

# National Current Affairs

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## **Government launches Ganga Gram project at Ganga Gram Swachata Sammelan**

The Union Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation has formally launched 'Ganga Gram' project at the Ganga Gram Swachata Sammelan held in New Delhi.

- The project was launched under the clean Ganga mission-Namami Gange Programme for holistic sanitation development in villages on the banks of River Ganga.
- Ganga Gram project is an integrated approach for holistic development of villages situated on the banks of the holy River Ganga with active participation of villagers.
- The objectives of project include solid and liquid waste management, water conservation projects, renovation of ponds and water resources, organic farming, horticulture, and promotion of medicinal plants.
- Ganga Swachhata Manch, a forum of individuals, academicians, civil society organisations and the like was also launched on the sidelines of Gram Swachata Sammelan. It has been formed upon initiative of Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation Uma Bharati.

## **NHAI creates National Highways Investment Promotion Cell**

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has created National Highways Investment Promotion Cell (NHIPC) for attracting domestic and foreign investment for highways projects.

- The cell will focus on engaging with global institution investors, developers, construction companies and fund managers for building investor participation in road infrastructure projects.
- NHIPC's primary focus will be to promote foreign and domestic investment in road infrastructure.
- It will work in close co-ordination with various connected Ministries and Departments of Central Government, State Governments, Apex Business Chambers like FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM, and InvestIndia etc.
- It will also work in close co-ordination with Foreign Embassies and Missions in India and Indian Embassies and Missions situated in foreign countries.

## **India's digital gender gap could further marginalise women: UNICEF Report**

According to recently released The State of the World's Children Report of UNICEF, India's girls and women are at risk of becoming further marginalised in society and at home if they remain digitally illiterate.

- The theme of this edition of report was Children in a digital world.
- It provided country-level examples to give a sense of the kinds of barriers girls and women confront.
- Digital connection and literacy offer advantages in knowledge-based society, improving children's lives and their future earning potential.
- In India, less than one-third internet users are females. Only 29% of all internet users are female in India.
- Girls in rural areas of India often face restrictions on their use of ICTs solely because of their gender. India is one place in which digital divide highlights deep chasms of society.

### **Mystic Kalinga poetry fest takes off**

Mystic Kalinga, the international festival of poetry and performances, kicked off in Bhubaneswar in the presence of a host of prominent poets from around the world.

- Renowned Indian English poet Keki N Daruwalla and famous Hindi poet as well as cultural critic Ashok Vajpayee graced the inaugural session and discussed various aspects of Indian culture from a critical point of view.
- The first day of the second edition of Mystic Kalinga showcased various genres of Indian poetry as three poetry recital sessions -- multilingual, Odia and Bhakti poetry -- were held after the inaugural session.
- Noted poets such as Navaneeta Dev Sen, Sitakanta Mohapatra, Arundhati Subramanian, Saroj Bal read out their poems.

### **Gujjars, 4 Other Communities to Get 1 Percent Reservation in Rajasthan**

The Vasundhara Raje government on Friday announced one per cent reservation for Gujjars and four other castes by creating a new category — most backward classes (MBC). This will take the total reservation in the state to 50%, which is the limit for quotas permitted by the Supreme Court.

- The move is aimed to woo Gujjars ahead of byelections to the Alwar and Ajmer Lok Sabha constituencies in a few months as well as assembly elections which are scheduled in the state by November.
- However, Gujjars have rejected the government move saying that it wants nothing short of 5% quota exclusively for the community within the 50% limit.

- The government announced the creation of MBCs through a notification on Friday and included Gujjars, Banjara, Gadia-Lohar, Rebari and Gadaria in it.

### **Uttar Pradesh Assembly passes bill for death penalty for hooch trade**

The Uttar Pradesh Assembly today passed a bill to award death penalty and life imprisonment to those dealing in spurious liquor if its consumption leads to any death.

- The bill provides for death penalty, life sentence and fine to the tune of Rs 10 lakh and not less than Rs five lakh in case of death caused due to consumption of spurious liquor.
- It also provides for rigorous imprisonment up to 10 years and not less than six years in case of disability caused by consumption of spurious liquor and fine to the tune of Rs five lakh and not less than Rs three lakh.
- After Delhi and Gujarat, UP will be the third state where bootleggers may be sent to the gallows, if consumption of spurious liquor leads to a loss of life.

