

# National Current Affairs

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## **Cabinet approves Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission**

The Union Cabinet has approved launch of Ayushman Bharat-National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM).

- The scheme will integrate two on-going centrally sponsored schemes viz. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).
- AB-NHPM aims to target over 10 crore families belonging to poor and vulnerable population based on Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC) database.
- It will cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year, taking care of almost all secondary care and tertiary care procedures. There will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme.
- Benefit cover: It includes pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- Cashless benefits: The scheme allows the beneficiary to take cashless benefits from any public or private empanelled hospitals across the country.
- The scheme will work in partnership with NITI Aayog to operationalise a robust, modular and interoperable IT platform which will involve a paperless and cashless transaction.

## **Cabinet extends term of commission on sub-categorisation of OBCs**

The Union Cabinet has approved second and final extension of term of Commission constituted to examine issue of Sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes in Central List for period of twelve weeks upto June, 2018.

- The Commission was constituted with approval of President under article 340 of Constitution in October, 2017. It is headed by Justice (Retd.) G. Rohini.
- The commission was tasked to examine extent of inequitable distribution of benefits of reservation among castes included in broad category of OBCs, specially with reference to OBCs included in the Central list.
- It was also tasked to take up exercise of identifying respective castes/sub-castes/communities synonyms in Central List of OBCs and classify them into their respective sub-categories.
- Its mandate was to work out mechanism, norms, criteria and parameters, in scientific approach, for sub-categorization within such OBCs.

## **Cabinet approves North-East Industrial Development Scheme 2017**

The Union Cabinet has approved North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), 2017 to promote employment in North Eastern Region states including Sikkim. NEIDS is combination of the incentives covered under the earlier two government schemes with a much larger outlay. It will have financial outlay of Rs. 3000 crores upto March, 2020.

- Purpose of NEIDS 2017:
  - Promote industrialization: It will promote industrialization in North Eastern Region (NER) states including Sikkim and will boost income generation and employment.
  - Promote employment: For this, government is incentivizing primarily MSME Sector through this scheme. It is also providing specific incentive through scheme to generate employment.
  - Benefits to industrial units: It will provide various incentives and benefits to all eligible industrial units. The overall cap for benefits under all components of incentives will be of Rs. 200 crores per unit.

#### **Cabinet approves amendments in Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016**

The Union Cabinet has approved proposal for moving official amendments in Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016.

- Once the Bill is enacted by Parliament, National Surrogacy Board (NSB) will be constituted at central level.
- The States/UTs will constitute State Surrogacy Boards (SSBs) and State Appropriate Authorities within 3 months of notification by Central Government.
- The proposed law will regulate surrogacy services in country and rein unethical practices in surrogacy.
- It will prevent commercialization of surrogacy and prohibit potential exploitation of surrogate mothers and children born through surrogacy.
- It will prohibit commercial surrogacy including sale and purchase of human embryo and gametes.
- It will allow ethical surrogacy to needy infertile couples on fulfillment of certain conditions and for specific purposes.
- It will protect rights of surrogate mother and children born out of surrogacy will be protected.

#### **Cabinet approves opening of 18 new missions in Africa by 2021**

The Union Cabinet has approved opening of 18 new Indian Missions in Africa over four year period from 2018-2021.

- Decision in this regard was taken at the Union Cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.

- The decision will enhance India's diplomatic outreach and increase its footprints in resource-rich African continent.
- It will allow India to engage with Indian diaspora in African countries.
- It is also considered as step towards implementing vision of enhanced co-operation and engagement with Africa.
- It will further enhance cooperation to implement commitments of India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III).

### **Parivara and Talawara: Cabinet approves inclusion of communities ST list in Karnataka**

The Union Cabinet has given its in principle approval for inclusion of communities, namely 'Parivara and Talawara' as synonym of Nayaka at in the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Karnataka.

- This approval fulfils long term demand of these communities for granting ST status in Karnataka.
- With this inclusion, persons belonging to these communities will be eligible to get ST certificate from Karnataka. They will also be eligible for all benefits meant for ST in state.

### **Cabinet approves revision of DTAA between India and Qatar**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for revision existing Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Qatar.

