

CURRENT AFFAIRS
16th APRIL TO 30th APRIL 2017

AGNI - III

IN NEWS: Successful test-firing of **land attack variant of supersonic cruise missile BrahMos** by Navy, the army is set to carry out a fresh user trial of Agni-III missile from a defence test facility off Odisha.

The Strategic Forces Command (SFC), a specially raised missile-handling unit of the Indian Army, is likely to carry out the test from Abdul Kalam Island with logistics support from DRDO.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Agni-III, capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads weighing up to 1.5 tonnes, is 17 metres tall with a two-metre diameter and weighs about 48 tonnes.
- Its range is 3000-km & weighs around 2,200 kg.
- The Agni-III features two solid fuelled stages.
- Agni-III supports a wide range of weapons, with total payload weight ranging from 600 kg to 1,800 kg including decoys and other ABM countermeasures.
- Instead of conventional bus architecture, the RV (Re-Entry Vehicle) is self-contained with velocity correction package, navigation and re-entry control systems.
- The missile was inducted in the armed forces in June, 2011.
- The missile is the mainstay of India's nuclear deterrence programme as it provides the country with strategic second-strike capability.

TEST AND TREAT POLICY FOR HIV

IN NEWS: This was launched by the Union Ministry for Health & Family Welfare.

This will be for all men, women, adolescents and children who have been diagnosed as a HIV + case.

This will improve longevity, improve quality of life of those infected and will save them from many opportunistic infections, especially TB.

We have nearly 1600 ART (ANTIRETOVIRAL THERAY) and Link ART sites diop D where treatment is provided across the country and recently India crossed the 1 million people on ART.

The 90:90:90 strategy that the Ministry has adopted will help to identify 90% of those infected, place 90% of these on treatment and ensure 90% have their virus under control.

Ending AIDS by 2030" is a part of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

INDIA'S FOREX RESERVE

IN NEWS: According to the Reserve Bank of India's weekly statistical supplement, the overall Forex reserves increased to \$371.13 billion from \$369.88 billion. India's foreign exchange (Forex) reserves rose by \$1.25 billion as on April 21, 2017.

India's Forex reserves comprise of **foreign currency assets (FCAs), gold, special drawing rights (SDRs) and the RBI's position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).**

- FCAs -- the largest component of the Forex reserves -- augmented by \$1.23 billion to \$347.48 billion.
- Besides the US dollar, FCAs consist of nearly 20-30 per cent of major (non-US) global currencies.
- The FCAs also include investments in US Treasury bonds, bonds of other selected governments, deposits with foreign central and commercial banks.
- The country's gold reserves were stagnant at \$19.86 billion.
- However, SDRs' value gained \$5 million to \$1.45 billion.
- The country's reserve position with the IMF inched higher by \$7.7 million to \$2.33 billion.
- India's quota in IMF is 2.76.

BROADBAND SERVICES TO POST OFFICES

IN NEWS: A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding has been signed among BBNL, Department of Posts and BSNL for providing broadband connectivity of BharatNet to Post Offices in rural areas.

The MoU signed under the Ministry of Communications is the first tri-partite agreement to provide broadband connectivity to about 1.3 lakh, post offices in rural areas and 25,000 sub-post offices for high speed internet connectivity to the rural masses.

The first phase of connecting about one lakh Gram Panchayats is nearing its completion and in the remaining one and a half lakh Gram Panchayats 100 mbps broadband connectivity will be completed by December, 2018.

BHARATNET

BharatNet is a project of national importance to establish, by 2017, a highly scalable network infrastructure accessible on a non-discriminatory basis, to provide on demand, affordable broadband connectivity of 2 Mbps to 20 Mbps for all households and on demand capacity to all institutions, to realise the vision of Digital India, in partnership with States and the private sector.

The entire project is being funded by **Universal service Obligation Fund (USOF)**, which was set up for improving telecom services in rural and remote areas of the country.

The objective is to facilitate the delivery of e-governance, e-health, e-education, e-banking, Internet and other services to the rural India.

- The project is a Centre-State collaborative project, with the States contributing free Rights of Way for establishing the Optical Fibre Network.
- The **first phase** envisages providing one lakh gram panchayats with broadband connectivity by laying underground optic fibre cable (OFC) lines by **March 2017**.
- The **second phase** will provide connectivity to all 2,50,500 gram panchayats in the country using an optimal mix of underground fiber, fiber over power lines, radio and satellite media. It is to be completed by **December 2018**.
- In the third phase from **2018 to 2023**, state-of-the-art, future-proof network, including fiber between districts and blocks, with ring topology to provide redundancy would be created.

CASSINI SPACECRAFT: NASA

IN NEWS: NASA's Cassini spacecraft successfully traveled between Saturn and its rings.

As it dove through the gap, Cassini came within about 1,900 miles (3,000 kilometers) of Saturn's cloud tops (where the air pressure is 1 bar -- comparable to the atmospheric pressure of Earth at sea level) and within about 200 miles (300 kilometers) of the innermost visible edge of the rings.

Cassini was programmed to collect science data while close to the planet and turn toward Earth to make contact about 20 hours after the crossing.

CASSINI MISSION:

Cassini-Huygens is an unmanned spacecraft sent to the planet Saturn. Cassini is the fourth space probe to visit Saturn and the first to enter orbit.

Its design includes a Saturn orbiter and a lander for the moon Titan. The lander, called Huygens, landed on Titan in 2005. The spacecraft was launched on October 15, 1997. This was the first landing ever accomplished in the outer Solar System.

The Cassini-Huygens mission is a cooperative project of NASA, ESA (European Space Agency) and the Italian Space Agency.

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the three-dimensional structure and dynamic behavior of the rings of Saturn.
- Determine the composition of the satellite surfaces and the geological history of each object.
- Determine the nature and origin of the dark material on Iapetus's leading hemisphere.
- Measure the three-dimensional structure and dynamic behavior of the magnetosphere.
- Study the dynamic behavior of Saturn's atmosphere at cloud level.
- Study the time variability of Titan's clouds and hazes.
- Characterize Titan's surface on a regional scale.

SOLAR CALCULATOR APP

IN NEWS: ISRO announced a Solar Calculator app that can accurately calculate all the benefits of installing solar panels in different parts of the country.

Under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, the app was created by the Space Application Center facility (SAC) of ISRO in Ahmedabad.