### **Air Deccan gets DGCA nod for Udan scheme; operations begins tomorrow**

The aviation regulator DGCA has granted a flying permit to Air Deccan, a move that will enable the airline to operate flights under the regional connectivity scheme called Udan.

- This paves the way for the airline, which till now was holding a non-scheduled operator permit, to fly on regional routes under the regional connectivity scheme that caps fares at Rs 2,500 for an under-one-hour flight.
- Air Deccan, which has bagged 34 routes in the first round of bidding for the scheme, has already announced the inaugural flight, which is set to take off for Jalgaon from Mumbai tomorrow. Besides, the airline also plans to connect Nashik and Kolhapur.
- Air Deccan will deploy a 19-seater Beachcraft B-1900D plane on this route. It has acquired three such planes so far.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **UNGA adopts resolution rejecting US declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital**

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has overwhelmingly adopted resolution declaring United States of America (USA) recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital as 'null and void'.

- The resolution was moved by Turkey and Yemen and was adopted with 128 countries voting in favour including major political powers such as India, Japan, Britain, France, Germany and 9 against it, while 35 abstained from voting.
- The UNGA resolution stressed that Jerusalem was final status issue to be resolved through negotiations.
- It demanded that all States comply with UNSC resolutions regarding Jerusalem, and not recognise any actions or measures contrary to those resolutions.
- Countries voting in favour of resolution also disregarded US President Trump's threat to cut off financial aid to countries that backed the draft resolution.
- The 9 countries that opposed resolution at UNGA included US along with Israel, Guatemala, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Honduras and Togo.
- The nations that abstained from voting include US allies such as Canada, Australia, Mexico, Bhutan, Poland, Czech Republic and Romania.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **RBI brings Bank of India under Prompt Corrective Action**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently had initiated prompt corrective action (PCA) measures against Bank of India (BoI) in the view of its high non-performing assets (NPAs) and insufficient capital.

- The RBI placed BOI under PCA consequent to the onsite inspection under the risk-based supervision model carried out for year ended March 2017.
- This was in view of high net NPA, insufficient CET1 Capital and negative ROA (return on asset) of BOI for two consequent years.
- The RBI under its supervisory framework uses various measures and tools to maintain sound financial health of banks.

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## Environment

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### **Schaller's wood scorpion: New scorpion species discovered in Tripura**

Scientists have discovered new scorpion species named Schaller's wood scorpion (*Liocheles schalleri*) from at Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary, Tripura.

- It has been named in honour of celebrated wildlife biologist George Schaller who has studied wildlife across the world, including the snow leopards of the Himalayas and central India's tigers.
- Schaller's wood scorpion is the eleventh wood scorpion species to be discovered in India. 9 of India's 11 wood scorpions are endemic to the country.
- It is likely to be found in Bangladesh too, which is three km away from Tripura border.

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## **Appointments & Resigns**

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### **Lt Gen B S Sahrawat takes over as DG, NCC**

Lieutenant General B S Sahrawat took over the reins of National Cadet Corps as its Director General. The General Officer is a third generation army officer.

- He has served in numerous Staff and Command appointments in various parts of the country and abroad, which includes the Military Observer in Iraq and Kuwait for a year.
- He has been awarded the Sena Medal during the floods of Kosi River in Bihar in 2008.

### **Amnesty International appoints Kumi Naidoo as next Secretary General**

Amnesty International has appointed Kumi Naidoo as the next Secretary General of the global human rights movement.

- The Secretary General is the leader and main spokesperson for Amnesty International and the Chief Executive of its International Secretariat.
- Kumi is an activist and civil society leader. His previous leadership roles include Executive Director of Greenpeace International, Chair of the Global Call for Climate Action, Founding Chair of the Global Call to Action against Poverty and Secretary General and CEO of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation.

- He currently chairs three start-up organisations in his home country South Africa: Africans Rising for Justice, Peace and Dignity; the Campaign for a Just Energy Future; and the Global Climate Finance Campaign.

### **American aid expert Henrietta Fore appointed to head UNICEF**

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed a former head of the U.S. Agency for International Development run the U.N. children's agency UNICEF.

- Fore was the first woman to head USAID, from 2006 to 2009. She currently chairs the board and is chief executive of Holsman International, a manufacturing and investment company.
- UNICEF works in 190 countries to promote the rights and well-being of children.

