

CURRENT AFFAIRS SNIPPETS : AUGUST 2017

INTERNATIONAL

Microsoft launches Project Brainwave for real-time Artificial Intelligence

Software giant Microsoft has launched Project Brainwave, a deep learning acceleration platform for real-time artificial intelligence (AI).

Its launch is important as the real-time AI has increasingly become important as cloud infrastructures process live data streams, whether they be videos, sensor streams, search queries or interactions with users.

China launches first cyber court in e-commerce hub

China launched its first cyber court specializing in handling internet-related cases in the e-commerce hub of Hangzhou, amid a spike in the number of online disputes.

The Hangzhou Internet Court in Hangzhou, capital of east China's Zhejiang Province will handle cases such as online trade disputes and copyright lawsuits. The cases handled by the court will be tried online, state-run Xinhua news.

India ranks 43rd in 2017 Global Retirement Index

India in the first week of August 2017 was ranked at the last position of 43rd in the 2017 Global Retirement Index (GRI). The Index is published by French asset management company Natixis Global.

The Global Retirement Index ranks 43 countries on the basis of four factors, which are the material means to live comfortably in retirement (Material Well-being), access to quality financial services to help preserve savings value and maximize income (Finances), access to quality health services (Health), and a clean and safe environment (Quality of Life). The 2017 Global Retirement Index was topped by Norway, followed by Switzerland and Iceland.

Qatar to offer permanent residency to some non-citizens

Qatar's Cabinet has approved a draft law making permanent residency available to some non-citizens, marking a partial shift from its reliance on its

longstanding visa-sponsorship system.

The energy-rich Qatar becomes first Gulf Arab state to make permanent residency available to some non-citizens. Under the new law, residency permits will be granted to children of Qatari women married to foreigners. Moreover it will be also granted to people who offered valuable services to the country and those with special skills.

SCIENCE, AEROSPACE, DEFENSE & TECHNOLOGY

Venus: First environmental research satellite launched by Israel

Venus, the first Israeli satellite for environmental research was launched from the European spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The satellite is a joint effort by the Israel Space Agency and the French Space Agency (CNES). The satellite was built in Israel by the Israel Aerospace Industries.

Venus is considered the smallest satellite of its kind in the world. It is crafted to survey and monitor large areas to study soil, vegetation, forests, agriculture, water and air quality and other aspects of the environment.

Versius: world's smallest surgical robot developed by UK scientists

British scientists have developed the world's smallest surgical robot which could transform everyday operations for tens of thousands of patients. British-built Versius device will slash costs, improve patient recovery times and help speed up keyhole surgery. From a converted pig shed in the Cambridge shire countryside, a team of 100 scientists and engineers have used low-cost technology originally developed for mobile phones and space industries to create the first robotic arm specifically designed to carry out keyhole surgery.

NASA Successfully Launches Latest Communications Satellite

NASA's Tracking and Data Relay Satellite-M (TDRS-M), which is the third and final in a series of next

generation communications satellites, has successfully been placed into orbit following separation from an United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket. TDRS-M launched from the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida.

Ground controllers report the satellite is in good health at the start of a four-month checkout in space by its manufacturer, Boeing. NASA will conduct additional tests before putting TDRS-M into service early next year. When ready, TDRS-M will become part of NASA's Space Network providing navigation and high-data-rate communications to the International Space Station, NASA's Hubble Space Telescope, rockets and a host of other spacecraft.

ISRO, NASA working towards completion of NISAR mission by 2021

ISRO is working along with NASA to co-develop and launch a dual frequency synthetic aperture radar satellite in the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) mission 2021.

The satellite will be the first radar imaging satellite to use dual frequency and it is planned to be used for remote sensing purposes, to observe and understand natural processes of the Earth. It's also going to be the world's most expensive earth-imaging satellite till date, costing around \$1.5 billion. It aims to study global environmental change and natural disasters.

India's first private missile production facility unveiled in Hyderabad

India's first private sector missile sub-systems manufacturing facility, Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS) plant was inaugurated at the Hardware Park in Rangareddy district near Hyderabad on 3 August 2017.

The facility, which is a joint venture between India's Kalyani Group and Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd, has been established in line with the Union government's 'Make in India' initiative and the policy to encourage private sector participation in defense production.

Indian Army develops app, Humraaz, for soldiers to track promotions, postings

The Indian Army has developed a mobile application named Humraaz. The app will allow serving soldiers to track details like postings and promotions.

