

National Current Affairs

Health Ministry and ICMR launch India Hypertension Management Initiative

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) had launched India Hypertension Management Initiative (IHMI).

- The IHMI aims to reduce disability and death related to cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading cause of death in India.
- It also aims to strengthen CVD component of Health Ministry's National Program for Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS).
- The IHMI is collaborative project of ICMR, MoHFW, World Health Organization (WHO), State Governments and Resolve to Save Lives initiative of Vital Strategies.
- Its primary goal is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to CVDs, by improving control of high blood pressure, which is leading risk factor for CVDs among adults in India.
- The IHMI focuses on five essential components of scalable treatment of hypertension.
- It will also focus on strengthening hypertension management and monitoring at primary health care level, within existing healthcare system.
- It is aligned with WHO's Global HEARTS Initiative and National Guidelines.

SAUBHAGYA Scheme launched in Manipur

The Union Ministry of Power launched Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA) in Manipur.

- Total of approximately 1.75 lakh households (1.62 lakh rural households and 0.13 lakh urban households) of Manipur are proposed to be included under scheme.
- Union Government will provide the required financial assistance for strengthening and improvement of infrastructure in the power sector in Manipur.
- The Union Ministry of Power launched had Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – "Saubhagya" in September 2017 with an aim to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of country by providing last mile electricity connectivity to all rural and urban households.
- Under the scheme, government will provide free electricity to all households identified under Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data 2011.

Mumbai to host 15th Mumbai International Film Festival for Documentary, Short and Animation films

Mumbai is to host the 15th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF) for Documentary, Short and Animation films from 28th January – 3rd February 2018.

- The Mumbai International Film Festival will be inaugurated on 28th January 2018, at the National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai. It is organized by the Films Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B).
- The Organizing Committee of MIFF is headed by the Secretary, I&B and consists of eminent film personalities, documentary makers and film critics.
- The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has approved doubling of prize money for the Golden Conch Award winning Best Documentary Film in the International Competition to Rs 1 million.
- The Award money for the Lifetime Achievement award has also been doubled to Rs 1 million. All together cash awards of Rs 5.8 million will be given away during MIFF 2018.

Centre sanctioned Rs 275 cr for Global Centre for Security and Counter Terrorism

Central Government has sanctioned Rs 275 crore for establishing a Global Centre for Security and Counter-Terrorism in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

- Announcement in this regard was made by Rajasthan Home Minister, Gulab Chand Kataria on November 28, 2017.
- Central Government will allocate Rs. 165 crore and Rajasthan State Government will bear Rs 110 crore for setting-up this centre.
- It is to be noted that Vasundhara Raje-led BJP government in Rajasthan will complete four years in office on December 13, 2017.

International Current Affairs

China hosts Inter-Governmental Meeting of Asia and Pacific Decade for Persons with Disabilities

The High Level Inter-Governmental Mid-Point review meeting of Asia and Pacific Decade for Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022 was held in Beijing, China.

- A number of countries in the Asia-Pacific region had participated in it.
- Indian delegation was led by Union Minister of Social Justice & Empowerment Thaawarchand Gehlot.

- Its main objective was to review progress made by member States during Decade at mid-point in 2017 with regard to Incheon Strategy to make right real for persons with disabilities in Asia and Pacific.
- It also discussed future policy action for building disabilities-inclusive societies in region, bearing in mind synergies between 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Incheon Strategy.
- It also finalised declaration to address gaps and challenges in empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

India and UK to sign MoU in Urban Transport Sector

India and United Kingdom (UK) will soon sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in urban transport sector for cooperation in policy planning, technology transfer and institutional organisation.

- The draft of MoU was finalised by Union Minister of Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari and Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport of UK in London.
- The draft MoU seeks to facilitate cooperation in transport sector between both countries and enable sharing of expertise and latest technology to promote efficient mobility solutions.
- It seeks to usher in policy reforms that can transform transport sector through improved customer service and data analysis and better use of Information Technology (IT) systems.
- The MoU will also help in promoting digital transactions and induction of high capacity diesel and electric vehicles (EVs) in India.
- It will also establish the terms on which such assistance can be provided.

