

National Current Affairs

Government launches National Strategic Plan 2017-24 and Mission SAMPAR

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched the National Strategic Plan 2017-24 aimed at eradicating HIV/AIDS by 2030.

- It was launched on the occasion of World AIDS Day (1st December).
- Mission SAMPARK was also launched to trace those who are Left to Follow Up and are to be brought under Antiretroviral therapy (ART) services.
- The National Strategic Plan 2017-24 will pave a roadmap not only for achieving the target of 90:90:90.
- Strategy but also strive along with partners towards fast track strategy of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.
- Mission SAMPARK will further aid to will help in fast-tracking the identification of all who were HIV positive and subsequently linking to ART program.
- Presently, about 11.5 lakh People Living with HIV (PLHIVs) are taking free ART through 536 ART centres in the country.

Panel set up by government for more GST tweaks

The six-member committee was set up by the government to provide inputs to the GST law review committee.

- While several changes have been brought as temporary relief measures, such as quarterly filing of returns, the panel wants them to be made permanent. This is in addition to suggesting simplification of forms.
- At the same time, the committee wants an overhaul of the architecture, beginning with an extension of the composition scheme to services, a benefit that is currently available to small traders, manufacturers and restaurants. The scheme provides for a lower tax liability and a lower compliance burden but does not allow input tax credit on taxes paid earlier in the manufacturing chain.
- Similarly, it wants a removal of the reverse charge mechanism that puts the liability on the buyer instead of the supplier.
- Further, the committee also wants the proposed rollout of E-way bills deferred till GSTN stabilises, arguing that the new toll will create more confusion.

Andhra Pradesh assembly passes Kapu Reservation Bill

Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly has unanimously passed Kapu Reservation Bill, 2017 to provide 5% quota in education and employment.

- The reservation to Kapu community will be given by including them in Backward Classes list.
- The reservation to existing Backward Castes will not be affected by this decision.
- With the quota for Kapus, the total reservation in state goes up to 55%, beyond 50% cap set by Supreme Court for reservations.
- Andhra Pradesh already has 29% reservation for Backward Castes.
- Apart from this, 15% and 6% reservations exist for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- The bill will be sent to Centre for its consent and State government is also going to request Centre to include this reservation in the 9th Schedule, to insulate it from judicial review.

Shared Value Summit in New Delhi

The Shared Value Summit 2017 organised by Shared Value Initiative India, Institute for Competitiveness (India), and SoulAce & India Council on Competitiveness in association with BusinessLine was held on December 1.

- The summit will feature deliberations amongst a varied cross-section of practitioners, thought leaders, government leadership and corporate honchos.
- The annual Shared Value Summit aims at encouraging businesses to adopt the practice of shared value by imbibing the spirit of inclusivity in their business models. The summit aims to provide a platform to identify and address the barriers that exist to equality and empowerment in the Indian society.

BIMSTEC Member States discuss draft text of Coastal Shipping Agreement

In the first meeting of Working Group BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) member countries discussed draft text of BIMSTEC Coastal Shipping Agreement.

- The agreement has been drafted by the Ministry of Shipping, Government of India detailing modalities for promoting coastal shipping in region.
- The objective of agreement is to facilitate coastal shipping in region to give boost to trade between member countries.
- It will apply to coastal shipping that is shipping within 20 nautical miles of coastline.
- Once agreement is ratified by member countries and becomes operational, it will facilitate lot of cargo movement between member countries can be done through cost effective, environment friendly and faster coastal shipping route.

Annual Konark festival begins in style in Odisha

The five-day annual Konark dance festival opened near the world famous Sun Temple of Konark with Odissi recital by the dancers of Nupur Dance Academy of Bhubaneswar under the tutelage of Niranjan Rout and group.

- The opening show was followed by a scintillating performance by a dance troupe from Malaysia, The Temple of Fine Arts, which staged a Bharatanatyam recital.
- A major attraction will be a show by Malaysia-based Odissi dancer Ramli Ibrahim who will stage his production Ganjam on December 3.
- Coinciding with the dance extravaganza, an International Sand Art Festival also opened at Chandrabhaga beach in Konark.

Chhattisgarh bans use of fire crackers in six cities

The Chhattisgarh government has ordered a ban on bursting fire crackers in six of its cities, including the state capital –Raipur.