The use of remote sensing observations from geo-satellites is important to get the space-time variability of surface insolation. The app will be a highly useful tool for installation of PV solar panels in order to tap solar energy.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The App provides solar energy potential (in kWh/m²) at any given location.
- The required location can be keyed in or can be obtained through GPS.
- It gives monthly and yearly solar potential processed using Indian Geostationary Satellite data (Kalpana-1, INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR).
- It also offers monthly minimum and maximum temperature to calculate realistic solar potential.
- Location is displayed on image with satellite data in the background.
- It also provides azimuth and elevation angles, and day length over different time periods in a year.
- Obstruction of sunlight due to terrain is also calculated using Digital Elevation Model (DEM).
- It also suggests optimum tilt angle for solar PV installation.

APMC ACT TO INTEGRATE AGRI MARKETS

IN NEWS: The Agriculture Ministry has come up with a new model Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act proposing single-point levy of market fee across a State and a united single trading licence for cost-effectiveness of transactions.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It has suggested abolition of fragmentation of market with the State/Union Territory by removing the concept of notified market area insofar as enforcement of regulation by the Agricultural Produce and Livestock Market Committee (APLMC) is concerned.
- To meet the marketing sector challenges, the Agriculture Ministry has formulated APMC Act 2017 and it is being shared with the States for implementation.
- The idea is to remove disincentives for farmers and traders to trade across the country as they will not have to shell out more money.
- States could then get integrated on the online platform **e-NAM (e-National Agriculture Market)** launched in April 2016 for online sale and purchase of commodities nationwide.
- The government has formulated the model contract farming law. It will help provide marketing infrastructure, developing marketing skills and in reducing risks associated with diversity of production.

- Other proposals in the model APMC Act include promotion of national market for agriculture produce through provisioning of inter-State trading licence, grading and standardisation and quality certification, rationalisation of market fee and commission charges, provision for special commodity market yard and promotion of e-trading to increase transparency.

MALARIA VACCINE

IN NEWS: As per WHO **Ghana, Kenya and Malawi** will pilot the **world's first malaria vaccine** from 2018, offering it for babies and children in high-risk areas as part of real-life trials.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The injectable vaccine, called **RTSS or Mosquirix**, was developed by **British drugmaker GlaxoSmithKline** to protect children from the most deadly form of malaria in Africa.
- In clinical trials it proved only partially effective and it needs to be given in a four-dose schedule, but is the first regulator-approved vaccine against the mosquito-borne disease.
- Malaria kills around 430,000 people a year, the vast majority of them babies and young children in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **RTSS was developed by GSK in partnership with the non-profit PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative and part-funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.**

The WHO had secured full funding for the first phase of the RTSS pilots, with \$15 million from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and up to \$27.5 million and \$9.6 million respectively from the GAVI Vaccine Alliance and UNITAID for the first four years of the program

IT HUB INAUGURATED IN TRIPURA

IN NEWS: Northeast India's sixth and largest Information Technology (IT) hub was inaugurated to boost employment and e-governance besides to export software technology.

It would help the state to bring more investments by big companies of India to set off their business and services taking the facilities of this newly set-up IT hub.

The Union Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology shared technological knowledge with the state government to set up this hub, sixth of its kind in northeast India and largest such hub in the region.

This IT hub would help India to export software technology.

WAX WORM CATERPILLAR EATS PLASTIC

IN NEWS: The larva of a common insect, **Galleria mellonella**, is able to biodegrade one of the toughest, most resilient, and most used plastics: polyethylene. A previous study has shown that **Plodia interpunctella** wax worms, the larvae of diatom mealmoths, can also digest plastic.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Study showed that the worms can do damage to a plastic bag in less than an hour.
- The researchers showed that the wax worms were not only ingesting the plastic, they were also chemically transforming the polyethylene into ethylene glycol.
- Wax is a polymer, a sort of 'natural plastic,' and has a chemical structure not dissimilar to polyethylene.

MUMBAI – ELEPHANTA ISLAND LINKED

IN NEWS: India's first and longest ropeway to connect Mumbai with the famous Elephanta Island in the Arabian Sea is planned to be constructed by the Mumbai Port Trust.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The 8-km ropeway will begin from Sewri in Mumbai's east coast and end at Raigad district's Elephanta Island, globally renowned for Elephanta Caves, a Unesco World Heritage site.
- Known locally as Gharapuri Caves, the small 16 sq. km island has several archaeological remains pointing to its rich cultural heritage, including the famous temples carved out of rocks.
- There has been evidence of settlement on the island from 2nd century BC, but the rock-cut temples are believed to have been constructed around 5th-6th century AD.
- At present, approximately 5,000 domestic and foreign tourists visit the island, inhabited by around 1,200 residents, mostly fisherfolk and farmers, in three tiny port villages called Rajbandar, Shentbandar and Morabandar.

GOLDMAN ENVIRONMENTAL PRIZE

IN NEWS: **Prafulla Samantara**, the face of people's resistance against Vedanta's plan to mine bauxite from **Niyamgiri hills in Odisha**, has been honoured with this year's Goldman Environmental Prize — one of the biggest recognitions in grassroots environmentalism.

- The prize, also known as Green Nobel prize, was announced in San Francisco.
- Samantara's Lok Shakti Abhiyan, a civil rights organisation, was at the forefront of the protests in Niyamgiri in Lanjigarh district where Sterlite Industries, a subsidiary of Vedanta Alumina, was planning to set up mining operations in a joint venture with state-owned Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC).

- The project, which involved demolition of 7 square km of Niyamgiri hilltop, considered sacred by the **endangered Dongariya Kondh tribe** inhabiting the area, was denied clearance by the Environment Ministry in 2010.
- Besides Samantara, five more people — Mark Lopez (the US), Uroš Macerl (Slovenia), Rodrigo Tot (Guatemala) Rodrigue Katembo (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Wendy Bowman (Australia) — have been honoured with this year's Goldman prize.
- Previous Indian winners include **Medha Patkar, M C Mehta, and Rashida Bee and Champa Shukla**, the last two having being honoured for their fight for justice for Bhopal gas victims.

