

National Current Affairs

IMBAX 2017: India-Myanmar joint Army exercise begins in Meghalaya

The first India-Myanmar Bilateral Military Exercise 2017(IMBAX - 2017) was held at Joint Warfare Centre at the Umroi Joint Training Node in Meghalaya.

- The joint exercise is also the first of its kind military training exercise on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) between India and Myanmar.
- The aim of this bilateral training event is to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations under the UN Flag.
- The upcoming bilateral exercise will be conducted at the Joint Training Node, Umroi, Meghalaya by Army's RED HORNS DIVISION under the aegis of GAJRAJ CORPS.
- The opening ceremony will be held on November 20. The exercise includes participation of 15 officers from Myanmar army and 16 officers from the Indian army who will jointly train for over a period of six days.
- The focus will be on training the Myanmar army delegation on the tactics, procedures, expertise and methodology required by the contingent of the member nations for serving in UNPKO.

Karnataka Cabinet approves Electronics System Design, Manufacturing policy

On November 20, 2017, Karnataka State Cabinet approved 'Karnataka Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (KESDM) Policy 2017-22' to promote electronic design and manufacturing in the state.

- Under this policy, Karnataka State Government will encourage start-ups involved in electronic design and manufacturing by providing them with right ecosystem.
- Electronics design and manufacturing business includes chip design, embedded software, large scale integration which are critical components in computers, cellphones and other gadgets.
- Under this policy, five hardware accelerators will be established at Shivamogga, Mangaluru, Kalaburagi, Mysuru, and Bengaluru.
- As Electronic design and manufacturing business is currently the fastest growing segment in the Information and Communications technology space, this policy of Karnataka State Government is expected to bring huge investment in the State.

Nagaland, A&N Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu ink MoU under UDAY Scheme

On the 2nd Anniversary of Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), the Government of India signed four Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) under the Scheme with the State of Nagaland and with Union Territories (UTs) of Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman & Diu for operational improvements.

- These State/UTs have joined only for operational improvement and shall not undergo financial restructuring/issue of bonds under the scheme. With the above, UDAY club has now grown to 27 states and 4 UTs.
- The MoU paves way for improving operational efficiency of the Electricity Departments/DISCOM of the State/Union Territory.
Through compulsory distribution transformer metering, consumer indexing & GIS mapping of losses, upgrade/change transformers, meters etc., smart metering of high-end consumers, feeder audit etc
- AT&C losses and transmission losses would be brought down, besides eliminating the gap between cost of supply of power and realisation.

FOGSI launches 'Manyata' movement for quality maternal care in India

On November 20, 2017, Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies of India (FOGSI) launched 'Manyata', a nationwide movement emphasising the need for quality care for mothers during and immediately after childbirth.

- FOGSI has launched 'Manyata' in partnership with MSD for Mothers, MacArthur Foundation and Jhpiego (a non-profit health organisation affiliated of Johns Hopkins University).
- In India, every year, nearly 45,000 women die during childbirth due to reasons which are preventable if quality care is provided.
- The movement is aimed at cultivating a mindset that mothers are as important as their babies and access to minimum quality care is her basic right.
- Under this movement, private maternity providers will be encouraged and assisted to adopt recognized standards for excellence in maternity services. Facilities that meet these stipulated standards will be assessed and will be awarded 'Manyata' certification.
- Currently, providers in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra can seek assessment for 'Manyata' certification. Gradually it will be rolled out across India.

Maharashtra sets up Gender Budget cell for WCD

Maharashtra's Minister for Finance and Planning, Sudhir Mungantiwar has announced to set up Gender Budget Cells in his ministry for improving coordination and implementation of various schemes of Women and Child Welfare department (WCD) with other government departments.

- The Gender Budge Cell will not only ensure quality and effective implementation of WCD schemes but shall also strive to improve its outcome.
- It has been decided that Inter-departmental committees will be set up among the concerned departments and each administrative department will have a nodal officer to monitor the implementation of the schemes of WCD.
- Currently, at least 30 per cent of allocation in various schemes of WCD like animal husbandry is earmarked for women.