- The Chhattisgarh Environment Conservation Board said the ban will be implemented every year during the period to curb pollution in the state.
- Besides Raipur, other cities, which have been banned from bursting firecrackers, include Bilaspur, Bhilai, Durg, Raigarh and Korba.
- The decision was taken under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act of 1981 by the state government.

International Current Affairs

India re-elected to International Maritime Organisation Council

India was re-elected to Council of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) at an assembly of body at its headquarters in London.

- India was elected under category B that represents nations with largest interests in international sea borne trade.
- It secured second-highest 144 number of votes from member-countries, just after Germany's 146.

- The IMO Council plays crucial role in deciding various important matters within mandate of IMO especially in relation to global shipping industry and its work strategy and budget.
- IMO's functions are to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit.
- This framework should address various areas like safety, legal matters, environmental concerns, technical co-operation, maritime security and efficiency of shipping.

CBDT signs two Advance Pricing Agreements

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has entered into 2 Bilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs) in November 2017.

- These two agreements are first ever Bilateral APAs with Netherlands.
- These two APAs pertain to Electronics and Technology sectors of economy.
- It also covers international transactions that include Distribution, Provision of Business Support Services, Provision of Marketing Support Services etc.
- The APA Scheme was introduced by Government in 2012 to give tax certainty to MNCs that agree on certain principles in valuation of their cross-border transactions.

Philippines Suspends Dengue Shots

The Philippines suspended its school-based dengue immunization program on Friday after the French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi warned that its flagship vaccine, Dengvaxia, had been found to pose health risks in people not previously infected.

- The company said further clinical studies had revealed that, in those who had previously had dengue, the vaccine could prevent repeat infection. But for those who had not had dengue, and were vaccinated and later became infected, "more cases of severe disease could occur.
- With more than 740,000 elementary school students in the Philippines having already received Dengvaxia vaccinations, the government decided to halt the program for the time being.

Indian engineers launch major road project in South Sudan

Indian engineers have launch a major project to repair over 200-km of road in strife-torn South Sudan that would improve the safety of travel for local motorists, traders and humanitarian organisations between two major cities in the country.

- The project is being carried out to repair 205 km of road from Malakal to Melut, in the northern region of South Sudan, which the United Nations has categorised among the least developed countries (LDC).
- The project would improve accessibility to Malakal and Melut and be a relief for all road users, including local motorists and traders, as well as humanitarian agencies trying to access vulnerable people.

Appointments & Resigns

Infosys appoints Salil S. Parekh as CEO and Managing Director

Infosys appointed Capgemini executive Salil Parekh as Chief Executive Officer .

- Parekh, who will take over on January 2, 2018 for a period of five years, was a member of the Group Executive Board at French firm Capgemini.
- He has nearly three decades of global experience in the IT services industry. He has a strong track record of executing business turnarounds and managing very successful acquisitions.

D K Sarraf appointed as PNGRB Chairman

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's former Chairman, D K Sarraf, as the new Chairman of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board.

- Former Director (Operations), Oil India Ltd, S Rath, has also been appointed as a Member in the board, after replacing K K Jha.
- Ex-Member, Cyber Appellate Tribunal. S S Chahar too has been appointed as Member (Legal) in the board.

Raj Shah becomes first Indian-American to hold press gaggle aboard Air Force One

Raj Shah, who holds a key position in the White House, has briefed reporters on board presidential chopper Air Force One, becoming the first Indian-American to enjoy the privilege.

- Shah was accompanying Trump as he flew to Missouri to deliver a major speech on middle-class tax relief and business tax relief.

A. Surya Prakash reappointed chairman of Prasar Bharati

Former journalist and author A. Surya Prakash has been appointed as the chairman of the public broadcaster Prasar Bharati for a second term.

- Prakash, a columnist and a fellow at the Vivekananda Foundation, has held key positions in several print and electronic media organization.

Anshu Prakash Appointed As Chief Secretary to Delhi Government

Senior IAS officer Anshu Prakash was appointed the chief secretary of the Delhi government.

- He served as an additional secretary and financial advisor in the ministry.
- Mr Prakash has the experience of working in the Delhi government as a principle secretary (health) and also in the municipal corporation of the city.
- He also served as the health secretary in his previous postings in Arunachal Pradesh and Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration.

Science & Technology

NASA fires up Voyager 1 thrusters after 37 years

A set of thrusters aboard the Voyager 1 spacecraft, the only human-made object in interstellar space, have been successfully fired up after 37 years without use.