CHINA'S FIRST CARGO SPACECRAFT DOCKED SUCCESSFULLY

IN NEWS: China's first cargo spacecraft docked successfully with the **Tiangong-2 space lab**, marking a major step towards Beijing's goal of establishing a permanently manned space station by 2022.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Tianzhou-1 cargo resupply spacecraft made the automated docking process with the orbiting space lab after it had taken off from the Wenchang Satellite Launch Centre in the southern island province of Hainan.
- The Tiangong-2 space laboratory, or "**Heavenly Palace 2**", was home to two astronauts for a month last October in China's longest ever manned space mission.
- The cargo spacecraft mission provides an "important technological basis" to build a Chinese space station. It can reportedly carry 6 tonnes of goods, 2 tonnes of fuel and can fly unmanned for three months.
- Despite the advances in China's space programme for military, commercial and scientific purposes, China still lags behind the United States and Russia.

NATIONAL WATERWAY - 1

IN NEWS: The World Bank has approved a \$375 million loan for capacity augmentation of National Waterway-1(River Ganga) under **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)**.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The government is developing NW-1 (River Ganga) under JMVP from Haldia to Varanasi (1390 Km).
- The project would enable commercial navigation of vessels with capacity of 1500-2,000 DWT.
- Under the project, there are going to be three multi-modal terminals--one each at Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh), Sahibganj (Jharkhand), and Haldia (West Bengal), two inter-modal terminals- at Kalughat and Ghazipur, a new Navigation Lock at Farakka, five Roll on-Roll off (Ro-Ro) terminals, development of

Ferry services at Varanasi, Patna, Bhagalpur, Munger, Kolkata and Haldia and Vessel repair and maintenance facilities.

- The project will enable IWAI setting up of River Information Service System on NW -1 for the first time in India. River Information System (RIS) are equipment, hardware and software information technology (IT) related services designed to optimize traffic and transport processes in inland navigation.
- JMVP will also support the design and development of low draft vessels capable of carrying up to 2000 tonnes of cargo in shallower depths.

MGNREGA GEOTAGGED

IN NEWS: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Ministry of Rural Development with NRSC on 24th June 2016 for geo-tagging the assets created under MGNREGS in each gram panchayat.

GeoMGNREGA is a unique endeavor of the Ministry of Rural Development in association with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO and National Informatics Centre.

On an average, about 30 Lakh Assets are created annually which includes a variety of works such as **water harvesting structures, plantations, rural infrastructure, flood control measures, individual assets for sustainable livelihood, community infrastructure and so on.**

Special focus is being given to geo-tag Natural Resource Management works especially the water related works.

GWADAR PORT

IN NEWS: A state-run Chinese company will handle the operations of Pakistan's strategic Gwadar port for a period of 40 years.

China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) would carry out all the development work on the port on the Arabian Sea.

- COPHC has 91% share of revenue collection from gross revenue of terminal and marine operations and 85% share from gross revenue of free zone operation.
- The provinces have no share in revenue collection as per the constitution.
- Gwadar forms the southern Pakistan hub of the \$57 billion **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** infrastructure and energy projects Beijing announced in 2014.
- It also aims to develop seafood processing plants in a nearby free trade zone sprawled over 2,281 acres.
- The route through Gwadar offers China its shortest path to oil-rich West Asia, Africa, and most of the western hemisphere.

Gwadar is a **deep sea port** city on the southwestern coast of Balochistan, Pakistan. The city is located on the shores of the Arabian Sea, approximately 700 kilometres to the west of Pakistan's largest city, Karachi. Gwadar is near the border with Iran, and is located to the east of the Persian Gulf and opposite Oman.

NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

National Safety Council is a self-supporting non-profit autonomous society, set up by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Govt. of India on 4th March, 1966.

Its aim is to strengthen a national movement on Safety, Health & Environment to prevent and mitigate loss of life, human suffering & economic losses and provide support services.

- As a part of the Council's services, it has been operating Safety Awards Scheme at the national level for three sectors viz. **Industrial Undertakings (Manufacturing Sector), Construction Projects (Construction Sector) and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME Sector)**.
- The main objective of the scheme is to provide national recognition to the organizations which have achieved and sustained a meritorious performance in Occupational Safety & Health (OSH) and for implementing effective OSH management systems, practices and procedures.

CRYOGENIC UPPER STAGE TESTED SUCCESSFULLY

IN NEWS: The ISRO has successfully tested its indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage for GSLV MkIII.

The cryogenic stage, designated as C25 was tested at ISRO Propulsion Complex at Mahendragiri in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

- GSLV MkIII, the next generation launch vehicle of ISRO, is capable of launching **four ton** class satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- The GSLV MkIII vehicle integration activities are in progress at Satish Dhawan Space Centre or Sriharikota for its first development flight (GSLV MkIII—D1) targeted for April 2017.
- The space agency described the C25 stage as the “most powerful” upper stage developed by ISRO which uses **Liquid Oxygen (LOX) and Liquid Hydrogen (LH2)** propellant combination.
- The stage carries 27.8 tonnes of propellants loaded in two independent tanks.
- According to ISRO, development of a cryogenic stage has unique design challenges, with **liquid Hydrogen stored at —253 deg C and liquid Oxygen stored at —195 deg C in its tank**.

RGIA ACHIEVED CARBON NEUTRAL STATUS

The **Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA)**, Hyderabad has achieved carbon neutral status. It is the first in the Asia-Pacific region in the 5-15 million passengers per annum category to attain this status.

It is the second airport among all categories in the Asia-Pacific region to achieve carbon neutral status.

Earlier in September, 2016 GMR Group-led Delhi Airport had become the first airport in Asia-Pacific to achieve carbon neutral status among all categories

Airports Council International (ACI) has certified Hyderabad International Airport with Level 3+, Neutrality under its Airport Carbon Accreditation programme. It is the industry standard for assessment of airports' efforts to manage and reduce carbon emissions and a significant achievement.

SUPER EARTH LHS 1140 b

IN NEWS: Astronomers Discovered a potentially Habitable Super-Earth LHS 1140 b.

