CURRENT AFFAIRS
21st NOV. TO 30th NOV. 2016

E-PASHUHAAT PORTAL

- Launched by the Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Ministry
- It has been developed for connecting breeders and farmers regarding availability of bovine germplasm under the scheme National Mission on Bovine Productivity.
- Through the portal breeders/farmers can sell and purchase breeding stock.
- Information on all forms of germplasm including semen, embryos and live animals with all the agencies and stake holders in the country has been uploaded on the portal.
- The portal will lead to propagation of high genetic merit germplasm

Facts related to Indian Bovine Population:
- India has the largest bovine population in the world. It has 14% of the world cattle population and it has 53% of the world buffalo population of which 79% of the cattle are Indigenous and 21% are Exotic and Crossbred varieties.
- The Indigenous bovine breeds are sturdy, endowed with the quality of heat tolerance, resistance to diseases and ticks with the ability to thrive under extreme climatic conditions and survive with low inputs. However, most of the indigenous have low genetic potential for milk production and are suited for draught animal power. But, some breeds have potential to be highly productive under optimal nutrition and farm management conditions alongwith selective genetic breeding.
- The bovine population in India is owned by 60m marginal, small and medium farmer households with an average herd size of 2-3 milch animals.
- The figures of high milk production are reflective of the large numbers of bovine population rather than that of high productivity and resource efficiency.

Shortcomings in Animals Trade Market
- No authentic organized market
- Difficult to get quality- disease free high genetic merit germplasm.
- Misleading valuation due to lack of traceability and tracking.
- Other malpractices include Horns removed & Teeth filed to mislead for their age.

Expected Benefits of the Portal for farmers:
- One stop portal for bovine breeders, sellers and buyers.
- Creating a Comparative Farm Network
- Making Farmers exchange local knowledge and resources
- Availability of disease free germplasm with known genetic merit.
- Minimizes the involvement of middlemen.
- Increase in farmers' income

AMENDMENTS TO BILL ON GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT

The Water Ministry is planning amendments to a Bill on groundwater management that will impose restrictions on how companies, farmers and various groups can use groundwater. Industries can only use recycled water, and activities such as gardening would require the use of treated sewage water.

Extracting pristine water from aquifers, the norm in much of the country, would be sharply regulated. Failing to adhere to this would invite "stringent punishment".

Background:

- Earlier this year, the Ministry had made public a draft Bill that proposed significant changes to the way groundwater would be regulated.
- This included guaranteeing every individual a certain amount of water "for life" and protecting groundwater from undue exploitation and pollution as well as mandating the use of rainwater harvesting in residential projects.
- However, this version of the Bill only demands that users "give priority" to recycling water and does not compel companies and other stakeholders to use recycled water.
- A committee has also been set up under the chairmanship of Secretary of Water Resources to suggest ways to conserve fast-depleting groundwater levels through aquifer recharge.
- The committee will also have Secretaries of Union Ministries of Rural Development, Environment and Agriculture as members.

Need for Regulation:

Groundwater depletion is among the grave ecological threats that the country faces. Around 85 per cent of drinking water and 65 per cent of water for irrigation is sourced from groundwater.

However, previous plans to address the problems have been stalled as water is a State subject and, existing laws give the owners of a piece of land complete right over its groundwater.

PARADIP PORT IMPLEMENTS THE MODERN RFID ACCESS CONTROL SYSTEM

- Paradip Port is the first among all Major Ports to have successfully implemented the RFID Access Control System.
- It has introduced RFID Access Control System (RFID) for controlling and tracking the entry and exit of vehicular as well as human traffic into and out of its prohibited area.
- The implementation of the system was done as per the directives of the Ministry of Shipping.

Advantages of RFID System: The implementation of the RFID system has contributed to improvement in productivity of Paradip Port due to smooth movement of traffic across the gates. The new RFID system is inherently accompanied with enhanced Maritime Security features.

- Faster and efficient movement of traffic across the gates leading to reduction in congestion,
- simplified online payment procedure,

- availability of real-time information on number of different types of vehicles, equipment, port user personnel inside the prohibited area,
- availability of entry and exit details of a particular person, vehicle inclusive of the gate no. instantly through which the traffic moved
- Retrieval of data pertaining to the entire period of time is also another advantage of the system.

The new RFID system is beneficial to the port users in that they can avail data related to their cargo inflow and outflow over any desired period of time. Besides, the system also keeps a record of the details of the vehicles along with the credentials of drivers & helpers which can be retrieved from the system at a later date for verification, reconciliation or investigation if required.

IWAI TAKES UP CONSTRUCTION OF NAVIGATIONAL LOCK AT FARAKKA

The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has awarded the work for the construction of a new state of the art navigational lock at Farakka in West Bengal to a reputed company under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) which is being implemented in National Waterway-1 (River Ganga).

What is a navigational Lock?
A navigational lock is a device used for raising and lowering ships/vessels between stretches of water of different levels on river and canal waterways. The existing lock gate at Farakka which has been operational since 1978, is old and inefficient.With the existing lock it takes about 2 hours or more for a vessel to pass upstream or downstream of Farakka. With the new lock it will take only 38 minutes for a vessel to pass through. If movement of a vessel is followed by movement of another vessel in the reverse direction, the operating time will be 23 minutes only.

