

CURRENT AFFAIRS**1ST MARCH TO 15TH MARCH 2018****CREDIT LIMIT OF NAFED IS DOUBLED**

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has doubled the credit limit of agri cooperative NAFED to undertake procurement of pulses and oilseeds amid market rates of tur and chana crops ruling more than 20% below their MSP.

HIGHLIGHTS

- CCEA approved an increase in government guarantee to Rs 19,000 crore from Rs 9,500 crore, which is provided to lender bank to extend the credit to the **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED)**.
- The agency undertakes procurement operation of pulses and oilseeds under the **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** of the government to help farmers when market rates fall below MSP.
- The government guarantee will be valid until 2021-22 and the CCEA has waived 1% government guarantee fee.
- Apart from enhancing the credit limit of NAFED, the CCEA has also approved Rs 45 crore to the **Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC)** for meeting their existing liability and settlement of extant claims.
- As the market price of almost all pulses and oilseeds are ruling below Minimum Support Price (MSP), the provision of government guarantee will help in protecting the farmers producing these commodities from making distress sales during the peak arrival period.
- Apart from procuring under the PSS, NAFED also had purchased 11.95 lakh tone of pulses under the **Price Stabilisation Fund scheme** for the buffer stock during 2016-17 (October-September).
- The government has allocated Rs 200 crore for both PSS and market intervention scheme (MIS) during FY2018-19.
- The MIS is utilised for compensating losses to state governments up to 50% while buying and selling vegetables like onion and potato to help farmers when market rates dip.

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVE MARKETING FEDERATION OF INDIA

- NAFED is an apex organization of marketing cooperatives for agricultural produce in India, under Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.
- It was founded in October 1958 to promote the trade of agricultural produce and forest resources across the nation.
- NAFED is now one of the largest procurement as well as marketing agencies for agricultural products in India.
- With its headquarters in New Delhi, NAFED has four regional offices at Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, apart from 28 zonal offices in capitals of states and important cities.
- In 2008, it established, National Spot Exchange, a Commodities exchange as a joint venture of Financial Technologies (India) Ltd. (FTIL).

ATGM NAG SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRED

India successfully test-fired Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) Nag.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Nag ATGM has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- It is a third generation "fire-and-forget" anti-tank missile.
- It is one of five missile systems developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP). i.e.
 1. *As Short range surface-to-surface missile (Prithvi).*
 2. *Short range low-level surface-to-air missile (Trishul).*
 3. *Medium range surface-to-air missile (Akash) and*
 4. *Third-generation anti-tank missile (Nag).*
 5. *The Agni missile was initially conceived in the IGMDP as a technology demonstrator project in the form of a re-entry vehicle, and was later upgraded to a ballistic missile with different ranges*
- The NAMICA version of the missile is a 'lock-on before launch' system, where the target is identified and designated before the missile is launched. As the targeting system is based on visual identification, the range is limited.
- The HELINA version on the other hand will use a 'lock-on after launch' system extending its range to 7 km.

ACTION PLAN FOR CHAMPION SECTORS IN SERVICES

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors for promoting their development and realizing their potential.

These include **Information Technology & Information Technology enabled Services (IT & ITeS), Tourism and Hospitality Services, Medical Value Travel, Transport and Logistics Services, Accounting and Finance Services, Audio Visual Services, Legal Services, Communication Services, Construction and Related Engineering Services, Environmental Services, Financial Services and Education Services.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- A dedicated fund of Rs. 5000 crores have been proposed to be established to support initiatives for sectoral Action Plans of the Champion Sectors.
- This initiative will enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors through the implementation of focused and monitored Action Plans, thereby promoting GDP growth, creating more jobs and promoting exports to global markets.
- The share of India's services sector in global services exports was 3.3% in 2015 compared to 3.1% in 2014. Based on this initiative, a goal of 4.2 % has been envisaged for 2022
- It was subsequently decided that **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)**, the nodal department for 'Make in India', would spearhead the initiative for

the Champion Sectors in manufacturing and Department of Commerce would coordinate the proposed initiative for the Champion Sectors in Services.

WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR PARK

The world's largest solar park set up at Pavagada in Karnataka's Tumakuru district was launched.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The 2,000 MW park, named as '***Shakti Sthala***', spans across 13,000 acres spread over five villages and is a benchmark in the unique people's participation in power model put on ground.
- The park's development is anchored by the Karnataka Solar Power Development Corp. Ltd (KSPDCL), an entity formed in March 2015 as a joint venture between Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd (KREDL) and Solar Energy Corp. of India (SECI).
- The park will create employment and act as an incentive for natives and farmers to explore new opportunities of socio-economic growth in the region.

NATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING AUTHORITY

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for establishment of National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) and creation of one post of Chairperson, three posts of full-time Members and one post of Secretary for NFRA.

The need for establishing NFRA has arisen on account of the need felt across various jurisdictions in the world, in the wake of accounting scams, to establish independent regulators, independent from those it regulates, for enforcement of auditing standards and ensuring the quality of audits to strengthen the independence of audit firms, quality of audits and, therefore, enhance investor and public confidence in financial disclosures of companies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The decision aims at establishment of NFRA as an independent regulator for the auditing profession which is one of the key changes brought in by the Companies Act, 2013.
- The inclusion of the provision in the Act was on the specific recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance (in its 21st report).
- The decision is expected to result in improved foreign/domestic investments, enhancement of economic growth, supporting the globalisation of business by meeting international practices, and assist in further development of audit profession.
- The jurisdiction of NFRA for investigation of Chartered Accountants and their firms under section 132 of the Act would extend to listed companies and large unlisted public companies, the thresholds for which shall be prescribed in the Rules.
- The Central Government can also refer such other entities for investigation where public interest would be involved.

- The inherent regulatory role of ICAI as provided for in the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949 shall continue in respect of its members in general and specifically with respect to audits pertaining to private limited companies, and public unlisted companies below the threshold limit to be notified in the rules.
- The **Quality Review Board (ORB)** will also continue quality audit in respect of private limited companies, public unlisted companies below prescribed threshold and also with respect to audit of those companies that may be delegated to ORB by NFRA.
- Further, ICAI shall continue to play its advisory role with respect to accounting and auditing standards and policies by making its recommendations to NFRA.

