

# National Current Affairs

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## **UIDAI unveils Virtual ID in beta form**

The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has unveiled the beta version of the much-awaited 'Virtual ID', and promised that service providers will "soon" start accepting the same in lieu of Aadhaar number.

- In the beta form, users can generate their Virtual ID (VID) and use it to update address in Aadhaar online for the time being.
- The new feature will allow Aadhaar holders to quote their VID number without actually disclosing the 12 -digit Aadhaar number for authentication or verification purposes.
- The VID, which is a random 16-digit number mapped to a person's Aadhaar number, together with biometrics of the user would give any authorised agency like a mobile company, limited details such as name, address and photograph, which are enough for any verification.
- The VID effectively gives the users the option of not sharing Aadhaar number at the time of authentication.
- The UIDAI had stated that it will be compulsory for all agencies that undertake authentication to accept the VID from their users from June 1, 2018.

## **Suresh Prabhu launches Digital Initiative for Ease of Export**

Union Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Minister, Suresh Prabhu launched digital initiatives by Export Inspection Council (EIC) for ease of export at New Delhi.

- EIC is the official export certification body of Government of India and has launched this flagship project of Digital India Initiative to keep pace with changing dynamics of the world.
- In order to continue the vision for credible inspection and certification and to strengthen the confidence on Indian produce, three portals have been developed to reduce transaction time and cost in a transparent manner.
- The portals not only provide an opportunity for ease of export but also plays an important role in the Go Green initiative by reducing paper usage and saving millions trees.
- To provide fast, efficient and transparent services for ease of doing business in all sectors the complete export food chain has been integrated in this digital platform.

- Primary production, chain catch, aquaculture pond, dairy farms and apiaries are all linked. Processing units, testing laboratories, official controls and exports have complete traceability.

### **CBDT signs 14 unilateral, 2 bilateral APAs in March**

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has signed 14 unilateral advance pricing agreements (APAs) with Indian taxpayers in March as it looks to reduce litigation by providing certainty in transfer pricing.

- Besides, it has signed two bilateral APAs with the US during the month, a CBDT statement said.
- With the signing of these agreements, the total number of APAs entered into by CBDT has gone up to 219.  
This includes 199 unilateral APAs and 20 bilateral APAs," it said.
- A total of 67 APAs (9 bilateral and 58 unilateral) have been signed in 2017-18.
- The 16 APAs during March pertain to sectors like telecom, IT, automobile, pharmaceutical, beverage, banking and insurance.
- The international transactions covered in these agreements include payment of royalty fee, provisions of business support services, marketing support services, engineering design services, engineering support services, among others.

### **120 castes/communities notified in Central OBC list in last 3 years: Government**

Central Government has notified inclusion of 120 castes/communities, their synonyms and sub-castes in the Central List of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) for different States/Union Territories in the last three years. It was informed by Ministry of State for Social Justice and Empowerment in written reply in Loksabha.

- The castes and communities, their synonyms and sub-castes were notified on basis of advice tendered by National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) under Section 9(1) of NCBC Act, 1993.
- The NCBC determines inclusion of castes/communities in the Central List of OBCs on the basis of norms established w.r.t. social, educational, economic, representation in central services and miscellaneous parameters.
- The castes and communities listed in the Central OBC list get reservations in appointments in government jobs and admissions into government institutions.

### **India's manufacturing sector growth falls to five-month low in March 2018: PMI**

According to monthly survey Nikkei India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI), India's manufacturing sector activity fell to five-month low in March 2018.

- It fell from 52.1 in February 2018 to five-month low of 51.0 in March 2018 indicating slowest improvement in operating conditions recorded by survey since October 2017.
- PMI is an indicator of business activity-both in the manufacturing and services sectors.
- It is a survey-based measure that asks respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from month before.

### **PM announces ex-gratia to the kin of those killed in Iraq**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia payment of Rs 10 lakh each to the next of the kin of 39 Indians who were killed in Iraq,

- Thirty-nine of the 40 Indian labourers were killed by terror group ISIS, while one of them managed to escape posing as a Muslim from Bangladesh.
- Out of the 39 killed, 27 hailed from Punjab, four from Himachal Pradesh, six from Bihar and two from West Bengal.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman heads to Moscow**

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman embarked on her first visit to Russia on April 3, to attend the seventh Moscow Conference on International Security.

- Over her three day tour, Sitharaman is expected to lead talks over the S-400 Triumph deal for India, a crucial deal for defence preparedness.
- Sitharaman is also slated to meet with Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, and others.
- Sitharaman's Moscow visit is likely to end in a Rs 40,000 crore bid.
- The deal has been purported to be essential in aiding India improve its border security against Pakistani and Chinese insurgents, and comes at a crucial time, with the Indian armed forces allegedly facing an acute shortage in fighter squadrons.

