Prelim Bits 30-10-2018

Train 18

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- It is India’s first engine-less semi-high speed train, rolled out recently by Chennai based Integral Coach Factory (ICF).
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- It has been designed to maximum operating speed of 160 kmph.
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- It will eventually replace the Shatabdi Express for inter-city travel and it will cut travel time by 15% compared to Shatabdi.
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- This fully air-conditioned train is nicknamed “The NextGen Shatabdi”.
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- It is driven by a self-propulsion module and it is the first long-distance train without separate locomotive (engine).
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- The Shatabdi trains were introduced in 1988 and are presently running on over 20 routes connecting metros with other important cities.
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Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

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- SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
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- India and Pakistan has recently become members of SCO in its 2017 meeting held at Astana, Kazhakhstan.
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- Observer status is given to Iran, Mongolia, Belarus, Afghanistan.
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- The official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are Chinese and Russian.
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- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ of the SCO.
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- It serves to promote cooperation of member states against terrorism, separatism and extremism.
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SCO Meeting on Urban Disaster

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- India is going to host Shanghai Cooperation Organisation’s meeting on Urban Disaster Handling.
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- Pakistan has accepted India’s invitation for the meeting.
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- It involves the joint mock exercise on urban earthquake search and rescue by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
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- It will provide an opportunity to member-countries to validate their preparedness and resilience to various disasters and making humanitarian assistance in disaster response more effective.
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Currency Swap Arrangement

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- India and Japan has agreed to enter in to currency swap arrangement of $75 billion.
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- Currency swap arrangement means one country exchanges its national currency for that of another or even a third currency.
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- Under this arrangement, India can acquire dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees.
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- So, India can acquire yen or dollars from Japan upto $75 billion in exchange for rupees under a fixed exchange rate.
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- This exchange has to be reversed after an agreed period. Conversely, Japan can also seek dollars from India in exchange for yen.

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- This facility will serve as a line of defence for our country’s foreign exchange reserve.
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- **Advantages** – Short –term liquidity mismatches can be met quickly.
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- It will help stabilize the rupee, which has witnessed the steepest fall in recent years.
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- It improves market sentiment, curbs speculative pressure on the rupee.
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- Foreign Investors will draw comfort from the arrangement.
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WHO Report on Child Health

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- World Health Organisation has recently released report on “Air Pollution and Child Health”.
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- According to the report, every day around 93% of the world’s children under the age of 15 years (1.8 billion children) breathe air that is so polluted it puts their health and development at serious risk.
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- The report highlights the reason why children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of air pollution.
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- One is that the children breathe more rapidly than adults and so absorb more pollutants.
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- The other reason is that pollutants are often more concentrated nearer to ground level.
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- It added that their developing organs and nervous system are also more susceptible to long-term damage than those of adults.
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- The study found that in poorer countries, 98% of all children under five are exposed to PM2.5 above WHO guidelines.
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- The report is being launched on the eve of WHO’s first ever Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health in Geneva.
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Growth Rate of States

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- According to the recent ranking on growth rate, Andhra Pradesh has achieved the first rank in the country with an average growth of 10.5% during the last 4 years.
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- It surpassed the average growth rate in the country which stood at 7.3% for 4 years.
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- It is followed by Telangana in the 2nd place and Karnataka in the 3rd place.
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- Andhra Pradesh is the only State to clock the double-digit growth rate.
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- Gujarat, which is considered the most developed State, registered a growth of 10.5% in 2014-15 but it slipped in the following years.
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Source: The Hindu

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