed "The Eye of Binhai", as it has a giant spherical auditorium in the middle that looks just like a giant eye.

Banking & Finance

RBL Bank opens all women branch in Chennai

On November 17, 2017, private sector RBL Bank inaugurated an all women branch in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. RBL Bank opens all women branch in Chennai.

- The all-women branch in Chennai will be managed by eight women and will offer all products and services across liability and assets.
- This initiative is RBL Bank's efforts in encouraging gender equality.
- Currently, RBL Bank has 246 branches and 389 ATM across India. It serves 3.54 million customers.

Centrum Capital acquires First Rand microfinance business

In a bid to kick-start its lending operations focused on retail and small & medium enterprises (SMEs), Centrum Capital has acquired South Africa-based First Rand Bank's (FRB's) microfinance business in India.

- Centrum is a non-banking finance company (NBFC) which has already received a microfinance institution (MFI) licence from the Reserve bank of India (RBI).
- As FRB already has a Rs 200-crore loan book, around 70,000 customers and a staff strength of over 300 people, its acquisition will provide a ready-made platform for Centrum to foray in micro finance business.
- Key focus area for Centrum Microcredit will be to provide loans to unserved and underserved borrowers operating small businesses in semi-urban areas.
- Besides, the microfinance client base will also be tapped in for cross selling Centrum's other financial products/services.

PNB, ACE tie-up for farm machinery financing

Punjab National Bank (PNB) and Action Construction Equipment Ltd (ACE) have tied up for augmenting tractors/agricultural implements financing to the farmers across India through PNB's branch network.

- A MoU regarding the tie-up was signed by B.M.Padha, Corporate General Manager, Priority Sector & Financial Inclusion Division, PNB and Ashok Kumar Tomar, COO, ACE (Agriculture Division) in the presence of Tirlochan Singh, Country Head, Retail Finance, ACE and other dignitaries.

- This tie-up will enable PNB to facilitate the availability of quality farm machinery equipment to its farmer base at an interest rate of 9.2 % per annum.
- Ashok Kumar Tomar informed that farmers can avail ACE farm machinery financed through PNB at discounted price.
- This tie-up will enable ACE to tap into PNB's branch network and customer base and further strengthen its presence in India.

Reliance General Insurance inks bancassurance pact with YES Bank

Reliance General Insurance, a subsidiary of Reliance Capital, has signed a comprehensive bancassurance-corporate agency agreement with YES Bank.

- YES Bank with its network of 1,040 branches across all 29 States and seven Union Territories will enable Reliance General Insurance to reach a large base of retail and MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) clients.
- This is the first partnership signed by YES Bank since the open-architecture norms under the corporate agency regulations were introduced by the IRDAI (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority) in April 2016.
- Rana Kapoor, MD, YES Bank, said that, with this alliance, we remain committed to use our pan-India branch network to capitalise on the immense opportunities in the Indian bancassurance market.

Business

Toyota teams with Suzuki to bring EVs to India by 2020

On 17th November 2017, Japanese automakers Toyota Motor Corp. and Suzuki Motor Corp. said they had agreed to ally to introduce Electric Vehicles (EVs) in India by around 2020.

- As per the pact, Suzuki would produce EVs for the Indian market and would supply some to Toyota. Toyota would provide technical support.
- A MoU was signed in February 2017 between Toyota and Suzuki to explore a partnership. Suzuki had earlier said it would invest \$180 million (about ₹1,150 crore), along with partners Toshiba and Denso, for a separate unit to manufacture lithium-ion batteries at its Gujarat plant.
- As per the agreement, in addition to lithium-ion batteries, electric motors and other major components would be locally procured for the production of EVs in India.

NEA, CTGC sign Joint Venture Pact to construct West Seti Hydropower Project

Nepal Electricity Authority, NEA has signed a joint venture agreement with China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC) to construct 750 MW West Seti hydropower Project.

- The joint venture agreement was signed at Kathmandu by NEA Executive Director Kulman Ghising and representatives of China Three Gorges Corporation (CTGC).
- He said that estimated cost of the project will be 1.8 billion US dollars. CTGC will have 75% stake in the joint venture and NEA will hold remaining 25%.
- The project will be completed in 79 months after starting of construction work. West Seti project will be spread over Baitadi, Bajhang, Dadeldhura and Doti districts of Nepal. The initial agreement with CTGC was signed in January 2017.

Karnataka, Intel's Mobileye tie up for "Automotive Safety Innovation" project

The Karnataka government has partnered with Intel Company Mobileye to launch a project for automotive safety called "Automotive Safety Innovation", which will create a repository of road and traffic information.

- As part of this project, multiple vehicles fitted with cameras and other sensors would be covering several areas around Karnataka to build the repository over the next 9 months.
- Priyank Kharge, Minister for IT, BT and Tourism said that, this repository can be used to develop and validate artificial intelligence technologies that can learn and analyse data of road conditions and assist drivers to make informed decisions for higher safety.
- The vehicles will also carry Mobileye Collision Avoidance Systems that would identify potential accident zones also known as "Grey Spots", in addition to real-time warnings to the driver.
- These Grey Spots will provide the State authorities with sufficient information to improve infrastructure for road safety.

Appointments & Resigns

Bhaskar Bhat, Saurabh Agrawal elevated to Tata Sons board

Tata Sons has elevated Group Chief Financial Officer Saurabh Agrawal and Titan Company Managing Director Bhaskar Bhat to its board.

