

# National Current Affairs

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## **Railways set to get 1st high-speed electric locomotive in March**

Indian Railways' first high speed electric locomotive which can run at a maximum speed of 120 kmph will be launched in March 2018 during French President Emmanuel Macron's Indian visit.

- The high-speed electric locomotive has a capacity of 12,000 horsepower and can run at a maximum speed of 120 kmph.
- This high-speed electric locomotive has been produced in collaboration with Alstom.
- The first 12,000 horsepower locomotive has been assembled at Madhepura plant in Bihar. Trials are being conducted now.
- This increase in speed will improve line capacity in the rail network. 800 such electric locomotives will be produced in the upcoming 11 years by Indian Railways in collaboration with Alstom.

## **AP CM Naidu lays foundation for Universal Peace Retreat Center in Amaravati**

On February 1, 2018, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation stone for the Universal Peace Retreat Center of 'Prajapita Brahmakumari Eswariya University' in Amaravati.

- This Center will be built on 10 acres of land at Nekkollu village within the Amaravati Capital Region. The land has been allotted by Andhra Pradesh State Government.
- Raja yoga and Dhyana will be taught at the Center. Besides, the center will be involved in propagating youth development, women empowerment, child care, and moral values.
- Universal Peace Retreat Center will have capacity to provide shelter to 1500 people.
- Other amenities that will be set up at the Center include an auditorium with 2000 seating arrangement, meditation hall, a museum, laser show and a housing complex.

## **7<sup>th</sup> India Energy Congress 2018 held in New Delhi**

The 7<sup>th</sup> India Energy Congress (IEC) 2018 was held in New Delhi. The theme for this edition of conference was Energy 4.0: Energy Transition Towards 2030.

- It was organised by World Energy Council India (WEC India) and inaugurated by Union Power and New and Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh.

- IEC is the flagship event of WEC India and joint event of Ministries of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy, Petroleum & Natural gas, External Affairs and Department of Atomic Energy. Over 400 experts participated in the Congress.
- They also discussed and debated on five sub-themes: Energy Investments in Uncertain World; Policy and Energy Environment 2030; Sustainable Mobility; Variable Renewable Energy Integration; and Reaching Last Mile.

### **Highlights Budget 2018-19**

Union Finance minister Arun Jaitley presented Union Budget 2018 in Parliament. It is last full budget of Narendra Modi Government before 2019 Lok Sabha elections.

- Focus Areas of Union Budget 2018: To strengthen agriculture, rural development, health, education, employment, Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and infrastructure sectors.
- For the year 2018-19, Railways Capital Expenditure has been pegged at Rs.148528 crore.
- For 2018-19, allocation on Digital India programme has been doubled to Rs 3073 crore.
- India's defence budget has been hiked by 7.81% to Rs 295511 crore from Rs 274114 crore last year
- Economic Health:
  - Economy firmly on course to achieve high growth of 8%.
  - GDP growth at 6.3% in second quarter of 2017-18.
  - Growth in second half likely to remain between 7.2% to 7.5%.
  - Manufacturing, services, and exports sectors are back on good growth path.
- Fiscal Management:
  - Budget Revised Estimates for Expenditure at Rs.21.57 lakh crore.
  - R Fiscal Deficit estimates revised at 3.5% of GDP.
  - Central Government's Debt to GDP ratio to be brought down at 40%.

### **Arun Jaitley announces new tunnel at Sela pass in Arunachal Pradesh**

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced the government's plan to build a tunnel through the Sela Pass located at an elevation of 13,700 ft which will ensure faster movement of troops in Tawang, a strategically- located town in Arunachal Pradesh bordering China.

- The proposal to build the Sela pass comes amid concerns in the defence establishment over China's growing assertiveness along the nearly 4,000 km-long Sino-India border.
- The Sela pass is located at an elevation of 13700 ft between the Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh and considered crucial from strategic perspective as they are located near to India-China Border.

- In recent times, Indian Defence officials have raised concerns over China's growing assertiveness along the nearly 4000 km-long India-China border.

### **ICMR partners with Pfizer to combat antimicrobial resistance**

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and American pharmaceutical giant Pfizer have inked MoU to establish a 'Centre to Combat Antimicrobial Resistance' in New Delhi. The centre will help in combating the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in India.

- The centre will help to expand ICMR's Antimicrobial Stewardship Programme across country in phased manner with focus on smaller in-patient centres and also enhance its existing AMR Surveillance Programme by training specialists to run expanded network.
- It will also focus on awareness and advocacy programme using media and non-media platforms to disseminate information on antibiotic resistance and promote rational use of antibiotics.
- The partnership will help to implement series of comprehensive interventions, ranging from AMR stewardship programmes for nursing homes.
- It will scale up ICMR's existing AMR surveillance programme by training specialists to run expanded India surveillance network that will cover both private and government hospitals to collate, analyse and publish drug resistance data across all geographies in India.