The **Jal Marg Vikas Project** is being implemented with technical and financial assistance of the World Bank at an estimated cost of Rs. 5369 crore for plying of vessels with capacity of 1500-2,000 tons. Phase-I of the project covers the Haldia-Varanasi stretch which includes development of fairway, Multi-Modal Terminals, strengthening of river navigation system, conservancy works, modern River Information System (RIS), Digital Global Positioning System (DGPS), night navigation facilities, modern methods of channel marking etc.

INDIA'S FIRST DIGITAL VILLAGE: AKODARA

- It is a village in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat with a total population of 1,191 people and 250 households using various cashless system for payments of goods and services. All transactions in the village are carried out through digital modes like SMS, net-banking or debit cards.
- The village was adopted by ICICI Bank under its Digital Village Project in 2015 and made cashless by adopting digital technology. All households in village have savings account in local ICICI Bank branch.
- The village has almost 100% financial rate and all mobile banking is done in Hindi, English and Gujarati languages.

ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (CAT)

The Conference is held to discuss and deliberate upon the problems faced by the institution and to bring improvement in the judicial/administrative system so as to achieve higher disposal in the shortest possible time. Justice delivery by the Tribunal has been acclaimed as a better system for resolving the issues because of the time factor and also due to the expertise. It provides effective, inexpensive and speedy justice.

About Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT):

- The Central Administrative Tribunal was established by an Act of Parliament namely Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985 as sequel to the 42nd amendment of the Constitution of India inserting **Article 323 A.**
- The Tribunal came into existence in 1985 for adjudicating disputes and complaints with respect to Recruitment and Conditions of Service of the persons appointed to the Public Services and Posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or any State or of any other Local Authorities within the territory of India or under the control of the Government of India.
- Apart from above the Tribunal also has the jurisdiction on the employees of 208 Public Sector Undertakings/ Organizations notified by the Government.
- The **Principal seat** of Central Administrative Tribunal is at **New Delhi** and it has 16 Outlying Benches scattered all over the Country.
- The Tribunal is headed by the Chairman and 65 Members, 33 from Judicial (including Chairman) and 33 from the Administrative stream. The Chairman is normally a retired Chief Justice of a High Court.

AIRSEWA PORTAL

AirSewa is an initiative of the Civil Aviation Ministry to offer people a convenient and hassle-free air travel experience. It will be operated through an interactive web portal as well as through a mobile app for both android and iOS platforms. The portal will include a mechanism for grievance redressal, backoffice operations for grievance handling, flight status/schedule information, airport Information and FAQs.

- AirSewa is an attempt to provide such a systematic approach to redressing passenger grievances like flight delays, problem in refunds, long queues and lack of proper facilities at airports and complaints of lost baggage
- With the launch of AirSewa, passengers will be able to register their grievances through the mobile app or a web portal.
- The users will have the facility to upload voice or video along with an elaborate description of their issues.
- They will be given a unique reference number for each of their reported grievances which would also be communicated through an email as well as an SMS. The Users can track the status and response to these grievances through the mobile application as well as the web application based on the reference number provided.

- Nodal officers have been selected for all stakeholder agencies who will address the grievance in a time bound manner. Each grievance shared will be directed to the responsible nodal agency for resolution based on the grievance category chosen by the complainant.
- The dashboard shall be divided into three categories consisting of grievances pending within time line, grievances pending beyond time line and closed grievances. Each grievance shall have a resolution time line defined for initial response as well as final resolution. Each communication made by the nodal officer will be send through an alert through email and SMS.
- Users will have an option to check the flight status and schedule between any of airports. Flights can be searched on the basis of flight number or for all flights to a particular airport.
- Airport Information will display basic weather information and connecting flight details from the airport. Airport information will include basic details and contact information regarding airport services like wheel Chair, transport/parking, rest and relax, Wifi services etc.

TRI-NETRA – TERRAIN IMAGING FOR DIESEL DRIVERS INFRA-RED, ENHANCED OPTICAL & RADAR ASSISTED SYSTEM

In news: Railways may soon get an advanced system, called "Tri-Netra", on its trains which will help reduce train accidents by keeping a record of the track maintenance and will also provide better visibility during foggy days.

The system provides a locomotive pilot a clear view of up to one kilometre on a straight track, even during inclement weather. This helps in maintaining high speed in poor visibility and avoids delay in arrivals.

The new technology has been used on a trial basis and has shown good results. The requirement for the system gained more pace after 14 bogies of the Patna-bound Indore-Rajendra Nagar Express went off the tracks near Kanpur Dehat .

About Tri-Netra System:
The concept of TRI-NETRA was developed by Development Cell under the guidance of Member Mechanical, Railway Board while brainstorming on how to use the technology employed by fighter aircrafts to see through clouds and operate in pitch darkness and the technology used by naval ships in mapping the ocean floor and navigating in the night.