- The purpose of revision is for avoidance of double taxation and for prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income.
- The existing DTAA between India and Qatar was signed in April 1999 and came into force in January, 2000.
- Features of Revised DTAA:
  - It updates provisions for exchange of information to latest standard. It includes Limitation of Benefits (LOB) provision to prevent treaty shopping and aligns other provisions with India's recent treaties.
  - It meets minimum standards on treaty abuse under Action 6 and Mutual Agreement Procedure under Action 14 of G-20 OECD Base Erosion & Profit Shifting (BEPS) Project to which India is participating.

### **CCEA allows ITI Limited's FPO**

The central government allowed defence communication major ITI Limited to go in for a "prospectus based" Further Public Offer (FPO) to raise working capital and to reduce its debt obligations.

- The development follows Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs' approval for a Department of Telecommunication's proposal to allow ITI Limited to go in for the FPO.
- Besides, the CCEA's move will allow ITI Limited to meet Sebi's requirement of minimum 25 per cent public shareholding.
- According to the CCEA, the FPO will provide "the much needed working capital to the company and help it to timely execute the orders that it has in hand and improve its margins".
- This, in turn, will help in protecting the current employment and generating more job opportunities in the company particularly in the field of new telecom technologies

### **Integrated scheme for development of silk industry approved**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved the Integrated Scheme for Development of Silk Industry.

- According to the CCEA, a total allocation of Rs 2,161.68 crore has been approved for the implementation of the scheme for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- The scheme is expected to increase the silk production from the level of 30,348 MTs during 2016-17 to 38,500 MTs by end of 2019-20.
- The core objective of the scheme is to improve the productivity and quality of silk through R&D intervention.
- The focus of R&D intervention is to promote improved cross-breed silk, so that Bivoltine silk production in India enhances to such a level that raw silk imports become nil by 2022 thereby making India self-sufficient in silk."
- Besides, the approved proposal includes provision for brand promotion of Indian silk through quality certification by "Silk Mark".

### **State-run TCIL to set up US arm for Google project**

The Cabinet approved setting up of a US subsidiary of the state-run telecom consultancy company TCIL for providing techno-commercial and logistic support for three Google projects for America.

- The newly formed subsidiary is expected to earn profit of around 10% in the initial years with turnover of \$10 million, and the number may rise depending upon the volume of work.

- This will also help the company in business expansion and increasing turnover and profits, ultimately resulting in increased dividend to the government
- Total investment of \$5 million will be made by TCIL in the form of equity from its internal resources. TCIL may also be required to provide counter guarantees of around \$5 million for getting finances in US for expansion of business

### **CBDT invites suggestions for new Direct Tax Law**

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has invited suggestions from general public for new Direct Tax Law.

- A task force has been constituted to review the Income-tax Act, 1961 and to draft a new Direct Tax Law in consonance with the economic needs of the country.
- Stakeholders and general public can give suggestions and feedback in the format provided on the departmental website [www.incometaxindia.gov.in](http://www.incometaxindia.gov.in).

### **MP inks MoU with Bharat Financial for animal healthcare plan**

The Madhya Pradesh Animal Husbandry Department has signed an MoU with Bharat Financial Inclusion Ltd (BFIL) to roll out an animal healthcare programme.

- The programme, 'Pashu Dhan Sanjeevani - 1962' is said to be the first of its kind initiative by any state government in the country.
- Under the programme, animal owners can avail a range of veterinary services by dialling a toll-free helpline number 1962, a release issued on the occasion said.
- Veterinary services, including emergency treatment, on -demand artificial insemination, vaccination and deworming will be provided at the doorstep of farmers.
- The programme will help farmers who earlier faced difficulty in bringing cattle to health centres.
- The IT ecosystem for the initiative has been developed by BFIL.
- The service delivery process will be monitored through the 'Bharat Sanjeevani' software and a mobile app specially developed for doctors, veterinary field officers and artificial insemination technicians

### **Jackfruit declared as Kerala's official fruit**

The Kerala government declared jackfruit as its official fruit.