### **Nobel Prize Series – India 2018 begins in Goa**

On February 1, 2018, Goa Chief Minister Manohar Parrikar inaugurated the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of 'Nobel Prize Series India 2018' in Panaji, Goa.

- 'Nobel Prize Series – India 2018' consist of a month-long 'Nobel Science Exhibition and the India Science Exhibition: Ideas Changes the world'. During the course of this event, Nobel laureates will interact with school children and teachers.
- This event has been jointly organised by Department of Bio-Technology under Union Ministry of Science and Technology, Goa State Government and Nobel Media, Sweden.
- Theme of Nobel Prize Series India 2018' is 'Science Impacts Life'.
- The first edition of 'Nobel Prize Series in India' was held in Gujarat in January 2017.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **India joins Ashgabat agreement**

India has joined Ashgabat Agreement which envisages facilitation of transit and transportation of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf to significantly boost up trade and investment. It was informed by Turkmenistan, as depository state of the Agreement that all its four founding members have consented to accession of India.

- Ashgabat Agreement aims at establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor between the Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- It was signed in April 2011 and is named after capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat.
- It establishes international transport and transit corridor between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf countries. Pakistan is also its member since Oct2016.
- Significance of accession to Agreement:
  - It will enable India to utilise this existing transport and transit corridor to facilitate trade and commercial interaction and ties with Central Asia and Eurasian region.
  - It will synchronise India's efforts to implement the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) for enhanced connectivity.
  - It will provide India an opportunity for reorientation of the freight traffic from the traditional sea route to land transcontinental routes.

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## **Banking & Finance**

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### **Government introduces Bill to amend the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002**

Government has made following amendments in the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) through Finance Act 2018 in order to enhance its effectiveness and widen its scope.

- Important Amendments to Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002:
  - Definition of “proceeds of crime” has been amended to include “property equivalent held outside the country.
  - Applicability of bail conditions has been made uniform to all the offences under PMLA.
  - Section 447 of Companies Act dealing with ‘fraud’ is being included as scheduled offence under PMLA.
  - 90 days more time has been given for investigation to Enforcement Directorate, before prosecution is filed.
  - New sub-section is being introduced to provide clear guidelines to share the information relating to contraventions of other laws noticed during investigation.

- Special Court has been permitted to consider the claims of the claimants for the purposes of restoration of confiscated properties even during trial.

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## Business

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### **DoT to set up 5G development centre in tie-up with IIT Chennai**

Finance Minister, Arun Jaitley, has announced that the Department of Telecom will set up a development centre to work on 5G technologies in partnership with IIT, Chennai.

- 5G technology is still being standardised globally and India has the opportunity to take the lead in the development of this technology.
- 5G will enable applications such as Internet of Things and Machine-to-Machine internet.
- Action has already begun in 5G technology in educational institutions with Ericsson and IIT Delhi signing an MoU to jointly roll out a '5G for India' programme. Ericsson will set up a Center of Excellence with a 5G test bed and incubation center at IIT Delhi and use this facility to drive development of the country's 5G ecosystem.
- In addition to hosting the Center of Excellence, IIT Delhi will conduct research and development to explore how some of the country's challenges can be addressed with mobile technologies.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **Odisha wins Geospatial World Excellence Award 2018**

Odisha Government has won 'Geospatial World Excellence Award-2018' for successful IT application for tracking of mineral production, dispatch and value accrued on real-time basis through its i3MS web-based software.

- The award was presented at the Geospatial World Forum Meeting held at Hyderabad, Telangana.
- The event was attended by more than 3,000 geospatial experts from 90 different countries.
- i3MS is GPS-linked web-based software designed by scientists of Odisha Space Applications Centre (ORSAC), Bhubaneswar.

- This system has enabled for first time in India to fix GPS devices on large number of moving objects in the mining sector.
- Using it, daily production and dispatch are being recorded on real-time basis through this software.
- Moreover, State Steel and Mines Department uses it for watching live movement of 43,000 vehicles carrying minerals from production point to ports, railway sidings and end-user industrial units.

### **Shabnam Asthana wins Times Power Woman 2017 award**

Dilip Kamble, Minister of State for Social Justice and Special Assistance in the Government of Maharashtra, presented the 'Times Power Woman 2017'- Pune for Global PR award to Shabnam Asthana.