"SAFE CITIES"

The Centre has approved projects worth Rs 2,919 crore under the Nirbhaya Fund for creating "safe cities" with special focus on women safety in public spaces and quick response systems to create deterrence against crime.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Eight cities where these initiatives will take shape include **Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Lucknow.**
- Between 2013 and 2017, the corpus of Nirbhaya Fund has grown to Rs 3,100 crore.
- Another Rs 500 crore has been set aside for it for 2018-19.
- The empowered committee of officers also approved user trial of the **panic button** feature on mobile phones in Uttar Pradesh that will start sometime later this month.
- It has also sanctioned setting up of a model forensic science laboratory in Chandigarh.
- Plans for safe cities have been prepared in coordination with municipal corporations and police commissionerates of these cities.
- For instance, in Delhi a project worth Rs 663 crore has been approved to enhance safety of public places like roads, schools and metro stations. The project includes use of latest technology such as video monitoring, facial recognition analytics, and person tracking systems.
- The project will also strengthen "**Police Didi**" programme wherein female police officers interact with women living in slums.
- A cyber-crime and legal assistance compensation lab will also be set up.

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2018

On 20 December 2013, at its 68th session, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) proclaimed 3 March, the day of signature of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as UN World Wildlife Day to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild animals and plants.

- The UNGA resolution also designated the CITES Secretariat as the facilitator for the global observance of this special day for wildlife on the UN calendar.
- World Wildlife Day has now become the most important global annual event dedicated to wildlife.

- World Wildlife Day celebrated in 2018 under the theme "***Big cats: predators under threat***".
- Big cats populations are declining at a disturbing rate due to loss of habitat and prey, conflicts with people, poaching and illegal trade.
- For example, tiger populations plummeted by 95% over the past 100 years and African lion populations dropped by 40% in just 20 years. But a range of measures are underway to arrest this decline.
- The expanded definition of big cats is being used, which includes not only lion, tiger, leopard and jaguar the 4 largest wild cats that can roar but also cheetah, snow leopard, puma, clouded leopard, etc.
- Big cat species are found in Africa, Asia, and North, Central and South America, representing a virtually global distribution, and representations of big cats, such as for car logos by sporting clubs and the fashion industry, are used globally.

ROOPPUR ATOMIC PLANT

India, Bangladesh and Russia signed an agreement to allow Indian firms in construction and installation works in the "non-critical" category for the Rooppur nuclear power plant project in northwest Bangladesh.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Rooppur project is the first initiative under an Indo-Russian deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries.
- This will also be the first time Indian companies will be able to participate in a nuclear power project abroad.
- India is not a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and hence cannot participate directly in construction of atomic power reactors.
- Russia is constructing two nuclear reactors with a capacity of 1,200 MW each in Rooppur, which will be Bangladesh's first nuclear power project.
- The Russian side is building a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh on a "turnkey" basis, which means the contractor will complete the whole project and they will be liable for any problems that arise in the plant.

WORLD FIRST DIGITAL LEGAL TENDER LAUNCHED

The Marshall Islands will launch the world's first legal tender cryptocurrency.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The nuclear-ravaged nation has partnered with Israeli company Neema to issue 24 million units of the Sovereign (SOV) digital currency.
- It will cap the number to prevent inflation.
- The move follows Venezuela's launch of the Petro cryptocurrency in February. Investors supposedly shelled out \$735 million (€600 million) for the oil-backed, sanction-skirting currency.
- Unlike the Petro, the SOV will be recognized in law as legal tender, holding equal status as the US dollar, which is the Pacific island nation's current currency.

- Half of the 24 million coins will go to the government and the other half to the Israeli financial technology startup helping with the plans.
- Six million SOVs will be made available to international investors, with the money raised used to help pay the budget, invest in anti-global-warming projects, and supporting people still affected by US nuclear testing.
- Residents will receive 2.4 million SOVs.
- Unlike most popular cryptocurrencies, such as Bitcoin or Ethereum, the SOV will require currency holders to identify themselves, hopefully avoiding the problems of regulating an anonymous currency.

SILVER COPPER TELLURIDE

A novel compound that exhibits poor thermal conductivity in the 25-425 degree C range but shows good electrical conductivity has been developed by a team of researchers led by Dr Kanishka Biswas from Bengaluru's Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR).

HIGHLIGHTS

- The compound, silver copper telluride (AgCuTe), shows promise as a thermoelectric material for converting waste heat into electricity.
- Since nearly 65% of utilized energy is wasted as heat, the focus is on developing materials that exhibit good thermoelectric property with both glass- and metal-like properties.
- Potential applications of the thermoelectric technology are in automobile industry, chemical, thermal and steel power plants where large quantities of heat are wasted.
- Due to the low thermal conductivity of the material developed by JNCASR, one end of the 8 mm-long rod that is contact with waste heat remains hot while the other end maintains cold temperature.
- The temperature difference is essential for the generation of electrical voltage. At the same time, the material exhibits good electrical conductivity like metal.

SUBHASH CHANDRA GARG COMMITTEE

The Finance Ministry has set up a steering committee led by Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Chandra Garg to look into issues relating to the financial technology sector.

- According to the Ministry, the committee would consider issues relating to development of financial technology space in India to make related regulations more flexible and generate enhanced entrepreneurship.
- The steering committee will also focus on how fintech can be leveraged to enhance financial inclusion of MSMEs.
- The terms of reference include reviewing the developments in fintech sector globally and in India and arrive at a common shared understanding of the current state of play.

Other members of the committee include Secretaries of the Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and MSME, Chairperson,

Central Board of Excise and Customs, CEO, UIDAI and Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India. Joint Secretary (Investment) in the Department of Economic Affairs will be its convener.

#YES I BLEED CAMPAIGN

Union Ministry for Women and Child Development has launched a menstrual hygiene campaign.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The objective of the campaign called "#Yes I Bleed" is to create a holistic approach to the issue of menstruation, which is an experience that transcends culture, class, and caste.
- The United Nations has recognised menstrual hygiene as a global public health and a human rights issue yet across the globe.
- "Period poverty" as some call it, is a reality for millions of women and girls.
- The safe disposal of used sanitary pads, which actually are an environmental disaster. In villages, the used pads often end up in village ponds, exposing every human being and animal to the risk of infection.
- Improper products and poor practices can have consequences for the physical and mental well-being of a woman.
- The campaign called "#Yes I Bleed" will be initiated formally across all multi-media platforms, including Facebook and YouTube.
- In India, only 12 per cent of the country's 355 million menstruating women can afford to avail sanitary protection.
- According to a Nielsen Survey, 23 per cent of adolescent Indian girls in the age group of 12-18 drop out of school once they reach puberty because of inadequate menstrual protection and a whopping 88 per cent who do not have access to sanitary pads, use un-sanitised cloth, husk sand, tree leaves and even ash.
- These can cause severe reproductive health problems and infections and can also lead to cervical cancer.