The following three components of the system shall act as three eyes (Tri-Netra) of ta Locomotive Pilot:
  ➢ high-resolution optical video camera,
  ➢ high sensitivity infra-red video camera and
  ➢ a radar-based terrain mapping system

- TRI-NETRA is designed to "see" the terrain ahead of the running locomotive during inclement weather by combining the images captured by the three sub-systems and to create a composite video image which shall be displayed in front of the Loco Pilot on a computer monitor
- During fog, heavy rain and also during night, the locomotive pilots face serious challenges in looking out ahead to spot any obstruction on the track such as vehicles which get stuck while crossing the track or trees or boulders which have fallen across the track etc. This is where TRI-

NETRA will come into picture and give the locomotive pilot a clear view of the track ahead in bad visibility conditions so that he can apply brakes well in time.

- Conversely, he can speed up the train even in poor visibility if the TRI-NETRA system shows that the track ahead is clear of obstruction. The system shall also map the terrain ahead so that the driver knows when he is approaching a station or a signal.

NORTH-EAST REGION TEXTILE PROMOTION SCHEME (NERTPS)

In news: Union Textile Ministry inaugurated Apparel & Garment Making Centre at Imphal, Manipur under the North-East Region Textile Promotion Scheme (NERTPS)

- Under this intervention, each state now has one centre with three units having approximately 100 machines each.
- The capacity building through this centre will include:
- ➢ Skill development
- ➢ Market linkages (3 domestic exhibitions and 1 international exhibition),

The **salient objectives** of the project are:
- ➢ Promotion of entrepreneurship in apparel manufacturing
- ➢ Provision of state of the art infrastructure
- ➢ Provision of skill development, market linkage and other services
- ➢ Creation of additional employment.

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA (NHAI)

In news: Yudhvir Singh Malik, the Special Secretary with NITI Aayog, has been appointed as new Chairman of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

- The National Highways Authority of India was constituted by an act of Parliament, the National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988.
- Under Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- It is responsible for the development, maintenance and management of National Highways entrusted to it and for matters connected or incidental thereto.
- The Authority was operationalized in February, 1995 with the appointment of full time Chairman and other Members.
- The importance of the body can be gauged by the fact that it regulates 92,851 km of national highways across the country.
- NHAI is entrusted with the task of implementing National Highways Development Project (NHDP), India's largest-ever highways project.

'INDIAN POLICE AT YOUR CALL' APP

- Launched by the PM at a national police conference in Hyderabad organised by the Intelligence Bureau.
- Developed by: NIC
- The app has a GIS map-based interface to let users locate police stations near them along with numbers of the District Control Room and office of the Superintendent of Police so that they can easily "reach" the police station in case of emergency

ASIA'S FIRST CYCLE HIGHWAY

- A first-of-its-kind project, the 207-km-long cycle highway runs between Etawah and Agra (UP).
- Constructed by the UP public works department, the cycle highway runs parallel to the main highway and is about 7-feet-wide. A divider in between ensures the safety of cyclists. Along the way from Etawah to Agra, it dots 92 villages.

SUPREME COURT'S ORDER ON SALE OF CRACKERS

The Supreme Court imposed a blanket ban on sale and stocking of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR with immediate effect, and also suspended all such licences.

About CPCB:
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), was constituted in September, 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
- Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
- Provides technical services to the Ministry of Environment and Forests under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Principal Functions of the CPCB, as spelt out in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,
  i. to promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution, and
  ii. to improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

STEPS TAKEN TO EASE DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS

- To encourage digital payments, the charges on debit cards by public sector banks, some private banks as well as service providers will also be waived until December 31, 2016.
- The National Payments Corporation of India has already waived the charges on Rupay cards. The intention of this decision is to ensure greater penetration of digital transaction in our economy. The Finance Ministry said 30 crore RuPay Debit Cards had been issued and 300 per cent growth in usage in the last 12 days has been witnessed.
- Similarly, the teleocm regulator TRAI has also reduced the USSD charges from the current 1.50 per session to 50 paise per session for transactions relating to banking and payments and has also simplified the procedure.
- Meanwhile, the Indian Railways has also decided to waive the service charges on online booking, till the end of the year.
- To ensure smooth movement at toll plazas, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways will advise vehicle manufacturers to provide ETC-compliant RFID tags in all new vehicles.
- All government organisations and public sector undertakings have also been advised to use digital means for payments.

SEBI EASES NORMS FOR ANGEL FUNDS

The board decided to amend the SEBI (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012 based on the recommendations received from the 'Alternative Investment Policy Advisory Committee' that was constituted under the chairmanship of N. R. Narayana Murthy.

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has liberalised norms for angel funds to invest in early-stage entities as part of its attempts to facilitate fund-raising for start-ups.
- The capital markets regulator also enhanced the scope of investment of foreign investors in unlisted debt securities.
- The regulator has increased the upper limit for number of angel investors in a scheme from forty nine to two hundred.
- Angel Funds will also be allowed to invest in start-ups incorporated within five years instead of the earlier norm of three years.
- Minimum investment: The requirements of minimum investment amount by an angel fund in any venture capital undertaking has been reduced from Rs.50 lakh to Rs.25 lakh.
- Further, the lock-in requirements of investment made by angel funds in the venture capital undertaking has been reduced from three years to one year.
- Such funds have also been allowed to invest in overseas venture capital undertakings up to 25 per cent of their investible corpus in line with other Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs).

