

# National Current Affairs

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## **GoM recommends uniform road tax structure for vehicles across country**

The Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted by Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has proposed One Nation One Tax policy for seamless movement of commercial vehicles across the country.

- The two day meeting of GoM held in Guwahati, Assam was attended by transport ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Goa, Kerala, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Meghalaya and Jharkhand.
- The GoM is headed by Rajasthan transport minister Yoonus Khan.
- Recommendations of GoM:
  - Uniform road tax for vehicles across states: It will allow transfer of vehicles from one state to another without levying road tax. It will put check on people registering their vehicles in low tax states and running them in other states. It will also bring necessary relief to genuine cases requiring transfer of vehicles.
  - Tax Structure: The uniform tax should be based on invoice price of vehicles in three slabs. 8% tax on vehicles below 10 lakhs, 10% for vehicles costing between 10 -20 lakh, and 12% for vehicles above 20 lakh. Diesel vehicles may have to pay 2% extra taxes, while electric vehicles will be given 2% discount.
  - National passenger vehicles permit for passenger cars: There should be national bus and taxi permit on lines of such permit for goods transport.

## **Government releases draft rules for high security registration plates**

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has published new draft rules to make mandatory for automobile manufacturers to provide high security registration plates (HSRP) to all new vehicles from January 1, 2019.

- The HSRP to be fitted in all classes of motor vehicles will have tamper-proof plaes with host of in-built security features and is expected to offer increased protection against theft. HSRP was made mandatory in some States 2005 but failed to take off.
- HSRPs will have in-built security features, such as self-destructive sticker with engine and chassis numbers. It will be fitted on front and rear of vehicles and windscreens will have number plate tag with hologram.
- Chromium-based hologram will be applied by hot stamping on top left corner of plates both at front and back.
- Permanent identification (id) number with minimum of 10 digits will be laser-branded into reflective sheeting on bottom left of registration plate.

### **Centre aims to make UP open-defecation free state**

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) along with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) have united and taken up the task of making India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh Open Defecation Free (ODF).

- As a part of the initiative, the ministries organised a training camp for nearly 1000 masons in Jhansi city for the construction of twin pit toilets.
- Later, the skilling sessions under the guidance of NSDC and others, is expected to reach out to approximately 50,000 masons residing in other nearby areas of the city, leading to more such training sessions in the future.
- This is the first such training camp to be launched in the province and is expected to be an intense drive towards making India Open Defecation Free (ODF) by October 2019.

### **Two day Regional Conference on “Urban Development**

The Ministry of Finance, Government of India in collaboration with the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), Gujarat Council along with Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), an autonomous research organization under the Ministry of External Affairs organised the 2-day Regional Conference on “Urban Development: Technological Solutions and Governance Challenges” which began in Ahmedabad.

- The Conference is a lead-up event to the 3rd Annual Meeting of AIIB scheduled to be held on 25th and 26th June, 2018 in Mumbai.
- The panellists/participants in different Sessions of aforesaid two day Conference include officials from the Centre, State and the local bodies as well as representatives from the civil society, academia and multilateral financial institutions among others.

### **Taipei World Trade Centre opens in Delhi**

Taipei World Trade Centre (TWTC) launched its office at New Delhi with the objective of promoting trade between India and Taiwan.

- Started in 1970 by Taiwan's foremost trade promotion organization, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), also known as Taipei World Trade Centre provides a single, modern venue that combines consulting service on trade-related issues, trading partners, suppliers, and markets for international business.
- The launch marks the start of a new chapter in India-Taiwanese business relation with leading Indian organizations such as Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Society of Manufactures

of Electric Vehicles (SMEV) and World Trade Center, Mumbai among the corporates, signing MOUs for greater trade collaboration to enhance India-Taiwanese partnership in the field of exhibitions, electric vehicles, smart city and petrochemicals.

### **UP govt orders govt hospitals and orphanages to establish SHISHU SWAGAT KENDRA- PALNA**

In Uttar Pradesh, Government has ordered all government hospitals and orphanages to establish SHISHU SWAGAT KENDRA- PALNA and put up cradles in front of their buildings so that parents can give up unwanted babies safely.

- This will help in tackling the problem of abandoning the infant at the roadside.
- Cradles at medical colleges, district, satellite and sub-district hospitals will be set up to save newborns abandoned by their parents.
- At these Centres, any person, lady or couple can leave the child with disclosing their identity. State Government has instructed that at these centres there will be the arrangement of proper treatment of infants and government employees will be posted in shifts to take proper care of the infants.
- A Gazetted officer will be in charge of these PALNA centres and his number will be displayed. District Magistrates have been asked to start a helpline which will work 24 into 7 and detail of every abandoned infant will be sent to higher official immediately.
- The 'Palna' scheme will also help bridge the gap between the number of children available for adoption and the burgeoning list of adoptive parents.

