

# National Current Affairs

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## **DANX-17: Defence of Andaman & Nicobar Islands Exercise concludes**

The Defence of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Exercise (DANX-2017) was conducted under aegis of Andaman & Nicobar Command from 20 to 24 November 2017.

- The main objective of the five day exercise was to practice and validate procedures and drills of all Command forces aimed at defending strategic Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Accretional forces from mainland including fighters, Special Forces, Naval ships and heavy lift transport aircraft participated in exercise.
- They collectively conducted fighter operations, night-para jumps at sea, slithering of troops from helicopters and amphibious landings of troops by ships.
- The purpose of the exercise was for adopting planning and precise execution of Command plans by forces in synergistic manner.
- It also aimed for being fully prepared for any eventuality in future.

## **Consultative Workshop on New National Policy on Biofuels held in New Delhi**

On 23rd November 2017, a consultative workshop on 'New National Policy on Biofuels & Pradhan Mantri Ji- Van Yojana (VGF for 2nd Generation Ethanol Bio Refineries)' was held in New Delhi.

- The workshop was organized by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for inviting suggestions for drafting a suitable roadmap for Biofuels in India.
- The workshop was organised with an objective to address growing environment concerns in the light of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Commitment at COP 21 (2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference).
- The workshop was organised for promoting Biofuels with objective to reduce dependency on import of crude oil, savings in foreign exchange, provide better remuneration for farmers and address growing environment concerns in the light of India's Commitment at COP 21.

## **Home Ministry conducts Multi State Mega Mock Tsunami Exercise 2017**

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) conducted Multi State Mega Mock Tsunami Exercise 2017 along the entire East Coast in 31 coastal districts across four States.

- It was conducted through National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS).
- The exercise was one of various activities conducted as part of observation of 2nd World Tsunami Awareness Day (observed on November 5).
- The exercise was simultaneously conducted in 31 coastal districts across four States – West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu and Puducherry (UT) along entire East Coast.
- It aimed to assess and help improve preparedness, response mechanism and coordination among concerned agencies.

### **Indian Railways installs Asia's largest Solid State Interlocking (SSI) in Kharagpur**

Indian Railways has installed Asia's largest Solid State Interlocking (SSI) system in Kharagpur, which will enable station masters to set 800 different routes for trains in a matter of minutes.

- Interlocking is a railway signal apparatus that prevents conflicting movements of trains. Asia's largest Solid State Interlocking (SSI) system has been installed in Kharagpur at a cost of Rs 39 crore.
- The cutting-edge technology replaces the pre-1989 route relay system that only allowed operators to set maximum 423 routes. The new system ensures that no cross-movement takes place.
- Also, the SSI software will detect the routes a particular train can take and inform the station masters working at the panel, bringing down the operation time and the possibility of human error.
- It will reduce the possibility of accidents. The system was made operational on 19th November 2017.

### **FSDC Sub-Committee reviews financial events of country**

The Sub-Committee of Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) reviewed major global and domestic developments that could impinge country's financial stability.

- The sub-committee meeting was headed by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Urjit Patel.
- Sub-Committee of the FSDC also discussed setting up of National Centre for Financial Education (NCFE), operationalisation of information utilities registered by the IBBI, sharing of data among regulators and implementation status of Legal Entity Identifier (LEI).
- Besides, it also reviewed activities of its various technical groups as well as functioning of State Level Coordination Committees.

- Its recommendations on FinTech and digital innovations, shadow banking implementation group and Stewardship Code were also discussed.
- FSDC is super regulatory body for regulating financial sector which is vital for bringing healthy and efficient financial system in the economy.

### **Bamboo not 'tree' any more: President promulgates ordinance to amend Forest Act**

President Ram Nath Kovind has promulgated an ordinance under Article 123 of Constitution to amend Indian Forest Act, 1927 to encourage bamboo plantation by farmers in private lands.

- The ordinance omits bamboo (taxonomically a grass) grown in non-forest areas from definition of trees. The omission, thereby exempts it from requiring permits for felling or transportation of bamboo grown in non forest areas.
- With this, bamboo grown in non-forest areas ceases to be tree. However, bamboo grown in forest areas continues to be governed by provisions of Indian Forest Act.
- The amendment to Section 2(7) of Indian Forest Act, 1927 will encourage bamboo plantation by farmers, which will contribute to doubling farmers income by 2022.
- By omitting bamboo grown in non-forest areas from definition of trees, government hoped to promote cultivation of bamboo in non-forest areas to achieve the "twin objectives" of increasing the income of farmers and also increasing the green cover of the country.
- The amendment approved will allow free movement of bamboo and ensure that production and consumption centres are seamlessly integrated.
- This will generate demand for raw material leading to planting of bamboo trees on non-forest land, provide employment and encourage growth of small and medium industries in villages and smaller towns also, and reduce our dependence on imports

### **Centre suggests Odisha to enhance PMGSY target to 10,000 km**

On 23rd November 2017, Union Secretary to Rural Development Minister Amarjit Sinha suggested to the Odisha government to enhance its rural road construction target under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) to 10,000 km from 7,000 km during the current fiscal year.

