

# National Current Affairs

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## **Karnataka govt to hold "largest" B2B travel event in the country**

The Karnataka government today announced that 'Karnataka International Travel Expo' (KITE) will be held here from February 28, billing it as the "largest" B2B travel event in the country.

- The three-day event will see close to 400 delegates from 25 countries take part.
- The aim is to project Karnataka globally and attract tourist footfall, with emphasis on promoting the state's wild life, luxury and adventure destinations, historical monuments and UNESCO world heritage sites.
- This will be an annual event here on, and will make a mark on the international travel expo map or circuit.
- KITE would see participation from a minimum of 100 international buyers and 250 domestic or national buyers like travel agents, tour operators, destination management professionals and wedding planners, among others.
- The event will for the first time see a blogathon, which will be attended by international travel bloggers.
- Also, the event would have a separate startup pavilion for promoting new technologies and innovations in the tourism sector.

## **Tamil Nadu government launches e-governance policy: Services to go digital**

The state government has launched its e-governance policy to enable members of the public, government and commercial establishments avail its services through digital mode.

- The policy aims at providing all government services through digital mode and also through common service centres and mobile applications under the government's Vision 2023 plan.
- The e-governance policy would also have guidelines to provide a 'comprehensive IT infrastructure' for digital initiatives taken by the government.
- The policy has a provision for the government to allocate 0.5 per cent of the total funds in a financial year for the digital initiatives and later increase it to three per cent in the next five years in a phased manner.

## **Puducherry launches tourist-friendly police force**

In a tourist-friendly measure, the Puducherry government has launched a special police force, with distinct blue-coloured head gears, to ensure the safety of visitors.

- The personnel of the newly-launched 'Tourist Police' wing would also don blue badges bearing the police emblem, marking a departure from the conventional red colour caps, the hall mark of territorial police since the French rule.
- The change in colour was aimed at easy identification of the personnel by tourists thronging the Union Territory.
- The force would be deputed at various tourist destinations to provide safety and security to domestic and international tourists.
- These personnel would act in coordination with the coastal police who would also be wearing blue caps and badges.
- The introduction of blue caps is confined to the tourist police while the red caps would continue to be used by those attached to other wings including the traffic and law and order.

### **Haryana to implement solar-based micro irrigation schemes in all districts**

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar directed the irrigation department to implement the integrated solar-based micro irrigation scheme in all districts of the state.

- He constituted a committee under the Chairmanship of Haryana Renewable Energy Development Agency (HAREDA) chairman to chalk out a strategy in this regard.
- The committee would work out a comprehensive strategy for the implementation of solar-based micro irrigation system in all districts of the state and submit a report in this regard.
- State government would make available infrastructure in those areas which would switch over the micro irrigation and solar water pumps.

### **Haryana makes solar power plants mandatory for new buildings**

All new residential buildings built on a plot size of 500 square yards and above falling within limit of municipalities, including Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA) sectors, would have to install Solar Photovoltaic Power plant with a capacity of minimum 1 kilo watt in the houses which have sanctioned load up to 20 KW.

- The owners would have to install a plant with a capacity of five per cent of the sanctioned electricity load, if the building has higher power consumption than of 20 KW.
- The government says the move aims to efficient use of electricity and its conservation in the state.

### **UP theme state for Surajkund crafts mela**

The Haryana tourism department on Monday disclosed that Uttar Pradesh would be the theme state for the 32nd Surajkund International Crafts Mela, which would be organized at Surajkund, Faridabad from February 2 to 15.

- Apart from all other states, about 24 countries would also participate in it.
- The fair organized by the Haryana Tourism and Surajkund Fair Authority in collaboration with the Union ministries of tourism, textiles, culture and external affairs, exhibited handicrafts, handloom variety and prosperity of India at global level.
- Apart from this, renowned folk artists and cultural groups of national and international repute enthrall tourists with various programmes at the choupal and open-air theatre located on the fair premises.

### **Famous Dhanu Yatra festival concludes in Odisha**

The Dhanu Yatra festival held in Bargarh district of Odisha came to an end on 2nd January 2018.

