

Daily Current Affairs 15-17 September 2018

Finance

State-owned Bank of Baroda, Dena Bank, Vijaya Bank to be merged: Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

- India plans to merge three state-run banks, Bank of Baroda, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank, the financial services secretary said on Monday, as part of efforts to clean up the country's banking system.
- The government will continue to provide capital support to the merged bank, expected to be India's third largest, Rajeev Kumar told reporters.
- Banking sector reforms are a major plank of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration to revive credit growth, which has slowed to multi-decade lows as banks struggle with bad loans.
- New Delhi owns majority stakes in 21 lenders, which account for more than two-thirds of banking assets in Asia's third-biggest economy.
- But these banks also account for the lion's share of more than \$150 billion in sour assets plaguing the sector, and need billions of dollars in new capital in the next two years to meet global Basel III capital norms.

India

India's first 'smart fence' pilot project inaugurated

- India's first 'smart fence' pilot project was inaugurated by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh along the India-Pakistan International Border in Ploura, Jammu and Kashmir on September 17, 2018.
- The Union Minister launched the project from the BSF Headquarters during his one-day visit to the state. The initiative has been taken up by the Border Security Force (BSF), as part of their comprehensive integrated border management system.
- The pilot project involves deploying of laser-activated fences and technology-enabled barriers to plug vulnerable gaps along the frontiers.
- The smart fencing uses a number of devices for surveillance, communication and data storage.
- The innovative system provides for round-the-clock surveillance on the border, even in different weather conditions be it dust storm, fog or rain.

India, Malta sign MoUs on maritime, tourism cooperation

- India and Malta on Monday signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) relating to tourism, maritime cooperation and exchanges between the Foreign Service Institute of India and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta.

- In addition, India has offered Malta to take advantage of its highly skilled professionals in the field of Information and Technology (IT), financial services, health, pharmaceutical, transport, freight and tourism.
- Speaking at the release of joint statement after his talks with President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca on Monday, Vice President Venkaiah Naidu said that these MoUs are a good move in creating modern framework for enhancing relations between the two countries.

Chhattisgarh starts pilot run of Ayushman Bharat across 1,033 hospitals

- The pilot run of the Modi government's ambitious health insurance scheme for all--- Ayushman Bharat---has started in Chhattisgarh.
- The national health protection scheme was launched in Chhattisgarh's restive Bijapur district this April by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The scheme, which will finally roll out on September 25 across India, will cover 107.4 million poor and vulnerable families.
- "The pilot run of the scheme started in 1,033 hospitals across the state," Chhattisgarh's health commissioner R Prasanna said. Of the hospitals selected, 608 are public and 425 are private, he added.

India's first underwater robotic drone EyeROV TUNA handed over to NPOL

- India's first underwater robotic drone EyeROV TUNA was handed over to Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- This underwater drone will be used by NPOL for research and development activities which in turn would result in commercial product for defence purposes.
- EyeROV TUNA was designed and developed indigenously by Kochi-based start-up IROV Technologies Pvt Ltd (EyeROV).
- It is smart micro-ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) or underwater drone.
- It is designed to perform visual inspection and surveys of submerged structures up to depth of 100 metres.

Union Power Ministry launches Chiller Star Labelling Program to improve energy efficiency

- The Union Ministry of Power on September 14, 2018 launched the Chiller Star Labelling Program, an ambitious program to encourage the deployment of energy efficient chiller systems in the country.
- Initially, the program is launched on voluntary basis and will be valid up to December 31, 2020.
- The Chiller Star Labelling Program envisages providing star rating in terms of its energy performance.
- The program has been formulated by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- BEE has developed an online registration platform for easy and expeditious approval under this initiative.
- The chillers manufacturers will be able to register online for availing appropriate star rating of chiller equipment.

DRDO conducts first successful test of man portable-anti-tank guided missile

- India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) on September 15, 2018 conducted the first successful flight test of its new indigenously designed and developed low weight man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MP-ATGM) at Ahmednagar test range in Maharashtra.
- The first successful test firing was followed by another test launch on September 16, which also took place at the same test range. The two successful missions were conducted to test different ranges of the missile, including its maximum range capability. According to DRDO, the two launches met all the test objectives.
- The man-portable anti-tank guided missile (MP-ATGM) is a third-generation anti-tank guided missile, which has been under development with the DRDO in partnership with Indian defense contractor VEM Technologies Ltd. since 2015.

