

# National Current Affairs

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## **Government to launch e-Sansad and e-Vidhan in Parliament and State**

The Union Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) has proposed rolling out of e-Sansad in Parliament and e-Vidhan in State Legislatures to digitize and make their functioning paperless.

- e-Sansad and e-Vidhan are mission mode projects of Union Government under Digital India to make the functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures paperless.
- They aim to digitise and make available Parliament and state legislature documents, including debates, speeches, committee reports and questions on internet.
- MoPA is the Nodal Ministry for implementation of both the projects. These projects will make functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures participative, responsive, transparent, productive and more accountable to public.
- They will make the entire Legislative process more efficient. They are environment-friendly initiatives in line with the Go Green initiative of the government.

## **Flamingo festival held at Pulicat lake in Andhra Pradesh**

The three-day annual Flamingo Festival was held at Pulicat lake and Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary in Sullurpet mandal. Flamingo Festival is held every year to promote tourism in Pulicat and Nellapattu. Flamingo Festival is being organised for the past 12 years.

- Migratory birds from Siberia visit this place during winter season for breeding.
- Somewhere between 9,000 to 12,000 migratory birds arrive at Pulicat region for breeding this season.
- Usually around 80 different avian species migrate to Pulicat for breeding. They hunt in shallow waters of lake and breed there. Once the breeding season concludes, they fly away to their native land with their offspring in tow.
- Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary is one of the biggest habitats for some hundreds of pelicans and other birds.

## **Vulnerable Odisha tribe Mankidia denied habitat in Similipal**

Mankidia tribe in Odisha was denied habitat rights inside core area of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) in Odisha under historic Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

- State Forest Department had objected their habitat rights on grounds that tribals could be attacked by wild animals, especially tigers.
- Mankidia is one of the 13 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) and is a marginalised group that critically depends on making rope with siali fibre that's richly available in Similipal.

### **BSES launches rooftop solar single-point for apartment complexes**

In an initiative to promote clean energy, BSES, one of Delhi's two electricity distribution companies (discoms), launched the country's first solar rooftop consumer aggregation programme for residential buildings to provide the installations at a single point for the entire apartment complex.

- In the first phase of the programme, around 150 residential societies will be targeted in the Dwarka area.
- 1 kW solar photovoltaic (PV) rooftop system is expected to generate 4-5 kilowatt hours (kwh) of electricity per day, which corresponds to an average monthly saving on bills of about Rs 750 for a period of 25 years for single-point delivery consumers.
- To set up the solar plant, a 30 per cent capital subsidy is provided by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy along with a Rs 2 per unit generation-based incentive allotted to a limited number of early projects by the Delhi government.
- The scheme would help BRPL in meeting its renewable purchase obligation, as well as minimise overloading issues in congested areas during the peak summer months.
- It will also help in achieving capex deferment for line replacement and unplanned grid up-gradation intermittently.
- BSES also announced that a portal has been launched as part of the initiative for online processing of rooftop solar applications, as well as a dedicated solar helpline for faster resolution of customer queries.

### **Indian Railways to equip all 8,500 stations with Wi-Fi**

All railway stations -- nearly 8,500 across the country, including those in rural and remote areas -- will be equipped with Wi-Fi facilities at an estimated cost of Rs 700 crore (\$110 million).

- As part of the government's ambitious Digital India initiative, the national transporter has currently commissioned Wi-Fi services at 216 major stations enabling about seven million rail passengers to log on to the free Internet facility.
- 1,200 stations have been identified for this facility to primarily cater to rail passengers and about 7,300 stations have been earmarked to not only serve passengers but also local people in rural and remote areas.

- The Wi-Fi facility at these stations in rural and remote areas will be offered to the local population as part of the digital makeover of rural India to promote e-governance.
- Railway stations in rural areas will have kiosks with Wi-Fi that will become digital hot spots offering services like digital banking, Aadhaar generation, issuing government certificates, including birth and death certificates, and filing taxes and paying

### **Nitish Kumar flags off projects worth over Rs 500 crore**

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar today inaugurated and laid foundation stones of around 750 projects, worth more than Rs 500 crore, in Khagaria and Begusarai districts of the state.