### **Actor Ranveer Singh appointed as Ambassador for EPL in India**

On 22nd December 2017, actor Ranveer Singh was appointed as Ambassador for EPL (English Premier League) in India.

- Ranveer Singh will help to promote the EPL (English Premier League) League both in India and other countries.
- As an ambassador, he will support the English Premier League's community initiatives in India, promote fan events etc.
- This partnership will also improve the relationship between EPL (English Premier League) and Indian Super League (ISL).

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## **Awards & Recognition**

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### **KP wins NASSCOM-DSCI excellence award**

The cyber section of Kolkata Police has been awarded with this years prestigious NASSCOM-DSCI excellence award.

- The section was awarded during an All India Security Seminar recently held in Gurgaon where cyber units from different state police forces all across the country had participated.

### **TCS wins record \$2.25 billion Nielsen outsourcing contract**

India's leading IT exporter Tata Consultancy Services (TCSBSE 1.76 %) has bagged a USD 2.25-billion outsourcing contract from Nielsen, a television rating measurement firm.

- The partnership, signed in October this year, is a renewal of TCS' existing collaboration with Nielsen. The two companies had struck a 10-year deal in 2008 for USD 1.2 billion, which was expanded to USD 2.5 billion in 2013.
- Under the new deal, the terms of the agreement have been extended for an additional five years so as to expire on December 31, 2025, with three one-year renewal options granted to Nielsen. Mumbai-based firm will globally provide Nielsen with professional services relating to IT -- including application development and maintenance -- BPO, client service knowledge process outsourcing, management sciences, analytics, and financial planning.

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## **Science & Technology**

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### **A new LIGO gravitational wave detector to be built in India by 2025**

A new LIGO gravitational wave detector will be built in India by 2025 in collaboration with universities from across the world. Abbreviation LIGO stands for Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory.

- This will be the world's third LIGO detector, along with two already operational in the US.
- Funding for this purpose is provided by the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) through its Newton-Bhabha project on LIGO.
- Institute for Plasma Research in Ahmedabad and Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology in Indore are in charge of building various parts of the system.

### **DRDO's homegrown quick reaction missile QRSAM successfully test fired off Odisha coast**

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test fired a Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile (QRSAM) from a defence base off Odisha coast.

- The homegrown canister-based high-speed weapon system, which can deceive enemy radars making it difficult to be detected, is capable of destroying aerial targets, tanks, bunkers and short range missiles.
- The trial was conducted to check various parameters in its subsystems and performance of advanced software.
- It was third test of the newly developed missile, which is yet to get a formal name, and all three have been successful this year.

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## Obituary

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### **NASA astronaut Bruce McCandless, first to spacewalk without tethers, dies at 80**

On 21st December 2017, former NASA astronaut Bruce McCandless, first person to fly in space without tethers, passed away.

- Bruce McCandless performed the famous spacewalk in 1984, during which he did not use restrictive tethers and umbilicals.
- He has been honoured with numerous awards like the Legion of Merit, American Expeditionary Service Medal, NASA Space Flight Medal, and NASA Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal.

### **Ex-UP & Delhi Governor Banwari Lal Joshi passes away**

On 22nd December 2017, former UP Governor Banwari Lal Joshi passed away at AIIMS.

- He has served as governor of many states.
- He has served as lieutenant governor of Delhi, governor of Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

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## Books & Authors

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### **Uttarkhand CM launches his biography 'Trivendra Ek Zindaginama – Khairasain ka Sooraj'**

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has launched his biography 'Trivendra Ek Zindaginama – Khairasain ka Sooraj'.
- Trivendra Ek Zindaginama – Khairasain ka Sooraj has been written by Nandan Singh Bisht, a doctor. This biography is based on Trivendra Singh Rawat's early struggle and lesser known aspects of his life.

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## Important Days

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### **National Farmers' Day (Kisan Diwas) – December 23**

On 23rd December 2017, National Farmers' Day (Kisan Diwas) was celebrated all over India.

- National Farmers' Day (Kisan Diwas) is celebrated to honour former Prime Minister of India Chaudhary Charan Singh, who introduced various policies to improve the life of farmers.
- It is celebrated to promote activities related to farmer's welfare. This day is celebrated by conducting debates, events, seminars, functions and competitions related agriculture.