Union HRD Ministry to confer Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar 2017-18

- The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Prakash Javadekar will confer the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar 2017-18 on September 18, 2018 at Dr Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi, as a part of the Swachhata Hi Seva campaign launched by PM Narendra Modi on September 15, 2018.
- This year, for the first time, the award has been extended to private schools besides government and government aided schools.
- The award was launched as a follow up to the Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative launched in 2014. Under Swachh Vidyalaya Initiative, a record number of 417796 toilets were constructed in 261400 schools, including 190887 girls' toilets in one year up to August 15, 2015.

Government to convert 1.5 lakh Primary Health Centers into Wellness Centers

- Union Health Minister JP Nadda announced that 1.5 lakh Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and sub-centres will be converted into wellness centers by 2022.
- These centres will facilitate screening of every individual aged 30 for blood pressure, diabetes, tuberculosis, breast cancer and leprosy among others.
- The Government is also set to launch the flagship Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission from September 25, 2018.

15th Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas to be held at Varanasi

- The 15th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas will be held in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh from January 21 to January 23, 2019.
- The theme of the 2019 will be "Role of Indian Diaspora in Building a New India".
- The event will be organised by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in association with Uttar Pradesh government.
- It will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Mauritian counterpart Pravind Jugnauth.

ISRO inaugurates S–Band Polarimetry Doppler Weather Radar at Sriharikota spaceport

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) inaugurated S–Band Polarimetry Doppler Weather Radar (DWR) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota spaceport, Andhra Pradesh.
- It will be used for observation of weather system up to range of 500 km and also for early warning of severe weather events.
- The Doppler Weather Radar (DWR) was indigenously developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL), Bengaluru under ToT (Training of Trainers) from ISRO.
- It is the seventh radar of such type manufactured in the country under “Make in India”.

Indian Coast Guard commissions indigenously built patrol vessel Vijaya

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) commissioned indigenously built patrol vessel ICGS Vijaya in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- It is second in the series of 98 m offshore patrol vessels (OPVs) commissioned by ICG.
- It was designed and built indigenously by Larsen & Toubro (L&T).
- This 98-metre long ship can carry one twin engine helicopter and four high speed boats, including two inflatable boats for boarding.
- It is fitted with advanced technology navigation and communication equipment and sensors.

Indo-US joint military exercise ‘Yudh Abhyas 2018’ begins in Uttarakhand

- Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2018, a joint military exercise of Indian and US armies, commenced on September 16, 2018 at Chaubattia, Uttarakhand with the unfurling of the national flags of both countries on the tunes of "Jana Gana Mana" and "The Star Spangled Banner".
- Indian and US soldiers gave a ceremonial salute to the two senior most officers of the US and Indian side reviewing the ceremony. The exercise will conclude on September 29, 2018.
- Exercise Yudh Abhyas is a series of one of the longest running joint military training and a major ongoing bilateral defence cooperation endeavour between India and the US.
- This is the 14th edition of the joint military exercise hosted alternately by both countries. The two-week exercise will witness participation of about 350 personnel of the US Army and similar strength of Garud Division of the Indian Army.

ISRO launches two UK satellites aboard PSLV-C42

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on September 16, 2018 successfully launched its polar satellite launch vehicle (PSLV) C42 carrying two earth observation satellites for the United Kingdom.
- The launch vehicle- PSLV-C42 lifted off at 10.08 PM from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- The 44.4 metres launch vehicle weighing 230.4 tons carried two earth observing satellites - NovaSAR and S1-4 of Surrey Satellite Technology Limited, UK. There was no Indian satellite on the flight.

PM Narendra Modi launches Swachhata hi Seva Campaign

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 15, 2018 launched the mega countrywide campaign- Swachhata hi Seva Campaign 2018. The fortnight-long campaign was launched by the Prime Minister through video conferencing.
- In the elaborate launch event, PM Modi interacted with a cross-section of people from 18 locations across the country including school-children, jawans, spiritual leaders, members of milk and agricultural cooperatives, media persons, local government representatives, railway employees, Self Help Groups, and Swachhagrahis, among others.
- The 2018 campaign follows the success of the 2017 campaign and will culminate with the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention (MGISC) from September 29 to October 2, 2018, which also marks the start of the 150th birth year celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi.