Victoria becomes first Australian state to legalise euthanasia

On 29th November 2017, Victoria became the first Australian state to legalise assisted dying, or euthanasia, as lawmakers voted to allow terminally ill patients the right to request a lethal drug to end their lives from June 2019.

- The legislation was passed in Victoria after 100 hours of debate, making it the only place in Australia where the practice will be legal.
- The scheme will be accessible only to terminally ill patients over 18 living in Victoria with less than six months to live. Those applying must be determined by multiple doctors to be suffering intolerable pain and be of sound mind.
- If they are able, the patient will administer the lethal substance themselves, but if they are not, a doctor will help.
- Countries that have legalised human euthanasia: Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia, Luxembourg, Canada and Victoria (state) of Australia

U.S.-India Business Council unveils mentorship program for women entrepreneurs

On November 28, 2017, U.S.-India Business Council (USIBC) announced a collaborative initiative titled “Women for Women Innovators, Social Leaders & Entrepreneurs (WISE)”.

- This announcement was made during USIBC’s road to Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) event, “Creating the Foundations of Innovation” in Hyderabad.
- Objective of ‘WISE’ initiative is to offer leadership, mentoring, and development opportunities for women entrepreneurs and innovators.
- ‘WISE’ will encourage a policy environment that is conducive to increasing the number of women innovators, entrepreneurs and leaders who can contribute to growth of Indian economy.
- This initiative will be led by women leaders and entrepreneurs including Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon Limited, Nivruti Rai, Country Head of Intel India and Vice President of Data Center Group and Vanitha Narayanan, Chairman of Intel India.

\$540mn for developing nations to eliminate climate-warming chemicals

UN Environment has stated that developing countries will receive \$540 million to continue their work in phasing out ozone-depleting chemicals.

- Developing countries will receive funds for this purpose from developed countries for three years starting from 2018.
- Funds will be provided through the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, which has disbursed over \$3.7 billion to developing countries since 1991 for phasing out ozone-depleting chemicals.
- The climate-warming chemicals are hydrochlorofluorocarbons and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). These chemicals are widely used in refrigerators, air-conditioners and aerosol sprays.
- The latest funding commitment was made by parties to Montreal Protocol during the joint 11th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and the 29th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol. These meetings concluded on November 24, 2017 in Canada.

Banking & Finance

Karnataka Bank ties up with BCG for transformation initiatives

Karnataka Bank Ltd has partnered with the Boston Consulting Group (India) Pvt Ltd for its transformation initiatives and the transformation project 'KBL Vikaas' was launched in Mangaluru on 29th November 2017.

- The transformation project is aimed at total transformation of the bank by re-positioning it as a relevant and significant bank by focusing on technology and by keeping intact its core values and identity.
- The bank has identified seven major intervention areas for this project. They are: growth aspiration and strategies to achieve growth; rationalisation of service outlets, including digital channels; human resource management structure and strategy; stakeholders' value enhancement initiatives; efficiency enhancement strategy; corporate branding and repositioning; and partnering and collaborating with Fintech companies, startups etc.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley launches Paytm Payments Bank

On November 28, 2017, Union Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley formally launched 'Paytm Payments Bank' in New Delhi.

- Paytm Payments Bank is being termed as India's only mobile first bank providing zero balance accounts.
- It also provides free personalised RuPay digital debit cards.
- In Paytm Payments Bank, every online transaction (such as IMPS, NEFT, RTGS, UPI) will be free of charge.
- Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Non-executive Chairman of Paytm Payments Bank, has stated that the management is working towards setting up physical ATMs across India.

ADB approves \$500 mn loan for rural roads in 5 states

On November 29, 2017, Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced that it will provide a \$500 million loan to improve rural road connectivity in five states of India.