### **Akkuyu: Turkey's first nuclear reactor site**

The Turkish Atomic Energy Authority (TAEK) awarded a construction licence for Akkuyu NPP, Turkey's first nuclear power plant, which is being built in Mersin province, in southern Turkey.

- The Akkuyu NPP will be built by Russian State Nuclear Energy Agency Rosatom and will compose of four units each with a capacity of 1,200 megawatts (MW).
- The plant, with a total investment cost of about \$20bn, will have a working life of 8,000 hours a year.
- The USD20 billion project to build the four-unit, 4800 MWe plant is part of Erdogan's '2023 Vision' marking 100 years since the founding of modern Turkey and is intended to reduce the country's dependence on energy imports.
- The first unit is scheduled to start operations that year, with the other three units following by 2025.
- The plant is expected to meet about 10% of Turkey's electricity needs.

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## Banking & Finance

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### MoU between Indian Army and HDFC Bank

A Memorandum of Undertaking (MoU) was signed between the Indian Army and HDFC Bank on the Defence Salary Package on 03 Apr 2018. The first MoU between HDFC Bank and the Indian Army was signed in 2011 and was renewed on 13 Mar 2015.

- The current MoU is tailor made to suit the requirements of serving soldiers, pensioners and families.
- Under the current MoU apart from other benefits the Army personnel will get free personal accident death cover and free permanent disability cover of Rs 30 lakhs, free educational cover of upto Rs 1 Lakh per year for four years for education of dependent child in case of accidental death of defence personnel and 100% processing fees waived for Car Loans and Personal Loans.

### SEBI eases algorithm trade rules in commodity exchanges

The Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has relaxed algorithm trading norms at commodity derivatives exchanges.

- The market regulator has raised limit of trading using algorithm trading process up to 100 orders per second by user from the existing limit of 20 orders per second.
- The decision was taken after receiving representations from exchanges along with views of SEBI's subcommittee- Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee.

- SEBI has asked exchanges to ensure that limit provided by it is subject to its ability to handle load.
- Besides, it also has decided to do away with requirement of empanelment of system auditors by the exchanges for system audit of algorithmic trading.

### **Jio Payments Bank begins its operations**

Jio Payments Bank Limited has commenced operations as a payments bank with effect from April 3, 2018.

- Reliance Industries Ltd was one of the 11 applicants which were issued in-principle approval for setting up a payments bank in August 2015.
- Jio Payments Bank is a joint venture between Reliance Industries and the country's biggest lender, State Bank of India. While Jio has a 70 per cent in the JV, SBI has the remaining 30 per cent.
- Payments banks are being promoted by the Reserve Bank to further financial inclusion by giving services such as small savings accounts, payment or remittance services to migrant labour workforce, low income households, small businesses and unorganised sector entities as well as other users.

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## **Business**

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### **SoftBank, China's GCL join hands for \$930-m India solar venture**

Betting big on India's renewable energy space, Japan's SoftBank Group has signed an agreement with China's Golden Concord Group Ltd (GCL) to set up a joint venture firm with a \$930-million investment.

- The JV firm will manufacture and sell solar equipment in India.
- GCL will hold a 40 per cent stake in the JV, while the remaining will be held by SoftBank.
- The firm, which intends to work on the photovoltaic (PV) technology that is used in solar panels, will manufacture PV ingots, wafers, batteries and component, GCL said in a regulatory filing in China.
- The JV firm will have a production capacity of 4 GW, which will be implemented in two phases.

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# Appointments & Resigns

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## **Ajay Desai appointed as the COO of Rubique**

Rubique, a Mumbai- based online credit marketplace, has appointed Ajay Desai as its chief operating officer.

- With this appointment, Desai who was formerly with Yes Bank as a chief financial inclusion officer, could help Rubique expand its operations in technology, SME lending and financial inclusion.
- The company intends to reach unexplored market segments and address the credit gap in rural areas.

## **SBI Life Insurance appoints Sanjeev Nautiyal as new MD & CEO**

SBI Life Insurance Company Limited appointed Sanjeev Nautiyal as its new MD and CEO.

- Nautiyal replaces Arijit Basu, who takes over a key role in the State Bank of India Group.
- With a career spanning over 32 years, he held various important roles and responsibilities in fields like credit, human resources, and international banking.

## **Subrata Bhattacharjee appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Serbia**

- Subrata Bhattacharjee, currently Joint Secretary in Ministry of External Affairs, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Serbia.

## **Aashish Kapoor Replaces Venkatesh Prasad in BCCI Jr Selection Panel**

Former India player Aashish Kapoor has been named as a replacement of Venkatesh Prasad in the three-member All-India Junior Selection Committee of the BCCI.