Shia Waqf Board headed by Wasim Rizvi proposes building Ram Temple in disputed Ayodhya land and mosque in Lucknow

On 20th November 2017, the UP Shia Central Waqf Board (UPShCWB), unveiled a proposed solution for an out-of-court settlement of the Ramjanmabhoomi-Babri Masjid case: a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya and a mosque in Lucknow.

- Shia board chairman Waseem Rizvi said they were in favour of a grand Ram temple at the disputed Ayodhya land, reiterating that the board was the rightful and only claimant to the land on which the demolished Babri mosque once existed.
- The Shia Board said the state government may in turn allot one acre of land for a mosque for Shia Muslims in Lucknow's Husainabad area.
- An application seeking permission to file the said settlement proposal has been submitted by the UPShCWB in the Supreme Court.

J P Nadda inaugurates 1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products in New Delhi

On 21st November 2017, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, J P Nadda inaugurated the 1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products and International Laws for Trade and Health in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in New Delhi.

- The Conference is being organized by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare with the support of WHO Country Office for India and in partnership with Indian Society of International Law.
- The objective of the Conference is to exchange knowledge and expand understanding on contemporary issues in international trade laws and research and innovation for access to medical products to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 agenda.
- J P Nadda stated that the coordination between the National Regulatory Authorities and pharmaceutical sector will enable launch and registration of new health technologies.

Tribal festival Parab takes off in Koraput, Odisha

On 19th November 2017, Parab-2017, the annual cultural festival of Odisha's Koraput district, showcasing the tribal art and culture, started.

- Parab 2017 started from the shrine of goddess Sankulai Devi of B Singhpur under Borigumma block, with a tribal dance. The objective of this festival is to protect and promote the region's rich cultural heritage.
- Congress chief whip in Odisha Assembly Tara Prasad Bahinipati and Koraput MP Jhina Hikaka performed the first ritual. This festival will go on till 20 December 2017.
- As a part of Parab, Rahgiri would be organised at Jeypore in the name of Saheed Laxman Nayak Pathoutsav on 26 November and 17 December 2017. This would include competitions and cultural programmes.
- A five-day Pallishree Mela will be organised on 21 December 2017, where a variety of handicraft items will be displayed.

Government observes Vasectomy Fortnight

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare observed Vasectomy Fortnight to raise awareness about male sterilisation and to promote the participation of men in family planning.

- Under this awareness campaign, all states and union territories observed Vasectomy Fortnight by providing quality of male sterilisation services at public health facilities.
- The Vasectomy fortnight will be observed up to block level with focus on family planning service delivery along with information, education, communication and advocacy.
- The theme for this is "Zimmedar Purush ki yehi hai Pehchan, Parivar Niyojan mein jo de Yogdaan".
- During the event, various myths about use of contraceptives by men will be dispelled.
- Through such initiative, government aims to achieve 'replacement level fertility' of 2.1 (presently it is 2.3). It will also be step in direction of fulfilling objectives of National population policy.
- Vasectomy is form of birth control for men where health care provider closes or blocks tubes that carry sperm.

International Current Affairs

China proposes three-phased solution on Rohingyas crisis

China has announced that Bangladesh and Myanmar have accepted its mediatory role and agreed to implement three-phased solution proposed by its Foreign Minister Wang Yi to resolve Rohingya refugee crisis.

- The three-phased solution was proposed after Wang Yi met separately with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Myanmar's top leaders.
- First stage: Myanmar should impose ceasefire and stop persecuted Rohingyas from fleeing into Bangladesh.
- Second stage: Bangladesh and Myanmar should strengthen exchanges and find solution on basis of equality.
- Third stage: International community to help develop the backward Rakhine state and poverty alleviation of Rohingyas in Myanmar.

India ranks 51 on IMD Talent Rankings

India ranked 51st among 63 countries on the IMD Talent Rankings in terms of ability to attract, develop and retain talent. In previous rankings, India was ranked 54th.