- Astronomers found the planet using the transit method – when a star dims as a planet crosses in front of it as seen from Earth.
- It is about 11,000 miles in diameter, or about 40 percent larger than Earth.
- It is located just 40 light-years away.
- The planet to be 6.6 times the mass of Earth, showing that it is dense and likely has a rocky composition.
- Small, potentially habitable planets have been found in the **TRAPPIST-1 system**, located a similar distance from Earth, but only one of those worlds has had its density measured accurately, showing that it isn't rocky. Therefore, some or all of the others also might not be rocky.
- The planet orbits a tiny, faint star known as **LHS 1140**, which is only **one-fifth the size of the Sun**. Since the star is so dim and cool, its habitable zone (the distance at which a planet might be warm enough to hold liquid water) is very close.
- This planet, designated LHS 1140 b, orbits its star every 25 days. At that distance, it receives about half as much sunlight from its star as Earth.
- In contrast with the TRAPPIST-1 star, LHS 1140 spins slowly and does not emit much high-energy radiation, which also may help the likelihood of life on its planet.
- LHS 1140 b was discovered using the **MEarth-South telescope array at Cerro Tololo Inter-American Observatory**. This collection of eight telescopes, with its companion facility MEarth-North, studies faint, red stars known as **M dwarfs** to locate orbiting planets using the transit method.

NATIONAL AWARD FOR FOOD GRAIN PRODUCTION

IN NEWS: The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has selected Tripura for **the Krishi Karman Award 2015-16** for commendable increase in food grain production in small category states.

Tripura gets this national award for the second time. The northeastern state first received the award in the 2009-10 fiscal.

- Tamil Nadu gets the award in **large category** (production more than 10 million tonnes), Himachal Pradesh in **medium category** (1 to 10 million tonnes) and Tripura in **small category** (less than 1 million tonnes).
- Tripura produced 825,000 tonnes of food grain in 2016, and had been implementing a "perspective plan" to achieve self-sufficiency in food grain within the next few years.
- The mountainous northeastern state targets to produce 935,000 tonnes of food grain in 2017.
- Under the Krishi Karman Award, another northeastern state, Meghalaya, too gets commendation prize for total food grain production and would receive Rs 1 crore.

KRISHI KRAMAN AWARD

- Krishi Karman awards were instituted in the year 2010-11 to reward the best performing States in foodgrains and individual crops of Rice, Wheat, Pulses and Coarse Cereals.
- Krishi Karman Awards comprises of three awards for total food grain production and four awards for production of rice, wheat, coarse cereals and pulses - the crops that constitute the food grain.
- There is no categorization of States for individual crops of Rice, Wheat, Pulses, Coarse cereals and Oilseeds.
- The Award amount will be of Rs. 5.00 crore for total foodgrains category and Rs. 2.00 crore for individual crops category. The amount for Commendation Award will be Rs. 1.00 crore for each State.

SAURASHTRA NARMADA AVTARAN IRRIGATION YOJANA

IN NEWS: Prime Minister inaugurated phase-I of the Link-II pipeline canal of the ambitious Saurashtra Narmada Avtaran Irrigation (SAUNI) Yojna in Botad district.

This will be second milestone in the Rs12,000 crore project to pump Narmada water in 115 dams of arid Saurashtra region.

- SAUNI Yojna is a project to divert one million acre feet (MAFT) of floodwaters of Narmada to Saurashtra region and fill up 115 reservoirs of Saurashtra through a 1,126-kilometre-long network of giant pipelines.

- The project envisages to channel the floodwater, which otherwise overflows the Narmada dam during monsoon and drains into the sea, to Saurashtra through Narmada main canal and Saurashtra branch canal (CBC) of the Narmada dam project.
- The SBC lands in Dholidhaja dam in Surendranagar & Botad branch canal (BBC) originates from the Dholidhaja dam and fills up Limdi Bhogavo-II dam along the way.

DIGITAL PAYMENT FOR 14 SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES

IN NEWS: 14 scholarship schemes for **Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) / Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes (DNTs)** students covering 3.54 crore students are under digital payment.

All Scholarship amount are released to students' bank account and there is 60% Aadhaar seeding in SC student bank account.

Educational Empowerment for SCs is through scholarships, hostels for students, coaching facilities, capital for creation/upgradation of premises, institution etc.

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment implements seven different types of scholarships, which include:

- Post and Pre-Matric Scholarships.
- Top Class Scholarship.
- National Overseas Scholarships.
- National Fellowship for Scheduled Castes administered by the UGC.
- Pre-Matric Scholarship for Children of those engaged in unclean occupations.
- Free Coaching for Scheduled Castes and OBCs (70: 30 ratio).
- Upgradation of merit.

Each branch of public sector banks has been assigned responsibility by the Finance Ministry to handhold at least one SC/ST youth, as an entrepreneur, to generate more employment among them.

TROPICAL CYCLONE MAARUTHA

IN NEWS: A tropical cyclone named **Maarutha** has been identified in the Bay of Bengal as a deep depression. It is the 1st named storm of 2017 in the region.

CYCLONES

- They are the large scale air mass that rotates around a strong center of low atmospheric pressure.

- They are different from hurricane or typhoon only of the basis of location Hurricanes are storms which occur in the Atlantic Ocean, northeastern Pacific Ocean, and a typhoon occur in the northwestern Pacific Ocean, and a cyclone occurs in the south Pacific or Indian Ocean.
- A cyclone's track is guided over the course of its 2 to 6 day life cycle by the steering flow of the subtropical jet stream.

TROPICAL CYCLONE

- It is a rotating, organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that originates over tropical or subtropical waters and has closed low-level circulation.
- They are mostly centered on the areas of low atmospheric pressure.
- The tropical cyclones rotate anti-clockwise in the northern hemisphere and are classified into three types viz. Tropical Depression (maximum sustained winds of 38 mph or less); Tropical Storm (maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph); hurricane (maximum sustained winds of 74 mph) and major hurricane (maximum sustained winds of 111 mph).

INDIA - RUSSIA

IN NEWS: India is set to formalize a free trade agreement with the Eurasian Economic Union, clearing the decks for negotiations on deepening trade relations with the five former Soviet republics.

The FTA is expected to open up a huge market with a trade potential of \$37 to 62 billion. Trade between India and the five Eurasian countries stands at about \$11 billion

EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION

The Eurasian Economic Union comprises **Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.**

The Eurasian Economic Union is an international organization for regional economic integration. It has international legal personality and is established by the Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union.

The EAEU provides for free movement of goods, services, capital and labor, pursues coordinated, harmonized and single policy in the sectors determined by the Treaty and international agreements within the Union.

The Union is being created to comprehensively upgrade, raise the competitiveness of and cooperation between the national economies, and to promote stable development in order to raise the living standards of the nations of the Member-States.