- As part of his 'Vikas Samiksha Yatra', Kumar began the day with a tour of Gauchhari Kataha village in Khagaria, where he flagged off 294 projects worth Rs 236 crore. Later, at Barbigghi village in Begusarai, he inaugurated another 462 projects totalling around Rs 321 crore,
- Kumar also spoke about the state government's measures for women empowerment and schemes introduced for young boys and girls pursuing studies or in search of employment after completing education.

### **Assam CM inaugurates skill development centres across state**

With an aim to promote skill development in northeast India, the centre and the states have been rolling out various projects. In a recent step in this direction, Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated various skill development centres across the state.

- Focusing on the need to nurture skilled manpower in the state, Sonowal recently inaugurated around 249 skill centres in the state to impart vocational training to the native youth and help them become financially independent.
- The centres were inaugurated as a part of a programme organized by Department of Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra in Guwahati.
- Around 18,000 youths from all across the state will be imparted training for various skills and by March 31 this year, around 1.5 lakh youths would be trained on trade under the state government's initiative.
- The Assam government is also planning to set up foreign language learning centres in the state to open job avenues for the youth abroad.

### **29th International Kite Festival begins in Ahmedabad**

The international kite festival which attracts kite flyers from across the country and the world, began on 7<sup>th</sup> Jan in Ahmedabad.

- The international kite festival was inaugurated by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani at Sabarmati Riverfront. The Governor O.P. Kohli was also present on the occasion.
- The state government-sponsored festival will culminate on January 14, which is celebrated as Uttarayan (Makar Sankranti).
- Around 150 delegates from 44 countries, including the UK, South Korea, New Zealand, China, Indonesia and Malaysia, have arrived here to participate in the event.
- Nearly 100 kite enthusiasts from 18 Indian states and hundreds of them from Ahmedabad also displayed their kite flying skills on the occasion.

### **PM to attend Annual DGP Conference at BSF Academy in Tekanpur**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will attend the Annual Conference of DGPs and IGPs on 7th and 8th January at the BSF Academy at Tekanpur, Madhya Pradesh.

- DGPs Conference is an annual event in which top police officers from all over the country share and discuss security related issues.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed the conference earlier in Guwahati, Assam in 2014, Dhoru, Rann of Kutch, Gujarat in 2015 and National Police Academy, Hyderabad in 2016.
- During the last meeting, issues such as cross-border terrorism and radicalization were discussed in detail. The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of leadership, soft skills and collective training. He specifically mentioned the importance of technology and human interface for the police force.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **World's largest ice festival celebrated in China**

34th Harbin International Ice and Snow Festival, world's largest ice festival opened on January 5, 2018 in Harbin (north-east China). The festival will continue through late February.

- This year's highlights are the ice sculptures of castles, historic landmarks and famous figures, including Moscow's Red Square, Bangkok's Temple of the Emerald Buddha and Beijing's Temple of Heaven.

- The ice park is spread across 197-acre land. More than 10000 workers were engaged in building the ice sculptures.
- In 2017, the ice festival had eighteen million visitors despite -30 degrees temperature. It fetched 28.7 billion yuan tourism revenue for Harbin.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **CBDT relaxes norms for MAT on firms facing insolvency**

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has announced to relax norms around levy of minimum alternate tax (MAT) for insolvent companies from financial year 2017-18.

- The purpose of the move is to make the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 more effective and minimise hardship faced by companies going in for insolvency resolution.
- Minimum alternate tax (MAT) aims to bring Zero Tax Companies” into tax realm who do not pay any tax.
- It is ruled by provisions enclosed in section 115JB of Income Tax Act, 1961.
- MAT is valid to all companies comprising foreign companies.
- This exemption facility will be available only for companies against whom application for corporate insolvency resolution process has been admitted by the adjudicating authority. An amendment to this effect will be made in section 115 JB of the Income Tax Act.
- According to existing provisions for purposes of levy of MAT company, amount of loss brought forward or unabsorbed depreciation, whichever is less as per books of account shall be reduced from book profit.
- The relation of norms will allow company to reduce amount of total loss brought forward including unabsorbed depreciation from the book profit for the purposes of levy of MAT.

