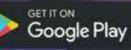
# WEEKLY

# 29TH JULY - 4TH AUGUST 2018

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# Awards & Honours

# Javed Akhtar awarded Hindi Sahitya Samman

- Eminent personalities from different fields, including Bollywood song writer Javed Akhtar, were presented the Delhi government's "Hindi Sahitya Academy Samman".
- Akhtar was awarded the 'Shalaka Samman' for his contribution to the world of films and poetry.
- Veteran theatre director M K Raina received the 'Shikar Samman'.

# Akshay Venkatesh gets Fields Medal

- Akshay Venkatesh, a renowned Indian-Australian mathematician, is one of four winners of mathematics' prestigious Fields medal, known as the Nobel prize for math.
- The Fields medals are awarded every four years to the most promising mathematicians under the age of 40.
- The prize was inaugurated in 1932 at the request of Canadian mathematician John Charles Fields.

# ONGC won top honours at Swachhta Pakwada

- Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) bagged top honours at the Swachhta Pakwada Awards.
- Swachhta Pakwada Awards is an oil ministry initiative to honour companies and individuals doing exemplary work in cleanliness.
- Indian Oil Corp (IOC) bagged the runner-up's award.
- The Ministry celebrated Swachhta Pakhwada from July 1, 2018, to July 15, 2018, with the theme 'Innovation and Sustainability'.

# Azad, Najma to be given Parliamentarian award

- The leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad, Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla and BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab will be conferred the Outstanding Parliamentarian award by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- Najma Heptulla will get the award for 2013, Lok Sabha member Hukumdev Yadav for 2014.
- The award will be given to Azad for 2015, TMC MP Dinesh Trivedi for 2016 and Mahtab for 2017.

# Rajiv Sadbhavana Award for Gopal Gandhi

- Former West Bengal Governor Gopalkrishna Gandhi has been chosen for Rajiv Gandhi Sadbhavana Award 2018 for promoting communal harmony and peace.
- The award carries a citation and a cash award of Rs. 10 lakh.
- Former recipients of the award include Mother Teresa, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Mohammed Yunus, Lata Mangeshkar, Sunil Dutt, Dilip Kumar, Kapila Vatsyayan, Teesta Setalvad.

# 3rd BRICS Film Festival concluded

- The 3rd BRICS Film Festival took place in Durban, South Africa, along with the International Durban Film Festival from 22-27th July, 2018.
- "Newton" won the Best Film and "Village Rockstars" won two awards at the third edition of the BRICS Film Festival.
- The Best Actress award went to Bhanita Das.
- The film festival is aimed at celebrating world-class film productions from the BRICS nations.

# HDFC awarded best performing bank

- HDFC has been awarded the best performing primary lending institution in credit linked subsidy scheme (CLSS) for the EWS (Economically Weaker Section) and LIG (Low Income Group) category.
- The award was given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- CLSS was introduced in June 2015 under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for home loans to customers from the EWS as well as LIG and MIG (Middle income group).

# Assamese film wins 3 top awards at US fest

- Assamese film Xhoihobote Dhemalite (Rainbow Fields) bagged 3 top awards at the 3rd Love International Film Festival in US including best movie.
- Besides the best film, it also won the awards for best actress and best music at the festival.
- The film, directed by Bidyut Kotoky, deals with the sensitive issue of children of Assam growing up in violent times & witnessing brutality around them.

# Pradip Chowdhury to receive Mohun Bagan Ratna

- Mohun Bagan 'Ratna', the highest honour of the century-old club will be conferred on former India international Pradip Chowdhury.
- A former Mohun Bagan captain, Chowdhury was also the India team manager.
- Chowdhury will be the 18th recipient of the award first given to Sailen Manna in 2001.

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# Days & Events

# NITI Aayog launches Move Hack

• NITI Aayog has launched Move Hack, a global mobility hackathon to crowdsource solutions aimed at the future of mobility in India.

- Move Hack aims to bring about innovative, dynamic and scalable solutions to problems pertaining to mobility.
- The hackathon is organized in partnership with Government of Singapore and is powered by Hacker Earth.

## World Day against Trafficking in Persons

- World Day against Trafficking in Persons is observed on July 30 every year.
- The aim is to "raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights."
- For 2018, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has chosen "responding to the trafficking of children and young people" as the focus of the World Day.

#### International Blockchain Congress

- Hyderabad will host a 3 day International Blockchain Congress beginning August 3.
- Jointly hosted by NITI Aayog, Telangana & Goa governments, IBC will bring together 3,000+ blockchain enthusiasts, innovators, businesses & regulators.
- Global Blockchain Protocol Consortium, a body of various countries to further progress the evolution of blockchain technology, will be launched at the congress.

#### International Tiger Day

- International Tiger Day is is celebrated every year on 29 July to raise awareness about tiger conservation.
- It was started in 2010 at the Saint Petersberg Tiger Summit in Russia in view of the alarming fall in the number of wild tigers.
- Many factors have caused their numbers to fall, including habitat loss, climate change, hunting and poaching.

# International Affairs

#### US cuts off security aid to Pakistan

- The United States Congress has slashed the securityoriented financial aid to Pakistan by approving a \$716.3 billion defence authorisation bill.
- The security aid was earlier around \$1 billion to \$750 million per year.
- The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2019, the security aid to Pakistan has been cut down to \$150 million.

#### Sushma Swaraj meets Kazakhstan counterpart

• External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj held a comprehensive discussion with her Kazakhstan counterpart Kairat Abdrakhmanov.

- The discussion was on deepening cooperation in areas like trade, energy and defence and security.
- Ms. Swaraj is on a three-nation tour to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as part of India's efforts to boost strategic partnership with the resource-rich nations.