About SEBI:
The Securities and Exchange Board of India was established on April 12, 1992 in accordance with the provisions of the <u>Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992</u>.

Objectives:
- ➢ to protect the interests of investors in securities and
- ➢ to promote the development of securities market, and
- ➢ to regulate the securities market

SEBI has three functions rolled into one body: <u>quasi-legislative, quasi-judicial and quasi-executive</u>. There is a <u>Securities Appellate Tribunal</u> which is a three-member tribunal to appeal against orders of SEBI.

Angel Investors:
- ➢ Angel investors invest in small startups or entrepreneurs. Often, angel investors are among an entrepreneur's family and friends. The capital angel investors provide may be a one-time investment to help the business propel or an ongoing injection of money to support and carry the company through its difficult early stages.
- ➢ Angel investors typically use their own money, unlike venture capitalists who take care of pooled money from many other investors and place them in a strategically managed fund.
- ➢ Angel investors are focused on helping startups take their first steps, rather than the possible profit they may get from the business. Essentially, angel investors are the <u>opposite of venture capitalists</u>.

AMITABH KANT COMMITTEE

In news: The Centre announced a new committee, headed by Niti Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, to form a strategy to expedite the process of transforming India into a cashless economy. The panel is tasked with identifying various bottlenecks affecting access of digital payments. The committee was set up following a directive from the Prime Minister's Office to back up the demonetisation move.
The attempt is to establish and monitor an implementation framework with strict timelines to ensure that nearly 80 per cent of the transaction in India moves to the digital-only platform.

Purpose of the Committee:
- ➢ The committee will identify and operationalise in the earliest possible time frame user-friendly digital payment options in all sectors of the economy. This is an integral part of the government's strategy to transform India into a cashless economy
- ➢ the aim is to identify various digital payment systems appropriate to different sectors of the economy and coordinate efforts to make them accessible.
- ➢ The committee will also attempt to estimate costs involved in various digital payments options and oversee implementation of measures to make such transactions between the government and citizens cheaper than cash transactions.
- ➢ The committee will also identify and access infrastructural and bottlenecks affecting the access and utility of digital payment options.

INDIA'S FIRST PAYMENT BANK

Airtel Payments Bank Ltd became the first payments bank to start operations, offering services in Rajasthan in a limited scale. The bank was the first applicant to receive the final licence from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in April. Kotak Mahindra Bank holds 19.9% in the Airtel Payments Bank.

- Customers will be offered an interest rate of 7.25% on deposits in savings account, higher than the 4-6% commercial banks are offering.
- The pilot will run at 10,000 Airtel retail outlets where basic banking services will be provided. Airtel Payments Bank is planning to expand its merchant network in Rajasthan to 100,000 by the end of the year.
- Bank accounts can be opened by customers without documents using Aadhaar based e-KYC. The subscriber's mobile number would function as a bank account number and transfer from Airtel to Airtel phone numbers would be free.
- The bank is not offering any debit card facility right now.
- It also offering personal accidental insurance of 1 lakh with every savings account
- The retail outlets, which will act as banking points, will offer account opening services, cash deposit and withdrawal facilities.

As a payments bank it cannot perform lending activities, except while giving loans to its employees on approval of the board. The bank can, however, accept deposits of as much as Rs1 lakh.

Payment Bank:

According to RBI guidelines issued in November 2014,

- a payment bank will maintain cash reserve ratio with the central bank.
- will be required to invest minimum 75% of their deposits in statutory liquidity ratio eligible government securities with maturity up to one year and
- hold maximum 25% in current and time deposits with other scheduled commercial banks for operational purposes and liquidity management
- can not issue debit cards
- Both current account and savings accounts can be operated by such banks

In August last year, the central bank had given in-principle approval to 11 applicants to set up payments bank by February 2017.

IBBI (INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA)

In news: IBBI sets up two high-level committees in order to push ahead the implementation of insolvency and bankruptcy code.

The nine-member advisory committee on service providers is headed by educationist Mohandas Pai while the panel on corporate insolvency and liquidation is chaired by noted banker Uday Kotak.

Both advisory committees have started deliberations on various matters. IBBI, which expects to soon operationalise the Code, has already notified three sets of regulations. These rules are for Insolvency Professionals, Insolvency Agencies and Model Bye-Laws and Governing Board of Insolvency Professional Agencies.

Insolvency Professionals and insolvency professional agencies:
- ➢ Subject to certain conditions, advocates, chartered accountants, company secretaries and cost accountants can serve as insolvency professionals while certain classes of not-for-profit companies can act as insolvency professional agencies.
- ➢ A not-for-profit company, having minimum net worth of Rs 10 crore, will be eligible to be an insolvency professional agency. Such an entity will have membership, monitoring, grievance redressal and disciplinary committees to regulate as well as have an oversight of the professional members.

About IBBI:

IBBI has been set up under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code that seeks to consolidate and amend laws relating to reorganisation as well as insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time-bound manner.