POLLUTION IN DAL LAKE

IN NEWS: The J&K High court ordered a slew of measures to contain the ever-growing pollution, and encroachments in and around the Dal Lake.

DAL LAKE

Dal is a lake in Srinagar is the second largest in the state, is integral to tourism and recreation in Kashmir and is named the "Jewel in the crown of Kashmir" or "Srinagar's Jewel".

- The lake is also an important source for commercial operations in fishing and water plant harvesting.
- The lake covers an area of 18 square kilometres and is part of a natural wetland which covers 21.1 square kilometres including its floating gardens.
- The floating gardens, known as "Rad" in Kashmiri.
- The wetland is divided by causeways into four basins; Gagribal, Lokut Dal, Bod Dal and Nagin (although Nagin is also considered as an independent lake).
- Mughal gardens, Shalimar Bagh and the Nishat Bagh are on its periphery.

e-SOT & e-PRAN CARD LAUNCHED

IN NEWS: With a view to digitally empower the Atal Pension Yojana (APY) subscribers and improve the quality of service, the facility of online viewing of the statement of transaction(e-SOT) and also the e-PRAN card have been launched.

By providing the APY/PRAN Acct details and Savings Bank Account number details, the APY subscriber can view one's APY Account Statement. This online tool enables the Subscribers to view his complete details of APY account like transaction details, pension amount, pension commencement date, nominee name, associated bank name etc.

ATAL PENSION YOJANA

- The Atal Pension Yojana (APY) was launched 09th May, 2015.
- APY is available for all citizens of India in the age group of **18-40 years**.
- Under the APY, the subscribers would receive a minimum guaranteed pension of Rs. 1000 to Rs. 5000 per month from the age of **60 years**, depending on their contributions, which depends on the age of the subscriber at the time of joining the APY.
- The Same amount of pension is paid to the **spouse in case of subscriber's demise**.
- After the demise of both i.e. Subscriber & Spouse, the **nominee would be paid with the pension corpus**.
- There is option for Spouse to continue to contribute for balance period on premature death of subscriber **before 60 years**, so as to avail pension by Spouse.

- There are tax benefits at entry, accumulation and pension payment phases. If the actual returns on the pension contributions during the accumulation phase are higher than the assumed returns for the minimum guaranteed pension, such excess returns are passed on to the subscriber, resulting in enhanced scheme benefits.

INDIA: 5TH LARGEST MILITARY SPENDER

IN NEWS: The report titled ‘Trends in world Military expenditure, 2016, which ranks countries based on their military spending was recently released.

The report was released by Swedish think-tank **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**.

India is now the world’s fifth largest spender on defence for 2016 after having moved up from the 7th place following its largest annual military spending increase since 2009.

While India spent \$55.9 billion in 2016, **China the second** largest spender did four times more at \$215 billion. The **US is the top** spender at \$611 billion. **Russia is third** at \$69.2 billion and **Saudi Arabia fourth** at \$ 63.7 billion.

STEREOLITHOGRAPHY

IN NEWS: Scientists have developed a novel way to 3D-print objects using glass, an advance that could be used to make very small optical components for complex computers.

Researchers from Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in Germany mixed nanoparticles of high-purity quartz glass and a small quantity of liquid polymer and allowed the mixture to be cured by light at specific points — by means of **stereolithography**.

Stereolithography is a form of 3D-printing technology used for creating models, prototypes, patterns and production parts in a layer by layer fashion using photopolymerisation, a process by which light causes chains of molecules to link, forming polymers.

A new method, an innovation in materials processing, in which the material of the piece manufactured is high-purity quartz glass with the respective chemical and physical properties.

The 3D-printed glass can be used for many applications, including data technology. The next plus one generation of computers will use light, which requires complicated processor structures, 3D technology could be used, for instance, to make small, complex structures out of a large number of very small optical components of different orientations.

COPs TO BRS CONVENTIONS

IN NEWS: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change participated in the **2017 Conference of Parties (COPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm (BRS) Conventions.**

The three COPs to BRS Conventions held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The theme of the meetings and the high-level segment - "A future detoxified: sound management of chemicals and waste".

Conference of Parties (COPs) to the BRS Convention included the **13th meeting of the Conference of Parties to "Basel Convention (BC COP 13), the 8th meeting of the Conference of Parties to "Rotterdam Convention (RC COP 8) and 8th meeting of the Conference of Parties to "Stockholm Convention (SC COP 8).**

While the **Basel Convention** discussed the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal, the **Rotterdam Convention** deliberated on the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade" and the **Stockholm Convention** was on persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

- The agenda of the 2017 BRS COPs meetings covered technical guidelines on transboundary movements of electrical and electronic waste and used electrical and electronic equipments.
- Technical guidelines for environmentally sound management of wastes, consisting of, containing or contaminated with low persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in Basel Convention, national reporting, capacity building and technical assistance.
- Listing of chemicals viz chrysotile asbestos, paraquat dichloride, fenthion, trichlorfon, short chain chlorinated paraffins, tributyltin compounds, carbofuran and carbosulfan under Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention.
- Listing of chemicals viz short chain chlorinated paraffins, decabromodiphenyl ether and Hexachlorobutadiene under Annex A, B, and C to the Stockholm Convention.

EARTH DAY

IN NEWS: Earth Day 2017 is being celebrated around the world today (April 22).

This year's campaign is dedicated to an ambitious goal – to achieve global climate and environmental literacy in the space of three years, by Earth Day 2020.

Earth Day Network's mission is to diversify, educate and activate the environmental movement worldwide.

Growing out of the first Earth Day, Earth Day Network is the world's largest recruiter to the environmental movement, working with more than 50,000 partners in nearly 195 countries to build environmental democracy.

More than 1 billion people now participate in Earth Day activities each year, making it the largest civic observance in the world. It works through a combination of education, public policy, and consumer campaigns.

BACKGROUND

Earth Day was first celebrated in 1970. The idea for it was first proposed at a UNESCO conference a year earlier, when activist John McConnell suggested a day to honour the planet and the idea of peace.

US senator Gaylord Nelson founded Earth Day in the US. It was made into an international day in 1990 and now is celebrated by over 193 countries every year.

The aim of the day is to bring attention to environmental issues to spark changes that will result in a healthy, sustainable environment. This includes addressing climate change and finding ways to protect the planet for future generations.