#### Iran officially joins ASEAN treaty

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) ratified Iran's membership in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC).
- There was a consensus among southeast Asian countries to accept Iran as a party to the treaty.
- This indicated the significance of interaction with Iran as an important and influential country in regional and international equations.

#### Google to launch censored search engine

- Google is developing a new search engine for China that will be in line with the country's stringent censorship rules.
- The "revised" search engine, which has been codenamed "Dragonfly" will block western services that are already outlawed in China.
- Google withdrew its search engine from China eight years ago due to censorship.

#### Mnangagwa won Zimbabwe Presidential Elections

- Emmerson Mnangagwa won the presidential election of Zimbabwe.
- Mnangagwa won by the smallest of margins, after needing more than 50% of the vote to secure the victory.
- Elections in Zimbabwe were conducted after 37 years of President Robert Mugabe's rule.

#### UAE launches amnesty scheme for overstayers

- The UAE launched a landmark three-month visa amnesty programme that will benefit hundreds of illegal foreign workers, including Indians, who are overstaying their permits.
- The programme allows the workers to leave the country without paying penalty and also gives them six months to find a job.
- Also, residents can also rectify their status by getting a new sponsored, valid visa.

#### U.S. eases export controls on India

- The US has eased export controls for hightechnology product sales to India by designating it as a Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) country.
- The granting of STA-1 status to India comes after the US recognised India as a Major Defence Partner in 2016.
- Currently there are 36 countries on STA-1 list. India is the only South Asian country to be on the list.



# National Affairs

#### Tech Mahindra inks pact with Telangana govt

• The Telangana State Information Technology, Electronics and Communication department (ITE&C) signed an MoU with Tech Mahindra to launch India's first Blockchain district.

- Tech Mahindra will provide the platform and technology assistance to all the incubators in blockchain disrict.
- The Telengana ITE&C will provide regulatory and policy support to enable and promote Blockchain growth.

#### India to impose delayed tariffs

- Government of India said that delayed higher tariffs against some goods imported from the United States will go into force on September 18.
- The government had decided in June 2018 to raise the import tax from August 4 2018 on some US products, including almonds, walnuts and apples.
- India has proposed to buy petroleum products from the US to help narrow the trade deficit.

#### Environment, skill ministries ink pact

- The ministries of skill development and environment signed a pact for up-skilling of refrigeration and air-conditioning technicians for the better employment opportunities.
- The courses to provide skill development to scientists and technicians have also been drawn up in the Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Through this MoU 1 lakh AC technicians will be trained & certified.

#### First-ever dragonfly festival in Delhi

- The dragonfly festival is being organised from Aug 3 to Sept 1 at World Wide Fund (WWF) auditorium, New Delhi.
- The aim is to spread awareness about the role of Dragonflies in maintaining a healthy ecosystem.
- Festival includes special events like Be a scientist for a day, Date Date with a dragonfly etc. by WWF India and Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS).

#### Logo, tagline launched for GI

- Suresh Prabhu launched a logo and tagline-"Invaluable Treasures of Incredible India"- for Geographical Indications (GI).
- This will increase awareness about intellectual property rights in the country.
- A GI product is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

#### Startup India Yatra begins in Chhattisgarh

- The Startup India Yatra was launched on July 30 2018 in Raipur.
- To promote job creation in tier 2 and tier 3 towns and cities, Startup India organizes the Startup India Yatra in one state every month.

• The Startup India initiative envisages to build a robust startup ecosystem in the country for nurturing innovation and providing opportunities to budding entrepreneurs.

#### **CETF Battalion for Environment Protection**

- Sanction has been accorded for raising a new Composite Ecological Task Force (CETF) of Territorial Army to patrol sensitive river areas for protection of biodiversity and other tasks.
- The CETF is expected to be largely manned by exservicemen.
- The ministry is implementing the programme of pollution abatement and rejuvenation of the Ganges as per Ganga River Basin Management Plan.

#### Final draft of NRC released in Assam

- The second and final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was published on July 30, 2018 with over 2.89 crore names out of the total 3.29 crore applicants in Assam.
- Assam is the first Indian state where the NRC is being updated after 1951, with March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date, to include names of genuine Indian citizens.
- The groundwork for this exercise began in December 2013.

#### 4-lane highway along Indo-Bhutan border

- Centre has agreed in principle to construct a fourlane highway of 264 KM along Indo-Bhutan border encompassing four districts of the state.
- The new connectivity would bring in revolutionary changes not only in connectivity but also in trade and commerce of the areas.
- The Bhutan–India border is 699 km long, and adjoins the Indian states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, and Sikkim.

#### Fee drugs, diagnostics for hepatitis B & C

- Considering the disease burden of viral hepatitis, government will now offer free drugs and diagnosis for Hepatitis B and C.
- The arrangement has been made under the National Viral Hepatitis Control Program launched.
- The aim of the initiative is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to viral hepatitis.
- The government aims to eliminate viral Hepatitis by 2030.

# States agree to supply milk under Mid-Day Meal

- Most states, including Rajasthan, have agreed to supply milk for 2 days a week through Mid-Day Meal & Anganwadi schemes.
- This has been done in order to absorb surplus stock & ensure better prices to farmers, Animal Husbandry & Dairy.

• Farmers are in distress in key milk-producing states because of fall in procurement rate amid surplus milk production & piling up of skimmed milk powder.

## Allowance for visiting Central Asian nations

- A proposal to allow Central government employees to go abroad on Leave Travel Concession (LTC) has been finalised by the Personnel Ministry
- The plan proposes to include 5 central Asian countries Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan under the LTC scheme.
- It is aimed at increasing India's footprint in the strategically important Central Asian region.