IMPRINT - II

The Centre had sanctioned Rs. 1,000 crore for the Phase II of the Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT) India programme.

IMPRINT-II, a fund was being created by the Department of Science and Technology and the HRD Ministry in which participation would come from the industry and interested Ministries.

IMPRINT INDIA PROGRAMME

Under the IMPRINT-I Programme, 142 projects at a cost of Rs. 318.71 crore are under implementation. These projects cover crucial domains like security and defence, information technology, energy, sustainable habitat, advance materials, health care, Nano-technology, climate change, etc.

- IMPRINT is the first of its kind MHRD supported Pan-IIT + IISc joint initiative to address the major science and engineering challenges that India must address and champion to enable, empower and embolden the nation for inclusive growth and self-reliance. This novel initiative with twofold mandate is aimed at

(a) Developing new engineering education policy

(b) Creating a road map to pursue engineering challenges

- IMPRINT provides the overarching vision that guides research into areas that are predominantly socially relevant.

46TH KNOW INDIA PROGRAMME

Forty Indian-origin students from nine countries met Railways Minister Piyush Goyal as part of Know India Programme (KIP), an initiative of the central government to engage with the Indian diaspora in the age group of 18 to 30 years.

- The KIP -- a 25-day orientation programme -- is organised by the Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with one or two states.
- The participants are selected on the basis of nominations received and recommendations of Heads of Indian Missions/Posts.
- As part of the 46th KIP, the participants visited Madhya Pradesh as the partner state.
- The participants also visited Parliament House, President's House in addition to an orientation programme at the Foreign Service Institute.
- The participants acknowledged that KIP has given them a useful opportunity to know the emerging opportunities in India and helped them understand Indian traditions, heritage and their family history.

SUKHAD YATRA APP

Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has launched a new mobile app called 'Sukhad Yatra' which is aimed to empower frequent highway users.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sukhad yatra mobile application has been developed by National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and offers a number of convenient features including real-time data waiting-time at toll-plazas.
- The key feature of the app includes provision for the user to enter road quality-related information or to report any accident or pothole on the highway.
- NHAI confirms that It will also provide app users with real-time data related to waiting time expected at Plazas and various facilities like points of interest, restrooms etc.
- Sukhad Yatra app can also be used by the users to purchase the FASTag tag and further facilitate the highway user experience.
- Along with the Sukhad Yatra mobile app, Government of India has also launched a new toll-free number, 1033, will enable users to report an emergency condition, or highway-related feedback, across the highway.

- The service is supported by a multi-lingual support and user location tracking features to provide the user with accurate and responsive complaint resolution.

INDIA BECAME MEMBER OF EBRD

India is all set to become the 69th member of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) after shareholders of the international financial institution gave their nod to the country's candidature.

The formal membership process will now get underway, which includes the purchase of shares by India at an estimated cost of around €1 million.

While India will not be a recipient of EBRD financing, it will benefit from the banks expertise and support in the region. Indian companies are going global and a lot of the push for this membership came from them.

EBRD

- The ***London-headquartered*** EBRD is a multilateral development bank set up in 1991 after the fall of the Berlin wall to promote private and entrepreneurial initiative in emerging Europe.
- It invests in 38 emerging economies across three continents, according to a set of criteria that aim to make its countries more competitive, better governed, greener, more inclusive, more resilient and more integrated.
- The EBRD is owned by 66 countries from five continents, as well as the European Union and the European Investment Bank.
- The EBRD President is currently Sir Suma Chakrabarti.
- Each shareholder is represented on the Board of Governors, which has overall authority over the EBRD.

PRITZKER PRIZE

Nonagenarian architect and reputed urban planner Balkrishna Doshi has been named this year's winner of architecture's highest honour — the Pritzker Prize, becoming the first Indian to do so.

His designs include the IIM-Bangalore; Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology, Ahmedabad; cultural spaces in Ahmedabad such as Tagore Memorial Hall, the Institute of Indology, and Premabhai Hall; and private residence Kamala House (Ahmedabad), among many others.

The architect also designed Aranya Low Cost Housing (Indore, 1989), which currently accommodates over 80,000 individuals through a system of houses, courtyards and a labyrinth of internal pathways.

- He has built more than a hundred buildings that reflect his investment in local materials, social change and the environment.
- He is the first Indian to receive the award.
- The international prize, which is awarded each year to a living architect/s for significant achievement, was established by the Pritzker family of Chicago through their Hyatt Foundation in 1979.

- It is granted annually and is often referred to as “architecture’s Nobel” and “the profession’s highest honour.”
- The award consists of \$100,000 (US) and a bronze medallion.
- The award is conferred on the laureate/s at a ceremony held at an architecturally significant site throughout the world.
- The Pritzker Architecture Prize is awarded annually "to honour a living architect or architects whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.
- It is considered to be one of the world's premier architecture prizes and is often referred to as the Nobel Prize of architecture.

PROMOTION OF AGRICULTURAL MECHANIZATION FOR IN-SITU MANAGEMENT OF CROP RESIDUE

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved a new scheme worth Rs 1,151.80 crore to provide subsidised farm machineries to farmers in Delhi and adjoining states to address stubble burning and curb air pollution in the national capital.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The new central scheme will be implemented for two years.
- Out of the total approved funds, Rs 591.65 crore will be spent in the 2018-19 fiscal and the rest 560.15 crore in the next financial year.
- The new scheme 'Promotion of agricultural Mechanization for in-situ management of crop residue' with 100 per cent central share will be executed with the Delhi government along with neighbouring states Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.
- The main component of the scheme includes establishment of 'Farm Machinery Banks' for custom hiring of in-situ crop residue management machinery.
- Under the scheme, financial assistance at 80 per cent of the project cost will be provided to the cooperative societies of the farmers, farmer producers organisation (FPOs), Self Help Groups, registered farmers societies, private entrepreneurs, group of women farmers.
- Financial assistance at 50 per cent of the machinery cost will be provided to individual farmers. Funds will also be given to various organisations for creating awareness.
- Under the scheme to be administered by the Union Agriculture Ministry, a national steering committee will be set up to give guidance for implementation of the scheme and it will also monitor and review the progress.
- At the state level, there will be a nodal implementing agency and also a State Level Executive Committee (SLEC) to implement the scheme and to ensure that no crop residue burning takes place in the farmer field.
- Whereas, the District Level Executive Committee (DLEC) would be responsible for carrying forward the objectives of the scheme.