- The annual IMD World Talent Ranking covers 63 countries and assessed methods countries adopted to attract and retain talent.
The rankings of countries are based on their performance in three main categories — investment and development, appeal, and readiness.
- Switzerland topped list followed by Denmark, Belgium, Austria, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Sweden and Luxembourg in top 10.
- Globally, Europe continues to dominate rankings being most competitive countries.
- Leading Asian economies in rankings are Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. They have cemented their global status as hubs of attracting and retaining highly-skilled workers though they trail Europe in this regard.
- Among BRICS bloc, China was in lead with ranking of 40, followed by Russia (43) and South Africa (48). Brazil was ranked 52nd just after India.
- India was ranked 62nd (on investment and development), 43rd (appeal) and 29th (readiness) in three main categories.
- India is not doing good job at retaining local talent and attracting foreign labour. On both fronts, remuneration levels, quality of life, security and property rights are deterrent to domestic employment.
- India ranks among the bottom five countries on list in terms of investment in education as percentage of GDP

India-Russia sign pact for visa free entry of flight crew

On 21st November 2017, a pact for visa free entry of the crew of chartered and scheduled flights between India and Russia was signed by the two countries.

- India and Russia have agreed to implement the general declaration for visa free entry of the crew of chartered and scheduled flights between the two countries.
- The agreement will facilitate visa free entry, stay and exit of crew of aircraft of the designated airlines as well as other aircraft companies operating chartered and special flights in the respective territories on reciprocal basis.
- According to official estimates, around 1,200 scheduled flights fly between India and Russia every year. About 1,100 Russian chartered flights arrive in India every year.

13th Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting begins in Nay Pyi Taw

Two-day 13th Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting begun on November 20, 2017 in Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar

- The meeting was inaugurated by Aung San Suu Kyi, the de facto leader of Myanmar.
- The meeting was held with an objective to boost cooperation between Asia and Europe in political, economic, social and cultural spheres.
- Representatives from 51 countries including Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the European Union (EU) participated in this meeting.
- Discussions on ongoing Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar also took place during several bilateral meetings held on the sidelines of 13th Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

China launches three remote sensing satellites

On 21st November 2017, China launched three remote sensing satellites Jilin-1 04, Jilin-1 05 and Jilin-1 06 from Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in China's northern Shanxi Province.

- The three remote sensing satellites have been designed to improve observation capability to promote commercial use for the remote sensing industry.
- It was the third launch of the Jilin-1 satellite family, a remote sensing system of more than 60 satellites developed by Chang Guang Satellite Technology Co., Ltd.
- The system will be used for wide imaging, video imaging and multispectral imaging. Remote sensing data will serve administrations and commercial customers.
- The satellites were carried by a Long March-6 rocket, a new generation of liquid-fuelled carrier rocket developed by China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.

Banking & Finance

Govt increases issue size of Bharat 22 ETF to Rs 14,500 cr

On November 20, 2017, Central Government announced that issue size of New Fund Offer (NFO) of Bharat 22 Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) has been raised to Rs 14500 crore from Rs. 8000 crore earlier.

- Bharat 22 ETF was oversubscribed by four times. It received highest subscription for any new fund offer (NFO) in the history of Indian mutual fund industry. The decision to raise the issue size has been taken in order to accommodate this positive response.
- Major chunk of this NFO has been subscribed by foreign institutional investors, which reflects confidence on the Indian public sector space.
- NFO of Bharat 22 ETF was managed by ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund.
- Bharat 22 ETF is a unique blend of shares of key Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), Public Sector Banks (PSBs) and Government owned shares in blue chip private companies like Larsen & Tubro (L&T), Axis Bank and ITC held under the Specified Undertaking of the Unit Trust of India (SUUTI).
- It comprises 22 companies that represent 6 important sectors of the economy – Finance, Industry, Energy, Utilities, Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and Basic Materials.