- The Times Group celebrated the Times Power Woman 2017 (Pune) awards recently to honour the achievements of women who have also been sources of inspiration.
- These awards were presented to the women of Pune. 34 women with power, supremacy, command and control were awarded.
- The awardees have contributed for socio economic, art, health, education, fashion, scientific improvement, etc.

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## **Appointments & Resigns**

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### **Lt. Gen. AK Bhatt takes charge as the 47th Corps Commander of Chinara Corps**

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018, Lt Gen A K Bhatt took charge as the 47th Corps Commander of the Chinara Corps of Indian Army.

- Lt Gen A K Bhatt replaces Lt Gen J S Sandhu. The Chinara Corps is also known as 15 Corps. It is based in Srinagar.
- Lt. Gen. Sandhu will take charge as Military Secretary (MS) in New Delhi. Lt. Gen. A K Bhatt was Director General Military Operations (DGMO) at Army Headquarters.
- Lt Gen A K Bhatt had worked with regiment of 9<sup>th</sup> Gorkha Rifles. He had also represented India as deputy Force Provost Marshal in Lebanon.

### **Alphabet names board veteran John Hennessy as chairman**

On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2018, John Hennessy was appointed as Chairman of Alphabet's Board.

- John Hennessy succeeds Eric Schmidt. Eric Schmidt was Executive Chairman of Alphabet's Board for a long time.
- John Hennessy is former president of Stanford University.
- He has held the post of lead independent director at Google and Alphabet since 2007.
- Eric Schmidt still remains as a board member and adviser on technical and science issues.

### **Sudeep Lakhtakia took charge as new Director General of NSG**

Senior IPS officer Sudeep Lakhtakia took charge as the new Director General of National Security Guard (NSG).

- He succeeds S P Singh who retired from the post and will hold post till July 2019.
- Sudeep Lakhtakia is 1984-batch IPS officer of the Telangana cadre. Prior to this post, he was serving as a Special Director General in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) headquarters in New Delhi.

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## **Science & Technology**

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### **Sixth interceptor boat V-410 for Coast Guard launched**

On February 1, 2018, V-410, an interceptor boat, built for the Indian Coast Guard, was launched in Mangaluru, Karnataka by Bharati Defence and Infrastructure Limited (BDIL).

- V-410 is the sixth in the series of 15 interceptors for which BDIL had been given a contract.
- It will be commissioned into the Indian Coast Guard at its Kochi station and post commissioning, it would be christened ICG 162.
- This is the second such interceptor boat the BDIL has launched at its shipyard at Panambur here for the CoastGuard after the launch of V-409 in November.
- V-410 is powered by two main engines, each of 1650kW capacity.

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## **Sports**

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### **SpiceJet India Open Boxing Tournament: Mary Kom Clinches Gold, India Bag 10 Medals**

On 1st February 2018, M C Mary Kom won gold medal at the SpiceJet India Open International Boxing tournament at the Thyagraj Indoor Stadium in New Delhi.

- India's M C Mary Kom defeated Filipino Josie Gabuco 4-1 in the finals of the women's 48kg category and won the gold medal.
- India's Pinki Rani defeated Jargalan Ochirbat in the finals of fly (48-51 kg) category and won gold medal.
- India's Shiva Thapa won a bronze medal in the 60 kg category. India's Pwilao Basumatary defeated Thailand's Sudaporn Seesondee 3-2 and won gold medal in the women's 64 kg category.
- India's Lovlina Borgohain defeated India's Pooja and won gold in the women's welterweight (69kg) category.
- India's L Sarita Devi lost to Finland's Mira Potkenon in the women's 60kg category and won a silver medal.
- India's Sanjeet defeated Uzbekistan's Sanjar Tursunov 3-2 in the men's 91kg category and won a gold medal.
- India's Manish Kaushik won gold medal in the 60 kg category for men. Satish Kumar won silver medal in the +91kg category for men.
- India's Dinesh Dagar won silver medal in the men's welterweight 69kg category. India's Manisha won a gold medal in the women's 54kg category.

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## **Important Days**

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### **World Wetlands Day – February 2**

On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2018, World Wetlands Day was observed all over the world. The theme for World Wetlands Day 2018 is: "Wetlands for a Sustainable Urban Future".

- On 2nd February 2018 every year, the World Wetlands Day is celebrated. On the same day in 1971, the Convention on Wetlands was adopted in Ramsar, Iran.
- The Convention on Wetlands is an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.
- The World Wetlands Day is celebrated to increase public awareness on wetlands and to highlight the value of wetlands.