- The aim is to promote 'Kerala jackfruit' as a brand in markets across the country and abroad, showcasing its organic and nutritious qualities

- This would also help in giving in the fruit's production and sale, besides increasing its value-added products. Every year around 32 crore jackfruit is produced in the state, of which 30% gets wasted. A total revenue of Rs15,000 crore is expected through sale of jackfruit and its allied products through branding of the fruit
- The agricultural office in Ambalavayil in Wayanad will be used as a research station for jackfruit. Elephant is the state animal of Kerala, while 'great hornbill' the bird and 'kanikkonna' the official flower. The state had recently declared pearl spot, popularly known as 'karimeen', as its official fish.

### **Three day International Yoga Fest begins in Delhi.**

A three-day International Yoga Fest was inaugurated by Union minister Jitendra Singh as a curtain raiser for the International Yoga Day (IYD) to be held on June 21.

- Around 5,000 delegates hailing from 16 countries and more than 40 yoga institutions and universities are expected to participate in the fest.
- Further, the ministry has shortlisted four cities -- Jaipur, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Mysore -- for holding the main function of International Yoga Day this year.
- These four names will now be sent to the PMO which will select one city and then finalise the venue of the main event.
- The international yoga fest will be followed by 10 state-level fests to be held in different parts of the country.
- Also, 100 yoga teachers have been deployed in Indian missions abroad and delegates from more than 16 countries will participate in the event.
- The aim is to build an atmosphere of yoga leading up to the main event and sensitise the masses about the grand function on June 21.

### **Gujarat village gets free WiFi service**

Taking a step forward in making India digitalize, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) launched Free Wi-Fi Facility in a village of Gujarat under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana. The facility was launched by State Communications Minister Manoj Sinha.

- At least 6000 citizens of Udwada Village in Valsad District of Gujarat is all set to use the internet as BSNL launched Free Wi-Fi Facility under Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana adopted by Textiles Minister Smriti Irani. Two Hotspots with 17 Access point have been installed at Udwada village.
- BSNL is also deploying 35,000 Wi-Fi Hotspots on PAN India basis to improve the Broadband penetration with 2G/3G mobile data Wi-Fi offload solution. Under this project till date more than 7700 Wi-Fi hotspots have been installed
- 1 lakh gram panchayats have been connected to WiFi which has ended the digital divide in the country.

### **Cabinet approves closure of India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians**

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for closure of India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI).

- The purpose of closure is to enhance synergies in channelizing contributions of Indian diaspora to Government's flagship programmes such as National Mission for clean Ganga and Swachh Bharat Mission.
- It also seeks to enhance synergies, improve efficiencies and avoid duplication of work.
- IDF-OI was set up by Central Government in 2008 as an autonomous not-for-profit Trust.
- Its mandate was to facilitate Overseas Indian philanthropy into social and development projects in India.

### **Telugu made compulsory up to Class X in all schools**

The State government has resolved to make Telugu compulsory in government and private educational institutions up to X standard from the next academic year.

- Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has instructed the officials to initiate measures for introducing Telugu as a compulsory subject from 2018-19.
- The Government has decided to enact legislation to this effect.
- The Chief Minister asked the Telugu Sahitya Academy and the Telugu University to prepare class-wise syllabus for teaching Telugu. He wanted the officials to take steps to ensure that students were taught about the useful things through mother tongue.
- In addition to protecting the Telugu language, the course material should comprise content that inculcated patriotism and ethical values among children.
- The government was firm on taking positive measures for the future of children who study Telugu as a subject. He wanted the Education department to take steps to ensure that at least one Telugu pundit was appointed in all private schools.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **New Delhi ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> globally as top destination for 2018**

New Delhi has been ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> in the world and eighth in Asia in the top destination for 2018, Travellers' Choice awards for Destinations by TripAdvisor.