Mastercard, Mswipe tie-up to strengthen digital payment acceptance in India

Mswipe, a domestic maker of Point of Sale (PoS) terminals, has partnered MasterCard to digitise merchant acquisition and can now enable a shopkeeper anywhere in India to acquire a card swipe machine.

- At present, merchants need to sign physical agreements and, in some cases, open new current accounts to become part of a credit card network.
- Mswipe will enable a merchant to complete the 'know-your-customer' (KYC) requirement using a mobile application that will scan documents and use complex software to compare these with government databases, including the income tax department's Permanent Account Number (PAN) database and the Shops and Establishments database.
- This solution to digitally validate and authenticate KYC documents has been developed by Bengaluru-based startup Signzy.

Business

Mahindra opens Detroit's 1st car making plant in 25 years

On 20th November 2017, Mahindra opened its new manufacturing plant in the world's car capital Detroit, which got its first automotive production facility in 25 years.

- Mahindra has opened its new manufacturing plant with an investment of \$230 million. The new plant will create 250 new jobs in the US.
- In a few weeks, the new facility will produce an off-highway vehicle, designed and engineered by Mahindra Automotive North America (MANA).
- By 2020, additional planned projects will result in 400 more jobs and another USD 600 million in local investment over that same period.
- In addition, MANA will continue to provide Metro Detroit- based engineering support for new vehicle platform development for India and global markets.

World Bank debars Madhucon Projects Ltd for two years

On 20th November 2017, Madhucon Projects Ltd said that, the World Bank has debarred it from participating in the projects aided by the multilateral funding agency for two years.

- The World Bank had temporarily debarred Madhucon Projects from participating in World Bank aided projects for a period of three years due to alleged negligence of its project staff in Lucknow-Muzzafarpur Highway projects.
- Madhucon challenged the same before the sanctions Board of World Bank at Washington. Madhucon was exonerated of all allegations except the one pertaining to negligence while claiming two material advances. World Bank has reduced the period of debarment to two years.

Appointments & Resigns

Dalveer Bhandari re-elected to International Court of Justice

India's nominee to International Court of Justice (ICJ) Dalveer Bhandari (70) was re-elected to fifth and the last seat of world court.

- Bhandari received 183-193 votes in United Nations General Assembly and secured all 15 votes in UN Security Council (UNSC).
- He was elected after Britain withdrew its candidate from the election.
- This is the first time since the ICJ was established in 1945 that there will be no British judge in ICJ.
- Bhandari is fourth Indian judge to be elected to ICJ after B.N. Rau, Nagendra Singh and RS Pathak

Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim named as UNAIDS Special Ambassador

Associate Scientific Director of the Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (Caprisa) Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim has been appointed UNAIDS Special Ambassador for Adolescents and HIV.

- The executive director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibe, made this announcement in Cape Town during the launch of a new report by the body, Right to health.
- The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths.
- In 2013, Professor Quarraisha Abdool Karim, was awarded South Africa's highest honour, the Order of Mapungubwe, for her contribution to the response to HIV.
- In her new role, she will focus on adolescents and HIV, while also championing the involvement of young women in science.

Ira Joshi appointed director general of Doordarshan News

On 20th November 2017, Ira Joshi was appointed as the Director General of Doordarshan News following the retirement of Veena Jain.

- Earlier, Ira Joshi was the Press Information Bureau (PIB) director general. PIB Director General Ghanshyam Goel has been made the new Director General of Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), replacing Esther Kar, who was put on compulsory wait.
- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has now appointed Ira Joshi as new Director General of Doordarshan News.

Awards & Recognition

Beyonce tops Forbes list of highest-earning women in music

Beyonce has jumped from number 5 last year to clinch the top spot (number 1) in Forbes magazine's 2017 list for the highest-paid women in music.

- Beyonce's most praised album "Lemonade," her sixth No. 1 hit, and her subsequent Formation World Tour accounted for the bulk of the estimated \$105 millionshe has earned between June 1, 2016, and June 1, 2017.
- This is nearly twice her \$54 million last year or her \$54.5 million the year before that. English singer Adele has secured the second position for the second year in a row, with an estimated \$69 million. Last year's topper, Taylor Swift, has scored \$44 million and reached the 3rd position.