### **AIIB plans to issue first US dollar bonds in June 2018**

China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is planning to issue its first US dollar-denominated bond with minimum worth of \$1 billion by June 2018.

- The earliest issuance window of bond will be toward end of first half of 2018 with time required for certain procedures, including Board of Governors’ approval of AIIB’s 2017 financial statements as well as borrowing and swap documentation.

- The minimum size of the issuance will be one billion dollars, but as demand for the first bond issue may increase AIIB anticipates of having to issue a larger size.
- The maturity of the bond will be between three and five years depending on investor demand at the time.  
The bank plans to cap its total borrowing volume at US \$3 billion dollars in 2018.
- The AIIB has received three top-notch ratings from global credit rating agencies S&P Global Ratings, Moody's and Fitch in recognition of the bank's strong capital base and stable outlook.

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## Business

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### **Defence Innovation Centre to be set up in Coimbatore to assist small industries**

Defence Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman announced that a Defence Innovation Centre would be set up by CODISSIA in Coimbatore, to assist small industries in manufacturing components for the defence sector.

- Coimbatore District Small Industries Association (CODISSIA) is a trade organization based in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu.
- CODISSIA will receive initial funding of Rs 20 crore from Union Defence Ministry for setting up the Defence Innovation Centre.
- CODISSIA will identify small and micro units as well as start-ups, that can manufacture components required for defence production.
- Decision to set up this Defence Innovation Centre has been taken in line with Central Government's "Make in India" programme.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **75th Annual Golden Globe Awards**

The 75th Annual Golden Globe Awards honored the best in film and American television of 2017. The ceremony was organized at Beverly Hills, California, United States (US). The Golden Globe Awards are the annual awards that honour the best in Motion Pictures and American Television for the previous year.

- This year The Shape of Water had received most overall nominations of show with seven, while Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri and Big Little Lies both won most awards with four each.
- Best Motion Picture Drama: Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri.
- Best Motion Picture Musical/Comedy: Lady Bird.
- Best Director in Motion Picture-Drama: Guillermo del Toro (The Shape of Water).
- Best Actor in Motion Picture-Drama: Gary Oldman (Darkest Hour) as Winston Churchill.
- Best Actress in Motion Picture-Drama: Frances McDormand (Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri) as Mildred Hayes.
- Best Actor in Motion Picture or Musical or Comedy: James Franco (The Disaster Artist) as Tommy Wiseau.
- Best Actress in Motion Picture Musical/Comedy: Saoirse Ronan (Lady Bird) as Christine “Lady Bird” McPherson.
- Best Actor in a Supporting role in Motion Picture: Sam Rockwell (Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri) as Officer Jason Dixon.
- Best Actress in a Supporting role in Motion Picture: Allison Janney (I, Tonya) as LaVona Golden.
- Best Original Score Motion Picture: Alexandre Desplat (The Shape of Water).
- Best Original Song: “This Is Me” (Benj Pasek and Justin Paul) – The Greatest Showman.
- Best Animated Feature Film: Coco.
- Best Foreign Language Film: In the Fade (Germany/France).
- Cecil B. DeMille Lifetime Achievement Award: Oprah Winfrey

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Akshay to promote ‘Swachh Survekshan 2018’ in Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation**

Bollywood actor Akshay Kumar has agreed to partner with the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) to promote cleanliness in Mumbai as part of the Swachh Survekshan 2018.

- Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs commenced Swachh Survekshan 2018 survey on January 4, 2018. This survey is being dubbed as the world’s largest cleanliness survey. It will conclude in March 2018.



- Under Swachh Survekshan 2018, all 4041 cities and towns in India will be rated and ranked on various parameters of sanitation and cleanliness. This will be the first such pan-India exercise.
- Cities will be assessed on various parameters including open defecation free status, mechanism for collection of garbage, facilities for transportation of garbage, processing of garbage using scientific methods and efforts made to encourage public participation in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign.

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## Science & Technology

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### **Pratyush: India's fastest supercomputer unveiled**

India's fastest and first multi-petaflops (PF) supercomputer named Pratyush was unveiled at Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM).