- The Dhanu Yatra festival began on 23 December 2017. It was held for 11 days. This festival is based on Krishna Leela and Mathura Vijay.
- This festival started in 1947-48 to celebrate India's Independence and to mark the victory of good over evil.
- Sureswar Satpathy is the Chairman of Dhanu Jatra organising committee.

### **Assam Chah Bagichar Dhan Puraskar Mela 2017-18 Scheme for Tea Garden Workers**

Assam Government has launched Chah Bagichar Dhan Puraskar Mela 2017-18 Scheme for the Tea Garden Workers. Subsequently, this scheme will help in financial inclusion of the tea labourers.

- This sarkari yojana will benefit around 6,58,250 tea garden workers with a total outlay of Rs. 364 crore (182 crore in both phases).
- Accordingly, Assam Tea Garden Workers Scheme will bring tea labourers closer to the banking sector and thus promote cashless transaction. Under this scheme, the workers of the tea community will receive Rs. 2500 in their bank accounts. In addition to this, tea labourers will get another Rs. 2500 in the next phase.
- The state govt. has launched this scheme to provide the benefits of the demonetization to the common people.

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# International Current Affairs

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## **China develops underwater surveillance networks in Indian Ocean, South China Sea**

China has developed a new underwater surveillance network to help its submarines get a stronger lock on targets while protecting the nation's interests along the maritime Silk Road, which includes the Indian Ocean.

- The system, which has already been launched, works by gathering information about the underwater environment, particularly water temperature and salinity, which the navy can then use to more accurately track target vessels as well as improve navigation and positioning.
- The project, led by the South China Sea Institute of Oceanology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), is part of an unprecedented military expansion fuelled by Beijing's desire to challenge the United States in the world's oceans.
- China is also seeking to establish logistic bases in the Indian Ocean, much to the chagrin of India.

## **Six countries enter the UN Security Council**

Equatorial Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Peru, Poland and the Netherlands formally joined the ranks of the non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday "to make a difference.

- There are 15 members at The UN Security Council has 15 members, including five with permanent seats who have the power to veto resolutions -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.
- The six countries who left the UN Security Council on December 31 are Egypt, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay.

## **Pakistan replaces Dollar with Yuan for bilateral trade with China**

The central bank of Pakistan on Tuesday gave its green signal to using the Chinese currency, Yuan, for bilateral trade with China. The decision to cozy up to Beijing comes just a day after US President Donald Trump vowed to stop all aid to Islamabad.

- Adoption of the Yuan would mean that Pakistan and China would be able to replace the US dollar for transactions in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects.

- Pakistan would now be able to pay for imports from China in Yuan and Chinese firms investing in CPEC projects in Pakistan would bring in funds and remit back their profits also in Yuan.
- This move is another indicator of the growing bonhomie between the two countries, which call each other all-weather allies.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **Crisil launches index to track FPI investments in fixed markets**

Rating agency Crisil launched an index to measure the performance of investments of foreign portfolio investors (FPI) in the fixed-income market.

- The Crisil FPI index would serve as benchmark for performance of FPI investments in government securities, and 'AAA' as well as 'AA' rated corporate bonds with residual maturity greater than three years.
- The indices have significance because of rising FPI investments in fixed-income securities and progressive hikes in the limits prescribed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its medium-term framework introduced in October 2015.
- The index, which constructed based on the regulatory restrictions for FPIs and its investment trends in domestic fixed-income securities, has generated annualised returns of 9.15 per cent over the past five years.
- Utilisation of limit for investment by FPIs stands at 95 per cent in corporate bonds and 84 per cent in gilts today.

### **India's GDP growth at 6.5% in FY18, will accelerate to 7.6% in FY20: HSBC**

As per HSBC's report, India's growth rate is expected to accelerate over the coming year and is likely to improve further to 7.6 per cent by 2019-20 as key sectors would revive from disruptions related to the implementation of GST and demonetisation.