# Conviction under SC/ST Act just 27%

- A meagre 27% of people, accused of committing atrocities & crimes against scheduled castes and tribes, have been convicted during 2014-16.
- According to a report compiled by Home Ministry, the rate of conviction is low despite the country having 195 exclusive special courts to deal with crimes against SCs and STs.
- The reasons for low conviction rate is mostly due to delay in lodging the FIR.

# India & World

#### 2 day Indo-US Military Cooperation

- A 2-day Indo-US Military Cooperation Meeting began in New Delhi as a prelude to 2 plus 2 Dialogue between the 2 countries.
- The meeting was co-chaired by Lt Gen Satish Dua, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the chairman and Lt Gen Bryan Fenton, Deputy Commander, Indo-Pacific Command.
- India and the US were also working to have a joint drill of all the three armed forces.

#### India and Germany signed agreement

- India and Germany signed agreements on financial and technical cooperation worth Rs 5,250 crore within the framework of the Indo-German development cooperation.
- As part of the cooperation, areas such as infrastructure development, urban mobility and climate relsilience are being promoted.
- Environmental and resource protection is also one of the funded areas of the cooperation.

#### Indo-Nepal forum to be set up for tourism

- A forum will be set up between India and Nepal for mutual consultation and promotion of tourism by the countries.
- In a meeting held on July 6, 2018 of the joint working group of the two countries it was decided that an Indo-Nepal Tourism Forum should be set up.

- Current Affairs Weekly Capsule I 29<sup>th</sup> July to 4<sup>th</sup> August 2018
- The forum will have representation from the government and private sectors of both the nations.

# Personalities in News

# Baker breaks 100m backstroke world record

- Kathleen Baker has set a world record in winning the 100-metres backstroke at the US national swimming championships.
- Baker, silver medalist in the event at the 2016 Rio Olympics, improved on the world record of 58.10 set by Canadian Kylie Masse.
- Baker's performance was more remarkable because she has long had to deal with Crohn's disease.

# Venkaiah Naidu to be Chancellor

- Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu has been appointed as the Chancellor of the Pondicherry Central University.
- The appointment was notified by the President, Ram Nath Kovind, in his capacity as Visitor of the university.
- The tenure of the Chancellor will be five years.

# First non-Muslim to win National Assembly seat

- Mahesh Malani of Pakistan Peoples Party's has become the first Hindu candidate to win a National Assembly seat.
- Malani contested & won the National Assembly (NA-222) Tharparkar-II seat in southern Sindh province, after defeating 14 candidates.
- Non-Muslims got the right to vote & contest on general seats in 2002 after the then president Gen Pervez Musharraf made amendments in the Constitution

# Environment

# Uttarakhand HC bans use of elephants

- The Uttarakhand High Court banned the commercial use of elephants in Corbett Tiger Reserve besides restricting the number of vehicles entering its ranges in a day to 100.
- The order came after the court was apprised that elephants were chained and ill-treated causing immense cruelty.
- The elephants shall be temporarily kept at Rajaji National Park, Chilla.

# Jongdari tropical storm hits Shanghai

- Downgraded from a typhoon, Tropical Storm Jongdari arrived in Shanghai on August 3, 2018.
- It is expected to gradually weaken as it moves westward into the Yangtze River delta.
- Jongdari, which means skylark in Korean and is the 12th typhoon of the season.

- Jongdari is one of the four Pacific tropical cyclones.
- More than 130,000 people have been evacuated as a tropical storm arrived Shanghai.

# World's first UN Certified Football Club

- The Forest Green Rovers Football Club was recognised by the United Nations as the World's first certified carbon neutral football club.
- The UN campaign, launched in 2015, encourages companies, organisations, governments and citizens to reduce their climate footprints.
- The aim is to achieve a climate neutral world by the middle of this century.

# **Government Policies & Schemes**

# Ministers' panel approves GST discounts

- A Group of State Finance Ministers on GST discount gave its nod for incentivising digital payments through a cash back mechanism.
- As much as 20% of total GST paid up to ₹100 per transaction would be provided as cash back on payments made through RuPay cards, BHIM App and UPI.
- This move will benefit RuPay card holders as well as BHIM App users.

# 'Shor nahin' mobile app launched in HP

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur launched 'horn not ok' awareness campaign and 'shor nahin' (no noise) mobile application.
- The 'shor nahin' mobile application can be used by the general public to report cases of noise pollution.
- As part of the first phase, the campaign has been launched in Shimla and Manali.

# 5 crore gas connections under Ujjwala Yojana

- Loksabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan handed over 5 croreth LPG connection under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) achieving the target in 28 months.
- PMUY was launched on 1st May 2016 and it is implemented by Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.
- Through PMUY, initially, 5 crore BPL households were targeted for providing deposit free LPG connections to BPL households by 31st March 2019.

# Paryatan Parv to be organized by tourism min

- The Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with other Central Ministries, State Governments and Stakeholders is organizing a "Paryatan Parv" across the country from the 16th to 27th September 2018.
- It is being organized with the objective of drawing focus on the benefits of tourism.
- The Paryatan Parv shall conclude with the World Tourism Day celebrations on 27th September 2018.

#### LS passes National Sports University Bill

- The Lok Sabha on 3rd August, 2018 passed a Bill establishing a National Sports University in Manipur **as part of a vision to enhance country's standing in** sports.
- The National Sports University Bill, 2018, which sought to replace an Ordinance promulgated on May 31, was passed by a voice vote.
- The legislation was introduced in the Lok Sabha in August 2017.