The mobile app has been developed in-house by the Army and will be launched in the second week of August 2017. The app will allow prompt communication of information to junior commissioned officers and other personnel

BUSINESS

MCX gets Sebi approval for launching gold options

The Multi Commodity Exchange Ltd (MCX) has received SEBI approval to launch options on gold, said two people with direct knowledge of the matter.

The launch of gold options is one of the major reforms SEBI has taken for the commodity derivatives market. Earlier in June 2017, SEBI had allowed options trading in commodities to deepen the market but permitted each exchange to launch options on futures of only one commodity initially.

Facebook launches YouTube competitor called 'Watch'

Facebook launched a new video programming platform 'Watch' for creators and publishers. Watch is expected to compete with Google-owned YouTube. Watch is a platform for all creators and publishers to find an audience, build a community of passionate fans, and earn money for their work. It is personalized to one in discovering new shows, organized around what your friends and communities are watching. Watch also has a Watch list to help the viewers to keep up with the shows they follow, so that they never miss out on the latest episodes.

China's TCL to launch waterproof BlackBerry phone

TCL Corporation, the Chinese electronics company is going to launch a full touch screen, waterproof Smartphone under the BlackBerry name in October 2017.

The launch will happen a month after Apple launches its new flagship iPhone 8 and a refresh of its iPhone 7 devices.

ICEX launches world's first diamond futures contracts

The Indian Commodity Exchange (ICEX) launched the world's first diamond futures contracts to provide exporters with a hedging tool.

India is a global diamond polishing hub where 14 out of every 15 rough diamonds in the world are polished. At the launch, the first diamond contract for delivery in November was traded at Rs 3,279/cent. One cent is the one-hundredth of a carat (ct)

ICEX has received approval from SEBI to commence trading with diamond futures contracts.

GOVERNMENT

Delhi Police launches YUVA - a skill development programme

Delhi Police has launched YUVA - a skill development programme under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY). It was inaugurated by Union Home Minister of India.

The 'YUVA' initiative aims to connect with youth by upgrading their skill as per their competencies. It will help youths to get gainful employment under PMKVY. It will also play important role in building up confidence and faith of youths in police organization.

Government clears 100% strategic sale of CEL

The Union Government (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) has approved a 100% disinvestment through strategic sale along with transfer of management control of Central Electronics Ltd. (CEL).

It is wholly owned by the government and has a net worth of Rs. 50.34 crore as on March 2017. The government is planning to engage an advisor from a consulting firm, investment banker or financial institution or merchant banker for providing advisory services and managing the disinvestment process.

Union Government launches National Sports Talent Search Portal

A sports talent search portal was launched by Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to find & provide essential directions to youngsters who pursue sports

It was officially launched by Vice President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium in New Delhi. The portal will enable any person from across India to upload his information and as per that the ministry will tap their talent and train them further in their respective disciplines.

Union Government launches e-RaKAM portal

The Union Government launched a portal, e-RaKAM, to provide a platform to sell agricultural produce. The portal is a joint initiative by state-run-auctioneer MSTC and Central Warehousing Corporation arm CRWC.

The platform is a digital initiative that aims to bring together the farmers, PSUs, civil supplies and buyers on a single platform to ease the selling and buying process of agricultural products

The e-RaKAM is a first-of-its-kind initiative that leverages technology to connect farmers of the smallest villages to the biggest markets of the world through internet and e-RaKAM centres

India's first Videsh Bhawan inaugurated in Mumbai by Union Government

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj inaugurated country's first Videsh Bhawan, assimilating all Regional Passport Offices and allied departments under a single roof at BKC, Mumbai.

As a first pilot project, four offices of MEA -- Regional Passport Office (RPO), Protector of Emigrants (PoE) office, Branch Secretariat and Regional Office of ICCR -- have been integrated and brought to function under one roof at the state-of-art office in BKC, Mumbai.

CCEA nod to rename food processing scheme as PM Kisan Sampada

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved renaming of SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY)

The SAMPADA scheme was approved by the CCEA in May 2017 for the period of 2016-20 coterminous with the 14th Finance Commission cycle. The objective of the scheme is to supplement agriculture, modernize processing and decrease agricultural-waste.

Five year anti-dumping duty on sodium nitrite imports from China

The Finance Ministry has imposed a five year anti-dumping duty on Sodium Nitrite imports from China. It was imposed based on recommendations of Directorate General of Antidumping and Allied Duties (DGAD). Sodium Nitrite is an oxidizing and also a reducing agent. It is a white crystalline powder mostly used in the pharmaceutical and dye industries, lu-

bricants, lubricants, construction chemicals, rubber blowing agent, meat processing, and textiles.