- According to the global financial services major, GDP growth in India is expected to accelerate to 7.0 per cent in 2018-19 from 6.5 per cent in this fiscal, shaking off the disruptions from demonetisation and introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- India's growth story has a two-part narrative. The first is a slowdown and gradual recovery in the short run, likely over FY18 and FY19, as key sectors revive from disruptions related to the implementation of GST.

- HSBC expects India's growth at around 6.5 per cent in 2017-18, 7.0 per cent in 2018-19 and 7.6 in 2019-20, respectively.
- According to HSBC, once the impact of transient factors wanes, inflation will settle around RBI's 4 per cent target.

### **AP Grameena Bank unveils desktop ATM in rural India**

Andhra Pradesh Grameena Vikas Bank (APGVB) has operationalised its first desktop ATM at Kasibugga in Mandi Bazar of Warangal in Telangana on Jan 2<sup>nd</sup>.

- The mini ATM, within the branch premises, will facilitate customers to withdraw small amounts. At the same time regular bank account holders can withdraw money and do other banking activities. The model will be scaled up to 100 in the near future,
- With these ATMs, there is neither the need for separate ATM kiosks nor security for the same. It's another IT initiative of the bank, which is the largest regional rural bank (RRB) sponsored by SBI.
- The initiative was launched on pilot basis. Plans are afoot to install 100 more desktop ATMs in different busy branches. Sixty of these will be in Telangana and 40 in Andhra Pradesh. It can be installed in the lobby or any business establishment.
- The ATM is designed to work in harsh climatic conditions and with minimum power requirements. It can dispense small denomination notes and cater to small cash needs of rural customers, who can activate and use their Rupay ATM debit cards.

### **SBI, Nabard tie up to promote joint liability groups in Bengal**

State Bank of India and Nabard has signed an agreement with five NGOs in Bengal for the promotion of 2,500 joint liability groups (JLGs) in select districts of the State.

- JLGs are informal groups of 4-10 members engaged in similar economic activities and willing to jointly undertake the responsibility to repay loans taken by the group from a bank.
- Through these JLGs, SBI plans to extend assistance to the financially excluded sections of the society, especially landless farmers in the districts of Purulia, Paschim Medinipur, Purba Medinipur, Burdwan and North 24 Parganas.
- The bank hopes to be able to extend support to close to 12,500 tenant farmers under this arrangement. Plans are also afoot to scale up the project in a phased manner to cover the remaining districts.

### **IICA, IPPB sign MoU to provide training on payment banking**

The Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) and India Post Payments Bank today signed an agreement for the training of employees of the latter in the area of payment banking.

- Under the agreement, IICA has been entrusted with the key responsibility of capacity building of IPPB through training of its officials/employees besides providing research support by instituting Research Chairs in the emerging area of payment banking,
- With massive network of post offices, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) can very effectively remedy the lack of financial inclusion in India.
- IPPB is a flagship "financial inclusion" initiative of the government to cover major portion of the country's population that is outside the ambit of formal banking.

### **Clean political funding: Details of electoral bond scheme announced**

In a bid to clean election financing, the government outlined contours of the new electoral bonds that donors can buy from SBI and said receiving political parties can encash only through a designated bank account.

- The electoral bonds, which are being pitched as an alternative to cash donations made to political parties, will be available at specified branches of State Bank of India (SBI) for 10 days each in months of January, April, July and October.
- The bonds, which would be valid for 15 days, will not carry the donor's name even though the purchaser would have to fulfil KYC norms at the bank.
- The move is aimed at making political funding more transparent. Currently, almost all of the funding is done by anonymous cash donations. This step follows the audacious move to ban high currency notes in November 2016 in a bid to flush the system of black money.
- Electoral bonds will allow donors to pay political parties using banks as an intermediary.

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## **Business**

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### **RIL commissions world's largest gas cracker complex**

Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) has commissioned the world's largest Refinery Off-Gas Cracker (ROGC) complex of 1.5 mtpa capacity along with downstream plants and utilities.