#### Karnataka launched "Swachhameva Jayate"

- Karnataka government launched "Swachhameva Jayate", a campaign in rural areas to take a pledge on cleanliness.
- Logo of the campaign released by Department of Rural Development includes a boy and a girl standing in front of the map of Karnataka.
- The campaign coincides with the "Swachh Survekshan Grameen" survey by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

#### AP launches 'Mukhya Mantri-Yuva Nestham'

- The Andhra Pradesh government has launched 'Mukhya Mantri-Yuva Nestham', a scheme through which an allowance of Rs 1000 per month will be provided to unemployed youth in the state.
- About 12 lakh youths in the age group of 22-35 years will get the benefit of the scheme.
- The scheme will be extended to all those eligible even if there are more than one beneficiary in a family.

#### Statutory status for BCs panel

- The Lok Sabha passed the 123rd Constitutional Amendment Bill providing for a National Commission for Backward Classes as a constitutional body.
- A constitutional amendment under Article 368 needs to be passed by both Houses separately with a special majority.
- The Bill as passed by the Lower House inserts Article 338 B in the Constitution.

#### SAATHI Initiative Launched

- Ministry of textiles and Ministry of Power launched SAATHI (Sustainable and Accelerated Adoption of efficient Textile technologies to Help Small Industries) initiative in the power loom sector.
- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) will replace old electric motors with new IE3 motors.
- The use of these efficient equipments will result in energy savings and cost savings to the unit owners.



# New policy for unconventional hydrocarbons

- The Cabinet approved a policy framework for hydrocarbons' exploration, permitting private companies to exploit unconventional hydrocarbons, including shale gas and coal bed methane (CBM), from their existing acreages.
- Prior to this, field operators were not allowed to explore unconventional hydrocarbons.
- An additional 10% profit petroleum will be levied for new CBM discoveries.

# Government extended the CFS

- The government extended the Concessional Financing Scheme (CFS) till 2023 to support Indian entities bidding for important infrastructure projects abroad.
- Under the scheme, the government provides the counter-guarantee and interest equalisation to EXIM bank.
- Also, the scheme will now cover all Indian entities, compared to the earlier stipulation of minimum 75% Indian shareholding.

# Cabinet clears changes to GST laws

- The Cabinet approved amendments to the GST laws, including the hike in turnover threshold for businesses to avail the composition scheme to Rs 1.5 crore.
- The amendments will allow employers to claim input tax credit on facilities like food, transport and insurance provided to employees.

• Besides, businesses with turnover of up to Rs 1.5 crore would be eligible for availing composition scheme.

#### Cabinet approves stringent anti-piracy law

- The Union Cabinet approved a bill providing for death penalty or life imprisonment to those involved in piracy at sea.
- The proposed anti-maritime piracy law is aimed at promoting the safety and security of India's maritime trade.
- The government is bringing the law as part of commitment made by India while signing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in 1982.

#### Scheme to reimburse taxes on food

- The Ministry of Culture launched a scheme to reimburse central share of CGST and IGST on food, prasad, langar or bhandara offered by religious and charitable institutions.
- The Ministry of Culture came out with the scheme, Seva Bhoj Yojana.
- Such institutions shall have to first register with Darpan Portal of NITI Aayog and get Unique ID generated by it.

#### Cabinet okays 51% stake for LIC in IDBI

- The Union Cabinet gave its approval to the government's decision to reduce its stake in IDBI Bank below 50%, with Life Insurance Corporation raising stake in the bank to 51%.
- The boards of IDBI Bank and LIC have both given their approval for the deal.
- Currently, LIC holds 7.98% stake in the debt-ridden public sector bank.
- Post the transaction, IDBI Bank would become a subsidiary of LIC.

#### LS passes commercial courts Bill

- The Lok Sabha passed the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts (Amendment) Bill, 2018.
- It will designate some courts as commercial courts for speedy disposal of commercial disputes.
- It will reduce the pecuniary jurisdiction of these courts from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 3 lakh.
- The bill is aimed at improving the ease of doing business in India.

# Bill cleared to restore SC/ST Act provisions

- The Centre has decided to introduce a Bill to restore the original provisions of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
- The Cabinet had given its nod to the Amendment Bill and the government would try to introduce it in Parliament during the ongoing session.

• The Amendment Bill seeks to insert 3 new clauses after Section 18 of the original Act.

# IWAI launches Dedicated Portal for cargo

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) launched a dedicated portal to connect cargo owners and shippers with real time data on availability of vessels.
- Named as the 'Forum of Cargo-Owners and Logistics-Operators', the link of the portal is available on the homepage of IWAI.
- It has been designed and developed by the in-house IT Department and the Traffic Wing of IWAI

# Largest pan-India rural sanitation survey

- The largest pan-India rural sanitation survey will commenced on 1st August 2018 under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- It will also rank districts based on their sanitation level.
- The criteria set for ranking includes construction and use of toilets under the Swach Bharat Mission-Gramin, direct observation of sanitation at public places and feedback from citizens.

#### CSCs to implement Ayushman Bharat

- Common Service Center (CSC) and National Health Accounts (NHA) signed a memorandum of understanding to implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme through three-lakh CSCs across the country.
- Ayushman Bharat is the National Health Protection Scheme, which will provide coverage of up to ₹5 lakh.
- According to the MoU, a beneficiary can now visit the nearby CSC to get the benefit of this scheme.

#### Rajasthan first to implement biofuel policy

- Rajasthan has become the first State in the country to implement the national policy on biofuels unveiled by the Centre in May 2018.
- The state will lay emphasis on increasing production of oilseeds.
- It will establish a Centre for Excellence in Udaipur to promote research in the fields of alternative fuels and energy resources.

#### Lok Sabha passes IBC amendment bill

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill 2018.
- The Bill amends the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 to clarify that allottees under a real estate project should be treated as financial creditors.
- Financial creditors will be able to decide the future of defaulting builders alongside their lenders.