LEGAL AID & EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

The launch of three key legal aid and empowerment initiatives of the Department of Justice – including ‘Pro bono legal services’, ‘Tele law service’ and ‘Nyaya Mitra scheme’.

The three initiatives launched were aimed at fulfilling the department’s core mandate of enhancing ‘access to justice’ for the poor and vulnerable communities, including making accessible quality and effective legal aid for them.

Pro bono legal Services

- The ‘Pro bono legal services’ initiative is a web based platform, through which interested lawyers can register themselves to volunteer pro bono services for the underprivileged litigants, who are unable to afford it.
- The Department of Justice has launched the online application for this initiative on its website doj.gov.in.
- Through the online portal, litigants from marginalised communities (including members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, women, children, senior citizens, persons with low income and persons with disabilities) can also apply for legal aid and advice from the pro bono lawyers.

Tele Law: Mainstreaming Legal Aid through Common Service Centre

Launched by the Minister, the Department of Justice and NALSA are partnering with CSC- E- Governance Service Limited for mainstreaming legal aid to the marginalized communities through the Common Service Centers (CSCs).

- This initiative, called ‘Tele Law’, is aimed at facilitating delivery of legal advice through an expert panel of lawyers – stationed at the State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA).

- The project would connect lawyers with clients through video conferencing facilities at CSCs, operated by para legal volunteers.
- The project would be launched across 1800 panchayats in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, North Eastern States and Jammu & Kashmir.

District Facilitation Centre to reduce pendency: Engagement of Nyaya Mitra

At present, more than 2.4 crore cases are pending in the district and lower judiciary, of which nearly 10% are more than 10 years old, Nyaya Mitra scheme, which is aimed at reducing pendency of cases across selected districts, with special focus on those pending for more than 10 years.

- Functionalized through a retired judicial or executive officer (with legal experience) designated as the 'Nyaya Mitra', the project would be operated out of District Facilitation Centres, housed in CSCs.
- Nyaya Mitra's responsibilities would include among others assistance to litigants who are suffering due to delay in investigations or trial, by actively identifying such cases through the National Judicial Data Grid, providing legal advice and connecting litigants to DLSA, CSC Tele Law, other government agencies and civil society organisations.
- He/she shall also refer the marginalized applicants to Lok Adalats for dispute resolution and render assistance towards prison reforms within the district, in coordination with the district judiciary and other stakeholders.

This initiative would be launched in 227 districts including 27 districts from North East and Jammu & Kashmir and 200 districts from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Odisha, Gujarat, West Bengal etc. and would be operated out of CSCs.

MISSION VENUS: ISRO

IN NEWS: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has invited scientists to suggest studies for a potential orbiter mission to Venus – somewhat similar to the one that landed in Mars in 2013.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ISRO plans to send a spacecraft that will initially go around Venus in an elliptical orbit before getting closer to the 'Yellow Planet'.
- It will carry instruments weighing 175 kg and using 500W of power.
- Venus, the second planet from the Sun, comes closest to Earth roughly every 583 days, or about 19 months.
- Ever since the then USSR sent the Venera mission to Venus in February 1961, there have been close to 30 missions to the planet, the last one being Japan's Akatsuki in 2010. These comprised orbiters, landers, atmospheric probes and fly-bys.
- The erstwhile Soviet Union tops the list with 16 Veneras and two Vegas. The US had Mariner, Pioneer and Magellan missions.

BCIM ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

The BCIM economic corridor is an ambitious undertaking that hopes to connect Kolkata with Kunming, capital of the Yunnan province. It envisages formation of a thriving economic belt, focusing on cross-border transport, energy and telecommunication networks.

Starting from Kunming, the route passes through nodal points, such as Mandalay and Lashio in Myanmar. It heads towards Kolkata after passing through Manipur and Silchar, before crossing Bangladesh via Sylhet and Dhaka, with branches extending to the ports of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

Chinese experts in Yunnan say that except for a 200-km stretch between Silchar in Assam and Manipur, and a similar length between Kalewa and Monywa in Myanmar, the central artery of the route is nearly functional.

THE BATTLE OF ADYAR

IN NEWS: History lovers, curious onlookers, veterans and NCC cadets gathered recently in Chennai to commemorate The Battle of Adyar, a turning point in modern Indian history.

About Battle of Adyar

- The Battle of Adyar took place on 24 October 1746.
- The battle was between the French East India Company men and Nawab of Arcot forces over the St. George Fort, which was held by the French.
- It was part of the First Carnatic War between the English and the French.
- The French captured Fort St. George from the British East Indian Company.
- Nawab of Arcot, a close ally of the British, set out to regain it by sending troops, led by his son Mahfuz Khan, to Madras. While leading an army of 10,000, he was dispersed by French forces, forcing him to move south.
- Khan seized San Thomé and formed a battle line on the north bank of the Adyar River on October 22 to prevent the French from moving up reinforcements from Pondicherry
- 200 French and French-trained Indian troops led by Captain Paradis, force marched from Pondicherry, crossed Quibble Island and took positions on the south bank of the Adyar River and faced ineffective artillery fire from Khan's forces.
- On 24 October, Paradis was informed that a similar sized army led by de la Tour was on its way from St. George Fort. He decided to ford the Adayar river to attack the rear of Mahfuz Khan's battle line. de la Tour arrived too late to support Paradis, who with disciplined firing and then charging with bayonets, broke the Nawab's line.
- Mahfuz Khan's troops fled and the Battle of the Adyar River ended with the French retaining control over Fort St. George.

INDIAN WOLF

IN NEWS: A picture of an Indian wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*) captured by a naturalist in Sunderbans. The State forest department was yet to verify the veracity of the claim, the photograph has sparked speculation whether the Indian wolf, categorised as ‘**endangered**’ by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, was in fact spotted in the mangrove forest.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Indian wolf is a Schedule I animal in the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 of India.
- Indian wolf prefers to live in scrublands, grasslands and semi-arid pastoral, agricultural landscape,
- The Indian region of the Sunderbans has a population of about 100 tigers.

MOBILE APP & PORTAL RUSA

IN NEWS: Union Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the unique portal and mobile app of **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)**.