- A city famous for mouth-watering food, New Delhi the capital of India was ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> this year offering alluring Mughal minarets, magnificent colonial-era buildings and flourishing culture.
- Paris in France topped the list of Travellers' Choice awards for Destinations followed by London (UK), Rome (Italy), Bali (Indonesia), Crete (Greece).
- Award winners were determined using an algorithm based on the quantity and quality of reviews and ratings for hotels, restaurants and attractions in destinations worldwide, gathered over a 12-month period, as well as traveller booking interest on TripAdvisor.
- The awards honour 402 outstanding destinations in 42 lists across the globe.
- In the Asia list, three Indian cities have featured with New Delhi at eighth position, followed by Goa at ninth and Jaipur (Rajasthan) at number 16 position.
- Goa with its picturesque beaches, pristine waters, spectacular landscapes and a happening nightlife continue to fascinate travellers around the globe, while 'Pink City' Jaipur attracts people with culture, cuisine and unmatched architecture.
- Bali in Indonesia topped the Asia list followed by Phuket in Thailand, Hanoi (Vietnam), Siem Reap (Siem Reap Province), Tokyo (Japan), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Hong Kong.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **BoI allowed to close Yangon representative office**

Bank of India has been allowed to terminate/close its Yangon representative office with effect from January 19, 2018 by Myanmar's Ministry of Planning and Finance, Directorate of Investment and Company Administration.

- Following BoI's move, there are now only two Indian financial entities -- United Bank of India and Export-Import Bank of India – with representative offices in Yangon. State Bank of India has a full-fledged branch there.
- As part of its cost-cutting exercise, BoI is planning to rationalise domestic and foreign branches and 9 foreign branches/subsidiaries/representative offices have been identified for closure.
- As per BoI's 2016-17 annual report, it had 29 branches, 4 representative offices, 5 subsidiaries and 1 associate/joint venture spread across 22 countries of all-time zones. Contribution of foreign operations in the bank's global business mix was 24 per cent.

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# Business

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## **BHEL inks tech pact with Korea-based HLB Power**

State-run power equipment maker BHEL on Wednesday said it has entered into a technology collaboration agreement (TCA) with HLB Power, Republic of Korea.

- The collaboration is for in-house design and manufacture of large size gates and dampers for use in coal fired power plants, to be commissioned or retrofitted with high capacity emission control equipment.
- BHEL has been supplying conventional gates and dampers, manufactured at its boiler auxiliaries plant in Ranipet, for over three decades.
- This TCA will help in establishing the capability for in-house design, manufacture and testing of very large size gates and dampers.

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# Awards & Recognition

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## **Canadian mathematician Robert Langlands wins Abel Prize for 2018**

Canadian mathematician Robert Langlands has been named as the winner of the Abel Prize for 2018 "for his visionary programme connecting representation theory to number theory

- The 81-year-old mathematician would receive the financial award of six million Norwegian kroner (\$776,000) from Norway's King Harald V at an award ceremony in Oslo on May 22.
- The Abel prize has been awarded annually since 2003 to one or more outstanding mathematicians in memory of the Norwegian mathematics genius Niels Henrik Abel.

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# Appointments & Resigns

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## **Htin Kyaw, Myanmar president and Aung San Suu Kyi confidante, resigns**

The president of Myanmar, Htin Kyaw, has stepped down, saying he is "taking a rest" following health issues.

- Htin Kyaw was an important ally in the government for state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, who is constitutionally barred from the presidency, and the pair were childhood friends.
- Htin Kyaw was the first Myanmar president since the 1962 coup to have no connections to the military.

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## Science & Technology

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### China to build 'world's fastest' wind tunnel

China has announced it is building the world's fastest wind tunnel to develop a new generation of super-fast airplanes, but it could also be used for hypersonic missile technology.

- Wind tunnels test how air will pass over a solid object, helping designers improve aerodynamics or reduce stress points for objects as they reach high speeds.
- The 265-meter-long tunnel can be used to test hypersonic aircraft that can travel at speeds of up to Mach 25 (30,625 kph), 25 times the speed of sound.
- The new tunnel will aid the engineering application of hypersonic technology by duplicating the environment of extreme hypersonic flights. Once issues are discovered during these ground tests, they will be ironed out before test flights begin.

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## Important Days

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### 22 March: World Water Day (WWD)

The World Water Day (WWD) is observed every year on 22 March to spread message of preservation and rational consumption of water.

- The day puts emphasis on the importance of freshwater and to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.
- It focuses attention on importance of universal access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in developing countries.
- The theme this year is 'Nature for Water'. It explores how nature can be used to overcome the water challenges of the 21st century.
- The first World Water Day was celebrated on 22 March 1993.