- \$ 500 mn loan has been approved by ADB for the 'Second Rural Connectivity Investment Programme' to improve rural roads in West Bengal, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.
- Entire loan amount will be spent to construct and upgrade over 12000-kilometre rural roads in these five states.
- Out of \$ 500 mn, \$250 mn will be provided in December 2017 for construction of initial 6254 km all-weather rural roads. Remaining \$ 250 mn will be provided by the third quarter of 2019.
- ADB has also offered its support to state governments for improving rural road maintenance and safety.

West Bengal to get World Bank subsidy to buy 130 electric buses

West Bengal State Transport Minister Suvendu Adhikari has mentioned that the state government has negotiated with the World Bank to avail subsidy to buy 130 electric buses.

- World Bank has agreed to provide a subsidy of Rs seven lakh per bus.
- Out of the 130 electric buses, 100 would operate in Kolkata and the remaining 30 will operate in industrial towns of Durgapur and Asansol.
- Bus depots in these towns are equipped for charging batteries. The electric buses would run 150 km on single charge.

Business

Air India opens simulator training centre for ATR pilots in Hyderabad

On 28th November 2017, Air India commissioned its first ATR simulator 'ATR 72-600 full-flight simulator (FFS)' at its Central Training Establishment (CTE) in Hyderabad.

- The ATR 72-600 full-flight simulator (FFS) has been set up at an investment of Rs 63 crore, including the acquisition cost. This will meet the training requirements of the ATR pilots of Alliance Air, Air India's regional arm. This new generation simulator is the first of its kind in India.
- Pilots will begin simulated training at the centre from 29th November 2017. Till now these pilots were going to Singapore, Bangkok or France for training on regional jets, which was costly.
- The training facility is spread over 20 acres. It currently has two simulators for Airbus A320s in Hyderabad.

Awards & Recognition

Aung San Suu Kyi stripped of Freedom of Oxford award

Aung San Suu Kyi has been formally stripped of the Freedom of the City of Oxford award over her response to the repression of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims.

- Oxford city council voted unanimously to permanently remove the honour given to Aung San Suu Kyi in 1997. It said it did not want to celebrate those who turn a blind eye to violence.

- Oxford councillors had previously voted to support a cross-party motion to remove the award, and made the decision official in a vote on 27th November 2017.
- Over 60,000 Rohingya Muslims have been driven from Rakhine state in western Myanmar into neighbouring Bangladesh through a series of military operations.

Egyptian journalist Khaled el-Balshy wins Nelson Mandela Innovation Award

Egyptian journalist Khaled el-Balshy has won the Individual Activist award of the Nelson Mandela – Graca Machel Innovation Awards.

- Khaled el-Balshy, a former board member of Egypt's Journalists' Union made several attempts to publicly reveal violations by the Egyptian government.
- In March 2017, he was handed a one-year, suspended sentence over charges of "harboring fugitives".
- Khaled el-Balshy will receive the award on December 7, 2017 in Fiji's capital Suva.

Awards & Recognition

Badri Narain Sharma appointed as Chairman of National Anti-Profiteering Authority

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has appointed senior bureaucrat Badri Narain Sharma as Chairman of National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) under Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime.

- Prior to this appointment, Sharma was additional secretary in Department of Revenue, Finance Ministry.
- The anti-profiteering framework under new indirect tax regime consists of NAA at top level, standing committee, screening committees in every state and Directorate General of Safeguards (DGS) in Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC).
- As per structure of anti-profiteering mechanism in GST regime, complaints of local nature will be first sent to state-level screening committee, while those of national level will be marked for standing committee.

Karen Pierce appointed as UK's first ever female ambassador to the UN

Karen Pierce, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) political director of UK, has been appointed UK ambassador to the United Nations, becoming the first female UK ambassador to the UN.

- Karen Pierce has previously represented the UK in a wide variety of capacities, attending functions hosted by organisations such as the UN and the World Trade Organisation.
- She joined the FCO in 1981. She has had a varied career in Washington, the Balkans, Afghanistan and briefly as head of news in the FCO under the foreign secretaryship of Robin Cook between 1999 and 2001.
- Most recently as political director she has been visiting the US advocating the retention of the Iran nuclear deal.