#### Chattisgarh CM to launch 'Mobile Tihar'

- Chattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh launched the 'Mobile Tihar' (Mobile Festival) under the Sanchar Kranti Yojna (SKY).
- The scheme is for distribution of smart-phone to women and students in the station covering 45 lakh women and 5 lakh students.
- Under the programme, 460,000 students of Chhattisgarh's colleges and 4 million women staying in rural areas will be given smartphones.

#### LS passes bill to revamp homoeopathy council

- A bill seeking to replace the Central Council of Homoeopathy (CCH) with a board of governors and aimed at bringing accountability and quality in homoeopathy education system was passed by the Lok Sabha.
- The government will reconstitute the CCH within a year.
- As per the bill, the members of the board of governor will replace the existing functionaries of the CCH.

#### Bill for merger of subsidiary banks with SBI

- The Parliament has passed the State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017 with the Lok Sabha approving the amendments sent by the Rajya Sabha.
- Under it, the 5 associates banks that were merged are State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur, State Bank of Hyderabad, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Patiala and State Bank of Travancore.
- The merger of these banks is in effect from 1st April, 2018.

#### Env survey to be conducted in 55 districts

- In a first, around 55 districts across the country have been identified in 2018-19 for conducting an environmental survey covering various parameters like flora, fauna and pollution.
- The National Environment Survey is being undertaken for the first time by the government in India.
- National Environment Survey is proposed under the ongoing Environmental Information System Scheme.

#### IT ministry launches "e-Aksharayan"

- The IT ministry launched a desktop software "e-Aksharayan" to enable editing of text printed on scanned documents.
- The software can be downloaded for free from its website.
- The software supports editing in seven Indian languages - Hindi, Bangla, Malayalam, Gurmukhi, Tamil, Kannada & Assamese.



#### Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill passed in LS

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill 2018 which replaces the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance promulgated on April 21 2018.
- The bill stipulates punishment for perpetrators of rape, particularly of girls below 12 years and death sentence has been provided for rapists of girls under 12 years.
- The investigation of all cases of rape has to be completed within 2 months.

#### DAC gives nod to strategic partnership model

- Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved the implementation guidelines for the Strategic Partnership Model to ensure timely delivery of equipment to the Armed Forces.
- The approval was given at the meeting of DAC chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- The first project will be 111 utility twin-engine helicopters worth an estimated Rs 21,000 crore for the Indian Navy.

#### Govt to launch 2nd oil, gas field auction

- The government plans to launch the auction of 60 oil and gas fields being offered in the second round of bidding for Discovered Small Field on August 9, 2018.
- The fields are being offered in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Kutch & Cambay shallow waters, Mumbai offshore, Assam and Tripura, Mahanadi shallow water, Andhra Pradesh and KG offshore.
- The fields hold an estimated 1.4 billion barrels of oil.

#### CRIF under Finance Ministry domain

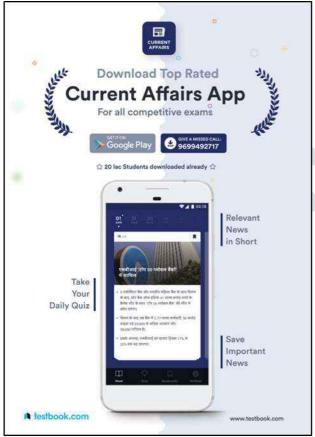
- Work related to the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund (CRIF) has been taken away from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- It will now be under the Department of Economic Affairs, Finance Ministry.
- Budget 2018 amended the Central Road Fund Act, 2000, and renamed the Central Road Fund the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund.

Meghalaya launches milk mission, bull fair

- The Meghalaya government launched 'Meghalaya Milk Mission' and First Meghalaya Bull Fair on 28th July, 2018.
- The Mission aims to plug the demand and supply gap in the availability of per capita milk, to generate alternate livelihoods for the rural people through the dairy sector and to create and revive dairy cooperatives.
- The Mission will benefit 2,000 farmers in the next 4 years.

#### Modi launches 81 investment projects

- PM Modi launched 81 investment projects worth over ₹60,000 crore for Uttar Pradesh at a groundbreaking event.
- The projects are expected to give a big boost to industrialisation in the state and have the potentials of creating over 2 lakh jobs.
- Around 80 leading industrialists, including Gautam Adani participated in the event, which comes close on the heels of 'Investors Summit'.



#### Govt notifies ethanol-making from sugarcane

- The government has notified a decision to allow sugar mills to manufacture ethanol directly from sugarcane juice or intermediate product called Bmolasses.
- The sugarcane control order of 1966 has been amended in this regard.

• So far, mills were allowed to manufacture ethanol from by-product called C-molasses, after sugar was taken out while processing raw cane juice.

#### Assam to implement Pranam Scheme

- Assam government has decided to implement PRANAM (Parent Responsibility & Norms for Accountability and Monitoring) Scheme that aims to ensure that government staff take care of their parents & physically challenged siblings.
- It mandates deduction of 10-15% of the gross salary of employees who do not take care of their parents & disabled siblings.
- It will come into force from October 2, 2018.

# Science & Technology

#### IDEMIA gets NPCI stamp for RuPay cards

- French company IDEMIA has become the first company to be given the certification to manufacture and personalise RuPay chip contact and contactless cards on the qSPARC v2 platform.
- The qSPARC is a dual interface open loop payment specification, with the option of loading multiple payment applications on a single card.
- The certification is issued by the National Payments Corporation of India.

#### First single-chromosome yeast created

- Chinese scientists claimed to have created the first single-chromosome yeast while not affecting the majority of its functions.
- Brewer's yeast, one-third of whose genome is said to share ancestry with humans, has 16 chromosomes.
- However, Chinese scientists have managed to fit nearly all its genetic material into just one chromosome.

