

# National Current Affairs

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## **Karnataka gives Lingayats separate religious status**

Karnataka government recognised Lingayats as a separate religious minority and accepted the recommendation of a committee under the state Minorities Commission Act. The proposal will be sent to Centre for final approval.

- In what it claimed was a unanimous decision, the cabinet also allowed Veerashaivas - or whoever agreed to follow social reformer Basavanna's ideals - to be considered Lingayats.
- Lingayats follow Basavanna, a 12<sup>th</sup> Century reformer, and have been demanding the status of a separate religion.
- In the political sphere, this demand was led by Congress ministers MB Patil, Basavaraj Rayareddy and Vinay Kulkarni, while their cabinet colleagues Eshwar Khandre and SS Mallikarjun opposed it.

## **Curtain Raiser for '3<sup>rd</sup> National Conclave on Mines and Minerals'**

The astounding success and immense utility of earlier National Conclaves on Mines & Minerals to gather solidarity in approach for addressing the issues in the mining sector, the Ministry of Mines is organizing 3<sup>rd</sup> National Conclave on Mines & Minerals on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2018 in Convention Hall, Hotel Ashoka New Delhi.

- Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) has agreed to partner in the event.
- The PSUs which are closely associated with the mining activity directly or as an integral part of their production process, would be one of the major stakeholders assisting the Ministry in organizing the conclave.
- These PSUs are NALCO, HCL&MECL under the Ministry of Mines and the companies in which the government stake is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Mines, viz. HZL&BALCO.
- The conclave will have three technical sessions for interaction on the following key topics-
  - Auction of Mineral Blocks & Implementation of PMKKKY
  - Impetus on Exploration
  - Sustainable Development Framework – Sharing of Best Practices

## **India EU to share earth observation data from each other's satellite**

India and the European Union signed an agreement that will enable them to share earth observation data from each other's satellite.

- The pact was inked in Bengaluru by Philippe Brunet, Director for Space Policy, Copernicus and Defence, on behalf of the European Commission and by PG Diwakar, scientific secretary with the aim to strengthen and stimulate cooperation on Earth observation and mutual access to the data from the EU's sentinel series of satellites and from the Indian earth observation satellites.
- Under this arrangement, the European Commission intends to provide India with free, full and open access to the data from the Copernicus Sentinel family of satellites using high bandwidth connections from data hub to data hub.
- Reciprocally the DoS will provide the Copernicus programme and its participating states with a free, full and open access to the data from ISRO's earth observation satellites, including historical data sets.
- It is intended that ISRO's satellite data would be made available for distribution on the European 'Copernicus hub'.
- This comprises land, ocean and atmospheric series of ISRO's civilian satellites (Oceansat-2, Megha-Tropiques, Scatsat-1, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR) with the exception of commercial high-resolution satellites data.

### **Airbnb inks four MoUs for promotion of tourism in North-East**

Online marketplace and hospitality service provider Airbnb has signed four MoUs to boost tourism North East India.

- The MoUs aim at creating hospitality micro-entrepreneurs across key destinations in North East India.
- They seek to leverage community resources and appropriate local resources based technology for development.
- Under MoUs, NEC, NETDC and Airbnb had agreed to expand tourism in north east India through Airbnb's global platform.
- They will also improve quality of homestay facilities and unique properties in NER and provide and promote outstanding tourism resources.
- They will also cooperate to improve regulatory environment for home sharing in North East.
- They will also aim to generate technology-enabled livelihood opportunities in tourism and hospitality for micro-entrepreneurs in North East India and to help low-income families monetize their existing assets through home sharing.
- Under these agreements, Airbnb will provide training to core teams of NERLP and NERCORMP, which will further train existing and potential hosts on homesharing, responsible hosting, hospitality standards, hygiene and basic amenities.

### **President of India inaugurates Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

President Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated Festival of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (FINE) in New Delhi. He also presented Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Awards.

- FINE is an initiative to recognise, respect, showcase, reward innovations and foster supportive ecosystem for innovators.
- The 5-day festival was organised by Rashtrapati Bhavan in association with Department of Science and Technology (DST) and National Innovation Foundation-India (NIFI).
- It was aimed to provide platform for innovators for building linkages with potential stakeholders whose support can improve their prospects in coming years to develop their ideas into implementable projects for the larger social good.

### **First India-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction inaugurated**

The Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, Dr. Rajiv Kumar inaugurated the First India-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction. The two-day workshop is being jointly organised by the Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Government of Japan.