PREPAID PAYMENT INSTRUMENTS

In news: The Reserve Bank of India has introduced a special dispensation for small merchants and doubled the limit of semi-closed Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) to Rs 20,000 to facilitate digital transactions.
- A special dispensation has now been enabled for small merchants whereby the issuers can issue PPIs to such merchants.
- While balance in such PPIs cannot exceed Rs 20,000 at any point of time, the merchants can transfer funds from such PPIs to their own linked bank accounts up to Rs 50,000 per month, without any limit per transaction.
- Merchants only need to provide a self-declaration in respect of their status and details of their bank accounts.
- The limit of semi-closed PPIs issued with minimum details has been enhanced to Rs 20,000 from the existing Rs 10,000. The total value of reloads during any given month has also been enhanced to Rs 20,000
- Full KYC PPIs with balance up to Rs 1,00,000 can continue to be made available by authorised PPI issuers. The measures will be effective November 21 till December 30.

Background:

With the public facing cash crunch, RBI has doubled the limit of semi-closed Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPIs) to Rs 20,000 to facilitate digital transactions.

The earlier PPI guidelines did not specifically provide for opening of PPIs for such merchants as a separate category and the limit for semi-closed PPIs issued with minimum details was Rs 10,000.

What are Pre-paid Payment Instruments (PPIs)
- These are payment instruments that facilitate transactions like purchase of goods and services, including funds transfer, against the value stored on such instruments.
- The value stored on PPIs represents the value paid by the holders by cash through a bank account etc.

- There are large variety of PPIs including smart cards, magnetic stripe cards, internet accounts, internet wallets or digital wallets, mobile accounts, mobile wallets, paper vouchers and any such instrument which can be used to access the pre-paid amount.
- PPI sector is regulated by the RBI and as per the RBI regulations, there are three types of PPIs:
    - Closed system payment instruments
    - Semi-closed system payment instruments and
    - Open system payment instruments (multipurpose cards)

JAGUAR DARIN III

In news: In a significant milestone for the countrys military aviation sector, the upgraded Jaguar DARIN III twin-seat aircraft has received Initial Operation Clearance (IOC).

- Besides HAL, certification agencies, trial team of ASTE and other agencies were involved in the upgrade programme.
- The aircraft is now equipped with world class avionics system.
- The total design and development covering system requirement capture, specification preparation, software, hardware, electrical and mechanical design and development were carried out indigenously at HALs Mission and Combat System Research and Design Centre (MCSRDC) and aircraft modification was done at Overhaul Division.
- Three DARIN I Standard Jaguars have been upgraded to DARIN III Standard by HAL.
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PRITHVI-II MISSILE

India successfully test-fired its indigenously developed nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile twice in quick succession as part of a user trial by the army from a test range at Chandipur in Odisha.

- The two surface-to-surface missiles have a strike range of 350 km and
- are capable of carrying 500 kg to 1,000 kg of warheads
- The missile is thrusted by liquid propulsion twin engines. It uses advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target.
- The entire launch activities were carried out by the specially formed strategic force command (SFC) and monitored by the scientists of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of training exercise.
- The missile trajectory was tracked by the DRDO radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry stations located along the coast of Odisha.

Inducted into Indian armed forces in 2003, the nine-metre-tall, single-stage liquid-fuelled Prithvi-II is the first missile to be developed by the DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.

INS CHENNAI: A P 15A GUIDED MISSILE DESTROYER

It has been commissioned into the Indian Navy. It is the third and the last of the three 'Kolkata' class destroyers, indigenously designed by the Indian Navy's in-house organisation, Directorate of Naval Design and constructed by Mazagon Dock Limited, Mumbai.

- The ship measures 163m in length, 17.4m in breadth with a displacement of 7500 tonnes and can rightfully be regarded as one of the most potent warships to have been constructed in India.
- The ship is propelled by four powerful Gas Turbines, in a Combined Gas and Gas (COGAG) configuration, capable of achieving speeds in excess of 30 knots.
- The ship has enhanced stealth features resulting in a reduced Radar Cross Section (RCS) achieved through efficient shaping of hull, full beam superstructure design, plated masts and use of radar transparent materials on exposed decks.
- INS Chennai is packed with contemporary and sophisticated 'state of the art' weapons and sensors such as Surface to Surface Missile and Surface to Air Missiles.
- The ship is fitted with a modern Surveillance Radar which provides target data to the gunnery weapon systems of the ship.
- The ship's Anti Submarine Warfare capabilities are provided by the indigenously developed Rocket Launchers and Torpedo Launchers. The ship is equipped to fight under Nuclear, Biological and Chemical (NBC) warfare conditions.

With the changing power dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region, INS Chennai will augment the Indian Navy's mobility, reach and flexibility.It adds another milestone in our relentless journey towards achieving self reliance in battle readiness.

AGNI-I MISSILE

It was successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range on the Wheeler Island off the Odisha coast by the Strategic Forces of Command (SFC). The missile is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead weighing 500 kg. In this mission, it carried a dummy warhead.