- RUSA is the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** of the Department of Higher Education, MHRD which aims to provide strategic central funding to State Higher Education Departments and Institutions and achieve the broad objectives of access, equity and excellence.
- The State Higher Education Departments and Institutions undertake certain governance, academic and administrative reforms as a pre-requisite to be entitled for RUSA grants.
- 17 facilities created under Rashtriya Uchchatat Shiksha Abiyan (RUSA) in one go in 14 states.
- Under the concept of RUSA the quality of education can go up by improving the research labs infrastructure and creating smart class rooms and various other programs.
- The portal is a one-stop for States’ Higher Education Plans, decision of the States’ Higher Education Councils and details of the resources under this scheme.
- Also, the gallery is a rich repository of the projects initiated under RUSA.

WIND POWER

IN NEWS: For the first time, wind power installations (windmills) crossed the 5 Gigawatt mark, to reach 5,400 MW in 2016-17. The earlier record was 3,472 MW of 2015-16. The current year might see installations of 6 GW.

BACKGROUND

The Indian wind industry has been around since the late 1980s. For many years, it existed only in **T.N., the windiest State**. In the last decade, it spread to eight other States that have any wind potential — four other southern states, **M.P., Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan**. But now, the Centre wants to buy electricity from wind power producers and sell it to electricity supply companies in other states, which are bound by law to buy a portion of their needs from wind and solar sources.

India, with **32,280 MW**, has the fourth biggest capacity in the world, after China, the U.S. and Germany.

The national target is **60 GW by 2022**. Wind accounts for 10% of India's total power capacity of 3.2 lakh MW; and 4% in terms of electricity produced.

TWO CHILD NORM IN ASSAM

IN NEWS: The Assam government announced a draft population policy which suggested denial of government jobs to people with more than two children and making education up to university level free for all girls.

- Any person getting a job after meeting this condition would have to maintain it till end of his service.
- For employment generation schemes like grant of tractors, houses and for other government benefits, this two children norm will be applicable.
- Besides, all elections such as panchayats, municipal bodies and autonomous councils held under the State Election Commission will also have this norm for candidates.
- If anybody had child marriage then he would be ineligible for government job.
- The policy proposes to set up a State Population Council and a State Population Research Centre.

ECOLOGICAL DAMAGE TO VEMBANAD

IN NEWS: A committee constituted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has held the Cochin Port Trust responsible for CRZ violations in Vembanad, which was classified as a Critically Vulnerable Coastal Area in the CRZ 2011 notification.

VEMBANAD

- Vembanad is the longest lake in India, and the largest lake in the state of Kerala.
- Spanning several districts in the state of Kerala, it is known as Punnamada Lake in Kuttanad, Kochi Lake in Kochi.
- Several groups of small islands including Vypin, Mulavukad, Vallarpadam, Willingdon Island are located in the Kochi Lake portion. Kochi Port is built around the Willingdon Island, and the Vallarpadam island.
- The Nehru Trophy Boat Race is conducted in a portion of the lake.
- Government of India has identified the Vembanad wetland under National Wetlands Conservation Programme.
- The Vembanad Wetland system was included in the list of wetlands of international importance, as defined by the Ramsar Convention for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands in 2002.
- It is the largest of the three Ramsar Sites in the state of Kerala.

PARTICULAR VULNERABLE TRIBAL GROUPS

IN NEWS: A recent Anthropological Survey of India (AnSI) publication has brought to the fore startling revelations about the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the country including the fact that no base line surveys have been conducted among more than half of such groups.

Base line surveys are done to precisely identify the PVTG families, their habitat and socio-economic status, so that development initiatives are implemented for these communities, based on the facts and figures.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12), Bihar including Jharkhand (9) Madhya Pradesh including Chhattisgarh (7) Tamil Nadu (6) Kerala and Gujarat having five groups each. The remaining PVTGs live in West Bengal (3) Maharashtra (3), two each in Karnataka and Uttarakhand and one each in Rajasthan, Tripura and Manipur.
- All the four tribal groups in Andamans, and one in Nicobar Islands, are recognised as PVTGs.
- Some of the PVTGs are distributed in more than one State. The **Birhor** are recognised as a PVTG in four States, while 10 other group are PVTG in two States, namely the **Sahariya, Kurumba, Koraga, Korwa, JenuKuruba, Kattunayakan, Katkari/Kathodi, Kharia, Kolam, and Lodha**.
- Thus, the number of the PVTGs at the national level would be 63, the book states.
- There is a huge variation in the number of PVTGs ranging from a few individuals as in case of **Great Andamanese, Onge and Sentinelese** and about a little more than a thousand people as in the case of **Toda** of Nilgiris.
- Although PVTGs are slowly witnessing decadal increase in their population, quite a few still face stagnation such as the **Birhor** in central India. Some are declining like the **Onge and Andamanese**.
- Smallest population size among the PVTGs are the **Sentineles** (as per the last contact effort on March 9, 2005, groups of 32 and 13 persons were sighted at different places).
- **The Great Andamanese (57 persons) and the Onge (107 persons in 2012 as per Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti)** are the dwindling populations.
- In main land, the **Toto** of West Bengal (314 families with 1,387 persons as per 2011 census) and the **Toda** of Tamil Nadu (1,608, inclusive of 238 Christian Todas as per TRC, Udagamandalam [Ooty], 2011)) have population less than 2000 persons.

- The **Saharia** people of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are the largest among the PVTGs with population more than 4 lakhs.

LITERACY RATE

- Literacy rate among the PVTGs has gone up significantly over the past.
- Literacy rate have increased to 30 to 40 % in many of the PVTGs. However, as is the case with entire India, female literacy rate is still considerably lower compared to male counterpart.
- There is considerable increase in the age of marriage among PVTGs. The incidence of girl child being married while still being a minor, among these tribes has been decreasing.

PLANET GJ 1132b

IN NEWS: Astronomers have, for the first time, detected an **atmosphere around an Earth-like** planet just 39 light years away.

Scientists, including those from Max Planck Institute for Astronomy in Germany, studied the planet known as **GJ 1132b, which is 1.4 times the size of earth.**

- The detection of an atmosphere around super Earth GJ 1132b marks for the first time the detection of an atmosphere around a planet with a mass and radius close to the Earth's mass and radius (1.6 Earth masses, 1.4 Earth radii).
- GJ 1132b orbits the **red dwarf star GJ 1132** in the southern constellation Vela.
- The team used **the GROND imager** at the 2.2-m ESO/MPG telescope of the European Southern Observatory in Chile to observe the planet simultaneously in seven different wavelength bands.
- GJ 1132b is a transiting planet: From the perspective of an observer on the Earth, it passes directly in front of its star every 1.6 days, blocking some of the star's light.