- Bhaskar Bhat is currently heading Titan. He has helped the company drive brand value and a market cap of \$10 billion. Saurabh Agrawal brings deep capital market knowledge and valuable cross industry experience to the group.
- The Tata group, comprising over 100 independent operating companies, has operations in more than 100 countries across six continents.

Anand Rajeshwar Baiwar takes charge as SEBI executive director

On 17th November 2017, markets regulator, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said that, Anand Rajeshwar Baiwar has taken charge as an executive director.

- Prior to this assignment, he was working as an income tax commissioner in Kolkata. He is a graduate in engineering as well as law.
- SEBI had also promoted two senior employees – Amarjeet Singh and Nagendraa Parakh as executive directors in July 2017.

Sibi George accredited as the next Ambassador of India to the Principality of Liechtenstein

Sibi George has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Principality of Liechtenstein.

- Sibi George is an Indian Foreign Service Officer (IFS) of 1993 batch. He is presently Ambassador of India to Switzerland. His residence is in Berne, Switzerland.
- He has been concurrently appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Principality of Liechtenstein. He is expected to take up the assignment shortly.

Science & Technology

NASA launches Joint Polar Satellite System-1

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has launched a next-generation satellite called the Joint Polar Satellite System-1 (JPSS-1) into space.

- JPSS-1 is a joint venture between NASA and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).
- It was launched into orbit atop United Launch Alliance-built Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

- It will be renamed NOAA-20 when it reaches its final orbit.
- JPSS-1 is first multi-day weather forecasts satellite in NOAA's series of four, next-generation operational environmental satellites representing major advancements in observations used for severe weather prediction and environmental monitoring. It is designed to monitor weather around world and help improve forecasts.
- The satellite will improve weather forecastings, such as predicting hurricane's track and will help agencies involved with post-storm recovery by visualizing storm damage and the geographic extent of power outages.
- Its data will also improve recognition of climate patterns that influence weather such as El Nino and La Nina.

INS Sarvekshak reaches Dar-Es-Salaam for hydrographic survey

INS Sarvekshak, a hydrographic survey ship of Southern Naval Command has arrived in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania for undertaking joint- Hydrographic Survey along with the Tanzanian Navy.

- The joint survey will be conducted with the Naval personnel of Tanzania who have been trained in India in National Institute of Hydrography, Goa.
- During the survey, training of Tanzanian Naval personnel will also be undertaken on advanced hydrographic equipment and practices.
- INS Sarvekshak is a specialised survey ship of the Indian Navy presently based at Kochi. It is fitted with state-of-the-art survey equipment like Deep Sea Multi beam echo sounder system, Side Scan Sonars and a fully automated digital surveying and processing system.
- In addition, the ship carries an integral Chetak helicopter which would be extensively deployed during the survey.
- The ship is second ship of the Darshak class of ships. It has 15 officers and 175 sailors and is presently commanded by Captain Peush Pawsey.

Sports

India to host Asia Cup of Road Racing with National Championship

On 18 and 19 November 2017, Round 3 of FIM Asia Cup of Road Racing (ACRR) will be held at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida, India.

- Top bikers from Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Nepal, Taiwan and India will participate in round three of the FIM Asia Cup of Road Racing (ACRR) at the Buddh International Circuit in Greater Noida.
- India will be represented by Sai Rahil Pillarisetty and Israel Vanlalhraizela, who are fourth in the standings after the first two rounds in Thailand and Taiwan. They have accumulated 28 points, 23 points behind the leaders from Philippines (5 points) and Thailand (25 points).

Sushil Kumar, Geeta Phogat win gold in 62nd National Wrestling championship

Sushil Kumar and Geeta Phogat bagged gold medal at the 62nd National Wrestling championship in Indore.

- Two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar won a gold medal in men's 74 kilogram freestyle competition.
- Geeta Phogat won a gold medal in the 59 kg category of women's wrestling. India's single woman Olympic medal winner Sakshi Malik won gold medal in the 62kg category of women's wrestling.
- Geeta's husband Pawan Kumar also finished on top in 86kg category. This is the first time Indore has hosted the National Wrestling Championship.

Wrestler Sandeep Yadav banned for four years for failing dope test

Wrestler Sandeep Tulsi has been handed a four-year ban by the Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel of the NADA.

- Wrestler Sandeep Yadav is from Sonapat. He has tested positive for methandienone, an anabolic steroid. The tests were conducted on 25 June 2016.
- Sandeep Yadav's sparring partner and roommate Narsingh Yadav was also ousted from the Olympics in 2016 and given a four-year ban for failing a dope test after Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) overturned the clean chit given to him by the NADA.

Awards & Recognition

Manushi Chhillar wins Miss World 2017 title

India's Manushi Chhillar (20) was crowned coveted Miss World crown for the year 2017.

- The win comes 17 years after Priyanka Chopra brought home coveted title in the year 2000.
- The winner of 2016 title, Puerto Rico's Stephanie Del Valle passed on her crown to Ms Chhillar at a grand event held in Sanya in China.
- \Miss England Stephanie Hill was first runner up and Miss Mexico Andrea Meza was second runner up.
- Around 108 women from across world participated in 2017 beauty pageant.
- Ms Chhillar is sixth Indian woman to win the coveted title of Miss World. Reita Faria was first Indian woman to claim title back in 1966, followed by Aishwariya Rai Bachchan (1994), Diana Haydon (1997), Yukta Mookhey (1999) and Priyanka Chopra (2000).