- The Odisha government had earlier set a target to construct 7,000 km roads during this fiscal. So far, around 42,058 km of road have been completed connecting 13,063 habitations under PMGSY.
- The field level work is going on for completion of another 14,800 km of road that will connect 3,492 habitations more. These projects would be completed by March, 2019.
- PMGSY is being implemented with fund support from both the Central and state government on 60:40 basis.

### **India asks UN to declare 2018 as International Year of Millets**

India has sent proposal to the United Nations (UN) for declaring the year 2018 as 'International Year of Millets'. If the proposal is agreed, it will raise awareness about millets among consumers, policy makers, industry and Research and Development (R&D) sector.

- Promotion of production and consumption of millets at global level will contribute substantially in fight against targeted hunger and mitigate effect of climate change in long run. Popularizing millets will benefit future generations of farmers as well as consumers.
- It has multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, biofuels and brewing. Therefore, millets are smart food and good for consumers, farmers and planet.

### **Dr Jitendra Singh announces exclusive 'Rural Livelihood' scheme for Northeast**

On November 23, 2017, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), Dr Jitendra Singh announced "North East Rural Livelihood Project", an exclusive rural Livelihood scheme for the North-eastern states of India.

- This scheme has been launched to benefit the tribals and the lower socioeconomic groups, including women, in the North-Eastern Region of India.
- This project is being supported by World Bank.
- Initially, this scheme will be rolled out to help tribal and even the non-tribal lower groups living in remote areas of four North-Eastern Indian States – Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
- Under this scheme, assistance will be provided to over 10000 Self Help Groups (SHGs) which will consequentially benefit about three lakh poor households.

### **TN has highest number of women entrepreneurs: Report**

As per a report by 'Sheatwork', a knowledge hub for women entrepreneurs, among all Indian States, Tamil Nadu has the highest number of women entrepreneurs followed by Kerala and West Bengal.

- The report by 'Sheatwork' has outlined that nearly 80 per cent of women entrepreneurs in India are self-financing their businesses. Very few women entrepreneurs have availed financial aid through various government schemes.
- Among all State Governments, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Karnataka and West Bengal are currently offering the maximum number of schemes for women entrepreneurs.

- Maximum number of women entrepreneurs have set up their businesses in education sector followed by financial services and insurance.
- Ratio of male to female entrepreneurs in northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland strongly favours women. However, numbers of women entrepreneurs in these states is quite low.

### **Centre announces infrastructure projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore for Tamil Nadu**

On November 23, 2017, Central Government approved infrastructure projects worth Rs 1 lakh crore in Tamil Nadu.

- These approved projects include highways and shipping as well as projects catering to irrigation and drinking water requirements in Tamil Nadu.
- Union Road Transport and Shipping Minister, Nitin Gadkari was on a visit to Chennai on November 23, 2017. During this visit, he announced highway projects worth Rs 40,000 crore under the Bharatmala highway construction program.
- Highway projects that have been announced are Chennai- Bengaluru Expressway at an estimated cost of Rs 20,000 crore and three new elevated corridors (Tambaram-Chengelpattu at a cost of Rs 2250 crore, Poonamalee- Maduravoyal at a cost of Rs 1500 crore and the Tiruvallur Corridor at a cost of Rs 1000 crore).
- Shipping projects that have been announced will focus on port development and expansion.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **Jindal Global University breaks into QS University Rankings: BRICS 2018**

O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) has been ranked among the Top 10 Private education Institutions in India in 'QS University Rankings: BRICS 2018'.

- QS University Ranking BRICS 2018 edition was released in New Delhi on November 23, 2017 by Chairman of University Grants Commission (UGC), Professor (Dr.) V.S. Chauhan.
- These rankings provides insights into the relative strengths and weaknesses of leading education institutions in Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS).
- The rankings are based on various performance indicators viz. academic reputation, proportion of staff with a PhD, employer reputation, faculty / student ratio, proportion of international faculty and students, research publications and citation rates.

- JGU is placed in the 251-300 rank out of 9000 universities in the BRICS region. By featuring in QS University Rankings BRICS 2018, JGU has become youngest Indian University to have been ranked in an international ranking.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **YONO: SBI to unveil India's first integrated digital platform**

State Bank of India (SBI), the largest commercial bank in India will soon launch country's first integrated lifestyle and banking digital service platform named YONO (acronym for 'You Only Need One').