- It will constitute Surveillance Committees involving farmers group/progressive farmers to mobilise farmers for not burning the crop residue and will also ensure active participation of Panchayati Raj Institution.
- State governments through DLEC will identify various beneficiaries and location-specific agricultural equipment depending on the farming system.
- DLEC will identify and select beneficiaries for establishment of farm machinery bank for custom hiring and procurement of machines on individual ownership basis to avail the benefit in transparent and time bound manner.

I - METROS

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs launched "I-METROS", an association of all Indian Metro Rail companies at the Conference on "Indian Metros: Collaborating for Excellence" held in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- "I-Metros" is proposed to be a platform to provide a forum for exchange of ideas, pooling of knowledge and sharing of experience, best practices, innovations etc. among the Indian Metro rail companies to nurture excellence in performance.
- This society will be registered under Society Registration Act-1860.
- This association will also undertake and promote techno-economic studies and research. It will safeguard the interest and rights of metro rail companies and will be resource tank of information for decision making.

UDYAM SHAKTI PORTAL

Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) launched a portal for women entrepreneurs of India: www.udyamsakhi.org.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The portal is a network for nurturing entrepreneurship and creating business models for low cost products and services in order to empower women and make them self-reliant and self-sufficient.
- The portal provides assistance through its platform for entrepreneurship learning tools, incubation facility, training programs for fund raising, providing mentors, one-on-one investor meet, provide market survey facility and technical assistance.
- Ministry is on the path of creating a vibrant MSME sector by promoting growth and development of this sector including Khadi, Village and Coir industries, in cooperation with the concerned ministries and departments, state governments and other stake holders.

SUVIDHA

The government launched a biodegradable sanitary napkin called 'Suvidha' under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP).

HIGHLIGHTS

- It will be available for Rs2.50 per pad at over 3,200 Janaushadhi Kendras across India by 28 May, 2018 which is also the World Menstrual Hygiene Day.
- This is one of the most important requirements in ensuring health security to that section of women in India which still uses unhygienic aids during menstrual period.
- Such unhygienic aids cause fungal infections, Reproductive Tract Infection, Urinary Tract Infection, Cervical cancer and also make women vulnerable to infertility.
- A special additive is added in the Suvidha napkin which makes it 100% biodegradable when it reacts with oxygen after it is used and discarded.
- The average price of sanitary napkins available in the market currently is around Rs8 per pad. With Suvidha government aims to make the significant product affordable for underprivileged women.

PRADHAN MANTRI BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI PARIYOJANA

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses.

- PMBJP stores have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.
- It was launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in November 2008 under the name Jan Aushadi Campaign.
- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementation agency for PMBJP.

Objective

Making quality medicines available at affordable prices for all, particularly the poor and disadvantaged, through exclusive outlets "Jan Aushadhi Medical Store", so as to reduce out of pocket expenses in healthcare.

JAN AUSHADHI STORES

- JAS has been opened across the country. To view the list of State-wise / District-wise JAS along with their locations.
- The normal working hours of JAS are 8 Am to 8 PM.
- All therapeutic medicines are made available from Jan Aushadhi Stores.
- In addition to medicines and surgical items supplied by BPPI, Jan Aushadhi stores also sell allied medical products commonly sold in chemist shops so as to improve the viability of running the Jan Aushadhi store.
- OTC (Over-the-counter) products can be purchased by any individual without a prescription. A prescription from a registered medical practitioner is necessary for the purchase of scheduled drugs.
- BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs for co-coordinating procurement, supply and marketing of generic drugs through the Jan Aushadhi Stores.
- The quality, safety and efficacy of medicines are ensured by getting each batch of medicines procured from CPSUs as well as private suppliers tested from NABL

approved laboratories and conforming to the required standards before the same are supplied to Super stockists /Jan Aushadhi Stores from the Warehouse of BPPI.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PLATFORM

NITI Aayog launched the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), on the occasion of International Women's Day.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realise their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses.
- Nominations for the Women Transforming India Awards, 2018 were also opened.
- WEP was envisaged by the CEO NITI Aayog during Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) last year in Hyderabad. It aims to power a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem through an enabling network of industry collaborations, partnerships, mentors and peer-to-peer connect.
- From providing unique services such as credit evaluation of women-led start-ups by CRISIL and potential equity investments through 10 crore fund established by DICE Districts, the WEP opens up avenues of growth and opportunity for women entrepreneurs.
- Other partner commitments include ShopClues.com, which has offered to provide internship and dedicated mentorship and Mann Deshi Foundation to provide digital and financial literacy to aspiring women entrepreneurs.

COUNTRY'S 1ST ENERGY SURPLUS UT

The harnessing of solar energy has made Diu the country's first energy surplus Union territory and a model for an effective way for people to harness this renewable energy source.

The Union territory has an area of just 42 square kilometres. Despite scarcity of land, solar power plants have been installed over more than 50 acres.

Diu generates a total of 13 megawatts of electricity from solar power generating facilities daily. Around 3 MW is generated by rooftop solar plants and 10 MW by its other solar power plants.

BACKGROUND

The population of Diu is only 56,000. For water and electricity, the Union territory was solely dependent on the Gujarat government.

Three years ago, the people of Diu consumed electricity supplied from the power grid owned by the Gujarat government, resulting in huge line losses. Once the local power company started generating electricity from solar energy, the electricity loss was significantly reduced.

INDO-FRENCH KNOWLEDGE SUMMIT

The first-ever Indo-French Knowledge Summit ended successfully with a landmark agreement on mutual recognition of educational qualifications between the two countries, held in New Delhi.

- The Knowledge Summit is the first Franco-Indian Summit for university, scientific and technology cooperation with the broader objective to design a roadmap of cooperation between the two countries for the next five years, in collaboration with companies.
- The event offered a common moment for a common goal increase student mobility, enlarge Research & Development collaborations and link campuses to companies by focusing on employability.