- This workshop “marks the beginning of formal implementation of the initiatives agreed under the Memorandum of Cooperation signed between the two countries on Disaster Risk Reduction in September 2017.
- Japan and India could collaborate for the implementation of the Sendai Framework so as to contribute to Disaster Risk Reduction globally.
- Deliberations at the workshop will take the dialogue on India-Japan Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction further with particular focus of earthquake safety. The workshop will identify possible areas of cooperation of India with Japan in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **India hands over 18 high-end diesel locos to Myanmar**

India handed over the 18th diesel-electric locomotive to Myanmar, thereby completing the first project under the current Indian line of credit (LoC) to the eastern neighbour.

- These 18 locos are fitted with the microprocessor control based system.

- 1350 HP AC/DC main line diesel locomotives with a maximum speed of 100 KM PH have been customised for the Myanma Railways, built by Diesel Locomotive Works, Varanasi.
- They are also extremely fuel-efficient and equipped with the latest features. Most of these supplies in the railway sector have been carried out under Indian Line of Credit.

### **India, Hong Kong sign double tax agreement**

India and Hong Kong have signed agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.

- This agreement will stimulate flow of investment, technology and personnel from India to Hong Kong and vice versa, prevent double taxation and provide for exchange of information between two contracting parties.
- It will also improve transparency in tax matters and will help curb tax evasion and tax avoidance.
- It will provide investors advantage of lower withholding tax of 10% on interest or royalties provided they fulfil main purpose test which broadly checks that transaction is not entered specifically to avoid taxes.
- It will also provide for capital gains taxation of indirect transfers.
- It provides that gains from sale of shares of company deriving more than 50% of its value from property situated in country will be taxed in that country.
- This agreement will give protection against double taxation to over 1,500 Indian companies and businesses that have presence in Hong Kong as well as to Hong Kong-based companies providing services in India.

### **Global economic leaders meet in Buenos Aires at the G20**

The First Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the Argentine G20 presidency began on 19 March.

- Infrastructure financing, the future of work, and the technology behind cryptocurrencies will be on the agenda for G20 financial leaders at the First G20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of 2018, on 19-20 March, at the Buenos Aires Exhibition & Convention Centre (CEC).
- 22 finance ministers, 17 central bank governors and 10 leaders of international organizations will discuss key issues affecting the global economy, such as international financial architecture, the international tax system and financial regulation – all long-standing issues on the G20 agenda – as well as Argentina's chosen priorities for the 2018 agenda, which include the future of work and infrastructure for development.

- This is the first ministerial meeting of the Argentine G20 presidency, and a key event on the G20 agenda. It will be the first of five meetings between finance ministers and central bank governors this year.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **Trump bans US purchases of Venezuela's cryptocurrency Petro**

US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order banning the use of Venezuela's new crypto-currency, Petro.

- The executive order, signed by Trump, prohibits all US transactions in digital currencies that benefit the Venezuelan government.
- Trump described the February launch of the Petro cryptocurrency as an "attempt to circumvent US sanctions.
- The order bans US businesses and citizens, specifically "all transactions related to, provision of financing for, and other dealings in, by a United States person or within the United States, any digital currency, digital coin, or digital token".

### **GIC Re to start ops as Lloyd's syndicate**

Government-owned national reinsurer GIC Re has received approval from Lloyd's to start operations as its syndicate from April 2018. Lloyd's is a UK-based insurance marketplace where specialty underwriters participate as syndicate members and provide reinsurance to global buyers.

- GIC Re has created a new entity — 'GIC Syndicate 1947' — that will operate as a member of Lloyd's.
- This is the first Lloyd's syndicate to be backed solely by capital from an Indian reinsurance group.
- For the initial years, the syndicate will be run by Pembroke — which is a specialist provider of Lloyd's managing agency services. Pembroke is a Liberty Mutual company — an insurance firm.

### **Bank of America launches Erica chatbot**

Bank of America has begun to roll out Erica, a chatbot that can help you check balances, reminds you about bills and answer your bank-related questions.

- Erica is accessible through BofA's mobile app and was just launched as a pilot to customers in Rhode Island last week.
- The virtual assistant can help app users access balance information, transfer money between accounts, send money with Zelle and navigate the app in general.

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## Business

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### **F-16 jet production in India will be exclusive: Lockheed**

American aerospace and defence major Lockheed Martin has offered to relocate its entire production line to India.

- The plan to set up a F-16 jet production unit in India will be an "exclusive" proposition that will help the country in achieving its operational needs as well as the 'Make in India' initiative
- The F-16 gives the Indian industry a unique opportunity to be at the centre of the world's largest fighter aircraft ecosystem
- Lockheed is offering F-16 Block 70, which is the most advanced version of the aircraft.
- The F-16 continues to aerodynamically outperform its competitors and advanced technologies are continually integrated into the F-16. Block 70 mission systems are completely new and leverage technologies from the F-35.