- The spacecraft has been using small devices called “attitude control thrusters” to orient itself so it can communicate with Earth, but the thrusters have been degrading since 2014.
- The Voyager team assembled a group of propulsion experts to study the problem and eventually agreed on an unusual solution that will try giving the job of orientation to a set of four backup thrusters dormant since 1980.
- Voyager engineers sent a command to fire the four “trajectory correction maneuver (TCM)” thrusters and it took 19 hours and 35 minutes for the test results to reach an antenna in Goldstone, California.

Awards & Recognition

India awarded Certificate of Commendation by CITES for its effort to combat illegal wildlife Trade

India was awarded certificate of commendation for its effort to combat illegal wildlife trade by Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

- The award was given to Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) for its efforts in conducting and coordinating species-specific wildlife enforcement operation, codenamed 'Operation Save Kurma'.
- It recognises exemplary enforcement action of WCCB's regional and global effort to combat illegal wildlife trade.
- The operation was conducted to combat the proliferating illegal trade of live turtles and its parts from the country to destinations abroad.
- The operation was also aimed to invite attention of the enforcement agencies towards such illegal trade.
- CITES is international agreement to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species.
- Its aim is to ensure that international trade does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild.

Sports

Shiva Keshavan wins gold in Asian Luge Championships

India's veteran Winter Olympian Shiva Keshavan on Friday won a gold medal at the Asian Luge Championships at Altenberg, Germany.

- The sole Indian participant and defending Asian champion retained his title with a time of 55.60 seconds.
- In a race that was full of surprises, Keshavan started slow but recovered the lead after the second corner.

India win 3 gold, 4 silver, 2 bronze at Asian Archery Championships

Indian archers produced an impressive performance, grabbing three gold, four silver and two bronze medals at the Asian Championships.

- 15-year-old Haryana girl Himani Kumari defeated her Mongolian opponent Bayasgalan Badamjuani 7-1 in the recurve cadet bronze play-off to bag the quota.
- Earlier in an all-Indian cadet recurve final, 14-year-old Akash, who also belongs to Haryana, defeated Dhiraj Bommadevara of Andhra Pradesh 6-4 to bag the boys quota for the Youth Olympics in Argentina.
- India also bagged two gold medals in the non-Olympic compound discipline.
- Abhishek Verma beat Korean rival Kim Jongho to win the gold and prevent a clean sweep of individual crowns by Korea.
- Indian women's compound team of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Trisha Deb and Parveena beat So Chaewon, Choi Bomin and Song Yun Soo 230-227 to win the gold medal.
- India also bagged second silver in compound section as the mixed team lost to Korea, while Jyothi bagged a bronze to complete their tally.

Obituary

Former Chief Justice of India Adarsh Sein Anand passes away at 81

Former Chief Justice of India, Justice Adarsh Sein Anand, passed. He was the 29th CJI and served from October 10, 1998 to October 31, 2001.

- Justice Anand believed in justice to be a constitutional right and insisted that steps were required to be taken for providing inexpensive justice to people.
- Known for his strictness in judicial matters, Justice Anand was known for his judgments concerning public interest.
- Justice Anand was also known for the exemplary work done as the chairman of National Legal Services Authority and had taken effective steps to establish Lok Adalats in every district of the country.

Important Days

Defence Ministry launches Armed Forces Week

Defence Ministry has launched a campaign to spread awareness about the valour of armed forces, starting December 1 and ending on December 7.

- The objective is to encourage citizens to make financial contributions to the families of war heroes and promote welfare activities.
- The main objective of the campaign is to get people to make financial contributions to the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund (AFFD) which is used for the welfare of disabled ex-servicemen, war widows, and children of martyrs.
- There will be a digital campaign spread across Twitter, Facebook and other social media platforms to encourage people to wear the armed forces flag with pride and show their support and solidarity with the military.
- The idea is to boost the morale of the forces and their families.

International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December, marks the date of the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others. The focus of this day is on eradicating these contemporary forms of slavery.

World Computer Literacy Day – December 2, 2017

World Computer Literacy Day has been celebrated annually on December 2nd of every year.

- World Computer Literacy Day is observed to promote the awareness about the computer and electronic devices.
- The celebration Day encourages people to use them efficiently with a range of skills ranging from primary use to the programming level and advanced problem-solving.