Gold & silver put in restricted list to curb rising imports from Korea

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in the Union Commerce Ministry has banned duty free imports of gold, silver items from South Korea

These restrictions were imposed against the backdrop of sudden surge in imports of precious metals from South Korea, with which India has a free trade agreement (FTA) since January 2010. Now, importers will now have to obtain a license from the DGFT for importing gold and silver from South Korea.

Centre notifies new Rs.200 note

The Union Finance Ministry on the recommendations of the Central Board of Directors of the RBI has notified currency notes of Rs.200. The new notes are likely to be in circulation shortly.

The new Rs.200 currency note was issued through an official gazette notification by the Finance Ministry's Department of Economic Affairs in exercise of powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 24 of RBI Act, 1934.

Swasth Bachche, Swasth Bharat Programme launched.

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) launched 'Swasth Bachche, Swasth Bharat' Programme. It was launched by Union HRD Minister Prakash Javdekar in Kochi, Kerala.

The programme is an initiative of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) to prepare a physical Health and Fitness Profile Card for more than 12 lakhs of Kendriya Vidyalaya students.

Indian Navy's second LCU Mark IV L52 ship commissioned at Port Blair

Dr. Jagdish Mukhi, Lieutenant Governor, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, commissioned IN LCU L52 into the Indian Navy at Port Blair. IN LCU L52 is the second Landing Craft Utility (LCU) Mk-IV class to be inducted into the Indian Navy. The ship has been indigenously designed and built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers, Kolkata. The commissioning of L-52 is yet another manifestation of the potential

of the country's indigenous design and ship building capability.

LCU MK-IV ship is an amphibious ship with the primary role to transport and deploy Main Battle Tanks, Armoured Vehicles, troops and equipment from ship to shore. These ships would be based in the Andaman and Nicobar Command and can be deployed for multirole activities like beaching operations, search and rescue, disaster relief operations, supply and replenishment and evacuation from distant islands.

Environment Minister Launches "Harit Diwali, Swasth Diwali" Campaign

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, launched the "Harit Diwali, Swasth Diwali" campaign. Addressing a gathering of about 800 children from schools of Delhi and NCR, the Minister impressed upon the children the importance of their contribution towards reducing pollution by not bursting harmful fire crackers during Diwali.

As a part of the campaign, the Environment Ministry will undertake various activities to create awareness among various stakeholders and encourage people to participate in combating air pollution.

NHAI launches mobile App MyFASTag and FASTag Partner

National Highways Authority of India launched two mobile Apps - MyFASTag and FASTag Partner in New Delhi, to facilitate the availability of FASTags for Electronic Toll Collection. Speaking on the occasion the NHAI Chairman Shri Deepak Kumar said the cumbersome method of purchase and recharge of FASTags has been one of the major challenges with the ETC project. The mobile Apps launched will ease the process, making it possible to buy or recharge FASTags at the click of a mobile button.

Odisha govt and Facebook launches 'SheMeansBusiness' program

A program to train women entrepreneurs was launched by CM Naveen Panik. It was launched in partnership between Odisha's MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) department and Project Mission Shakti. Under this initiative, 25,000 women entrepreneurs and self-help group (SHG) members from the state will be given training on digital marketing skills within

by the end of 2018. Facebook will monitor the growth of the MSMEs in Odisha after imparting training to them in next one year.

Google, NSDC launch programme to improve Mobile Developer Ecosystem

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Google India on 8 August 2017 launched Android Skill Development programme to improve Mobile Developer Ecosystem.

The programme is aimed at imparting mobile development training on the Android and Web platform and improving the quality of mobile app development ecosystem in India. NSDC and Google India will also work together to focus on up-skilling Android trainers under the programme

Army to get six Apache attack helicopters

This is the first time that the Army will be able to operate attack helicopters as it has long been demanding its own fleet of such choppers besides the Air Force. The army has long been demanding a fleet of attack choppers for its own use.

Defense Acquisition Council (DAC) cleared a long-pending proposal. Six choppers will be procured for the army at a cost of Rs 4168 crore. Apache choppers are operated in the armed forces of United States, Israel and The Netherlands among other nations. The Boeing AH-64 Apache can seat a two-man crew and is equipped with nose-mounted sensor suite for target acquisition, night vision systems, four hardpoints mounted on stub-wing pylons capable of carrying hellfire missiles and Hydra 70 rocket pods.