- The ROGC complex is a core component of RIL's J3 project at its integrated refinery- petrochemicals complex at Jamnagar. This is one of the largest capital expenditure programme globally in the sector in recent times.
- The ROGC complex has a unique configuration as it uses off-gases from RIL's two refineries at Jamnagar as feedstock. This approach of integration with refineries provides a sustainable cost advantage, making ROGC competitive with respect to the crackers in West Asia and North America which have feedstock cost advantage.
- ROGC is the latest addition to RIL's existing cracker portfolio consisting of cracker facilities at Nagothane in Maharashtra and Hazira, Dahej and Vadodara in Gujarat.

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## Environment

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### **World to become drier with global warming of 2 degrees Celsius**

According to scientists, over a quarter of the world's land could become significantly drier even if global warming is limited to the target of two degree Celsius.

- The change would cause an increased threat of drought and wildfires.
- However, limiting global warming to under 1.5 degree Celsius would dramatically reduce the fraction of the Earth's surface that undergoes such changes.
- Researchers from University of East Anglia (UEA) in the UK and Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech) in China studied projections from 27 global climate models.
- They identified the areas of the world where aridity will substantially change when compared to the year-to-year variations they experience now, as global warming reaches 1.5 or two degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

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## Sports

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### **Sathiyan surpasses Kamal to be highest-ranked Indian paddler**

The in-form G Sathiyan has surpassed the legendary Sharath Kamal to be India's highest-ranked player in the International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) rankings, which also have an unprecedented nine players in the top-100.



- Sathian, who was nowhere near the top-100 bracket until a few months ago, is the leader today at world No. 49, thus pushing Kamal to the second spot at 51.
- They are followed by Soumyajit Ghosh (58), Harmeet Desai (60), Sanil Shetty (68) and Anthony Amalraj (87).
- As for the women, Manika Batra is topping the world chart among Indians at 62, while Mouma Das (74) and Madhurika Patkar (81) trail the leader.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Government appoints former RAW chief Rajinder Khanna as Deputy National Security Advisor**

Rajinder Khanna, former chief of the country's external intelligence agency RAW, was today appointed as Deputy National Security Adviser.

- The post was lying vacant since Arvind Gupta, a former Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, completed his tenure in August last year. Gupta was in August 2014 appointed to the post.
- Khanna, a 1978 batch Research and Analysis Wing Service (RAS) officer, has supervised several counter-terrorism operations and is considered an expert on Pakistan and Islamic terrorism.
- Khanna is at present Officer on Special Duty (Neighbourhood Studies) in the National Security Council Secretariat.

### **AB Mathur appointed interlocutor for talks with ULFA**

The Centre on announced the appointment of AB Mathur as the interlocutor on their behalf to hold talks with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA).

- A 1975-batch IPS officer, Mathur served as the former special secretary of the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), following his appointment on December 10, 2009.
- Prior to his stint at country's primary foreign intelligence agency, Mathur was with the Intelligence Bureau (IB) under the ministry of home affairs.

### **Salman Khan appointed as brand ambassador of Emami's edible oil brands**

On 2nd January 2018, Emami Group announced actor Salman Khan as the brand ambassador for its edible oil brands.

- Salman Khan will work with Amitabh Bachchan in promoting Emami's edible oil brands. Emami Healthy & Tasty, Himani Best Choice and Rasoi are Emami's edible oil brands.

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## Obituary

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### **Legendary Urdu poet Anwar Jalalupri passed away**

Legendary Urdu poet Anwar Jalalupri, who translated Bhagwad Gita into Urdu couplets, breathed his last at the King George Medical University in Lucknow on Jan 2nd.

- The poet had won laurels for translation over 700 shlokas of the Bhagwad Gita from Sanskrit to Urdu, with an aim to promote communal harmony.
- Some of his important literary works include "Rahrau se Rahnuma Tak", translations of Gitanjali and Bhagwat Gita in Urdu. He also wrote dialogues for TV serial "Akbar the Great".
- He was a member of the Uttar Pradesh Haj Committee and had also the Chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education.