

**NATIONAL****Karmapa now a Dominican citizen:**

The 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, who has been out of India since May 2017, has taken the citizenship and passport of Dominica, a Caribbean island country. The passport of Dominica allowed Karmapa the visa-free entry into many Commonwealth countries.

**Karma Kagyu school:**

The Karma Kagyu lineage belongs to one of the 4 main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. As a lineage of direct oral transmission it places particular emphasis on meditation and the realization of the direct experience of mind gained through the guidance of a teacher.

The Karma Kagyu lineage has its roots in the teachings of the historical Buddha and developed into a practical way to enlightenment in India and Tibet.

For over a 1000 years Buddhist Masters (Mahasiddhas) such as Naropa and Maitripa in India as well as the famous Tibetan Yogis Marpa and Milarepa shaped the lineage as a practical everyday practice for lay people.

**Karmapa:** Since the 12th century the Karmapas have been the heads of the Karma Kagyu lineage and responsible for the continuation of this direct transmission lineage.

**Amendments to the Citizenship Rules, 2009**

Union Home Ministry has notified amendments to the Citizenship Rules, 2009. The Centre has made the changes under Section 18 of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

The amendments seek to include a separate column in the citizenship form for applicants belonging to six minority communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

Under the amendments, a separate entry in the form will ask the applicant: "Do you belong to one of the minority communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, Sikhs and Christians?"

**What necessitated this?**

The contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016, is pending in Parliament. A parliamentary committee has been examining the Bill. It has run into strong resistance in Assam because it will pave the way for giving citizenship mostly to illegal Hindu migrants from Bangladesh in Assam, who came after March 1971, in violation of the 1985 Assam Accord.

**Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016:**

- The Citizenship Amendment Bill was proposed in Lok Sabha on July 19, amending the Citizenship Act of 1955.
- If this Bill is passed in Parliament, illegal migrants from certain minority communities coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan will then be eligible for Indian citizenship.
- In short, illegal migrants belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian religious communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan would not be imprisoned or deported.
- Moreover, these citizens gain permanent citizenship after six years of residency in India instead of 11 years — as mentioned in the Citizenship Act (1955).
- The registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may get cancelled if they violate any law.

**Khelo India Youth Games**

After the first edition of the Khelo India School Games 2017, the second edition, the games has become an initiative of the Central Government, has expanded in its scope, and will allow participants to compete in two categories (under 17 and under 21).

**Khelo India:** The Khelo India programme has been introduced to revive the sports culture in India at the grass-root level by building a strong framework for all sports in India and establish India as a great sporting nation.

To accomplish the above objectives, Khelo India programme has been divided into 12 verticals, namely:

- Play Field Development
- Community Coaching Development
- State Level Khelo India Centres
- Annual Sports Competition
- Talent Search and Development
- Utilization and Creation/Upgradation of Sports Infrastructure
- Support to National/Regional/State Sports Academics
- Physical fitness of school children
- Sports for Women
- Promotion of sports amongst people with disabilities
- Sports for Peace and Development
- Promotion of rural and indigenous/tribal games

Talented players identified in priority sports disciplines at various levels by the High-Powered Committee will be provided annual financial assistance of INR 5 lakh per annum for 8 years. Khelo India School Games are a part of the Khelo India programme. There are 16 disciplines as follows: Archery, Athletics, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Shooting, Swimming, Volleyball, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

#### **India's tallest bridge pier built in Noney, Manipur:**

The Northeast Frontier Railway Construction Organization has constructed India's tallest pier as part of the project to build a railway bridge at Noney in Manipur. The proposed bridge will be the world's tallest railway bridge.

Key facts:

- The bridge is being constructed across the valley of river Ijai near Noney, with the height of the final pier being 141 metres. The total length of the Noney bridge will be 703 metres.
- On completion, the bridge will surpass the existing world record, held by the 139-metre Mala-Rijeka viaduct in Montenegro.
- The bridge is a part of the 111-km Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal new broad gauge line project, a national project which is set to be completed by 2022. The project also includes 45 tunnels, the longest being 10.28 km, which will be the longest railway tunnel of the northeast.

#### **Kannur airport inaugurated, Kerala becomes the only state with four international airports**

Kerala became the only state in the country to have four international airports. Kochi, Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram are the other three cities with an international airport. The greenfield airport, built on a public-private-partnership model, stretches across over 2,000 acres of land at Mattanur, a town 25 kilometres from Kannur town.

### **INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL**

#### **39th GCC summit and Riyadh declaration**

The 39th session of the GCC summit was held recently in Riyadh. At the end of the summit, the council issued the 'Riyadh Declaration', which included 72 items covering matters related to the Gulf countries, the region and the world.