India moves to revive TAPI gas pipeline

India will host the next steering committee meeting of the proposed 1,814 kilometre-long Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline. The decision was came during the sixth joint Inter-Governmental Committee (IGC) meeting on trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation.

The IGC discussions between both countries comprehensively reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations and took stock of the progress achieved in the areas of energy, security cooperation, civil aviation, information technology, science and technology, trade and economic cooperation, transport and connectivity, cultural and educational matters.

SPORTS

PV Sindhu & Saina Nehwal clinch medals 2017 BWF World Championships

PV Sindhu won the silver medal, whereas Saina Nehwal clinched bronze medal in 2017 World Badminton Championship held at Glasgow, Scotland (United Kingdom).

In the final match, Sindhu lost to Japan's Nozomi Okuhara by 19-21, 22-20, 20-22 score. This is for first time, Indian shuttlers have won two medals in the Championship.

Hockey India sacks head coach Roelant Oltmans

Hockey India sacked Roelant Oltmans, who served as the head coach of the men's hockey team. The step was taken following a three-day meeting of the Hockey India High Performance and Development Committee. Hockey India Selection Committee selection committee chairman Harbinder Singh stated that the decision was taken due to the unsatisfactory performance of the Indian team in 2016 and 2017.

Cristiano Ronaldo wins UEFA Men's Player of the Year Award

Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo in August 2017 was named the 2016-17 UEFA Men's Player of the Year Award. Ronaldo picked up the trophy for the second consecutive season and third time in total, having also received the accolade in 2013-14.

Lewis Hamilton wins 2017 Belgian Grand Prix

Lewis Hamilton on 27 August 2017 won the 2017 Belgian Grand Prix of Formula One (F1).

The race was held at Circuit de Spa-Franco champs Stave lot, Belgium. Second position was held by Sebastian Vettel (Germany), whereas third position was held by Daniel Ricciardo (Australia).

England striker Wayne Rooney retires from international football

Former England captain Wayne Rooney announced his retirement from international football, ending a 14-year career. With this, Rooney also leaves as England's most-capped outfield player with 119 appearances.

National Sports Awards 2017

The Union Government honored the National Sports Awards. Para athlete Devendra and hockey player Sardar Singh were honored with the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award.

Cricketer Cheteshwar Pujara and football player Oinam Bembem Devi have also been awarded for the top national sports award. They were given awards by President on national Sports Day.

Alexander Zverev beats Roger Federer to win 2017 Rogers Cup

Germany's Alexander Zverev defeated Roger Federer 6-3 6-4 to claim his second Masters 1000 title in Montreal, Canada. By claiming the 2017 Rogers Cup, Zverev became the first player outside the Big Four to win multiple Masters 1000 titles in a season since David Nalbandian in 2007.

Real Madrid beats Manchester United to win 2017 UEFA Super Cup

Real Madrid defeated Manchester United, the winners of the 2016-17 UEFA Europa League, to grab the 2017 UEFA Super Cup. Real Madrid won the match 2-1 for their fourth UEFA Super Cup title.

The match was played at the Philip II Arena in Skopje, Macedonia. It was the first UEFA final staged in the country.

Real Madrid's Isco was declared the Man of the Match

PERSON-IN-NEWS

Ashwani Lohani appointed as New Chairman of Railway Board

Former CMD of Air India, Ashwani Lohani has been named as the New Chairman of Railway Board following the resignation of A.K.Mital.

His appointment comes after A.K. Mital resigned from post, owing moral responsibility of Puri-Haridwar Utkal Express derailment in Uttar Pradesh due to several lapses in track maintenance work.

Prasoon Joshi appointed as new Chairman of CBFC

Noted Bollywood lyricist-screenwriter and ad guru Prasoon Joshi on Friday replaced Pahlaj Nihalani as CBFC chairperson.

Joining Prasoon Joshi on the Censor Board will be joined by Vidya Balan, Gautami Tadimalla, Narendra Kohli, Naresh Chandra, Neil Herbert, Vivek Agnihotri, TS Nagabharana, Ramesh Patange, Vani Tripathi, Jeevitha Rajasekhar and Mihir Bhuta among others.