SUPER PRESSURE BALLOON

IN NEWS: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) successfully launched its football-stadium-sized, heavylift Super Pressure Balloon (SPB) from Wanaka, New Zealand on a mission designed to run 100 or more days floating at 110,000 feet (33.5 km) about the globe in the southern hemisphere's mid-latitude band.

International Extreme Universe Space Observatory on a Super Pressure Balloon (EUSO-SPB) payload is flying as a mission of opportunity.

- EUSO-SPB's objective is to detect **ultra-high energy cosmic rays** from beyond our galaxy as they penetrate the Earth's atmosphere.
- As these high-energy particles enter the atmosphere, they interact with nitrogen molecules in the air and create a UV fluorescence light.
- From its high-altitude vantage point, EUSO-SPB will look downward observing a broad swathe of the Earth's atmosphere to detect the UV fluorescence from these deep space cosmic rays coming in from above.
- As the balloon travels around the Earth, it may be visible from the ground, particularly at sunrise and sunset, to those who live in the southern hemisphere's mid-latitudes, such as Argentina and South Africa.

CHINA LAUNCHED AIRCRAFT CARRIER

IN NEWS: China has launched its first domestically built aircraft carrier, which will join an existing one bought secondhand from Ukraine.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The 50,000-ton carrier was towed from northern port city of Dalian, where its predecessor, the Soviet-built Liaoning, also underwent extensive refurbishing before being commissioned in 2012.
- It is expected to be formally commissioned before 2020.
- Like the 60,000-ton Liaoning, the new carrier is based on the **Soviet Kuznetsov class design**, with a ski jump-style deck for taking off and a conventional oil-fuelled steam turbine power plant.
- China is believed to be planning to build at least two and possibly up to four additional carriers, with one of them, the **Type 002**, reported to be under construction at a shipyard outside Shanghai.
- They are expected to be closer in size to the US navy's nuclear-powered 100,000-ton **Nimitz-class ships**, with flat flight decks and catapults to allow planes to launch with more bombs and fuel aboard.

FACTS IN NEWS

KHURKI & TEENKATHIYA SYSTEMS

Khurki: Under Khurki system, the British planters used to pay some money to the farmers (Raiyyat) by mortgaging their lands and houses and compelling them to sow indigo.

Teenkathiya: The British administration and Jamindar had established “Teen Kahitya” system under which teen katha land out of one bigha was reserved for indigo (Neel) farming. The farmers had to bear the cost of indigo farming and the British planters used to keep the yields without compensating the farmers.

CHANNAKESHAVA TEMPLE

The Channakeshava temple in Belur — a masterpiece of Hoysala architecture — turned 900 this year. Belur, along with Halebid, is proposed as a UNESCO heritage site.

The temple, constructed by Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysala dynasty, is a monument recognised by the ASI. Considered to be the first temple of Hoysala style, it was built between 1106 and 1117. The temple is regarded a marvel of architecture in typical Hoysala style. It commemorates the king’s victory in 1104.

HARVEST FESTIVALS

The second spell of Hindu New Year and harvest festivals falls are being celebrated across the country:

- Bengalis - Poila Boishakh.
- Malayalis - Vishu.
- Tamilians - Puthandu.
- Assamese - Rongali Bihu.
- Punjabis - Baisakhi.
- Odia - Maha Vishuba Sankranti.

FIRST SILK ROAD TRAIN SETS OFF

The first rail freight service from **Britain to China** was recently flagged off from Britain.

Thirty containers filled with UK-produced goods have set off on the 7,500-mile journey from Stanford-le-Hope in Essex which will take 18 days.

The service is part of China’s One Belt, One Road programme of reviving the ancient Silk Road trading routes with the West.

INDIA SECOND LARGEST IMPORTER OF LPG

India has replaced Japan as world's number two importer of liquefied petroleum gas or LPG.

Japan recorded a drop of 3.2% in LPG imports during the period under review to 10.6 million tonnes.

China continues to occupy number 1 position as world's largest LPG importer.

ENDEMIC BIRDS OF WESTERN GHATS

IUCN overestimated the habitat of these bird species by up to 88%. Of the 18 species, habitats of 12 were overestimated by over 50%.

Under the new model, 10 species could be bumped up on the IUCN scale, for a higher risk.

- **Malabar grey hornbill** which IUCN classifies as 'Least Concern' turned out to be in 'Near Threatened' category.
- The **Nilgiri pipit** appears to have lost 88% of its habitat, making it "endangered" rather than "vulnerable".

INDIA'S FIRST BOOK VLLAGE

- Opened in Bhilar, Satara district in Maharashtra.
- Bhilar is also known as strawberry country of Maharashtra.

GRAMADAY SANKALP

- Launched by ministry of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development and Drinking Water and Sanitation in Lucknow.
- Quarterly magazine.
- Launched in Hindi, English & other regional language.

RUSSIA – CHINA

- A freight train connects Russia with China bringing goods from Moscow to the Jiangxi province.

NDB MEET

New Delhi is playing host to Second Annual Meeting of the New Development Bank (NDB) also known colloquially as BRICS bank. This is the first time the meet took place in India.

SHAURYA CHAKRA

For the first time since Nagaland officially gained recognition as a state, a state Police Officer Atu Zumvu has been awarded one of the nations' military honour, 'Shaurya Chakra' award at a ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

TARE ZAMEEN PER PROGRAMME

Jharkhand Police has initiated 'Tare Zameen Par programme' to enlighten children in Naxal-affected areas in the Palamau district of Jharkhand.

M.S SWAMITHAN AWARD

The sixth prestigious **M.S. Swaminathan Award** for contribution in the field of agriculture given to R.R. Hanchinal, Chairperson of Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Authority, the government of India.

DADASAHEB PHALKE AWARD

Renowned Director and actor Kasinathuni Viswanath has won the Dadasaheb Phalke award for the year 2016 for his outstanding contribution to the film industry. He will be the 48th recipient of the award.

MONGOL SAT- I

Mongolia launched its first satellite named Mongol Sat-I, part of its efforts to make use of new technology to diversify its resource-dependent economy.

BRABO

TAL Manufacturing Solutions, a wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Motors has launched India's first industrial-articulated robot and it goes by the name "BRABO".