### **Gujarat launches magazine on hemophilia to spread awareness**

On the occasion of World Haemophilia Day, Gujarat assembly Speaker Rajendra Trivedi launched 'Haemophilia Jagruti, a magazine to spread awareness about haemophilia, an inherited bleeding disorder.

- World Haemophilia Day was observed on April 17.
- The tri-monthly magazine aims to share knowledge and the research being done on the subject. Hemophilia affects over 6,000 people in the state.
- Across the country, there are over 16,000 registered patients of hemophilia, a hereditary and genetic disorder that impairs the body's ability to control blood clotting.

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## **International Current Affairs**

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### **Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) held in London**

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2018 (CHOGM 2018) was held in London, United Kingdom. It was overall 25th meeting of the heads of government of the Commonwealth of Nations.

- It was also first CHOGM held following United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from European Union.
- This decision has resulted for Britain to strengthen its economic ties with and play greater role in Commonwealth.
- The theme CHOGM 2018 was "Towards a Common Future". The British hosts had set out four main goals for summit viz prosperity: boosting intra-Commonwealth trade and investment; security: increasing cooperation across security challenges including global terrorism, organised crime and cyberattacks; fairness: promoting democracy, fundamental freedoms and good governance across Commonwealth and sustainability: building resilience of small and vulnerable states to deal with effects of climate change and other global crises.

### **Malaria Summit held in London**

The Malaria Summit was held in London, United Kingdom organisations to make game-changing commitments towards beating malaria.

- It was organized by non-profit organisation Malaria No More in conjunction with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and supported by British Prime Minister Theresa May.
- The participants committed on high level political commitment towards malaria elimination, significant increase in investment from malaria endemic countries to leverage and complement donor funding, new innovative tools to overcome the growing threat of resistance and improved methods to track disease to enable more effective and efficient intervention and to prevent resurgence.
- The summit pledged investment of over \$3.8 billion to pay for innovation in malaria research and treatment.

### **Saudi Arabia's first cinema in over 35 years opens with Black Panther**

Saudi Arabia has unveiled its first cinema in over 35 years with a private screening of the blockbuster Black Panther.

- The invitation-only gala event in a converted Riyadh concert hall was the first in a series of test screenings after a ban on cinemas was lifted last year. US giant AMC has been granted the first licence to operate movie theatres.
- The move to reopen cinemas is part of a modernisation drive by the reformist crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, who is seeking to balance unpopular subsidy cuts in

an era of low oil prices with more entertainment options, despite opposition from hardliners.

### **Meeting of BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors**

The first meeting of the BRICS Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors was held on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington DC.

- India was represented by Subhash Chandra Garg, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (EA).
- During the meeting with BRICS counterparts, Garg highlighted that India has been a constructive participant to the discussions on NDB's membership expansion.
- He expressed that a more careful and cautious approach on the value and addition/benefits new member will bring to the Bank would be desirable rather than setting deadlines which are practically difficult to achieve.
- With regard to the issue of expansion of NDB's project pipeline across member nations evenly, Garg said that the objective has to be balanced with member country's requirement for infrastructure financing.
- He also sought the support of the Presidency in building consensus amongst the BRICS membership on the BRICS Rating Agency proposal.

### **India pitches for independent BRICS credit rating agency**

India has pressed the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) nations to set up an independent credit rating agency of the five-member group.

- India sought the support of BRICS members in building consensus amongst BRICS membership on the BRICS Rating Agency proposal.
- It also requested to take forward report to be submitted by expert group set up under the aegis of BRICS Business Council to study the feasibility of the BRICS Rating Agency.
- India had first mooted the idea of having such an agency for the BRICS grouping to solve impediments for the emerging market economies posed by present credit rating agency market that is dominated by S&P, Moody's and Fitch. These three western rating agencies hold over 90% of the sovereign ratings market.

### **India becomes the sixth largest economy in the world: IMF**

India has been declared the sixth largest economy in the world with a GDP of 2.6 trillion in 2017, as per the recently released report by Indian Monetary Fund (IMF). India displaced

France to stand firm on this position, while the United States of America, China, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom are ahead in the race.

- India has made progress on structural reforms in the recent past, including through the implementation of the GST, which will help reduce internal barriers to trade, increase efficiency, and improve tax compliance.
- India's high public debt and recent failure to achieve the budget's deficit target call for continued fiscal consolidation into the medium term to further strengthen fiscal policy credibility.
- India has jumped from 6.7 per cent in 2017 to 7.8 per cent in 2018.

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## Banking & Finance

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### **RBI directs Mumbai-based bank to restrict withdrawals**

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has placed Mumbai-based City Co-operative Bank controlled by Shiv Sena MP Anandrao Adsul, under directions restricting withdrawals from the bank accounts to Rs 1,000 in every account and banning the bank from granting loans, making investments, borrowing funds and accepting deposits.