The 40th session of the GCC summit will be held in the UAE, according to a communique issued at the end of the 39th summit in Riyadh.

**GCC** : The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a political and economic alliance of six countries in the Arabian Peninsula: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Established in 1981, the GCC promotes economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the six states and holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.

All current member states are monarchies, including three constitutional monarchies (Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain), two absolute monarchies (Saudi Arabia and Oman), and one federal monarchy (the United Arab Emirates).

Role of GCC today:

Whether the GCC still has a relevant function and role in the region is questionable. Though it was created for the purpose of solidifying union ranks, the blockade imposed on Qatar by its neighbours has largely annulled these principles.

The Gulf states have in the past differed in their views on several issues that have unfolded in the region over the past two decades. The role of the GCC has also been diminishing ever since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, with the six states illustrating various approaches to the war and its consequences. This has been enhanced during the wave of protests that swept the Middle East in 2011, known as the Arab Spring. Saudi Arabia has gained a dominant role within the GCC today.

**Maldives has applied to rejoin Commonwealth**

Two years ago, the country's former leader Yameen withdrew the Maldives from the Commonwealth after it mounted pressure on him to protect human rights and ensure the rule of law amid a ferocious crackdown on dissent.

Commonwealth of Nations : The Commonwealth of Nations, at one time known as British Commonwealth, is an organisation of fifty three states that were principally below the colonial rule of British Government. They came into existence with the proclamation of sovereignty of the state from the colonial rule of British Empire and were later given self-governance.

It proclaims that the Commonwealth nations are "free and equal." The insignia of this Commonwealth Association is Queen Elizabeth II who is considered the Supreme of the Commonwealth nations.

The member states of the commonwealth are not legally liable or bound to each other. They are rather united by language, history, culture, likeness of the democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

**1st International Conference on Sustainable Water Management at Mohali**

The first International Conference under the aegis of National Hydrology Project, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation is being organized by Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) at Indian School of Business (ISB), Mohali on the theme 'Sustainable Water Management'.

Aims of the Conference:

To foster the participation of and dialogue between various stakeholders, including governments, the scientific and academic communities, so as to promote sustainable policies for water management,

To create awareness of water-related problems, motivate commitment at the highest level for their solution and thus promote better management of water resources at local, regional, national and international levels.

The main aim is to bring advancement in water management system to further reduce flood and draughts all over the Globe.

## **ECONOMY**

**RBI moots new floating rates for MSME loans**

In a bid to ensure greater transparency, Reserve Bank has proposed that floating interest rates on personal, home, auto and MSMEs loans be linked to external benchmarks like repo rate or treasury yields. In a statement issued from Mumbai yesterday, RBI said that the final guidelines to link the interest rate to external benchmarks will be issued by the end of this month.

Currently, banks follow system of internal benchmarks, including Prime Lending Rate, Benchmark Prime Lending Rate, Base rate and Marginal Cost of Funds based Lending Rate. The new system is likely to become operational by 1st April 2019.

RBI has said that the banks should decide the benchmark rate system to be followed right at the inception of the loan and it should remain unchanged through the life of the loan. It added that adoption of multiple benchmarks by the same bank will not be allowed within a loan category.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Amazon river dolphins now listed as 'Endangered' by IUCN

The dolphins of the Amazon river have been listed as "Endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in its latest "Red List" published in November 2018.

There are two types of Amazon river dolphins namely, the "boto" and the "tucuxi", which were once considered abundant in the Amazon. The study had warned that freshwater dolphins found in the Amazon River Basin were "dying off fast", and could face extinction unless they were more vigorously protected against fishing.

The primary reason for the decrease in numbers is "Use of flesh and blubber as bait for catfish", which have become widely available commercially. In May 2018, the IUCN had listed the freshwater dolphins' status as "data deficient," meaning not enough was known about their numbers in the wild to assess the degree of threat to the population.

## DEFENCE

### Ex Aviaindra 2018

Ex AVIAINDRA, a service specific exercise between Indian Air Force and Russian Federation Aerospace Force (RFSAF) is planned at Air Force Station Jodhpur.

#### AVIAINDIRA-2018:

- Exercise Aviaindra is an Air Force level exercise between India and the Russian Federation.
- First Aviaindra was conducted in 2014, planned as a bi-annual exercise.
- AVIAINDRA-2018 is the second in the series of bilateral joint exercise between IAF-RFSAF (the exercise is unique, where the foreign participants does not bring its assets).
- The aim of the exercise is focused towards anti-terrorist operations in a bi-lateral scenario. This further enhances the co-operation and understanding each other's Concept of Operations.