#### Sunita to fly on US' First Private Spaceships

- Sunita Williams is among the 9 astronauts named by NASA for its first human spaceflight programme.
- The 8 active NASA astronauts and one former astronaut will launch on Boeing CST-100. Starliner and SpaceX Dragon capsules to the International Space Station beginning in 2019.
- The missions will mark the first crewed launches from the US since the end of the space shuttle programme in 2011.

#### New material will remove dyes from water

- Scientists have created a sponge-like material using wood pulp and small bits of metal that can remove harmful dyes in water in a matter of seconds.
- Cellulose, the main structure in plant cell walls and the most abundant natural material on Earth, provides the backbone of the material and has tiny pieces of palladium.

• Palladium serves as a catalyst to help remove colour quickly.

# LHC accelerates atoms for the 1st time

- For the very first time, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN has injected and accelerated lead **'atoms'.**
- Previously, the LHC had accelerated only protons and the nuclei of atoms.
- The process was done to test out a new CERN concept called the Gamma Factory.
- With this new advancement, scientists could be able to make 'exotic' particles like dark matter or a muon (heavy electron) beam.

# Radioactive molecule detected in space

- In a first, astronomers have detected a radioactive molecule in space, believed to be from a stellar explosion that took place in the 17th century.
- The radioactive molecule was spotted with the Northern Extended Millimetre Array and the Atacama Large Millimetre/ submillimeter Array radio telescopes.
- The radioactive molecule is an isotope of aluminium monofluoride.

# Mars closest to earth in 15 years

- At 57.6 million kilometres apart, Mars will be closest to Earth in over 15 years.
- With Mars and Sun on each side, the rare event will witness all three celestial bodies falling in a straight line.
- This will also be the closest the red planet comes to Earth until October 2020.
- Back in 2003, Earth and Mars were "only" 56 million kilometres apart- the closest it came in over 60,000 years.

# Scientists discover new shape called scutoid

- Scientists have discovered a new shape called scutoid while studying nature's way of moulding tissue to form the skin, cavity linings and the building blocks of organs.
- The shape has five sides on one end and six on the other and a triangular surface on one of its longer edges.
- Scientists have referred to it as a twisted prism kind of shape that allows the tissue to mould around organs.

MG Motor partners IIT-Delhi for child safety

- MG Motor India announced a partnership with IIT-Delhi for developing technologies and applications to boost in-car child safety.
- Under the partnership, a team IIT-D is working on a project to develop an application for geofencing for child safety through ECU control.
- MG Motor India is slated to launch its first vehicle in the country in the second quarter of 2019.

# Doctors identify rare bloodgroup 'P null'

- A team of doctors from the Blood Bank of Kasturba Medical College (KMC), has identified a rare blood group called "pp" or "P null" phenotype.
- A blood type is considered rare if fewer than one in 1,000 people have it.
- A person is said to have rare blood group when he lacks the high frequency antigen or multiple common antigens.

# NASA begins new planet hunting probe

- NASA's latest planet hunting probe the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) - has started its search for new worlds around nearby stars.
- TESS is expected to transmit its first series of science data back to Earth in August 2018.
- TESS is NASA's latest satellite to search for planets outside our solar system, known as exoplanets.

# Govt. plans 'ISRO-like' ocean mission

- The Centre has drawn up a 5-year, Rs. 8,000 crore plan to explore the deep recesses of the ocean.
- The Union Earth Sciences Ministry unveiled a blueprint of the 'Deep Ocean Mission'.
- India has been allotted a site of 1,50,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin by the UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules.

# Places in News

# Kadaknath chicken from Jhabua GI tag

- The famous Kadaknath chicken meat from Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh has now got a Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- The tag denotes that the product comes from a particular geographical area, and often enhances its commercial value.
- The Gramin Vikas Trust of Krishak Bharati Cooperative had sought GI tag for the protein-rich and black coloured meat of Kadaknath variety of chicken.

# Neelakurinji flowers bloom after 12 years

- The neelakurinji will bloom in the Anamalai hills near Munnar, a phenomenon that occurs once in 12 years.
- Spread over 3,000 hectares of rolling hills, Munnar is home to this rarely occurring neelakurinji flower plants.
- These plants take another 12 years for the seeds to sprout again and grow up to 30 to 60 centimetres high.

# Books & Authors

# The Unending Game by Vikram Sood

- "The Unending Game: A Former R&AW Chief's Insights into Espionage" has been written by Vikram Sood.
- Vikram Sood is the former head of India's foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing from 2000 to 2003.
- The book covers some of the most exciting aspects of intelligence failures and successes.
- Currently, Sood acts as Advisor to Observer Research Foundation.

### **Committees & Recommendations**

#### Govt. panel to study stressed power sector

- The government will set up a high-level empowered committee under the Cabinet Secretary to resolve the stress in the thermal power sector.
- The committee will have representatives from the Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Coal, and the lenders having exposure to the power sector.
- The Committee would look into the various problems faced by power sector.

# Business & Economy

#### 'Umbrella Organisation' to revive Co-op Bank

- India's co-operative banking sector is set to undergo a transformation with the concept of Umbrella Organisation (UO) of Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) to look into the issues plaguing the sector.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has allowed nonfund-based umbrella organisations at State levels.
- Gujarat is the first State in the country to have an UO for the UCB sector.

#### Services sector grows fastest since Oct. 2016

- India's services sector activity remained in the growth territory in July 2018, as business activity witnessed the strongest growth since October 2016.
- The seasonally adjusted Nikkei India Services Business Activity Index rose from 52.6 in June 2018 to 54.2 in July 2018.
- The Nikkei India Composite PMI Output Index maps both the manufacturing and services sectors.