- YONO is first digital banking platform that will allow customers to meet their lifestyle needs across 14 categories including booking and renting cabs, entertainment, dining experience, travel and stay etc.
- YONO is path-breaking comprehensive digital product of SBI, developed using world's latest digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Predictive Analytics and Machine Learning.
- The integrated omni-channel digital platform will offer an array of banking and financial services which can be accessed through mobile phones, both android and iOS and web portal through a browser.
- It will allow customers with smart phones to conduct basic banking like opening an instant account (with limited facilities) with as well as make investments. It will also enable it users to shop at various online stores.
- SBI will also use platform to sell its cards, life and general insurance and mutual funds etc.

### **Bajaj Allianz General Insurance launched 'Pro-fit' platform**

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has launched 'Pro-fit', a platform that will act as a one-stop solution to all the health-record tracking needs of customers.

- Pro-Fit is available on Bajaj Allianz General Insurance's self-service app 'Insurance Wallet' and can also be accessed on the company website.
- Customers can store their health records, track their fitness levels, and get reminders for vaccinations or medications.
- Bajaj Allianz General Insurance is one of the leading private general insurance company in India. Bajaj Allianz is a joint venture (JV) between Bajaj Finserv and Allianz SE, the world's leading insurer and largest asset manager.

### **RBI relaxes 26% debt-equity conversion cap for ARCs**

On November 23, 2017, Reserve Bank issued a notification which relaxed norms capping asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) shareholdings at 26 per cent in the borrower firm under reconstruction.

- However, this relaxation is subject to the condition that the net-owned funds are maintained at Rs 100 crore on an ongoing basis.
- As per earlier provisions, ARCs could convert a portion of the debt into equity of the borrower company only to the extent of 26 per cent of the revamped equity capital.
- Beside, all ARCs with at least half of the directors (including independent directors) have also been exempted from the 26 per cent shareholding cap in the borrower firm.
- RBI has asked the boards of ARCs to frame a policy for converting debt into equity. It has recommended that final decision on such matters should be taken by a committee comprising mostly independent directors.

### **Kotak Mahindra Bank launches “Smart Banking 24×7” e-Lobbies**

On November 20, 2017, Kotak Mahindra Bank (Kotak) launched “Smart Banking 24X7” e-lobbies, in the Mumbai suburbs of Juhu and Powai.

- “Smart Banking 24×7” e-Lobbies gives customers the freedom to complete banking transactions at any hour of the day as per their convenience.
- It offers 24×7 access to a range of banking services such as cash withdrawals, cash deposits and cheque deposits.
- These e-lobbies have been structured to give an easy and non-intrusive banking experience.

### **Canara Bank rolls out Canarites app and digital library**

On November 19, 2017, Canara Bank celebrated its Founder’s Day by rolling out several initiatives and benefits for its staff.

- Canara Bank was founded on July 1, 1906, by late Ammembal Subba Rao Pai, at Mangaluru.
- Several initiative including a Canarites app, a digital library, a field recovery mobile app, a retail loan (vehicle) – tracking system, and a regulatory guidance tracking system were launched on this occasion.
- Currently, Canara Bank has a clientele base of over eight crore.
- There are 6165 branches of Canara Bank and over 10300 ATMs spread across India.



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# Business

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## **Uber to partner with Mahindra and Mahindra to pilot electric vehicles in India**

On 24th November 2017, Uber Technologies partners with Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) to add electric vehicles on its platform in India.

- Uber will deploy hundreds of electric vehicles in Delhi and Hyderabad, and will consider adding the cars in other cities across India.
- Mahindra's electric vehicles on the Uber platform will include the e2oPlus hatchback and the eVerito sedan.
- As part of the arrangement, driver partners on the Uber app can avail of a package that will include Mahindra electric vehicles at competitive prices, attractive financing and insurance premiums as well as comprehensive maintenance packages from M&M and its associates.
- M&M will also support driver education and training related to various aspects of electric vehicles.

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# Awards & Recognition

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## **Rajkummar Rao, 'Newton' win big at Asia Pacific Screen Awards**

On 23rd November 2017, Bollywood movie 'Newton' secured two wins with Rajkummar Rao winning the best actor award at the Asia Pacific Screen Awards in Brisbane, Australia.

- For 'Newton', Rajkummar Rao won the best actor award and Mayank Tewari and Amit V. Masurkar secured the best screenplay honour.
- Newton was produced by Drishyam Films and directed by Amit V. Masurkar. The movie revolves around a young government clerk who is sent on election duty to a Maoist-controlled town and how the ideological struggle puts him in an awkward situation.
- India's Lady of the Lake by director Haobam Paban Kumar won a special mention in the Cultural Diversity Award under the Patronage of UNESCO category.