SAMVEDNA

The first Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in association with South Asian Region nations held off the coast of Kerala.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The multilateral exercise named 'Samvedna' would involve representatives from air forces of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and the UAE.
- The entire settings of the exercise are based on a scenario of a tsunami in the western coast of India originating from an earthquake in Makran subduction zone and resulting in post-tsunami disaster management along the western coast and western islands of India.
- The exercise, spearheaded by IAF and conducted by Southern Air Command (SAC).
- **SAMVEDNA** which means 'Empathy', would be focused on practising Air Force-centric HADR solutions in a Multi-national cooperative Disaster Management environment.

MILES - 18

The MILES-18, first-ever multi-nation naval exercise at sea was held at the Andaman Sea.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The three days exercise was conducted as part of the 10th edition of MILAN 2018. MILES roughly means 'Milan Exercise at Sea'.
- MILAN 2018 is a multi-national mega event that was organised by Andaman and Nicobar Command with theme 'Friendship Across the Seas'.
- This was the first ever eight-day long multi-national naval exercise at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The motive of the exercise was to expand regional cooperation and combat unlawful activities in critical sea lanes.
- 23 countries participated in the exercise in the backdrop of state of emergencies in two of India's maritime neighbours, and China's growing assertiveness in the region.

BACKGROUND

Exercise MILAN was first held in 1995 with five participating nations; ***India, Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand***. The aim of the initiative was to have an effective forum to discuss common concerns in the Indian Ocean Region. Since 1995, the exercise was conducted bi-annually except in 2001, 2005 and 2016.

MILAN has evolved from an initiative of the Indian Navy in the early nineties which aimed to create a forum for the littoral navies of the region to exchange thoughts in the area of maritime cooperation and 'Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief' (HADR).

INTERNATIONAL SOLAR ALLIANCE SUMMIT

The aim of the summit which is held at Rashtriyapati Bhavan is to deliberate on a finance mechanism for the promotion of solar energy in member countries, crowd-funding and technology transfer.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The summit is of particular significance to India as it strives to achieve the ambitious target of generating 175 GW of renewable energy, including 100 GW of solar energy, by 2022.
- India will work towards finalizing mechanisms to merge Indian technology and finance capabilities with specific projects around the world.
- Among the countries that have requested India for projects are Tanzania, Togo, Benin, Congo, Chad and Seychelles. The summit will kick off 24 projects in about 14 countries.
- India is looking at four types of solar-powered projects — off-grid power supply hubs, street lighting, irrigation, green buildings, in addition to everyday products like solar cookers etc.
- Since a bulk of the countries who are part of the ISA are from Africa, India has decided to use about \$2 billion of the \$10 billion line of credit promised to Africa for renewable energy projects in these countries
- For India, it will be the first time an international treaty body will have its secretariat in this country.
- In addition, the forum is expected to spur innovation in the renewable energy space and help make India a technological hub in the sector and not just remain a re-exporter of Chinese photovoltaic cells.

GROUNDWATER ARSENIC PROJECT

An India-UK Joint Team has won the Newton-Bhabha Fund for a project on Groundwater Arsenic Research in Ganga River Basin.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Department of Science and Technology has undertaken the project with the Natural Environment Research Council, UK, to find solutions to the water challenges faced in the pervasively arsenic-affected Ganga River Basin.

- The Newton Bhabha Fund, provided by the British Council, aims to bring together the UK and Indian scientific research and innovation sectors to find joint solutions to the challenges facing India in economic development and social welfare.
- The team members involved with the project will try to assess how the problem of arsenic poisoning can get aggravated in the next 25 to 30 years and influence groundwater management practices and suggest water remedial technologies accordingly.
- The project will be conducted from three sites - ***Bijnor and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Nadia in West Bengal.***

ARSENIC

- Arsenic occurs in many minerals, usually in combination with sulphur and metals, but also as a pure elemental crystal. Arsenic is a metalloid.
- Arsenic and its compounds, especially the trioxide, are used in the production of pesticides, treated wood products, herbicides, and insecticides.

Arsenic contamination of groundwater is a problem that affects millions of people across the world.

- Arsenic contamination of groundwater is a form of groundwater pollution which is often due to naturally occurring high concentrations of arsenic in deeper levels of groundwater.
- It is a high-profile problem due to the use of deep tube-wells for water supply in the Ganges Delta, causing serious arsenic poisoning to large numbers of people.
- The problem became serious health concern after mass poisoning of water in Bangladesh. Arsenic contamination of ground water is found in many countries throughout the world, including the US.
- In Bihar, Groundwater in 13 districts have been found to be contaminated with Arsenic with quantities exceeding 0.05 mg/L. All these districts are situated close to large rivers like Ganga and Gandak.

KOCHON PRIZE

The 2017 Kochon Prize was awarded to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in New Delhi for building a tradition of excellence in TB research and development.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The \$65,000 Prize is awarded annually by Stop TB Partnership to individuals and/or organizations that have made a significant contribution to combating TB.
- The 2017 Kochon Prize is specifically about contributions to TB research.
- The India TB Research Consortium is addressing the need for increased investment by India and other TB high-burden countries.
- In a few months, trials using the two new TB drug (Bedaquiline and delamanid) combinations for MDR-TB and XDR-TB will get under way. The trials will be combining two existing drugs and the two new drugs to reduce the duration of treatment from the current 24-30 months to 6-9 months.

- Another trial to be carried out at multiple sites in India will test the effectiveness of adding the already approved ***diabetes drug metformin*** to standard anti-TB regimen for drug-sensitive TB.

WHO SEARO COUNTRIES TO ADOPT DELHI END TB SUMMIT

Tracking progress to eliminate tuberculosis, Member countries of WHO South-East Asia Region committed to further intensifying efforts to ensure rapid and concrete progress to End TB by 2030.