- designed and developed by: DRDO
- It is a single stage missile that weighs 12 tonnes and is 15 metres long. It has a range of 750 km.
- Agni-I is equipped with a navigation system which ensures that it reaches the target with a high degree of accuracy and precision.

INDIA BECOMES ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF CERN

India became an associate member of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN), the world's largest nuclear and particle physics labaratory.

Background:
Last year, the Union cabinet green-lit the proposal for India officially entering the Geneva-based body, following which the CERN Council accepted India as an associate member.
India had 'observer' status till September this year, when the CERN Council adopted a resolution upgrading its position.

Though India was invited to be member of CERN at least two years ago, it tarried. Incidentally, Pakistan became an associate member of the body in 2014.

India's association with CERN:
For over 50 years, India has been a strong partner in CERN's scientific activities.
- India's association with CERN goes back decades with an active involvement in the construction of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), in the areas of design, development and supply of hardware accelerator components/systems and its commissioning and software development and deployment in the machine.
- Indian scientists have played a significant role in the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) experiment, one of the two large experiments that led to the discovery of the Higgs Boson.
- India also participated in the COMPASS, ISOLDE and nTOF experiments.

About CERN:
- Founded in 1954, The organisation is the world's largest nuclear and particle physics laboratory, where scientists and engineers are probing the fundamental structure of the Universe using the most sophisticated scientific instruments and advanced computing systems.
- They use the world's largest and most complex scientific instruments to study the basic constituents of matter – the fundamental particles. The particles are made to collide together at close to the speed of light. The process gives the physicists clues about how the particles interact, and provides insights into the fundamental laws of nature.
- Presently CERN has 22 member states, four associate member states(Turkey,Pakistan,Ukraine and India) , and the observer status is given to four states and three International Organisations. Israel is the only non-European country granted full membership.
- **HQ: Geneva**

INDIA-EU DRUGS DISPUTE SETTLED BY WHO

The European Union Free Trade Agreement (EU FTA) had reached a deadlock after affordable, safe-to-use generic drugs made in India were confiscated as 'illegal' and 'counterfeit.' Nearly 20 shipments of generic drugs, including basic antibiotics and anti-retrovirals, were detained while in transit from India to several developing countries via Europe between 2008 and 2009, derailing the free trade agreement negotiations.
In a meeting, the WHO settled a long standing dispute between India and the European Union (EU) by clarifying that 'counterfeit'— will now be used by member States with respect to protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

WHO decision:
In a significant victory for the global access to medicines campaign, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has dropped the term 'counterfeit' and retained 'falsified' to describe medicines of inferior quality.
The terms were being used interchangeably to confiscated Indian made generic drugs exported to other countries by showing that they were in violation of intellectual property.

Clarifying its position, the WHO said in a statement that, "the adopted definition drops the word counterfeit and uses the term falsified — which is much more in line with public health concerns regarding medicines, which make false claims about what they contain or where they are from, that represent a genuine problem." The decision was taken by a technical working group on draft working definitions of substandard/spurious /falsely-labelled/falsified/counterfeit (SSFFC) medical products.

Positive Impact of the decision:

This decision by the WHO settles a long-standing battle about labelling of drugs. For far too long, genuine generic medicines have been labelled as counterfeit. The confusion had taken away the much needed attention from the substandard medicines — which is a bigger public health problem for developing countries.

Additionally, big pharmaceutical companies were using the term 'counterfeit' to describe generic medicines and disrupting trade of generic medicines,

Position under TRIPS:

Under international law, — the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) — the definition of counterfeit is clearly targeted at one particular area: wilful infringement of trademark on a commercial scale.

In reality, campaigns and legislation against counterfeit drugs often have nothing to do with concerns about drug quality. Major U.S. and European pharmaceutical companies have a vested interest in limiting competition from generic drugs, and are using increased enforcement of intellectual property laws as a tool to clamp down on the legitimate trade in high-quality generic medicines between developing countries.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE LAW (UNCITRAL)

India hosted the golden jubilee (50th anniversary) celebrations of United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) in New Delhi.

About UNCITRAL:

It is the core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law, with a mandate to further the progressive harmonization and unification of the law of international trade.

The New York Convention was prepared by the United Nations prior to the establishment of UNCITRAL in 1969. Nevertheless, promotion of the New York Convention is an integral part of the Commission's programme of work.

India is only one of eight countries that has been a member of UNCITRAL from its inception, and has recently been re-elected for a term of six years.

ICT DEVELOPMENT INDEX (IDI)

- Published by the <u>United Nations International Telecommunication Union</u> based on internationally agreed information and communication technologies (ICT) indicators.
- IDI is a standard tool that governments, operators, development agencies, researchers and others can use to measure the digital divide and compare ICT performance within and across countries.
- The ICT Development Index is based on 11 ICT indicators, grouped in three clusters: access, use and skills.
- <u>IDI 2016 rankings:</u>
    1. S.Korea
    2. Iceland
    3. Denmark
    4. Switzerland
    5. U.K.
- India ranks at 138 (India's rank in IDI 2015: 135)

CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX (CCPI)

In news: India has climbed six places to 25th position amongst 58 countries in the latest Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI), which emphasised that developing countries should not ape industrialised nations, but choose a "cleverer and cleaner" development path.