### **Bhel commissions 1st unit of Kishanganga hydro project in J&K**

State-run power equipment maker Bhel has commissioned first unit of 110 MW of the Kishanganga hydro-electric project (HEP) of NHPC in Jammu and Kashmir.

- Located on the river Kishanganga, a tributary of the Jhelum in Bandipora district, all the three units of the 340 MW project will generate 1,350 million units (MU) of clean electricity annually.
- The other two units are also in advanced stages of commissioning.
- In J&K, Bhel has so far commissioned 31 Hydro sets with a cumulative capacity of 1,257 MW.
- It is executing hydroelectric projects of more than 2,900 MW in the country and 2,940 MW in Bhutan which are at various stages of implementation.

### **IRCTC ties up with Ola**

In an attempt to ease commuting for railways travellers, public sector undertaking Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) announced its partnership with cab-hailing app, Ola.

- This tie-up will allow commuters to book an Ola taxi on the IRCTC app.
- This partnership, a six-month pilot project, will give railway travellers access to Ola booking services through the IRCTC Rail Connect App and also on its website, as mentioned in a statement by IRCTC.
- Commuters will have access to Ola's Micro, Mini, Auto and Share options, but will not be able to avail any of the discounts offered by the company.
- Customers will be able to book cabs up to seven days in advance or even upon reaching the railway station.
- There will be Ola's self-serving kiosks at IRCTC outlets as well from where commuters can book their cabs.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik given additional charge as Governor of Odisha**

President Ram Nath Kovind has given Bihar Governor Satya Pal Malik (72) additional charge of Odisha until regular arrangements are made.

- He was given additional charge after incumbent governor S C Jamir completed his five-year tenure.
- The five-time Chief Minister of Nagaland S C Jamir had taken over as Odisha governor in March 2013 after serving as governor of Goa and Maharashtra.
- He had also been given additional charge of Gujarat in 2009.

### **Reliance ARC appoints Ravindra Rao as CEO**

Reliance Asset Reconstruction Co (ARC), part of Reliance Capital, has appointed Ravindra Rao as its new Chief Executive Officer.

- Rao has taken over as CEO from Asokan Arumugam, who was leading Reliance ARC for the last four years.
- Rao has joined Reliance ARC from Fullerton India where he worked in different roles for over six years, with his last assignment being the CEO of the home finance subsidiary.



### **Shri Atul M. Gotsurve appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea**

Former Regional Passport Officer (RPO) of Pune Atul M Gotsurve has been appointed as Indian ambassador to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

- He is currently posted as Director in Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) New Delhi.
- In June, 2015 he was conferred the special recognition award for setting high standards in passport delivery to citizens by Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj.

### **Fullerton India Home finance appoints Rakesh Makkar as CEO**

Fullerton India Home finance, the company which operates under the brand name Grihashakti has appointed Rakesh Makkar as its chief executive officer.

- Makkar will be responsible for building the brand, scaling up business volumes and driving the corporate strategy for the firm.
- Rakesh has been instrumental in driving the robust growth at Fullerton India over the past four years.

### **Sony India appoints its first Indian MD, Sunil Nayyar**

For the first time, Sony India has appointed an Indian as its Managing Director (MD). Sony India announced that Sunil Nayyar will replace Kenichiro Hibi, who will move to head the Brazil operations for the Japanese electronics giant.

- Nayyar joined Sony in 1995 as part of Sony Gulf's sales team in charge of North and East Africa, Russia, Lebanon, Syria and other GCC countries.
- As of now, Nayyar is the head of Retail Experience in Sony North America, before which he was Sales Head from 2006 to 2015.

### **David Wright joins BSE board as public interest director**

Leading stock exchange BSE has appointed David Wright as a public interest director on its board.

- Wright, who worked with the European Commission for more than three decades, also served as Secretary General of the International Organisation of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) from March 2012-March 2016.



### **Aamir Khan replaces Ranveer Singh as Vivo India's brand ambassador**

Chinese smartphone maker Vivo announced the appointment of Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan as its brand ambassador for India, replacing actor Ranveer Singh who had been associated with the company for the past two years.

- Aamir has been signed for future brand and product communication initiatives of Vivo India.
- Aamir will soon be seen in a full-fledged marketing campaign around the upcoming products and a new TV commercial.

### **Actress Katrina Kaif to be the Voice of Girl Child Education in India**

Actress Katrina Kaif has joined the international award-winning non-profit organization, Educate Girls as their ambassador.

- Through her association with Educate Girls, she attempts to bring renewed focus to girl child education and gender equality.
- In partnership with the government, Educate Girls has been bridging the gender gap in education across 12,000 villages, working with over 21,000 schools in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh over the last ten years.

### **Wang Yi promoted as State Councillor; China's foreign policy shifts gears**

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has been elevated to the post of State Councilor, signaling a revamp of China's foreign policy establishment, which is likely to influence New Delhi-Beijing ties.