- The supercomputer has been named as 'Pratyush' meaning Sun.
- It will help India with better forecasts in terms of monsoon, extreme events, cyclones, tsunamis, earthquakes, air quality, lightning, fishing, hot and cold waves, flood and drought among others.
- Supercomputer Pratyush will be national facility for improving weather and climate forecasts and services under umbrella of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
- Pratyush has 6.8 PF computational power installed at two MoES Institutes. 4.0 Peta Flops HPC facility at IITM, Pune and 2.8 Peta Flops facility at NCMRWF, Noida. (PF is a measure of a computer's processing speed).

### **Acer unveils Swift 7, the 'world's thinnest laptop'**

Acer has launched new Acer Swift 7 laptop, which it claims to be the world's thinnest laptop. The new Acer Swift 7 will be available in the US from March 2018.

- Acer Swift 7 has a thickness of 8.98mm. It has a 14-inch full-HD touchscreen panel and Corning Gorilla Glass NBT protection.
- It features Windows 10 operating system. It is powered by Intel Core i7 processor. It has 8GB of LPDDR3 RAM and 256GB PCIe SSD storage.
- It also supports LTE through built-in Nano-SIM slot and eSIM functionality.
- It has a backlit keyboard. It provides fingerprint reader and face detection through Windows Hello. It has 10 hours of battery life on a single charge.



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# Sports

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## **Julia Goerges wins Auckland Classic, her third-straight WTA title**

Julia Goerges won the WTA Auckland Open Tennis title, in Auckland, New Zealand.

- In a final delayed by this week's persistent Auckland rain, Goerges was dominant against the top-seeded Dane, slamming numerous unplayable winners to triumph 6-4 7-6 (7-4).
- The German world No.14 broke in the first game of both sets to place early pressure on Wozniacki.
- Goerges cruised through the Classic rounds, overcoming rain delays to down Olympic gold medallist Monica Puig, Viktoria Kuzmova and Polona Hercog.

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# Obituary

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## **Legendary astronaut, moonwalker John Young passes away**

Legendary astronaut of NASA John Young, who walked on the moon and later commanded the first space shuttle flight passed away in Houston, US.

- He was NASA's only astronaut to go into space as part of Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle program, and the first to fly into space six times. He was 9th man to walk on moon.
- His NASA career spanned over 42 years, longer than any other astronaut's. In 1965, he had flown the first manned Gemini mission and commanded another in 1966. In 1969, he became first person to orbit Moon alone for Apollo 10. He also had driven Lunar Roving Vehicle on Moon's surface during Apollo 16.
- He is one of only three people to have flown to the Moon twice.
- He also commanded two Space Shuttle flights, including its first launch in 1981, and served as Chief of Astronaut Office from 1974–1987. He retired from NASA in 2004.

## **Actor Shrivallabh Vyas passes away**

On 7th January 2018, actor Shrivallabh Vyas passed away in Jaipur, Rajasthan.

- Shrivallabh Vyas had acted in more than 60 Hindi films. He has also performed in television and theatre. He stopped acting after he collapsed in his hotel room in Gujarat in 2008.
- His popular films are Lagaan, Sarfarosh, Abhay, Aan: Men at Work, Shool, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: The Forgotten Hero and Sankat City.

### **Powerlifting world champion Saksham Yadav passes away**

On 7th January 2018, Saksham Yadav, powerlifting world champion, died due to injuries, at the AIIMS Trauma Centre in New Delhi.

- Saksham Yadav met with a car accident and was admitted in an extremely critical condition at the AIIMS Trauma Centre.
- Saksham Yadav bagged a gold medal in the 2017 world weightlifting championship. Along with Saksham five other men including Rohit, a weightlifter, were also injured in the accident.

### **Peter Sutherland, former WTO director general passes away**

On 7th January 2018, Peter Sutherland, former World Trade Organization (WTO) director general died after brief illness.

- Peter Sutherland was a long-serving chairman of BP (B.P.L), an oil and gas company. He also served as chairman of the overseas arm of Goldman Sachs.
- He was also Ireland's European Union commissioner and attorney general in the 1980s.