- India climbed six ranks this year up to 25. The country performs second best in emissions level but ranks 59th in emissions development. Regarding renewables and efficiency, India's scores improved slightly.
- It said that national experts value a shift of investments from coal to the renewables sector, including a massive expansion of solar energy in India.
- India plans to use non-fossil fuel sources for 40 per cent of installed power capacity by 2030 and so improved its score in the policy ranking.
- The index said that China, Morocco, India, France and Germany improved its policy evaluation and find themselves in the group of relatively good performing countries, where they were also joined by the US, improving its score by 23 places.

About The Climate Change Performance Index:
- It is an instrument designed to enhance transparency in international climate politics and aims to put political and social pressure on those countries which have, up until now, failed to take ambitious action on climate protection.
- issued by German watch and Climate Action Network Europe
- On the basis of standardised criteria, the index evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of 58 countries that together are responsible for more than 90 per cent of global energy-related CO2 emissions.

TIANLIAN I-04

- China's fourth data satellite launched to achieve global network operation that will provide data relay, measurement and control services for its manned spacecraft.
- The satellite, Tianlian I-04, was launched on a Long March-3C carrier rocket from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in southwest Sichuan province.
- Developed by the China Academy of Space Technology under the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, the satellite will join its three predecessors to achieve global network operation.
- The network is expected to provide data relay, measurement and control services for China's manned spacecraft, space labs and space stations, according to the centre.
- The network will also offer data relay services for the country's medium- and low-Earth orbiting resources satellites, as well as measurement and control support for spacecraft launches.
- China launched its first data relay satellite, the Tianlian I-01, in April 2008. The second satellite was launched in July 2011, and the third was launched in July 2012.
- The launch of the Tianlian I-04 marked the 241st mission of China's Long March series of rockets.
- Since China's first experimental communications satellite was launched in the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in 1984, it has sent more than 100 spacecraft into space in recent decades, including over 20 BeiDou navigation satellites and the country's first lunar probe, Chang'e-1.

GOES-R SATELLITE: A "NEXT GENERATION" US WEATHER SATELLITE

- GOES-R is the first in a series of next-generation Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites, or GOES.
- After the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R (GOES-R), reaches its final designated orbit, it will be renamed GOES-16.
- Liftoff took place at Space Launch Complex 41 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida, atop a United Launch Alliance (ULA) Atlas V rocket.
- It also continues a decades-long partnership between NASA and NOAA to successfully build and launch geostationary environmental satellites.
- Its improved technology and instrumentation are designed to provide more timely and accurate weather forecasts and warnings of thunderstorms, tornadoes, fog, flash floods and other severe weather. It also will provide improved capabilities for forecasting the hazards of space weather.
- Forecasters will have three times more spectral channels, four times better resolution and five times faster scans of the Earth compared with current GOES satellites.
- The benefits with the GOES-R satellite system: the higher resolution, the more frequent updates, the increased number of products, and the lightning information.
- The satellite's primary instrument, the Advanced Baseline Imager, will provide images of Earth's weather, oceans and environment with 16 different spectral bands, including two visible channels, four near-infrared channels, and 10 infrared channels.

- Improved space weather sensors on GOES-R will monitor the sun and relay crucial information to forecasters so they can issue space weather alerts and warnings. In all, data from GOES-R will result in 34 new or improved meteorological, solar and space weather products.

CHINA LAUNCHES A 712-KM QUANTUM COMMUNICATION LINE

- It is stated to be the world's longest secure telecommunications network, which boasts of ultra-high security making it impossible to wiretap, intercept or crack the information transmitted through them.
- The new quantum communication line links Hefei, capital of Anhui province, to Shanghai, the country's financial hub.
- It is part of a 2,000-km quantum communication line connecting Beijing and Shanghai, The 712-km line has 11 stations and it took three years of construction.
- Quantum communication lines boasts ultra-high security: It is impossible to wiretap, intercept or crack the information transmitted through them.
- The Beijing-Shanghai quantum communication line is expected to be completed at the end of this year.
- In August, China successfully launched the world's first quantum satellite. It was nicknamed "Micius" after a fifth century BC Chinese philosopher and scientist.
- The Beijing-Shanghai quantum communication line will be connected to the satellite through the line's station in Beijing, enabling the space-to-Earth quantum communication network.

FIDEL CASTRO PASSES AWAY

Castro's reign over the island-nation Cuba was marked by the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis a year later that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

The revolutionary, who survived a crippling U.S. trade embargo as well as dozens, possibly hundreds, of assassination plots, died eight years after ill health forced him to formally hand power over to Raul.

Youngest leader in Latin America: Castro overcame imprisonment at the hands of dictator Fulgencio Batista, exile in Mexico and a disastrous start to his rebellion before triumphantly riding into Havana in January 1959 to become, at age 32, the youngest leader in Latin America. For decades, he served as an inspiration and source of support to revolutionaries from Latin America to Africa.

"Socialism or death" remained Castro's rallying cry even as Western-style democracy swept the globe and other communist regimes in China and Vietnam embraced capitalism.