In a statement adopted at the Delhi End TB Summit here, member countries unanimously agreed to actualizing and intensifying essential actions agreed to in the Delhi Call to Action which was adopted in March last year to accelerate efforts to End TB in the Region, host to one fourth of the global population but a disproportionate 46% of the global TB burden.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Member countries of the Region stressed their firm intent to collectively reach out to 2 million missing TB cases and 150 000 multidrug-resistance cases by 2020 and implement a response that is demonstrably adequate for ending TB.
- The countries committed to multisectoral and empowered national initiatives, reporting to the highest levels of government, to lead the TB programme.
- The Member countries committed to increasing budgetary and human resource allocations by governments as well as by their global, domestic and other partners so as to ensure that national TB plans are fully funded.
- The WHO South East Asia Region has 11 Member States: **Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste.**

AYUSH - 82

The technology related to the drug developed by Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), namely, AYUSH-82 has been given to eight manufacturing firms through National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), Dept. of Scientific & Industrial Research, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- CCRAS has developed medicine for other Chronic diseases like arthritis and cancer.
- CCRAS has developed **AYUSH-SG (Sunthi Guggulu)** for Arthritis and the technology has been transferred to five firms through NRDC and is available in the market.
- Projects on **AYUSH-QOL2C** for improving quality of life in cancer patients and **AYUSH-Manas** in Mental Retardation have been recently concluded.
- Further, CCRAS has undertaken work for developing **AYUSH-SL** for Lymphatic Filariasis, **AYUSH-D** for Diabetes Mellitus, **Carctol-S** for Ovarian Cancer and **AYUSH M-3** for Migrane.
- Initially the pilot study has been started in six districts.

UREA SUBSIDY SCHEME

The government approved a proposal to extend urea subsidy till 2020 and also implementation of direct benefit transfer (DBT) for disbursement of fertiliser subsidy.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Urea is made available to farmers at a statutorily controlled price of Rs 5,360 per tonne.
- The difference between the delivered cost of the fertiliser at farm gate and MRP is given as subsidy to manufacturers.
- The continuation of the urea subsidy scheme will ensure adequate quantity of urea is made available to the farmers at statutory controlled price.
- Normally, the Fertiliser Ministry takes approval for the urea subsidy on an yearly basis, but this time has received clearance for three years.
- The CCEA has also approved implementation of direct benefit transfer (DBT) for disbursement of fertiliser subsidy in order to reduce diversion and plug the leakages.
- DBT would entail 100 per cent payment to fertiliser companies.

WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY

World Consumer Rights Day is an awareness day, which is observed on March 15, 2018.

- The WCRD was first celebrated in 1983 and became an important annual occasion for mobilizing citizen action and solidarity within the international consumer movement.
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will join countries across the world in celebrating “World Consumer Rights Day” on 15th March, under the theme “**Making Digital Market Places Fairer**”.

CAMPAIGN TO ERADICATE TB

Prime Minister launched a campaign to eradicate tuberculosis (TB) from India by 2025, five years ahead of a globally-set deadline.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A target has been set to end TB globally by 2030.
- After inaugurating the Delhi End-TB Summit, the Prime Minister launched the TB-free India Campaign to take the activities under the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination forward in a mission mode for ending the epidemic by 2025.
- Leaders from across the globe have converged in the national capital for the summit, hosted by the **Union Ministry of Health along with the WHO and the Stop TB Partnership**.
- TB was responsible for 1.7 million deaths in 2016, despite most cases being curable while over 10 million people contract TB every year.

- The summit would set the stage for the September 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB, where for the first time, TB would be discussed in the UN General Assembly at the Heads of State level.

WHO END TB STRATEGY

WHO VISION: A world free of tuberculosis – zero deaths, disease and suffering due to tuberculosis.

GOAL: End the global tuberculosis epidemic.

INDICATORS	2020	2025	SDG 2030	END TB 2035
Reduction in number of TB deaths compared with 2015 (%)	35%	75%	90%	95%
Reduction in TB incidence rate compared with 2015 (%)	20% (<85/100 000)	50% (<55/100 000)	80% (<20/100 000)	90% (<10/100 000)
TB-affected families facing catastrophic costs due to TB (%)	ZERO	ZERO	ZERO	ZERO

WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX 2018

The World Happiness Index 2018, which measures 156 countries in terms of happiness, has placed India in the 133rd position, a drop of 11 places from last year's 122nd rank. The country was ranked 118th in 2016.

HIGHLIGHTS

- India's ranking was far behind from other neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Nepal and China.
- Among the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries, Pakistan was ranked 75th, while Nepal was ranked at 101st. Bhutan has been placed at 97th rank and Sri Lanka at 116th position. Bangladesh is ranked at 115th in the happiness index.

- Myanmar, which is embroiled in the ethnic violence between the majority Buddhists and the minority Rohingya Muslims has been placed at 130th position.
- Only war-ravaged Afghanistan fared worse than India, as the former was ranked 145th.
- Finland, which was ranked 5th last year, displaced Norway to be the world's happiest country. Norway dropped to 2nd position in the index.
- The United States, which was ranked 14th last year, dropped four places to be at 18th position, while the United Kingdom was ranked 20th respectively.
- The African countries - Tanzania (153rd), South Sudan (154th), Central African Republic (155th) and Burundi (156th) occupied the bottom positions in the happiness index.

The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network's (SDSN) 2018 World Happiness Report ranks 156 countries in GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity and absence of corruption.

RARE DISEASE DAY

Rare Disease Day takes place on the last day of February each year.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The main objective of Rare Disease Day is to raise awareness amongst the general public and decision-makers about rare diseases and their impact on patients' lives.
- The campaign targets primarily the general public and also seeks to raise awareness amongst policy makers, public authorities, industry representatives, researchers, health professionals and anyone who has a genuine interest in rare diseases.
- Rare Disease Day was first launched by EURORDIS and its Council of National Alliances in 2008.
- The campaign started as a European event and has progressively become a world phenomenon, with the USA joining in 2009 and participation in over 90 countries all over the world in both 2017 and 2018.

PRIME MINISTER'S EMPLOYMENT GENERATION PROGRAMME

The government has approved the continuation of Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) beyond the 12th Plan period for three years to 2019-20 with a total outlay of Rs 5,500 crore.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Scheme will create sustainable estimated employment opportunities for 15 lakh persons in three financial years.
- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal implementation agency at the national level. At the State/district level, State offices of KVIC, Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) and District Industry Centres (DIC) are the implementing agencies.
- A minimum target of 75 project/district is awarded to all districts of the country to achieve Inclusive Growth.

- Higher rate of subsidy (25% to 35%) will be applicable for women, SC/ST, OBC, Physically Disabled, NER applicants in rural areas.