#### Japan become world's 2nd largest stock market

- Japan has pipped China as the world's secondlargest stock market.
- The Chinese market was worth \$6.09 trillion next to Japan's \$6.17 trillion.
- Both markets are ranked after the US which is the world's largest at just over \$31 trillion.
- China lost to Japan after Chinese stocks and currency fell this year amid a trade spat with the US.

# **RBI bars Fino Payments Bank**

- Fino Payments Bank has been barred by the Reserve Bank of India from adding new customers since the end of May 2018.
- The central bank in its auditing of payments banks in May found Fino Payments non-compliant with the operational guidelines laid down by it.
- According to RBI's operating guidelines for payments banks, a customer can make deposits of up to ₹1 lakh per account in a year.

# Facebook announces \$4.5 mn investment

- Facebook will invest an additional \$4.5 million towards helping the news industry globally.
- Earlier, Facebook gave \$3.5 million towards **'Facebook Membership Accelerator', a three**-month pilot programme designed to help news organisations with membership models.
- The 'Facebook Membership Accelerator' will help non-profit news organisations and local, independent publishers.

# NHAI to ink MoU with SBI for Rs 25k cr loan

- NHAI will ink a pact with State Bank of India (SBI) for a long-term unsecured loan to the tune of Rs 25,000 crore.
- This is SBI's highest long-term unsecured loan to any entity and also the largest ever loan sanctioned to NHAI.
- NHAI is getting an unsecured loan from SBI for 10 years with 3 years of moratorium on repayments.

# Apple: World's first trillion dollar company

- Apple became the world's first trillion-dollar public company, as a rise in its share price pushed it past the landmark valuation.
- The company hit a \$1trillion market capitalisation 42 years after Apple was founded and 117 years after US Steel became the first company to be valued at \$1bn in 1901.
- Apple was co-founded in 1976 by Steve Jobs, Ronald Wayne and Steve Wozniak.

# RBI raises rates again by 25 bps

- The RBI on 1st August 2018 raised interest rates by 25 basis points, setting its benchmark repo rate at 6.5%.
- The increase will push up the cost of loans for all borrowers, from consumers looking to finance their purchases of homes and cars to businesses looking to meet their capital needs.
- The RBI retained its forecast for economic growth in the current fiscal year at 7.4%.



#### India's Q1 fiscal deficit at 68.7%

- The government of India reported a fiscal deficit of ₹ 4.29 trillion (\$62.57 billion) for April-June, or 68.7% of the budgeted target for the current fiscal year 2018-19 compared with 80.8% a year ago.
- The fiscal deficit target for the current financial year is Rs 6.24 lakh crore.
- Rs 2.37 lakh crore was the net tax revenue during the April-June quarter.

#### IOC tops 7 Indian firms on Fortune 500 list

- Seven Indian companies have made it to the latest Fortune 500 list of the world's biggest corporations in terms of revenue.
- Indian Oil Corporation continued to be the highest ranked Indian firm and Reliance Industries (RIL) jumping 53 places.
- Indian Oil Corp (IOC) with 23% rise in revenues at USD 65.9 billion was ranked 137th, up from the 168th position in 2017.

#### India imposes safeguard duty on solar cells

- India imposed safeguard duty on solar cells imports from China and Malaysia for two years to protect domestic players from steep rise in the inbound shipments of the product.
- This comes following recommendations by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), under the commerce ministry.
- As per the notification of the finance ministry, 25% safeguard duty has been imposed.

### Mauritius's SBM gets RBI approval

- Mauritius-based SBM Group has received Reserve Bank of India's approval to operate in the country through a wholly-owned subsidiary route.
- It is the first foreign lender to receive such a licence after local incorporation was introduced in 2013.
- SBM, which has been in India since 1994, currently operates through four branches, in Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Ramachandrapuram.

#### Core industries grows to 6.7% in June

- Eight core sector industries registered high growth of 6.7% in June 2018.
- According to the data released by the commerce and industry ministry, eight sectors including coal, refinery products, fertilisers, steel and cement showed better performance due to better outcome by cement, refinery and coal segments.
- Fertilisers saw growth slowing sharply in June to 0.93% from 8.44% in May 2018.

#### RIL reclaims its top slot

- Reliance Industries Ltd. (RIL) regained its status as the country's most valued firm by market capitalisation (m-cap) on 31st July 2018.
- It replaced Tata Group's Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) from the top slot.
- Reliance Industries had crossed the \$100-billion market capitalisation mark.
- The m-cap figure of companies changes daily with stock price movement.

#### India Inc's ECB jumps 66% to \$2.71 bn in Jun

- India Inc raised USD 2.71 billion through External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) and rupeedenominated bonds (RDBs) in June 2018, the RBI data said.
- Indian companies had raised USD 1.63 billion from overseas sources in June 2017.
- ECB is basically a loan availed by an Indian entity from a non-resident lender. Most of these loans are provided by foreign commercial banks

# India's agricultural land is shrinking

- According to the government data, in 2017, nearly 40 lakh hectares of agricultural land was impacted because of water woes.
- It has resulted in a drop in the area under cultivation for crops like rice, pulses & oilseeds.
- With 1/3rd of agriculture activities in India still depending on groundwater for irrigation, the **country's cultivated land is shrinking due to depleting** ground water levels.

Paytm to roll new retail model for deliveries

- Paytm is now on an expansion spree to build a 'New Retail' model to equip shopkeepers with technology, logistics and marketing capabilities.
- Under this model, the consumers be able to place orders and get instant deliveries.
- The company has partnered with a large network of local shops, restaurants & groceries for accepting Payments & will soon extend 'New Retail' services to them.