- Mr. Wang will continue to retain the post of Foreign Minister.
- Mr. Wang's new assignment was cleared by lawmakers who had assembled for an annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's parliament.

### **China forms new economic team as President Xi kicks off second term**

China elevated a key confidante of President Xi Jinping to one of the top positions in government as Beijing cracks down on riskier financing and a debt build-up that may pose systemic risks to the world's second-largest economy.

- The endorsement of Liu He as a vice premier by the country's largely rubber-stamp parliament also comes as the United States presses China to cut its trade surplus by \$100 billion.

- Yi is a vice governor of PBOC and a protege of outgoing chief Zhou Xiaochuan. His appointment is seen as pointing to continuity in monetary policy even as one of the world's biggest central banks is gaining considerable new regulatory powers.

### **Nanda Bahadur Pun re-elected Nepal vice president**

Nanda Bahadur Pun was sworn in as Nepal's vice president for his second term in office, a day after he was re-elected to the post unopposed.

- Shasi Kala Dahal of CPN-Maoist Centre was elected vice-chairperson of the national assembly. She was elected to the post defeating Nepali Congress candidate Brinda Devi Ale.

### **Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai elected as chairman of the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat**

Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai was elected chairman of the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, replacing Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

- Geelani held the post for 15 years since the party was formed following a split in the Hurriyat Conference in 2003.
- Sehrai was elected chairman of the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat at a meeting of its executive committee after Geelani decided to step down.
- Geelani will, however, continue to head the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference of which Tehreek-e-Hurriyat is a constituent.

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## **Science & Technology**

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### **Govt launches 'Delhi's Date with Democracy' app**

The Delhi government launched a mobile application to give a platform to aspiring singers and dancers in the Capital.

- An initiative of the Department of Art, Culture and Languages, the 'Delhi's Date with Democracy' app will scout for performers and provide them an opportunity to showcase their talent on a big stage.
- The app would be used to help select candidates online first and then competitions would be held at various venues, from ward-level to the grand finale at the city level.

- There is no age limit and interested candidates can start sending their entries in both categories -- singing and dancing, from tomorrow onwards. The whole process would take about one month or so.
- Sahitya Kala Parishad and Delhi Kalyan Samiti have collaborated with the government for this initiative

### **Yogi Adityanath launches anti-graft portal**

Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath launched an anti-graft portal as his government completed its first year in office.

- The chief minister also declared that his government will soon hire four lakh people in various government departments.
- The portal was launched at the Lok Bhawan.
- Through this portal any official who is involved in corruption or is encouraging it at any level will not be spared.
- Effective action will be taken if a video or any other evidence is uploaded on the portal. This will deliver a lethal blow against the corrupt elements
- He also announced four lakh jobs in as many as 64 departments ranging from police constables to sub-inspectors, block development officers and revenue officials.

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## **Sports**

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### **Team USA broke records at Winter Paralympics**

The Paralympics ran from Mar. 9 to Mar. 18, and brought Team USA not only a whopping 36 medals, but also saw them breaking several records and marking a number of historic firsts for the team.

- Team USA won 43 medals. Their medal count in PyeongChang is 36, the second-highest total ever, following Salt Lake City and the 1994 games in Lillehammer, Norway, where Team USA also won 43 medals.
- The Team USA sled hockey team won their third gold medal in a row. And with that win, they became the first sled hockey team to ever win three consecutive gold medals at the Paralympics. They won thanks to the help of a goal scored in the final minute of the game, scored by Declan Farmer.
- Eighteen military veterans were a part of Team USA. They brought home nine medals from the Games.

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# Obituary

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## **Veteran Hindi poet Kedarnath Singh passes away**

Renowned Hindi poet and critic Kedarnath Singh passed away on March 19.

- A former professor and chairperson at the Department of Hindi Language at the Centre for Indian Languages at Jawaharlal Nehru University, Prof. Singh was a recipient of the Jnanapeeth award in 2013.
- He won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1989 for his poetry collection Akaal Mein Saras.

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# Important Days

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## **International Day of Happiness - 20 March**

March 20 has been established as the annual International Day of Happiness and all 193 United Nations member states have adopted a resolution calling for happiness to be given greater priority.

- This campaign is a global celebration to mark the United Nations International Day of Happiness. It is coordinated by Action for Happiness, a non-profit movement of people from 160 countries, supported by a partnership of like-minded organisations.
- In 2012 the first ever UN conference on Happiness took place and the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution which decreed that the International Day of Happiness would be observed every year on 20 March. It was celebrated for the first time in 2013.
- The United Nations has celebrated the International Day of Happiness as a way to recognise the importance of happiness in the lives of people around the world