World's longest ruling head of government: By the time Castro resigned 49 years after his triumphant arrival in Havana, he was the world's longest ruling head of government, aside from monarchs. In retirement, Castro voiced unwavering support as Raul slowly but deliberately enacted sweeping changes to the Marxist system he had built.

FARC (REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA)

In news: Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and the leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Rodrigo Londono, signed a revised peace agreement.

This came less than two months after a plebiscite narrowly rejected the original agreement, which took four years to negotiate.

Unlike the previous agreement, this new deal will not be subject to a public vote but will have to be approved by Congress over the course of the next week.

Background:

- The new accord to end 52 years of war in Latin America's fourth-largest economy was put together in just over a month after the original pact was narrowly and unexpectedly defeated in an October 2 referendum for being too lenient on the rebels.

- The government and the FARC worked together in Cuba for four years to negotiate an end to the region's longest-running conflict that has killed more than 220,000 and displaced millions in the Andean nation.

- The FARC, which began as a rebellion fighting rural poverty, has battled a dozen governments as well as right-wing paramilitary groups.

- An end to the war with the FARC is unlikely to end violence in Colombia as the lucrative cocaine business has given rise to criminal gangs and traffickers.

- Santos, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last month for his peace efforts, wants to get the deal in place as quickly as possible to maintain a fragile bilateral ceasefire.

About the Accord:

- The expanded and highly complex new 310-page document makes only small modifications to the original text, such as clarifying private property rights and detailing more fully how the rebels would be confined in rural areas for crimes committed during the war.

- Within 90 days after the approval, the FARC will begin to lay down arms. And within five months, all the weapons of the FARC will be in the hands of the United Nations.

- As a party without weapons, the FARC can present its political project. It will be Colombians who support or reject it with a vote.

- Despite widespread relief at an end to conflict, many among Colombia's largely conservative residents are angry because, like the original agreement, the new deal will not jail FARC leaders who committed crimes like kidnappings and massacres, and it allows them to hold political office.

NIKKI HALEY

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has chosen South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, the first woman tapped for a top-level administration post during his White House transition so far.

Who is Nikki Haley?

Born as Nimrata 'Nikki' Randhawa to Indian immigrants from Punjab, she became the first female governor in South Carolina. Ms. Haley is the second Asian American to become the Governor of a State after Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal. At 44, she's the youngest current Governor in the U.S..
She would also be the first ever Indian-American Cabinet rank official in US administration.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: 25 NOVEMBER

Why This International Day?

- Violence against women is a human rights violation.
- Violence against women is a consequence of discrimination against women, in law and also in practice, and of persisting inequalities between men and women.
- Violence against women impacts on, and impedes, progress in many areas, including poverty eradication, combating HIV/AIDS, and peace and security.
- Violence against women continues to be a global pandemic.

One of the major challenges to efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls worldwide is the substantial funding shortfall. As a result, resources for initiatives to prevent and end violence against women and girls are severely lacking. Frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes a specific target on ending violence against women and girls, offer huge promise, but must be adequately funded in order to bring real and significant changes in the lives of women and girls.

UN Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women's call for action is themed 'Orange the World: Raise Money to End Violence against Women and Girls', to amplify and address the funding shortfall. This Campaign against gender based violence will last for 16 days from 25th Nov to 10th Dec (Human Rights Day).

MASS BLEACHING TAKES PLACE ON GREAT BARRIER REEF

A mass bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef this year killed more corals than ever before, , sounding the alarm over the delicate ecosystem. It suffered its most severe bleaching in recorded history, due to warming sea temperatures during March and April, with the northern third bearing the brunt.

Follow-up underwater surveys, backing earlier aerial studies, have revealed a 700-kilometre stretch of reefs in the less-accessible north lost two-thirds of shallow-water corals in the past eight to nine months.

This region escaped with minor damage in two earlier bleaching events in 1998 and 2002, but this time around it has been badly affected.

Further south over the vast central and southern regions, including major tourist areas around Cairns and the Whitsunday Islands, there was a much lower toll.

Reasons behind such damage in Great Barrier Reef:
- Coal Mining
- farming run-off
- climate change
- development activities and
- the coral-eating crown-of-thorns starfish

About Great Barrier Reef:
It is the world's largest coral reef system composed of over 2,900 individual reefs and 900 islands stretching for over 2,300 kilometers. The reef is located in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia.

The reef structure is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps. It supports a wide diversity of life and was selected as a World Heritage Site in 1981.

Coral Bleaching:
Bleaching occurs when abnormal environmental conditions, such as warmer sea temperatures, cause corals to expel tiny photosynthetic algae, draining them of their colour. Algae are vital to the coral, which uses the organic products of photosynthesis to help it grow. The loss of algae makes the host vulnerable to disease and means it will eventually die.

However, coral can recover if the water temperature drops and the algae are able to recolonise them.

Environmentalists blame the burning of fossil fuels for global warming and call for Australia to abandon coal mining to help prevent further bleaching disasters.

A credible plan is needed to protect the reef which addresses climate change and calls for a ban on new coal mines.