Sports

Gates 3 & 4 of Feroz Shah Kotla to be named after Anjum Chopra

The Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) has decided to name the Gate No. 3 and 4 of the Ferozshah Kotla stadium after Anjum Chopra, who represented India in six World Cups.

- The Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) has decided to name the Gate No. 3 and 4 of the Ferozshah Kotla stadium after the cricketer-turned-commentator, Anjum Chopra.
- The DDCA led by retired Justice Vikramajit Sen, has also planned to host its first Annual Conclave on 29 November 2017.
- In addition to that, the DDCA has planned to name two stands of the stadium after former India captain Bishan Singh Bedi and former India all-rounder Mohinder Amarnath.

Science & Technology

NASA tests Supersonic Parachute for Mars 2020 mission

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) successfully tested supersonic landing parachute that will be deployed in its Mars rover mission set to launch in 2020.

- The mission will rely on special parachute to slow spacecraft down as it enters Martian atmosphere at over 5.4 kilometres per second. It was first of several tests in support of NASA's Mars 2020 mission.
- The Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE), mission's parachute-testing series was launched on 17.7-metre-tall Black Brant IX sounding rocket for evaluation of ASPIRE payload performance.
- The payload was bullet-nosed, cylindrical structure holding supersonic parachute along with parachute's deployment mechanism, and test's high-definition instrumentation including cameras to record data.
- This payload was carried as high as about 51 km and was successfully deployed from altitude of 42 km and at velocity of 1.8 times speed of sound.
- Thirty-five minutes after launch, ASPIRE splashed down in Atlantic Ocean about 54 km southeast of Wallops Island.

Improved Samba Masuri: CCMB-IIRR develop low Glycemic Index rice

Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in association with the Indian Institute of Rice Research (IIRR) has come out with an Improved Samba Masuri (ISM) which is not only resistant to bacteria blight but also has a low Glycemic Index (GI) considered suitable for those with diabetes.

- National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), a constituent of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), has done extensive human trials on the new variety and had come to the conclusion that ISM has low GI of 50.99 which is among the lowest value for several rice varieties tested and usually in the range of 53 to 69.
- ISM also has desirable attributes like better yield and fine grain type enhancing market potential and profit for farmers.

Obituary

Former Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna dies aged 49

Jana Novotna On 19th November 2017, former Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna passed away peacefully after a battle with cancer.

- Jana Novotna is former world number one in doubles and number two in women's tennis singles.

- Novotna won 24 singles titles in a 14-year career on the professional circuit with her most famous achievement in 1998 when she finally lifted the Wimbledon crown after twice falling at the final hurdle.
- She had won 17 Grand Slam titles in total including 12 in doubles and four in mixed doubles as well as claiming silver medals at the 1988 and 1996 Olympics and a bronze in Atlanta.

Important Days

21 November: World Fisheries Day

The World Fisheries day is celebrated every year on November 21 throughout world by fisherfolk communities to highlight critical importance to human lives, of water and lives it sustains, both in and out of water.

- Water forms a continuum, whether contained in rivers, lakes, and ocean. Fish forms an important part of diets of people around world, particularly those living near rivers, coasts and other water bodies.
- A number of traditional societies and communities are rallied around occupation of fishing.
- In India, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare is celebrating the day. This year's theme is 2022 Ka Hai Sapna Kisan Ki Aay Ho Dugna – Sankalp Se Siddhi”.

World Television Day – November 21

On 21st November 2017, World Television Day was observed all over the world.

- In December 1996, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 21 November as World Television Day commemorating the date on which the first World Television Forum was held in 1996.
- World Television Day is not so much a celebration, but the philosophy which it represents. Television represents a symbol for communication and globalization in the contemporary world.
- World Television Day is a day to renew governments', organizations' and individuals' commitments to support the development of television media in providing unbiased information about important issues and events that affect society.