Awards

Dr. Raghupati Singhania conferred with civilian honour of Mexico

- Chairman and MD, JK Tyre & Industries Ltd., Dr. Raghupati Singhania has been conferred with 'Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle', the highest honour accorded to non-nationals by the Government of Mexico.
- Melba Pría, Ambassador of Mexico to India presented the award to Dr. Singhania on behalf of the President of Mexico on the eve of 128th National Day of Mexico.
- The top honor is in recognition of Dr. Singhania's exemplary leadership, his noteworthy services towards humanity and his efforts to strengthen bilateral ties between India and Mexico.

Kerala Tourism wins two Gold awards of Pacific Asia Travel Association

- Kerala Tourism won two Gold Awards of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for its innovative marketing campaigns.
- These awards were won by Kerala Tourism's Yalla Kerala print campaign and Live Inspired Posters under PATA's Travel Advertisement Print and Travel Poster categories respectively.
- Both campaign and posters were developed and designed by Stark Communications, the advertising agency of Kerala Tourism.
- Yalla Kerala was print media travel advertisement campaign launched in Gulf countries. It showcased state's greenery and backwaters.
- Live Inspired Poster was developed for third edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale (KMB), the biggest contemporary art show in South Asia.

Appointments

SBI appoints Prashant Kumar as CFO

- The State Bank of India (SBI) has announced Prashant Kumar as the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).
- A Science graduate and a Law graduate from Delhi University, Kumar joined the bank in the year 1983, as Probationary Officer and since then he has held various important portfolios in Bank.
- As DMD (HR) & CDO he was spearheading the largest Human Resources Department of the Banking Industry consisting of a workforce of more than two lakh seventy thousand employees and the largest training infrastructure in the country in the Banking system.

Reports

National AIDS Control Organisation releases HIV Estimations 2017 Report

- The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) on September 14, 2018 released the HIV Estimations 2017 report.
- The HIV Estimations 2017 report is 14th in the series of HIV Estimations launched earlier under the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP). The first round of HIV estimation was done in 1998, while the latest round was done in 2015.
- NACO undertakes HIV estimations in every two years in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) - National Institute of Medical Statistics (NIMS).
- The report highlights the significant achievement of nation's response on AIDS prevention as well as on treatment front.
- It indicates that there is no place for gratification as the country aims to achieve the ambitious goal of attaining the 'End of AIDS' by 2030.
- As per the report, India had around 21.40 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV) with adult prevalence of 0.22 percent in 2017.
- Around 87.58 thousand new HIV infections and 69.11 thousand AIDS related deaths happened in 2017.

World

Time magazine sold to Salesforce co-founder Marc Benioff

- Meredith Corp. is selling Time magazine for 190 million USD in cash to Marc Benioff, co-founder of Salesforce and his wife.
- The Benioffs are purchasing Time personally, and the transaction is unrelated to Salesforce.com, where Benioff is chairman, co-CEO and co-founder, reported ABC News.
- As per the announcement by Meredith, the Benioffs will not be involved in the daily operations or journalistic decisions at Time and the current executive leadership team of the magazine will continue to take care of these.

Nepal and China conducts second Mt Everest Friendship Exercise in Sichuan province

- The second edition of Nepal-China joint military exercise named Mt Everest Friendship Exercise 2018 (Sagarmatha Friendship-2018) commenced in China's southwestern Sichuan province.
- The 12 day long joint exercise will focus on combating terror and disaster management trainings.
- Sagarmatha is the Nepali name for Mt Everest, which stands in between both the countries.
- This will be the second time that Nepal Army will participate in joint military drill with People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China.

Nasa satellite ICESat-2 launched to measure Earth's ice changes

- NASA satellite ICESat-2, designed to precisely measure changes in Earth's ice sheets, glaciers, sea ice and vegetation, was launched into polar orbit from California.
- The mission aims to advance knowledge of how the ice sheets of Greenland and Antarctica contribute to sea level rise.
- The melt from those ice sheets alone has raised global sea level by more than 1 millimeter a year recently.

Days

International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer observed

- The International Day for Preservation of Ozone Layer was observed globally on September 16, 2018 with the theme 'Keep Cool and Carry On: The Montreal Protocol'.
- The day was designated by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 19, 1994.
- The Day commemorates the date in 1987 when the Montreal Protocol was signed on substances that deplete the ozone layer.
- Montreal Protocol is an international treaty designed to protect ozone layer by phasing out production of numerous Ozone Depleting Substances (ODSs) that are responsible for ozone depletion.

International Day of Democracy 2018 observed globally

- The International Day of Democracy was observed across the world on September 15, 2018. The day provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world.
- The theme of the 2018 International Day of Democracy was 'Democracy under Strain: Solutions for a Changing World'.