

CURRENT AFFAIRS SNIPPETS: OCTOBER 2018

BUSINESS & TRADE

NITI Aayog & Microsoft sign agreement to bring in AI tools for agriculture and healthcare

Government's premier think tank NITI Aayog has signed agreement with Microsoft India to deploy AI technologies to address challenges in agriculture & healthcare & promote adoption of local language computing among others. This partnership will help NITI Aayog to move beyond pilots and understand how to scale AI implementation in sectors characterized by preponderance of public goods.

BSE becomes first stock exchange to launch commodity derivative contracts

India's leading bourse BSE became first stock exchange in the country to launch commodity derivative contracts. It has launched contracts in popular commodities like gold (1kg) and silver (30kg). This launch comes after unified exchange regime kicked off from 1st October 2018.

Tea Board of India planned to launch an app named Chai Sahay

An app aims at guiding small growers, whose share in total tea production is increasing.

GOVERNMENT

CSIR developed less polluting Firecrackers named – SWAS, SAFAL and STAR

Green crackers are so named because they do not contain harmful chemicals that would cause air pollution. These crackers are 15-20 percent cheaper than the conventional ones. SWAS stands for safe water releaser, SAFAL stands for safe minimal aluminum and STAR stands for safe thermite cracker.

India Mobile Congress 2018 held in New Delhi

The second edition of India Mobile Congress 2018 was held in New Delhi from 25-27 October, 2018. It was organised by Department of Telecommunications and Cellular Operators Association of India. The theme was "New Digital Horizons. Connect. Create. Innovate".

HRD Ministry launches SPARC Scheme to promote research in Science

In October 2018, the Union Ministry of HRD has launched Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) scheme. It aims to improve the research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions and the best institutions in the world.

HRD Ministry launches IMPRESS Scheme to promote research in Social Sciences

In October 2018, the Central Government has announced formal launch Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS) scheme to promote research in Social Sciences. The objective of this scheme is to identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society. The government support would include a total funding of Rs.414 crore on 1500 projects for policy themes in the social sciences at the cost of Rs. 20-25 lakh per project.

Ministry of Environment launches Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali campaign

Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has launched Harit Diwali-Swasth Diwali campaign. It aims to reduce adverse environmental conditions especially pollution in the country after post Diwali celebrations due to excessive bursting of crackers which contributes significantly to air and noise pollution.

India's longest river bridge will be built on Brahmaputra river in Assam

India's longest river bridge with total length of 19.3 kilometers will be built on Brahmaputra river in Assam. This bridge will connect Dhubri of Assam to Fulbarani of Meghalaya. This bridge will reduce the distance between these two places by 203 kms and also travel time. At present, India's largest river bridge is Dhola-Sadia bridge, its length is 9.15 kilometers.

QS Asia Rankings 2019: Eight Universities from India among top 100

IIT-Bombay has topped the Quacquarelli Symonds Asia University Rankings from India followed by

IIT Delhi and IIT Madras. Eight Indian universities have figured among the top 100 in the list of Asia's top 50 universities. IIT-Bombay, IIT-Delhi, IIT-Madras, IISc Bangalore, IIT-Kharagpur, IIT-Kanpur, Delhi University and IIT-Roorkee are the Indian institutions in the top 100.

Bihar's Shahi litchi gets Geographical Indication tag

Shahi Litchi from Bihar has received GI tag from Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry and Intellectual Property India. The GI registration was done in name of Muzaffarpur-based Litchi Growers Association of Bihar, which had applied for the tag. Shahi Litchi is famous for sweet, juicy, unique flavour and aroma is mostly grown in Muzaffarpur and adjoining areas of East Champaran, Vaishali, Samastipur and Begusarai districts of state. Bihar produces 40% of the litchis grown in India on 38% of the area.

Ask Disha: IRCTC launches AI chatbot to answer user queries

IRCTC has launched Artificial Intelligence powered chatbot- Ask Disha (Digital Interaction to Seek Help Anytime) to help its users answer various queries. The chatbot is special computer programme designed to simulate conversation with users, especially over the internet. It has gone live on IRCTC's next-generation e-ticketing website and soon will be integrated on the IRCTC Rail Connect Android app.

Alphonso mango from 5 districts of Maharashtra gets Geographical Indication tag

Chennai based Geographical Indication Registry and Intellectual Property India has granted Alphonso mango from 5 districts of Maharashtra gets Geographical Indication (GI) tag. These five districts Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg, Palghar, Thane and Raigad are from western Konkan coastal region of State. With this recognition, Alphonso has joined list of 325 products from India with GI tag. Alphonso, better known as 'Hapus' in Maharashtra is considered as king of mangoes.

Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018: Haryana ranked Best State, Satara District of Maharashtra ranked Best District

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently conferred Swachh Survekshan Grameen Awards 2018 to top ranked states and districts. Haryana was ranked as

best State, Satara District of Maharashtra was ranked as best district. Uttar Pradesh was rewarded for maximum citizens' participation.

Digi Yatra: Government releases policy on biometric based digital processing of passengers at airports

Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has released policy on biometric based digital processing of passengers at airports called Digi Yatra. The initiative seeks to promote paperless and hassle-free air travel. It will be operational by end of February, 2019 at Bengaluru and Hyderabad airports.

IAF launches MedWatch mobile health app

Indian Air Force (IAF) has launched 'MedWatch' mobile health app to provide health information to users, including first-aid and other health and nutritional topics. It was launched on 8 October on the occasion of IAF's 85th anniversary. It is first of its kind mobile health app built by any of the three armed forces

Government launches SATAT initiative to promote Compressed Bio-Gas production

Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas has launched Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) aimed at providing sustainable alternative towards affordable transportation. The initiative was launched with PSU Oil Marketing Companies i.e. IOC, BPCL and HPCL.

India's first engine-less, semi-high speed train named 'Train 18' unveiled

India's first engineless train 'Train 18' made a debut on tracks in Chennai on 29th October 2018. This Train 18 is driven by a self-propulsion module sans a separate locomotive (engine). It is capable of running at a speed of up to 160 kmph.

INDIA'S GLOBAL RANKINGS

Global Hunger Index 2018: Key Findings

India has been ranked at the 103rd position among 119 countries. India is among the 45 countries that have "serious levels of hunger.

India is ranked below many neighbouring countries, including China (25th spot), Nepal (72), Myanmar (68), Sri Lanka (67) and Bangladesh (86). GHI scores for South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara reflect serious levels of hunger.

INTERNATIONAL

13th India-Japan Annual Summit

The annual bilateral summit of India –Japan held on 28-29 October 2018 in Japan. The Indian prime minister visited Japan to attend the summit. The partnership between the two countries has been transformed a lot and it has now become as a ‘special strategic and global partnership’.

Mahinda Rajapaksha sworn in as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena has sacked Ranil Wickremesinghe, incumbent prime minister of Sri Lanka and appointed former President Mahinda Rajapaksha as new Prime Minister.

China opens world’s longest sea bridge linking Hong Kong, Macau and Zhuhai

China's launched the world’s longest Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau sea bridge with total length of 55 km. The new sea bridge will connect the east and west sides of Pearl River Delta of the South China Sea, connecting two Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau with Zhuhai i.e. mainland China.

Bhutan general elections: Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa party got majority

Dravk Nyamrup Tshogpa Party has won the recent general elections held in Bhutan. This party won 30 of the National Assembly’s 47 seats. The National Assembly is the Lower House of Bhutan Parliament. This was overall third general election since democracy was adopted in Bhutan in 2008 and the first general elections held same year itself.

Indian-American Gita Gopinath appointed as Chief Economist of IMF

She will take over as IMF chief economist after Maurice Obstfeld retires in December 2018. It makes her second Indian after former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan to hold the position.

SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY, AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

Researchers developed a web-based tool to monitor fake news on Facebook, Twitter

A web-based tool to monitor the spread of fake news on social media platforms has been developed by the Researchers from the University of Michigan in the US. The tool uses a Platform Health Metric called the Iffy Quotient and will supposedly draw data from two external entities namely NewsWhip and Media Bias/Fact Checker.

India, Iran, Afghanistan hold first trilateral on Chabahar port project

The first trilateral meeting between India, Afghanistan and Iran of coordination Council of Chabahar Agreement was held in Tehran, capital city of Iran. India, Iran and Afghanistan in May 2016, had signed agreement which entailed establishment of transit and transport corridor among three countries using Chabahar Port as one of regional hubs.

IND-INDO CORPAT: 32nd edition of India-Indonesia coordinated patrol being held in Indonesia

The 32nd edition of India-Indonesia coordinated patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) is being held in Belawan, Indonesia from 11 – 27 October 2018. Under it, ships and aircraft from both countries will undertake patrolling on respective sides of 236 nautical miles long International Maritime Boundary Line.

Sahyog HOP TAC -2018: First India-Vietnam Coast Guards exercise held in Bay of Bengal

The maiden joint exercise of Coast Guards of India and Vietnam “Sahyog HOP TAC -2018” was held in the Bay of Bengal off the Chennai coast, Tamil Nadu. It was aimed at strengthening the working level relationship between coast guards of both navies. The exercise was aimed at acquainting coast guards of both countries with each other’s’ capabilities and strengthening working level relationship to rescue lives at sea.