BACKGROUND

PMEGP is a major credit-linked subsidy programme being implemented by the Ministry of MSME since 2008-09. The Scheme is aimed at generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector by helping traditional artisans and unemployed youth in rural as well as urban areas. A total of 4.55 lakh micro enterprises have been assisted with a margin money subsidy of Rs 9564.02 crore providing employment to an estimated 37.98 lakh persons from inception till 31.01.2018.

RECENT CHANGES MADE TO PMGEP

- Second loan of upto Rs. one crore to existing and better performing PMEGP units for upgrading with subsidy of 15%.
- Merger of Coir Udyami Yojana (GUY) in PMEGP.
- Introduction of concurrent monitoring and evaluation.
- Mandatory Aadhaar and Pan card.
- Geo-tagging of units.
- Negative list under PMEGP amended allowing serving/selling non-vegetarian food at Hotels/Dhabas and Off Farm/Farm Linked activities.
- Dispensing the ratio of 30:30:40 for KVIC/KVIB/DIC.
- Cap the working capital component for manufacturing units to 40% of the project cost and for service/trading sector to 60% of the project cost.

DR. HARSH VARDHAN APP

Dr Harsh Vardhan App has been launched. It is named after the Union Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan.

- The App is intended, among other things, to promote the theme of 'green good deeds' and engage with the public at large.
- The campaign has been launched by the Environment Ministry to sensitise the people and students, in particular, about climate change and global warming.
- The objective of the campaign is to restore and return the clean and green environment to the next generation.

KOOTHYATTAM RITUAL

- The Kuthiyottam ritual is usually performed every year during the Pongala festival at the Attukal Bhagavathy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
- The Attukal Pongala festival is the largest congregation of women for a festival in the world.
- Pongala, which means 'to boil over', is a ritual in which women prepare a pudding made from rice, jaggery, coconut and plantains cooked together, and offer it to the goddess.
- The ritual can only be performed by women.

- Nearly 1,000 young boys undertake a seven-day penance before Pongala day. These boys are said to represent the wounded soldiers of the goddess.
- The boys have to observe strict discipline and stay inside the temple for seven days. The rigours include sleeping on the floor, strict diet restrictions, and bathing three times a day. They also have to prostrate 1,008 times before the deity.
- The ritual also reportedly involves piercing the child's side with a small hook and knotting a thread through it to symbolise their bond with the Goddess.

WORLD'S LARGEST SOLAR PARK

The Karnataka government recently inaugurated the world's largest solar park, Shakti Sthala.

- It is located in Tumkur district, about 180km from Bengaluru.
- The park ties in with the centre's scheme to generate 100 gigawatts (GW) of solar power by 2020.
- It has a capacity of 2,000 MW.
- It is part of the "Karnataka Solar Policy 2014-2021" which aims to decrease dependence on traditional power sources and move to environmentally friendly ones to meet the growing power needs of the state.

GLOBAL STATUS REPORT 2017

Buildings and construction together account for 36% of global final energy use and 39% of energy-related carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions when upstream power generation is included.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The energy intensity per square meter (m²) of the global buildings sector needs to improve on average by 30% by 2030 (compared to 2015) to be on track to meet global climate ambitions set out in the Paris Agreement.
- The Global Status Report 2017 was prepared by the ***International Energy Agency (IEA)*** for the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GABC).
- The GABC aims to bring together the building and construction industry, countries and stakeholders to raise awareness and facilitate the global transition towards for low-emission, energy-efficient buildings.

INDIA'S SEX RATIO AT BIRTH

A recent report from the NITI Aayog said sex ratio at birth (SRB) nationwide had dropped from 906 in 2012-2014 to 900 in 2013-2015.

The SRB is the number of girls born for every 1,000 boys.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In all, 17 of 21 large Indian States saw a drop in the SRB, with Gujarat performing the worst, declining 53 points.

- While the NITI Aayog report used data up to 2013-15, newer data from India's Sample Registration System show the SRB fell even further in 2014-2016, from 900 to 898.
- This has been a consistent lowering of the SRB since the 1970s. In natural circumstances, the SRB hovers around 952 girls for every 1,000 boys.
- Its SRB is far lower than 952 because of the preference for the male child.
- This means we are killing girl children in the womb. As on today, around 63 million girls are estimated to be 'missing' in India because of such actions.

SILVER COPPER TELLURIDE

A novel compound that exhibits poor thermal conductivity in the 25-425 degree C range but shows good electrical conductivity has been developed by a team of researchers led by Dr Kanishka Biswas from Bengaluru's Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR).

- The compound, silver copper telluride (AgCuTe), shows promise as a thermoelectric material for converting waste heat into electricity.
- Potential applications of the thermoelectric technology are in automobile industry, chemical, thermal and steel power plants where large quantities of heat are wasted.

NAMASTE SHALOM

The government has launched the social media of "Namaste Shalom", a magazine devoted to India-Israel relations.

- It is a regular monthly magazine on bilateral relations between the two nations.
- The magazine aims to strengthen India-Israel relations and provide a platform for exchanging views between Indians and Jews the world over.

DEFEXPO INDIA 2018

It is an international land, naval and internal homeland security systems exhibition - is being held in Chennai.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It will brand India as a defence exporter of several defence systems and components for all three Services - Army, Navy and Air Force.
- This is the tenth edition of the exhibition.
- It is the first time that the defence expo is going to be held in Chennai.
- Till 2016, all defence expos had been held only in New Delhi. It was held in Goa (in 2017).

CIMON (Crew Interactive MOBILE Companion)

The Crew Interactive MOBILE companion (CIMON) is able to see, hear, understand, speak - and fly. It is roughly spherical, has a diameter of 32 centimetres and weighs five kilograms.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Its robotic predecessor was Professor Simon Wright's 'flying brain', with sensors, cameras and a speech processor in the 1978 cartoon series, 'Captain Future'.
- Almost 40 years later, CIMON, the astronaut's flight attendant and assistance system, could turn science fiction into 'science fact'.
- From 2018, CIMON will become the new 'crew member' on the International Space Station (ISS), in order to demonstrate cooperation between humans and intelligent machines in the form of a technology experiment.
- The interactive astronaut assistant was developed and built by Airbus in Friedrichshafen and Bremen on behalf of the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) Space Administration and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy.

SAPOSHI

It is a new malware detected by cybersecurity agencies.