- The directions are imposed in exercise of powers vested in the Reserve Bank under sub-section (1) of Section 35 A of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949 read with Section 56 of the said Act.
- The bank can only pay salaries, rent, taxes, electricity bills and legal expenses like stamp duty and registration charges. Even lawyers fee have been capped at Rs 5000.
- The bank has deposits of Rs 500 crore and has advances of Rs 300 crore. It had net NPAs of 8.84 per cent in March 2016, the latest number available on its website up from 3.49 per cent in March 2013.

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## Acquisitions & Mergers

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### **Zoom announces partnership with Myntra for its new avatar**

Zoom, part of the Times Network announced one of the biggest-ever brand partnerships in the television history in India, with the country's leading online fashion e-tailer, Myntra.

- Zoom is set to unveil its new avatar 'Zoom Styled by Myntra', making a transition from being just a TV channel to a platform agnostic entertainment destination.

- The channel features a new logo - 'Zoom styled by Myntra'.
- The partnership aims to create the best entertainment and style destination across every medium - TV, Social, On-Ground and Digital.

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## Appointments & Resigns

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### **Rahul Kulshreshth appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Egypt**

- Shri Rahul Kulshreshth, presently Ambassador of India to the Republic of Turkey, has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

### **Sanjay Bhattacharya appointed as the next Ambassador of India to Turkey**

- Shri Sanjay Bhattacharya, presently Ambassador of India to the Arab Republic of Egypt has been appointed as the next Ambassador of India to the Republic of Turkey.

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## Awards & Recognition

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### **Madhya Pradesh wins Most Film Friendly Award**

Madhya Pradesh has bagged the Most Film Friendly Award given by the central government for its efforts to ease filming in the state by creating a well-structured website, film friendly infrastructure and more.

- The award, which was earlier conferred on Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, was announced by the Chairman of the Jury and filmmaker Ramesh Sippy.
- The award will be presented by President Ram Nath Kovind on May 3 during the presentation of the 65th National Film Awards.
- Madhya Pradesh beat 16 other states, including Delhi to bag the honour.
- Uttarakhand has been given a Special Mention certificate to recognise the efforts made by the state towards creating a film friendly environment.

### **Health Minister JP Nadda gives away Kayakalp awards**

Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda gave away the Kayakalp awards in New Delhi.

- The award is given by the Ministry to those best performing public health facilities which demonstrate high level of cleanliness, hygiene and infection control.
- On the basis of numbers of patients and bed occupancy, the awards have been listed in two categories.
- In the first category, AIIMS, New Delhi received the first prize worth Rs. 2.50 crore, while PGI Chandigarh won the second prize worth Rs. 1.50 crore.
- In the second category, North Eastern Indira Gandhi regional Institute of Health and Medical Science, Shillong was adjudged the winner with a prize money worth Rs. 1.50 crore.
- The second prize went to AIIMS, Bhubhaneswar with a prize money worth 1 crore.

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## Science & Technology

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### NASA launches CHESS mission to study matter between stars

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) on April 17, 2018 successfully launched Colorado High-resolution Echelle Stellar Spectrograph (CHESS 4) from the Kwajalein Atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

- The mission launched on a NASA Black Brant IX sounding rocket will study the interstellar medium, the matter between stars.
- The CHESS 4 instrument was developed by the Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics at the University of Colorado, Boulder.
- The mission will study the interaction of the stellar wind with the surrounding interstellar medium to study the excitation of atoms and molecules in the interface region.
- This would enable the researchers to study the catalysts of galactic chemistry and the raw materials for future generations of stars and planets.
- The research team will also quantify the temperature and motions of the clouds along the line of sight.

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## Sports

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### **BWF Rankings: Kidambi Srikanth drops four places, HS Prannoy back in top 10**

Commonwealth Games silver medallist Kidambi Srikanth's reign at the pinnacle did not last long as the Indian shuttler slipped a massive four places to fifth in the new world rankings released by the Badminton World Federation (BWF) on Thursday, April 19, 2018.

- World champion Viktor Axelsen is thus back to the top after having relinquished the prized ranking to the Pullela Gopichand protégé for a week.
- Srikanth's fall was a result of the Singapore Open Superseries points coming off this week. The 25-year-old reached the final at that tournament last year, by dint of which, he had accumulated a whopping 7800 points. Since the BWF system considers the 10 best results in the past 52 weeks, losing the Singapore points affected his ranking badly.
- India's B Sai Praneeth was also a casualty. The Singapore Open Superseries champion gave up 9200 points from his tally and that pushed his ranking down by four spots to 19th.

### **FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019 unveils official fan-chosen mascot Son of Dreams**

Son of Dreams was unveiled as official Mascot of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2019.

- Born in China on August 8, 2015, Son of Dreams' magical horns give him the power to see in the future, envisioning plays and moves before they actually happen.
- The selection of Son of Dreams as China 2019's Official Mascot was the culmination of a unique process by FIBA. The mascot finalists are a Chinese dragon ('Son of Dream'), a Siberian tiger ('Speed Tiger') and a lion ('Qiu Qiu').