IBSAMAR-VI: Joint Maritime exercise between Indian, Brazilian and South African navies held

The sixth edition of IBSAMAR, a joint multi-national maritime exercise between Indian, Brazilian and South African Navies was held at Simons Town, South Africa. The aim of this maritime exercise is to undertake collective training for participating navies, building interoperability and mutual understanding as well as sharing of best practices.

SPORTS

Youth Olympic Games 2018

Motto - Live the future, Mascot - Pandi

Manu Bhaker - Indian contingent flag bearer during opening ceremony

Jeremy Lalrinnunga - Indian contingent flag bearer during closing ceremony

India - 13 (4 Gold, 9 Silver, 0 Bronze)

Gold medalists (4)

- Jeremy Lalrinnunga - men's 62kg Weightlifting
- Saurabh Choudhary - men's 10m air pistol
- Manu Bhaker - women's 10m air pistol
- Lakshya Sen - Mixed team Badminton

AWARDS & HONORS

Winners of United Nations Human Rights Prize – 2018

The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights was announced recently by María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd Session of United Nations General Assembly. The winners of 2018 award are:

Asma Jahangir – Pakistan's late human rights activist

Rebeca Gyumi – A Tanzanian human rights activist

Joenia Wapichana – Brazil's first indigenous lawyer
Front Line Defenders – A human rights organisation of Ireland.

Global Agriculture Leadership Awards – 2018

Prof. M.S. Swaminathan won the First World Agriculture Prize 2018. He is known as Father of Green Revolution in India and is renowned worldwide for his basic and applied research in genetics, cytogenetics, radiation and chemical mutagenesis, food and biodiversity conservation.

PM Narendra Modi awarded 2018 Seoul Peace Prize

Seoul Peace Prize Committee has decided to confer 2018 Seoul Peace Prize to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is the fourteenth recipient of this award. PM Modi was selected for this prestigious award in recognition of his dedication for improving international cooperation, raising global economic growth, accelerating Human Development of people in India by fostering economic growth and furthering development of democracy through anti-corruption and social integration efforts.

New Academy Prize in Literature: Maryse Conde wins alternative Nobel Literature Prize

Guadeloupean author Maryse Conde was awarded New Academy Prize in Literature, an alternative award formed in protest to Nobel Literature Prize. She was selected from 47 authors who were nominated by Swedish librarians and voted on by nearly 33,000 people from around the world.

William Nordhaus, Paul Romer awarded 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics

American economists William Nordhaus and Paul Romer were jointly awarded 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics Sciences for integrating climate change and technological innovation into macroeconomic analysis. Their findings have significantly broadened scope of economic analysis by constructing models that explain how market economy interacts with nature and knowledge. Their studies has helped to address some of current time's most basic and pressing questions about creating long-term sustained and sustainable growth.

Frances Arnold, George Smith and Gregory Winter win 2018 Nobel Chemistry Prize

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has selected US scientists Frances Arnold and George Smith and British researcher Gregory Winter for the 2018 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. They were selected for harnessing power of evolution to develop enzymes and antibodies that have led to new pharmaceuticals and biofuels. Chemistry was third of this year's Nobel Prizes. Frances Arnold shared the half price and George Smith and Gregory Winter share other half of the prize.

Arthur Ashkin, Gerard Mourou and Donna Strickland win 2018 Nobel Physics Prize

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has selected three scientists Arthur Ashkin (USA),

Gerard Mourou (France) and Donna Strickland (Canada) for the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physics. They were selected for groundbreaking inventions in the field of laser physics. Arthur Ashkin received the half prize and remaining half was shared equally by Gérard Mourou and Donna Strickland.

James P. Allison and Tasuku Honjo awarded 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine

The 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was jointly awarded to two immunologists James P. Allison (US) and Tasuku Honjo (Japan) for their discovery of Immune checkpoint therapy i.e. cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation. It was announced by Nobel Assembly at Sweden's Karolinska Institute.

PERSONALITIES

Shekhar Mande appointed as Director-General of CSIR

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has appointed Dr. Shekhar Mande as the Director General of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Secretary of the Department of Scientific and Research (DSIR). He will succeed Girish Sahni who superannuated in August 2018.

Tushar Mehta appointed as new Solicitor General of India

The Appointments Committee of Union Cabinet has approved appointment Tushar Mehta has been appointed as the new Solicitor General of India. He will replace Ranjit Kumar, who had stepped down sometime back and shall hold office till June 30, 2020. Prior to this appointment he was Additional Solicitor General.

Justice Ranjan Gogoi sworn in as 46th Chief Justice of India

Justice Ranjan Gogoi was sworn-in as 46th Chief Justice of India. He was administered oath of the office by President Ram Nath Kovind. With this, Justice Ranjan Gogoi is the first Chief Justice of India from the north-east. He succeeded CJI Dipak Misra who retired from the office. He will have

tenure of about 13 months, from October 3, 2018 till his retirement on November 17, 2019.