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# Appointments & Resigns

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## **Emmerson Mnangagwa sworn in as Zimbabwe's President**

On 24th November 2017, Emmerson Mnangagwa sworn in as Zimbabwe's second president since independence in 1980.

- Emmerson Mnangagwa took his oath of office in front of tens of thousands of Zimbabweans at National Sports Stadium in Harare.
- He received a 21-gun salute, firing of a cannon and a military aircraft fly past, in a colorful ceremony attended by African leaders and other dignitaries to mark the historic moment.
- He will serve until the end of the presidential term next year. An election date has not yet been set.

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# Science & Technology

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## **Scientists make world's smallest tape recorder from bacteria**

Columbia University researchers have converted a bacterial immune system into the world's smallest data recorder.

- The researchers at the Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) in the US modified an ordinary laboratory strain of the human gut microbe *Escherichia coli*, using CRISPR gene-editing method. This enabled the bacteria to not only record their interactions with the environment but also time-stamp the events.
- It could be used for disease diagnosis and environmental monitoring. Other applications are environmental sensing and basic studies in ecology and microbiology.
- The Science paper is titled, "Multiplex recording of cellular events over 1 time into a CRISPR biological tape." The contributors are: Harris Wang, Sung Sun Yim and Felix L. Wu (CUMC).

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# Sports

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### **First Indian casino game training course centre in Goa**

On 24th November 2017, Delta Corp Limited claimed to have set up the first casino game training course centre in India, at Goa.

- The casino game training courses were set up in 2013 as a part of Delta Corp Limited's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Goa.
- Anil Malani, President Delta Corp Ltd said that, they have a designated batch of 20 courses which is absolutely free. Also, after passing the course, most of the students get recruited in premier hotels like Hyatt or Taj.
- The state government-recognised courses are either in diploma – which runs through a year or certified – that ends in six months.

### **Sixth edition of Swimmathon will be held in Goa**

The sixth edition of Swimmathon, open water swimming competition, is to be held at Colva beach in South Goa on 3 December, 2017.

- The Swimmathon had been accredited by the Swimming Federation of India as the national selection trials. Olympian Virbhaw Khade is the brand ambassador of Swimmathon.
- Swimmathon is organized by Square Off Sports. This year the event will have four categories which includes 10K and 5K for both men and women.
- Winners of Swimmathon, both men and women in 5K and 10K races, will represent India at the FINA World Championship and Asian and Commonwealth Games.
- The total cash prize for the event is Rs 4 lakh with winners in 10K and 5K categories (male and female) getting Rs 50,000 and Rs 25,000 each.

### **Indian football team remains 105th in FIFA rankings**

On 23rd November 2017, the Indian football team remained static at 105th in the latest FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) rankings.

- India drew with Myanmar 2-2 in the AFC Asian Cup qualifiers at the Sri Kanteerava Stadium in Bangalore during this ranking period.
- Among the Asian Football Confederation countries, the Indian team occupies 15th position, ahead of Jordan, North Korea and Bahrain. Iran led the Asian rankings and world champions Germany are on top of world rankings.

### **Youth Women's World Championships 2017 held in Guwahati**

On 19 – 26th November 2017, Youth Women's World Championships 2017 is held in Guwahati, Assam.

- The World Youth Women's Boxing Championship 2017 was inaugurated at Md. Toyabullah Hockey Stadium in Bhetapara by Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal.
- It is organised by AIBA (International Boxing Association). Over 150 boxers from 38 countries are competing in the event, being held in India for the first time.
- So far, Indian boxers have given their best ever performance at the AIBA Women's Youth World Championships, adding 7 medals to India.
- Jyoti Gulia (51kg), Shashi Chopra (57kg), Ankushita Boro (64kg), Nitu (48kg) and Sakshi Choudhary (54kg) entered the semi-finals after winning their respective quarter-finals.
- Neha Yadav (+81kg) and Anupama (81kg), reached the last-four stage due to the small size of the draws of their respective weight categories.

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## Environment

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### Migratory birds start arriving in Chilika Lake

Lakhs of migratory birds have made their way to Chilika Lake (Odisha) after a long flight of thousands of miles.

- Major bird congregations were spotted in wetlands of Nalabana Bird Sanctuary inside Chilika and Mangalajodi, a major village on banks of lake.
- During winter season, migratory birds fly across continents from Caspian Sea, Baikal Lake and remote parts of Russia, Mongolia and Siberia and flock to the marshy lands of Nalabana Bird Sanctuary inside Chilika Lake, which is spread across over 1000 sq. km.
- Chilika Lake or lagoon is the largest coastal lagoon or brackish water lake in India and Asia and second largest lagoon in the world after New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia, US.
- It was designated as the first "Ramsar Site" of India on account of its rich biodiversity and ecological significance.