M.Venkaiah Naidu sworn in as Vice President of India

Former Union Minister M Venkaiah Naidu was sworn in as 13th Vice President of India. He was administered the oath of office by President Ram Nath Kovind at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

After the swearing in he took charge as the Chairman of Rajya Sabha. He also chaired the proceedings of the Upper House. He was elected as the Vice President after defeating opposition candidate Gopal Krishna Gandhi.

Justice Dipak Misra appointed as 45th Chief Justice of India

The Union government on 8 August 2017 appointed Justice Dipak Misra as the 45th Chief Justice of India (CJI). Justice Misra sworn in as the 45th Chief Justice of India by President Ram Nath Kovind on 27 August 2017.

He succeeded incumbent Justice J S Khehar, who retired on 27 August 2017. Misra's name was recommended by Justice Khehar himself to succeed him as the next Chief Justice of India.

Senior bureaucrat Aparna appointed Executive Director at World Bank

Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani's Principal Secretary, S Aparna- a senior IAS officer has been appointed as the Executive Director at the World Bank in the United States.

The 1988- batch IAS officer has been appointed to the post for three years. She would be representing four nations- India, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka at the prestigious international body. The information was shared by an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

Aparna would be succeeding S C Garg, who was recently appointed as the Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs in the Union Ministry of Finance.

Rajiv Kumar appointed as new Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog

The Union government on 5 August 2017 appointed noted economist Rajiv Kumar as the new Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog. Kumar would be succeeding Arvind Panagariya, who recently announced his resignation in order to return to the field of academics.

Kumar, who holds a doctorate in economics from Oxford University and Lucknow University, is a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a public policy think-tank. He has also authored several books on the Indian economy and India's national security.

Dara Khosrowshahi appointed as CEO of Uber Technologies Inc

Dara Khosrowshahi has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Uber Technologies Inc. His appointment was approved by the Uber Board.

Prior to this appointment, Khosrowshahi was serving as the Chief Executive Officer of travel company Expedia Inc. He succeeds Travis Kalanick, Uber's co-founder who was expelled as CEO in June 2017 after shareholders representing about 40 per cent of the company's voting power signed a letter asking him to resign amid growing concern over his behavior.

Nandan Nilekani appointed as Chairman of Infosys Board

Nandan Nilekani was on 24 August 2017 appointed as the Non-Executive Chairman of Infosys Board, returning to the company ten years after he stepped down as its Chief Executive Officer.

The decision in this regard was taken at the meeting of the Board of Directors of Infosys. Meanwhile, UB Pravin Rao will continue to serve as the interim CEO and MD at Infosys. Nilekani's appointment came amid high-level exits from the company as CEO Vishal Sikka, Chairman of the board R Seshasayee and Co-Chair Ravi Venkatesan resigned from the Infosys board. Moreover, Directors Jeffery S Lehman and John Etchemendy also resigned with immediate effect.

Sanjiv Gupta appointed as President and MD of General Motors India

Sanjiv Gupta was appointed as the President and Managing Director (MD) of General Motors India. He joined the office on 1 September 2017. Prior to this

appointment, Gupta was serving as the Chief Financial Officer.

Gupta succeeded Kaher Kazem, who has been appointed as the President and CEO of General Motors Korea. Gupta will also continue to serve as Chief Financial Officer.

DEATHS

Former Manipur CM Rishang Keishing passes away

Former Manipur Chief Minister and Veteran Congress leader Rishang Keishing passed away in Imphal following a brief illness. He was 96.

He was freedom fighter and member of India's first parliament (1952-57). He had served as the Chief Minister of Manipur for four terms from 1980 to 1988 & 1994 to 1997. He retired from the Rajya Sabha as its oldest member in 2014 after serving two terms since being elected in 2002.

Renowned scientist Pushpa Mitra Bhargava passes away

Pushpa Mitra (PM) Bhargava, a veteran molecular biologist and a ardent critic of Genetically Modified crops, passed away. Bhargava was the Founder-Director of Hyderabad-based Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB). He founded the CCMB in 1977 as an institution for research in basic biology and for seeking its application for the benefit of society.

Dhrupad maestro Ustad Hussain Sayeeduddin Dagar passes away

Ustad Hussain Sayeeduddin Dagar, a classical vocalist and one of the leading exponents of Dhrupad tradition, passed away following a brief illness. He was 78 and is survived by his wife and two sons.

Known to his admirers as Sayeed Bhai, Sayeeduddin belongs to Dagar family of musicians that is the only one to practice Dhrupad, a form of Hindustani classical vocal music. He is the 19th generation of the family practising this form of music