

PM Modi held Informal Meeting in Hamburg to discuss terrorism



The leaders of the 5 BRICS nations had an informal meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Hamburg, Germany on 7 July 2017.

- This was in run up to the forthcoming 9th BRICS Summit scheduled to be held in September 2017 in Xiamen, China.
- During the meet, the leaders discussed preparations and priorities for the forthcoming Xiamen BRICS Summit.
- In addition, President Xi, the leader of the host country for the September Xiamen BRICS Summit said he looked forward to welcoming the BRICS leaders.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was a participant of the meet mentioned that BRICS has been a strong voice and needs to show leadership on terrorism and global economy.
- He stressed that G20 should collectively oppose terrorism financing, franchises, safe havens, support and sponsors.

EPFO inks agreement with 4 private banks to collect PF dues



The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) on 5 July 2017 inked an agreement with four private banks and Bank of Baroda for collection of provident fund dues from employers and payments to its subscribers.

- It is the first time that the EPFO has tied up with private banks. These four banks are ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank.
- Before, only State Bank of India was authorised to collect contributions from employers and make payment to employees.
- The agreement will help the EPFO save about Rs 300 crore annually as the five banks have agreed to zero transaction charges.
- Bandaru Dattatreya, Union Labour and Employment Minister, stated that "With today's agreement, we have tied up with 10 banks now to collect provident fund contribution and pay dues to the workers.
- EPFO settles around 1.16 crore claims every year and collects Rs 75000 crore annually from establishments under the EPF Act."

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Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passes GST Bill



The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Friday passed the state GST Bill 2017 amidst opposition boycott, making it the last state of the country to join the new tax regime.

- The bill entitled the Jammu and Kashmir Goods and Services Tax Bill 2017 moved by finance minister Haseeb Drabu was adopted by a voice vote as all opposition members decided to boycott the proceedings, accusing the government of undermining the special status of the state by seeking a presidential order for extending the GST regime.
- Drabu said the GST regime will roll out in the state at midnight tonight, making Jammu and Kashmir the last state to join the new tax regime.
- Before moving the bill for consideration and passing by the state assembly, Drabu read out the contents of the presidential order pertaining to the special status of the state and its exclusive taxation powers.
- “Although there is no tradition of tabling a presidential order in the assembly, we are starting a new tradition in the democracy of the state by tabling this presidential order in the House.

Uttarakhand to have its own ‘Super-30’



Taking cue from the famous „Super 30“, run by Anand Kumar in Bihar, the Uttarakhand government has launched its own version of „Super-30“ to improve higher education.

- Super 30 coaches meritorious students for Joint Entrance Exam (JEE).
- These students are taken from underprivileged families who can’t afford expensive coaching.
- Moreover, the Uttarakhand government has also introduced similar facility for civil services aspirants, Higher Education minister Dhan Singh Rawat said at a function held at the Himalayan University Jolly Grant to award meritorious students.
- Announcing a third scheme for postgraduates, Rawat said 100 such meritorious students will also be selected every year for doing PHD and will be provided with financial assistance by the government.

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India likely to clock GDP growth of 6.9 per cent this fiscal: BMI Research



- Indian economy is expected to recover in the coming quarters and the country is expected to clock a real GDP growth of 6.9 per cent in this financial year, says a report.

- According to a report by BMI Research, India's growth is expected to pick up following the negative ramifications from the demonetisation drive in November 2016, but weak public banks will likely cap

the recovery.

- Real GDP growth slowed substantially to 6.1 per cent year-on-year in the fourth quarter of 2016-17.
- The Fitch Group company, noted that the negative effects from the demonetisation measure is already wearing off, and the Indian economy will likely benefit from positive demographic trends, greater external stability (due to improved terms of trade from low oil prices), and continued reforms that should help to improve the country's admittedly poor business environment.
- The report, however, noted that the public banking sector is still weak and plagued with mounting non-performing assets, and it is likely to weigh on India's growth potential.

PM Modi visits Haifa, pays homage to Indian World War I heroes



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday visited the Indian cemetery in Haifa, Israel, and paid homage to Indian soldiers whose bravery in 1918's Battle of Haifa is the stuff of legend.

- The Indian Army commemorates September 23 every year as Haifa Day to pay its respects to the two Indian Cavalry Regiments that helped liberate the city.
- In the autumn of 1918, the Indian Brigade was a part of the Allied Forces sweeping northwards through Palestine in what is seen as the last great cavalry campaign in history.
- Captain Aman Singh Bahadur and Dafadar Jor Singh were awarded the Indian Order of Merit and Captain Anop Singh and 2nd Lt Sagat Singh were awarded the Military Cross (MC) as recognition for their bravery in this battle.

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- In 2012, the municipality of Haifa decided to immortalise the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers, many of whom are buried in the cemetery, by including their stories in school curricula.
- The municipality also decided to organise a ceremony every year to commemorate the role of the Indian Army in liberating the city from Turks after almost 402 years.

Italy passes bill making 'Torture' crime under national law



Italy has finally passed a bill making torture a crime under national law, after years of parliamentary back-and-forth.

- The bill was passed on 5 July 2017 with 198 lawmakers backing the legislation, 35 opposing it and 104 abstaining.
- It aims to make torture punishable by four to 10 years in prison and 12 years for members of the security forces.
- Rome signed the UN Convention against Torture in 1984 but had never transferred it into national legislation.
- Torture is defined under the law as intense physical suffering or psychological trauma verifiably caused by violence, grave threats or cruel actions.
- In 2015 the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had blasted Italy for police violence against anti-globalisation activists on the sidelines of the 2001 G8 summit in Genoa, ruling that officers' actions against protesters sheltering in a school were similar to torture.
- Several members of the Italian security forces were convicted after the violence but this did not include any officers who had been at the scene.

Indian men's wrestling team for World Championships selected



Olympic bronze medallist Yogeshwar Dutt and reigning Commonwealth Games champion Amit Kumar were among the 16 male wrestlers selected on Tuesday to represent India in the World Championships to be held in Las Vegas between September 7 and 12.

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- The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) selection committee picked the grapplers of both the Greco-Roman and Free Style categories during the selection trials conducted at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium here.
- In the hard fought bout of Free Style 65 kg category, Yogeshwar beat Asian Championships gold medallist Amit Dhankhar 6-3, while in the 74 kg category, Olympian Narsingh Yadav beat Parveen Rana from Railway Sports Promotion Board 6-5 in a very close clash.
- In the 57 kg category, 2013 World Championships silver medallist Amit Kumar overcame Sandeep Tomar of Services Sports Control Board 3-2.
- Asian Games 2014 medallist Mausam Khatri (97 kg) also booked his berth for the World Championships as he ousted Satywart Kadian 6-0.
- In the 61 kg category, Sonu from Haryana has only been selected for the Kazakhstan Tournament and will have to give final trial against Bajrang before the World Championships.
- The 2013 World Championships bronze medallist Bajrang couldn't participate in the trials due to injury.

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