- Kapoor was a part of the original five-member panel selected in 2016 but was later kept out as BCCI pruned it to three as per Lodha panel diktat.
- A former off-spinner, Kapoor played four Tests and 17 ODIs for India, including the 1996 ICC World Cup. He has also played 128 first-class games and 93 List A matches.

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# Awards & Recognition

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## **NIRF India Rankings 2018**

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru was adjudged the overall best institution in the country followed by Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Banaras Hindu University (BHU) by the Human Resource Development Ministry's national ranking framework (NIRF) 2018 or NIRF-3 released by Ministry of Human Resource Development.

- This year it is third edition NIRF survey and was released as part of India Rankings 2018 for the Educational Institutions.
- The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) has been adjudged the best engineering college and the Indian Institute of Management-Ahmedabad (IIM-A) the best management institution.
- The premier healthcare institute All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) Delhi was ranked number one institute under medical college category.
- Delhi University's Miranda House was the best college and NLSIU-Bengaluru the best law school in the country.
- This year for the first time medical and dental colleges were also ranked by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF). Apart from the medical, NIRF has also added Architecture and Law this year.

## **Paddler Sathiyam Gnansekaran jumps three places to become World No. 46**

The in-form Sathiyam Gnansekaran reached his career-best ranking of 46 while veteran Achanta Sharath Kamal climbed 22 places to be at 48 in the latest International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) rankings.

- Sathiyam jumped three places to become World No. 46 as he continued to be the country's top singles player. The 25-year-old had won gold in the ITTF Challenge - Spanish Open in November last before reaching the pre-quarterfinals of the Qatar Open.
- Other Indian paddlers in the Top-100 are Soumyajit Ghosh (70), Harmeet Desai (74), Anthony Amalraj (83) and Sanil Shetty (84).
- As for the women, Manika Batra continued to top the world chart among Indians, rising eight places to 58, while Mouma Das dropped 17 places to settle at 88.

## **Study Khazana for best emerging E-Portal From North India**



Study Khazana, an e-portal founded by CA Sana Baqai has been awarded "For best emerging online Education Portal in North India". The Award was given by Veteran actress Sharmila Tagore at 'World Education Summit and Award 2018 at New Delhi'.

- Study Khazana is an attempt to bring education-deprived aspirants under one portal and contribute towards the journey of transforming education.
- Recently, Study Khazana, introduced a campaign, Beti Hai Khushiyon ka Khazana that will help girls from rural backgrounds build a future, independently.
- As part of the campaign, these young girls will be provided with vocational language training for a nominal fee.
- The project utilises a three-pronged approach to engage marginalised girls, teachers, and community also introduced members to come together in support of educating the girl child.

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## Environment

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### **Fimbristylis agasthyamalaensis: New plant species discovered in Western Ghats**

Researchers have discovered new grass-like plant species named *Fimbristylis agasthyamalaensis* in Ponmudi hills within the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve in the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot. It has been classified as sedge, the grass-like plant and has been named after the locality from which it was found.

- The new species of plant belongs to the Cyperaceae family.
- Its flowering and fruiting were observed from October to March.
- In India, Cyperaceae genus is represented by 122 species, of which 87 are reported from the Western Ghats.
- Many of the known Cyperaceae species are medicinal plants or used as fodder.

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## Science & Technology

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### **ASPIRE: NASA successfully tests supersonic Mars landing parachute**

NASA has successfully conducted Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE) to test supersonic parachute that will help its space exploration missions to land on Mars.



- The parachute was launched aboard of sounding rocket from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in US. It was tested in sky, mimicking conditions of entering red planet.
- The test of ASPIRE was meant to mimic conditions that spacecraft will experience during red planet entry, descent and landing (EDL). Shortly after liftoff, ASPIRE splashed down into Atlantic Ocean, from where it was retrieved by boat.
- Analysis of recovered parachute, and data gathered by cameras and other instruments will help researcher's complete design of the chute for NASA's 2020 Mars rover.

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## Important Days

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### **International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action – 4 April**

In 2005, the UN General Assembly declared 4th April as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

- This day is observed to create awareness about the threat of mines, unexploded grenades and other explosive hazards that prevents the return of normalcy in areas affected by armed conflicts.
- The theme for International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action 2018 is: Advancing Protection, Peace and Development.

### **Army Medical Corps celebrates 254th raising day on 3rd April**

On 3rd April 2018, the 254th raising day of the Army Medical Corps was celebrated by all the Army medical units of India.

- In 1886, the three medical services, the Bengal Medical Service, the Madras Medical Service, and the Bombay Medical Service were combined into one entity named "Indian Medical Services".
- In 1943 it was renamed as The "Indian Army Medical Corps". Again on 26 January 1950 it was renamed as "Army Medical Corps" (AMC).
- The AMC has served in all wars and Operations including the Kargil war.