Upendra Prasad Singh appointed as Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation

Upendra Prasad Singh has been appointed as Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.

- Upendra Prasad Singh, IAS Officer (OR:85) presently holding the charge of Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga has been appointed as Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- He will succeed Dr. Amarjit Singh, IAS Officer (GJ:82) who will superannuate on November 30, 2017.

Snehlata Shrivastava appointed first woman Secretary General of Lok Sabha

Snehlata Shrivastava, a 1982-batch retired IAS officer of the Madhya Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as the first woman Secretary General of the Lok Sabha.

- Snehlata Shrivastava's appointment to this post was made by Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan.
- She will replace Anoop Mishra, who is retiring on November 30, 2017.
- Snehlata Shrivastava has held several senior positions in the Madhya Pradesh State Government, including Principal Secretary in the ministries of Culture and Parliamentary Affairs.
- In the Central Government, she has held the position of Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice and also as Special/Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Finance.

Sports

Punjab to get world-class football academy

UK's Southall Football Club will jointly set up an international level football academy with Cordia Institutes at its campus at Sanghol in Punjab.

- Cordia Institutes Chairman Diljit Rana said that the objective was to build a world class academy with facilities comparable to the very best in the world.
- The academy is proposed to be set up at Sanghol in Fatehgarh Sahib District. The club will be spread over 10 acres, and will offer sports facilities of high standards.
- According to the proposal, the academy would recruit the best talent from across India at under 11 years level to build a core group of the most talented players for the future of the India national team.
- A former footballer who played for East London Club, Tommy Taylor would head the academy.

Asian champion Bajrang Punia and Vinod Kumar bags silver U-23 World Wrestling Championship

Asian champion Bajrang Punia and Vinod Kumar settled for silver medals at the U-23 World Wrestling Championship in Poland.

- Bajrang Punia lost the 65kg lop-sided final 6-17 to Russian grappler Kuular and Vinod Kumar lost 1-3 to American Richard Lewis. Both won silver medals in the event.
- Ritu Phogat also won a silver medal in the women's 48kg final. She lost against Turkish Wrestler Demirhan in the gold medal bout and settled for a silver.
- She had won the gold medal at the Commonwealth Wrestling Championship in 2016. India finished with three medals at the event.

IOA formally recognises Boxing Federation of India

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) has been recognised as a national body by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA), which removed the terminated Indian Amateur Boxing Federation (IABF) as its affiliate.

- The BFI, had already been recognised by the International Boxing Association (AIBA) and the Sports Ministry. It has finally been approved by IOA.
- Also, IOA has removed Indian Amateur Boxing Federation (IABF) as its affiliate. IABF was first suspended and then terminated by AIBA for manipulation in elections.
- IABF has been trying to keep itself afloat by organising a couple of meetings with its former members in the past few months. The Sports Ministry had earlier barred IABF from using India in its name, as it was no longer a national federation.

Obituary

Former Kerala minister E Chandrasekharan Nair passes away

On 29th November 2017, Veteran Communist Party of India leader and former Minister E. Chandrasekharan Nair died following a chest congestion in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

- E Chandrasekharan Nair was elected to Assembly six times in 1957, 1967, 1977, 1980, 1987 and 1996. He had served as Minister thrice under the Late E.K. Nayanar.
- He had held the Food and Civil Supplies portfolio and in 1996 held Law and Tourism too. He was active in the cooperative sector and also served as the managing editor of the CPI organ, Janayugam.

Important Days

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People – November 29

On 29th November 2017, International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed all over the world.

- In 1977, the UN General Assembly called for the annual observance of 29 November as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.
- The date of 29 November was chosen because on that day in 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which came to be known as the Partition Resolution.
- This day provides an opportunity for the international community to focus its attention on the fact that the question of Palestine remains unresolved.
- A special bulletin containing the texts of the statements delivered and messages received on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity is published annually by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat.