

# National Current Affairs

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## **Cabinet approves Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018**

The Union Cabinet has approved the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 for introduction in the Parliament.

- Human Trafficking is third largest organized crime violating basic human rights. At present there is no specific law to deal with this crime.
- The bill addresses the issue of human trafficking from point of view of prevention, rescue and rehabilitation.
- It takes into consideration aggravated forms of trafficking. It includes trafficking for purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity etc.
- It prescribes punishment for promoting and facilitating trafficking of person.
- It includes producing, printing, issuing or distributing unissued, tampered or fake certificates, registration or stickers as proof of compliance with Government requirements, or commits fraud for procuring or facilitating acquisition of clearances and necessary documents from Government agencies.
- It deals with confidentiality of victims and witnesses and complainants by not disclosing their identity.
- It has provision for time bound trial and repatriation of the victims. It will be within a period of 1 year from taking into cognizance.
- It provides immediate protection of rescued victims and their rehabilitation.
- It creates Rehabilitation Fund for the first time.
- It creates dedicated institutional mechanisms at District, State and Central level.
- The punishment prescribed under it ranges from rigorous minimum 10 years to life and fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh.
- It comprehensively addresses transnational nature of the crime. It entrusts National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB) to perform functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries and international organizations.

## **CCEA approves continuation of Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved continuation of Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) beyond 12<sup>th</sup> Plan for 3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

- The scheme has been extended with total outlay of Rs. 5,500 crore to create sustainable estimated employment opportunities for 15 lakh persons in three financial years.
- Targets under the continuation period has been fixed taking into account extent of backwardness of states, unemployment, fulfilment of previous year targets and population of States/UTs and availability of traditional skills and raw material.
- Minimum target of 75 projects per district will be awarded to all districts across country to achieve Inclusive Growth.
- Higher rate of subsidy (25% to 35%) will be applicable for women, SC/ST, OBC, Physically Disabled, NER applicants in rural areas.
- The entire process of application flow and fund flow right from receipt of application, processing, sanction by banks, transfer of margin money subsidy till creation of Term Deposit Receipt (TDR) in name of applicant will be online.

### **Cabinet approves Action Plan for Champion Sectors in Services**

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors for promoting their development, and realizing their potential.

- The Cabinet has also directed the Ministries/Departments concerned with these sectors to utilize the available draft sectoral plans to finalize and implement the Action Plans for the identified Champion Services Sectors.
- The respective line Ministries/Departments shall finalize the Action Plans and the implementation timelines along with a monitoring mechanism to monitor implementation under the overall guidance of the Committee of Secretaries (CoS) under Cabinet Secretary.
- A dedicated fund of Rs. 5000 crores has been proposed to be established to support initiatives for sectoral Action Plans of the Champion Sectors.
- This initiative will enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors through the implementation of focused and monitored Action Plans, thereby promoting GDP growth, creating more jobs and promoting exports to global markets.
- Competitive services sector will also add to competitiveness of manufacturing sector as well.

### **CCEA doubles Bank guarantee limit for pulses & oilseeds for NAFED**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved proposal to double guarantee to Rs. 19,000 crore from earlier Rs 9,500 crore to National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) for obtaining credit from banks for procurement of pulses and oilseeds at the support price.

- The regularization and extension is for undertaking procurement operation of pulses and oilseeds under Price Support Scheme (PSS).
- The CCEA also approved Government Guarantee up to Rs. 45 crore to the Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) for meeting its existing liability and settlement of extant claims.
- The guarantee will be provided for period of 5 years, till 2021-22 and with waiver of 1% of government guarantee fee.
- NAFED is apex organization of marketing cooperatives for agricultural produce in India.

### **Cabinet approves Amendments to Housing and Telephone Facilities Rules, Constituency Allowance Rules and Office Expense Allowance Rules for MPs**

The Union Cabinet approved following amendments:

- Increase in the monetary ceiling of furniture at residence of Members of Parliament from Rs. 75,000/- (Rs. 60,000/- for durable and Rs. 15,000/- for non-durable) to Rs. 1,00,000/- (Rs. 80,000/- for durable and Rs. 20,000/- for non-durable).
- Broadband internet facility may be provided to Members of Parliament w.e.f. August 2006 against 10,000 surrendered call units per annum on land line connection.
- Wi-fi zone with monthly tariff plan of Rs. 1700/- from 1.9.2015 to 31.12.2016 and Rs. 2200/- from 1.1.2017 onwards may be created in the Members' residential areas for providing high speed internet connection (FTTH connection). This facility will be in addition to the existing broadband facility.
- Increase in the Constituency Allowance for Members of Parliament from Rs. 45,000/- per month to Rs. 70,000/- per month.
- Increase in the Office Expense Allowance for Members of Parliament from Rs. 45,000/- per month (Rs. 15,000/- for expenses on stationary items and postage plus Rs. 30,000/- for a computer literate person engaged by Member of Parliament for obtaining secretarial assistance) to Rs. 60,000/- per month (Rs. 20,000/- for expenses on stationary items and postage plus Rs. 40,000/- for a computer literate person engaged by Member of Parliament for obtaining secretarial assistance).

### **DAC approves Rs. 9,435-crore procurement proposals for three services**

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has approved various procurement proposals for three services estimated at about Rs. 9,435 crore.

- The proposals includes purchase of 41,000 light machine guns (LMGs) and over 3.5 lakh close quarter battle (CQB) carbines, High-capacity radio relay (HCRR) and two

Pollution control vessels (PCV). DAC is Defence Ministry's highest decision-making body on procurement.

### **Manufacturing growth falls to four-month low in February 2018: PMI**

According to Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI), India's manufacturing sector activity fell to four-month low in February 2018 as factory output and new business orders rose at slower pace.

- The monthly PMI fell to 52.1 in February 2018 from 52.4 in January 2018, indicating modest improvement in operating conditions. A reading above 50 on index denotes expansion and less than that indicates contraction in activities.
- This is for seventh consecutive month that PMI remained above 50-point-mark that separates expansion from contraction.
- The expansion was primarily driven by significant rise in manufacturing production, while there were reports of improved underlying demand, with domestic and external sources driving new business gains.
- PMI Survey on prices front found that cost inflation has accelerated to sharpest since February 2017, adding to expectations that inflationary risks will continue over coming months. It also noted that Indian manufacturers remained optimistic towards 12-month outlook for output during February 2018.

### **Delhi govt to set up State Sanskrit Education Council**

The Delhi government has decided to set up its State Sanskrit Education Council to improve the state of formal education of the language in the national capital.

- Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia has ordered the education department to go through representations received by Delhi government regarding Sanskrit education in schools and colleges.
- The education department will study the representations and take necessary steps to form a Delhi State Sanskrit Education Council.

### **The Union territory of Lakshadweep joined UDAY Scheme**

The Union Territory of Lakshadweep and the Government of India signed a MoU under the UDAY (Scheme Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana) Scheme. This will ensure operational turnaround of Lakshadweep's Electricity Department.

- Lakshadweep will receive an overall net benefit of around Rs. 8 crore through the UDAY Scheme. This will be achieved by cheaper funds, reduction in AT&C (Aggregate Technical and Commercial) losses, interventions in energy efficiency, etc.
- The Central Government will help Lakshadweep in improving Power infrastructure which will result in further reduction of the cost of power.

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## International Current Affairs

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### **Cabinet approves agreement between India and Jordan on Customs Matters**

The Union Cabinet has approved signing and ratifying Agreement between India and Jordan on Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters.

- It will help in availability of relevant information for prevention and investigation of Customs offences.
- It is also expected to facilitate trade and ensure efficient clearance of goods traded between countries.
- The Agreement will provide legal framework for sharing of information and intelligence between Customs authorities of two countries and help in proper application of Customs laws, prevention and investigation of Customs offences and facilitation of legitimate trade.

### **Cabinet approves MoU between India and Jordan on Cooperation in Health Sector**

The Union Cabinet has approved signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Jordan on cooperation in the field of Health & Medical Science.

- Working Group will be set up to oversee the implementation of this MoU and further elaborate the details of cooperation.
- MoU covers the following areas of cooperation.
  - Health Research.
  - Tobacco Control.
  - Chronic Disease Control.
  - National Health Statistics.
  - Health System Governance.
  - Universal Health Coverage (UHC).
  - Health Finance and Health Economy.
  - Services and Information Technology in Health.
  - Regulation of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices.
  - Diagnosis, Treatment and Medication in Tuberculosis.

### **Cabinet approves MoU between India-Jordan for mining, beneficiation of Rock Phosphate**

The Union Cabinet has approved signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Jordan for mining and beneficiation of Rock Phosphate and Muriate of Phosphate (MOP).

- It also approved setting up production facility in Jordan for Phosphoric Acid/NPK/DAP Fertilizers with long term agreement for 100% off-take to India.
- The MoU will ensure consistent supply of raw material, intermediaries and finish Phosphatic and Potassic (P&K) fertilizers to cater to needs of country at a reasonable price.

### **Cabinet approves MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Manpower between India and Jordan**

The Union Cabinet also approved the proposal for signing of MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Manpower between India and Jordan.

- It aims at enhancing collaboration between two countries in promoting best practices in administration of contractual employment.
- The MoU will be valid for period of 5 years and incorporates provision of automatic renewal and monitoring mechanism through Joint Technical Committee (JTC).
- It reflects latest reforms in recruitment processes and enhances protection and welfare of Indian workers in Jordan.
- It is expected to usher in greater transparency and curb malpractices in the recruitment process due to use of online portal for recruitment of Indian manpower.

### **Cabinet approves MoU between India and Macedonia on cooperation in the field of Health**

The Union Cabinet has approved signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Macedonia on cooperation in the field of Health. The MoU covers the following areas of cooperation:

- Capacity building and short term training of human resources in health;
- Exchange & training of medical doctors, officials, other health professionals and experts;
- Assistance in development of human resources and setting up of health care facilities;
- Any other area of cooperation as may be mutually decided upon.

### **Cabinet approves MoU between India and Vietnam on Economic and Trade Cooperation**

The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Vietnam on Economic and Trade Cooperation.

- The MoU would expand more bilateral trade and economic cooperation between India and Vietnam.

### **Pakistan admits being added grey list of FATF**

Pakistan has confirmed that it will be added on 'grey list' of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in June 2018, once an action plan is mutually negotiated. But it has disputed claims of being put on 'black list' from 'grey list', which are mainly non-cooperative countries. Earlier, Pakistan was on the FATF grey-list from 2012 to 2015.

- In February 2018 plenary session of FATF, US, UK, Germany and France had pushed for putting Pakistan on grey list for its ineffectiveness to deal Islamist terrorists especially Haqqani Network and its facilitators.
- FATF had decided to put Pakistan back on "grey list," subjecting it to direct monitoring and intense scrutiny by the International Co-operation Review Group (ICRG) on terror financing, pending further review in June 2018.
- The FATF decision was by consensus, after days of closed-door discussions within the 37-member group.
- Blacklisting will endanger Pakistan's handful of remaining banking links to the outside world, causing real financial pain to the economy. It will squeeze Pakistan's economy and make it harder to meet its mounting foreign financing needs, including potential future borrowings from International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- It will lead to downgrading of Pakistan's debt ratings by international banking and credit rating agencies, making it more difficult to tap funds from international bond markets. It will also suspend international funds and aid to Pakistan such as Coalition Support Funds (CSF), money which US owes to Pakistan for military operations.

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## **Business**

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### **Economy to grow at 7.6% in calendar year 2018: Moody's**



Moody's Investors Service said that the Indian economy is starting to recover from the negative impact of demonetisation and disruption caused by the GST roll-out, but kept GDP growth estimates unchanged at 7.6 per cent for 2018.

- Moody's expects that sentiment in Indian economy will improve on account of measures to stabilise rural economy (announced in Union Budget 2018) and public sector bank recapitalisation plan.
- For calendar year 2019, Moody's has estimated that Indian economy will grow at 7.5%.
- In 2018, G20 economies will collectively grow at 3.4 %, up from prior forecasts of 3.2 %.
- In its global growth forecasts for 2018 and 2019, Moody's said the Budget for fiscal year beginning April 1 (2018-19) includes some measures to stabilise the rural economy that was disproportionately hit by scrapping of high denomination Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 notes.

### **Core sector grows at 6.7% in January 2018**

According to index of eight core industries released by Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Core sector growth has grown at faster pace of 6.7% in January 2018. The eight core sectors had grown by 4.2% in December 2017 and 7.4% in November 2017.

- Cumulatively, the growth in eight core sectors during April-January this fiscal slowed to 4.3% as against 5.1% in the same period last fiscal.
- The growth in key sectors will have implications for Index of Industrial Production (IIP) as these eight segments account for about 41% of the total factory output.
- Breakup of January performance:
  - Petroleum refinery production: It jumped up by 11%.
  - Cement output: It jumped up by 20.7%.
  - Electricity generation: Its growth rose to 8.2%.
  - Coal sector output: It improved by 3%.
  - Steel production: It grew by 3.7%.
  - Crude oil production: It dropped by 3.2%.
  - Fertiliser output: It dropped by 1.6%.
  - Natural gas: Its output fell by 1%.

### **Avaada Power inks pact to develop 500MW solar capacities in Andhra Pradesh**

Avaada Power Pvt Ltd, India's leading clean energy company will invest Rs 3,500 crore to set up 500 MW solar projects in Andhra Pradesh.



- The utility-scale solar projects will generate enough clean energy to sustainably power over 2.4 million households across the state.
- An agreement to this effect was signed during the 'CII Partnership Summit 2018' in Vishakhapatnam.
- The investment by Avaada Power is expected to generate more than 1,200 employment opportunities.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Luminous Power Technologies signs Virat Kohli as Brand Ambassador for Amaze**

Luminous Power Technologies announced Virat Kohli as the brand ambassador for its new independent brand Amaze.

- Luminous Power Technologies would invest Rs 150 crore in the upcoming 3 to 5 years in Amaze to develop it.
- Amaze will produce totally different products compared to that of Luminous. Amaze will focus on the unstructured battery market.

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## Science & Technology

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### **CMFRI to launch e-com portal, mobile app for fishermen**

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has come up with a solution that will help fishermen fetch better price for their catch without depending on middlemen.

- The institute has developed a multi-vendor e-commerce website and mobile app to help fish farmers and fishermen sell their catch directly to customers online.
- The website, [www.marinefishsales.com](http://www.marinefishsales.com), and mobile app, [marinefishsales](http://marinefishsales), were developed under the National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project of the CMFRI as part of improving income of the coastal community.
- The initiative was one of the ways to tackle the situation prevailing in the coastal belt owing to dwindling catches.
- The portal is an interface of multi-vendors and consumers with the CMFRI performing the administrative role between them. Fishermen and fish farmers who want to sell their catch and fish online may form Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and

register with the platform. The CMFRI will monitor vendor profiles, order status and sales.

- The e-commerce platform developed by the NICRA project of the CMFRI will be greatly beneficial to fishermen and fish farming community to increase their income and avoid exploitation by middlemen

### **Telangana launches integrated app for all government services**

The Telangana government launched an m-Governance mobile application called 'T App Folio' to help citizens with one point access to government services like MeeSeva services, RTA services, fee payments and bill payment services etc.

- While T App Folio has already integrated T Wallet, myGHMC, RTA m Wallet and HawkEye through a single sign-in feature, going forward, the Telangana government plans to bring on-board all mobile apps of its various departments to T App Folio over next 12 months.
- Telangana has become the second state government in India to set up a mobile service delivery gateway in place for the provision of government to citizen (G2C) services. The platform is being launched in Telugu and English for the convenience of citizens
- In phase-I of T App Folio, ESD has on-boarded (over) 150 services on T App Folio which includes the most used MeeSeva services, RTA services, fee payments and bill payments services. In addition, a host of informational services, location services like MeeSeva centers, Ration shops, Hy-Fi hotspots have also been made available on T App Folio
- Telangana state has been ranked number 1 in digital transactions based on the number of e-transactions per 1,000 population for the period of June 2, 2014 to December 31, 2017 by the government of India's e-Taal website.

### **ATGM Nag successfully test fired in desert conditions**

Indigenously developed Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) Nag was successfully test-fired in desert conditions against two tank targets at different ranges and timings. With this, the developmental trials of Nag missile have been completed and it is now ready for induction.

- ATMG Nag is one of five missile systems developed indigenously by DRDO under integrated guided missile development programme (IGMDP).
- The other four missiles are Agni, Akash, Trishul and Prithvi. It is manufactured by India's sole missile producer, state-owned Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- The Nag missile is third generation ATMG which works on "fire and forget" principle. ...
- It has operational range of 500m to 4km (Land version) and 7-10km (when air-launched)....

- It is equipped with highly advanced Imaging Infrared Radar (IRR) seeker along with integrated avionics.
- It also possesses advanced passive homing guidance system. It has been designed mainly to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets. It can be launched from land and air-based platforms.

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## Sports

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### **Russia's Olympic membership restored by International Olympic Committee**

Russia's Olympic membership has been restored by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

- Russia has got back its Olympic membership, following its suspension from 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.
- Russia was banned by IOC due to state-sponsored doping during the Winter Olympics 2014 in Sochi.
- Still, 168 Russians participated in the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics as neutral participants. They participated as Olympic Athletes from Russia (OAR). It was the third largest team and bagged 17 medals.
- Except two participants from Russia, all others proved clean in the dope test conducted during the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics. IOC has restored Russia's Olympic membership

### **Japan unveils Tokyo 2020 Olympics superhero mascots**

The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, launched the superhero mascots for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, at the Kakezuka school in Tokyo.

- The winning Olympic and Paralympic mascots have not yet been named. The Olympic mascot has a futuristic blue and white chequered pattern.
- It is said to have a special power that enables it to move anywhere instantly.
- The Paralympic mascot has a pink and white design inspired by cherry blossoms. It is said to have special power to move things just by looking at them.
- Name for the mascots will be decided by the selection panel and a formal launch will be performed in July or August 2018. The mascots were selected through voting after designs were submitted.

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# Obituary

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## **Kanchi seer Jayendra Saraswathi passes away**

Kanchi acharya Sri Jayendra Saraswathi died on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

- He was the 69<sup>th</sup> head of the Kanchi mutt.
- He was considered one of the most influential spiritual leaders of his time.
- He became the head of the Kanchi mutt in 1994.

## **Former SC Judge Ratnavel Pandian passes away**

S Ratnavel Pandian, former Supreme Court judge, died in Chennai, Tamil Nadu on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

- He was Supreme Court judge in the 1988 to 1994 period.
- After his retirement from Supreme Court, he served as chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes.
- He was an advocate for 17 years. In 1971, he was appointed State Public Prosecutor in the High Court of Madras. In 1974, he was promoted as a judge. He served as the acting Chief Justice of the Madras High Court twice.