# OYO inks pact with SBI, Bank of Baroda

- OYO has inked an MoU with SBI and Bank of Baroda for extending support to budget hotels and create jobs across levels.
- The MoU will enable financial support for OYO's existing & potential hotel partners for fuelling transformation and standardisation at their properties.
- These loans will help individuals hailing from Tier II and III cities to be self-employed and run their own budget assets.

# Sports

#### Rohit Kumar Becomes Fourth Youngest Player

- Nepal's Rohit Kumar Paudel, at 15 years and 335 days, became the fourth youngest One-day International (ODI) cricket debutant.
- Pakistan's Hasan Raza remains the youngest to play an ODI. Raza made his debut against Zimbabwe in 1996 aged just 14 years and 233 days.
- Canada's Nitish Kumar is third on the list he was 15 years and 273 days when he played Afghanistan in Sharjah in 2010.

#### Virat Kohli completes 7000 runs as captain

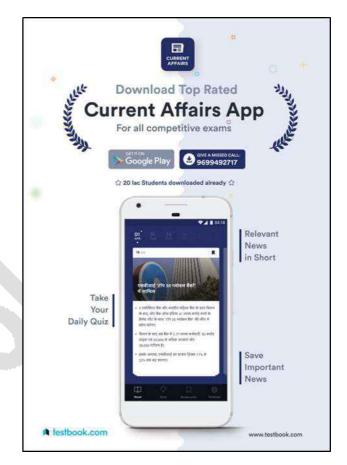
- Virat Kohli became the fastest captain to reach 7000 international runs.
- Brian Lara was the fastest among the previous 14 players who scored 7000 International runs as captain.
- Kohli is the 4th Indian after Mohammad Azharuddin, Sourav Ganguly and MS Dhoni to complete 7000 runs as captain in International cricket.

#### Smriti equals fastest T20 half-century

- India's batswoman Smriti Mandhana equalled the record for the fastest half-century in women's T20 cricket during a Kia Super League.
- Mandhana equalled New Zealand's Sophie Devine's record of a half-century off 18 balls, set against India during a T20 International in 2015.
- Mandhana also smashed the tournament record for the fastest fifty.

#### Britain's Thomas wins maiden Tour de France

- Britain's Geraint Thomas has won his maiden 2018 Tour de France.
- Thomas beat Tom Dumoulin of Team Sunweb by one minute and 51 seconds.
- Geraint Thomas became the third Briton to win the Tour de France when he crossed the finish line in Paris.
- The Tour de France is an annual men's multiple stage bicycle race primarily held in France.



# Neeraj Chopra won gold in Javelin

- Javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra won a gold in the Savo Games in Finland, beating his Chinese Taipei rival Chao-Tsun Cheng.
- Neeraj threw 85.69m in the event held at Lapinlahti, Finland, where he is undergoing training as part of preparations for the Asian Games.
- Cheng managed 82.52m to take the second place.

#### Sourabh Verma won Russian Open

- Sourabh Verma lifted the 2018 Russian Open Badminton trophy at Vladivostok on
- In the title clash, Sourabh beat Japan's Koki Watanabe and won his first title of the season.
- Sourabh Verma had recently won the All India senior ranking tournament in Bangalore to qualify for the Asian Games squad.

#### Bajrang Punia, Pinki win gold in wrestling

- In Wrestling, Bajrang Punia has won his second consecutive international gold while Sandeep Tomar won silver medal at the Yasar Dogu International in Istanbul, Turkey.
- Indian wrestlers returned with 10 medals, including seven by women, from the ranking event.
- In the women's competition, Pinki was the lone gold medallist in the 55kg category.

#### Sourabh lifts Russian Open Badminton trophy

- Ace Indian shuttler Sourabh Verma lifted the Russian Open Badminton trophy at Vladivostok.
- In the title clash, Sourabh came back from a game behind to beat Japan's Koki Watanabe, 18-21, 21-12, 21-17, and win his first title of the season.
- He had clinched the Chinese Taipei Grand Pri Gold and finished runners-up at the Bitburger Open in 2016.

#### Defence

#### DRDO develops indigenous landing gear for UAV

- An indigenously designed and developed landing gear for the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV)-Rustom II has been successfully tested.
- The landing gear developed by a Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) laboratory has undergone low-speed and high-speed taxi trial in Karnataka.
- Rustom II is a medium-altitude long-endurance UAV designed for carrying out surveillance.

#### Another success for naval LCA

- The naval version of the indigenously built Tejas Light Combat Aircraft underwent a series of successful tests to check its capability to land on an aircraft carrier.
- The Naval LCA is expected to begin touch and go landings on the INS Vikramaditya.
- Tejas is a four-and-half generation light combat aircraft developed by state-run aerospace behemoth Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL).

#### Advanced Air defence interceptor test fired

- The advanced Air defence interceptor missile has been successfully test fired from Abdul Kalam Island on 2nd August 2018.
- The missile has been built with indigenous technology.
- The missile is being developed as part the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system, which can intercept medium-range ballistic missiles travelling at speeds of Mach 3 to 8.

#### India plans to buy missile shield from U.S.

- India is in talks with the U.S. to procure an advanced air defence system to defend the National Capital Region (NCR) from aerial attacks.
- The process for procuring the National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II), estimated at \$1 billion, has been initiated.
- The NASAMS was developed by Raytheon in partnership with KONGSBERG Defence and Aerospace of Norway.

#### International Army Games 2018 declared open

- The International Army Games 2018 at Patriot Park in Moscow region has been declared open by Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.
- The games are being held at 24 training grounds in 7 countries namely Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Iran, Kazakhstan, China and Russia.
- Indian teams are taking part in two major competitions Tank Biathlon event and Elbrus Ring competition.