Saposhi Malware is capable of taking over electronic devices and turning them into bots (device take over by malware) which can then be used for any purpose including DDoS attacks which, with enough firepower, can cripple entire industries.

DDOS Attack

In DDoS attacks, malware first creates a network of bots — called botnet and then uses the botnet to ping single server beyond its capacity at the same time. As number of pings are far beyond server's capacity, server crashes and denies service to its consumers. Malwares like Saposhi, Reaper and Mirai are primarily used for DDOS attacks.

CERT-In

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is an office within the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology. It is the nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing.

ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA

The headquarters of the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has been shifted from Chennai to Haryana's Ballabhgarh.

- The Animal Welfare Board of India was established in 1962 under Section 4 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- Well-known humanitarian Rukmini Devi Arundale was instrumental in setting up the board and was its first chair.
- The Board consists of 28 Members, who serve for a period of 3 years.
- The Board was initially within the jurisdiction of the Government of India's Ministry of Food and Agriculture.
- In 1990, the subject of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was transferred to the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate change, where it now resides

INDIA – WEST-ASIA EUROPE SUBMARINE CABLE SYSTEM

Bharti Airtel and Gulf Bridge International (GBI), a cloud provider for the West Asia and Europe have agreed to unlock the capacity on GBI's India-West Asia-Europe submarine cable system.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Under the agreement, Airtel will acquire the ownership of the India leg of GBI's India-West Asia-Europe submarine cable.
- Airtel and GBI have also agreed to formulate joint 'Go to Market' strategies and leverage the footprint of their respective global networks to serve global customers.
- GBI is a multilayer terrestrial and subsea cable meshed network bridges the East to the West through the West Asia, empowers businesses, connects societies and contributes to the region's transformation towards knowledge-based economies.

MINERAL VATERITE

Naturally occurring vaterite is rarely found on Earth.

Small amounts of vaterite crystals have been found in some sea and freshwater crustaceans, bird eggs, the inner ears of salmon, meteorites and rocks. This is the first time that the rare and unstable mineral has been found in such a large quantity and the first time it has been found to be associated with plants.

- Vaterite has special properties that make it a potentially superior carrier for medications due to its high loading capacity, high uptake by cells and its solubility properties that enable it to deliver a sustained and targeted release of therapeutic medicines to patients.
- For instance, vaterite nanoparticles loaded with anti-cancer drugs appear to offload the drug slowly only at sites of cancers and therefore limit the negative side-effects of the drug.
- Other potential uses of vaterite include improving the cements used in orthopaedic surgery and as an industrial application improving the quality of papers for inkjet printing by reducing the lateral spread of ink.
- Vaterite is not very stable in the Earth's humid atmosphere as it often reverts to more common forms of calcium carbonate, such as calcite

WINGS INDIA 2018

The biennial event on Civil Aviation and Aerospace titled "Wings India 2018" is being held in Hyderabad.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The event with the theme "India-Global Aviation Hub" is organised jointly by the Union Civil Aviation Ministry, Airports Authority of India and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry.
- "Wings India 2018" aims to be the most comprehensive platform in the region for the interactions, forging alliances, investments and air connectivity between the States and the global aviation players/ stakeholders.

- It will have a special focus on connecting the cities and towns aimed at increasing the regional connectivity in the country.

RYDBERG POLARONS

An international team of physicists have successfully created a “giant atom” and filled it with ordinary atoms, creating a new state of matter termed “Rydberg polarons”.

- These atoms are held together by a weak bond and is created at very cold temperatures.
- It uses ideas from two different fields: Bose Einstein Condensation and Rydberg atoms.
- A BEC (Bose Einstein Condensate) is a liquid-like state of matter that occurs at very low temperatures. A BEC can be perturbed to create excitations which are akin to ripples on a lake.
- Electrons in an atom move in orbits around the nucleus. A ‘Rydberg atom’ is an atom in which an electron has been kicked out to a very large orbit.
- A particularly interesting implication is for cosmology.

CALCIUM SILICATE PEROVSKITE

For the first time, scientists have found Earth’s fourth most abundant mineral—calcium silicate perovskite—at Earth’s surface.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Scientists found the calcium silicate perovskite within a diamond mined from less than one kilometre beneath Earth’s crust, at South Africa’s famous Cullinan Mine, best known as the source of two of the largest diamonds in the British Crown Jewels.
- CaSiO_3 perovskite in diamond indicates the recycling of oceanic crust into the lower mantle.
- Usually, the mineral is found deep inside Earth’s mantle, at 700 kilometres.
- The only possible way of preserving this mineral at the Earth’s surface is when it’s trapped in an unyielding container like a diamond.
- Silicate perovskite may form up to 93% of the lower mantle, and the magnesium iron form is considered to be the most abundant mineral in Planet Earth, making up 38% of its volume.
- Under the very high pressures of the lowermost mantle, below about 2,700 km, the silicate perovskites are replaced by post-perovskite.

IREDA - EIB

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) and European Investment Bank (EIB) have inked a 150 million euros loan agreement, a move that will benefit over 1.1 million households with clean energy.

- IREDA, which is the financing arm of New and Renewable Energy Ministry, has signed the loan agreement for a second line of credit (LoC) on non-sovereign basis.

- EIB is the long-term lending institution of the European Union owned by its member states.

COMPREHENSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE AGREEMENT FOR TPP

Trade ministers from 11 countries gathered in Santiago, the capital of Chile, to sign the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, or CPTPP.

- The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), also known as TPP11 is an agreed in principle trade agreement between **Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.**
- These countries represent 13.4 percent of the global gross domestic product or \$13.5 trillion, making this the third largest trade agreement after the North American Free Trade Agreement and European Union.
- The TPP was signed on 4 February 2016, but never entered into force as a result of the withdrawal of the United States.
- All original TPP signatories, except the U.S., agreed in May 2017 to revive it and reached agreement in January 2018 to conclude the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.
- The formal signing ceremony was held on March 8, 2018 in Santiago, Chile.

ITB BERLIN

India has won the "Best Exhibitor Award" at ITB – Berlin.

- As the Leading Travel Trade Show, ITB Berlin is the foremost business platform for global touristic offers.
- The ITB Berlin takes place annually in March at the Messe Berlin.
- The fair always has an official partner country, in 2018 represented by the German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.
- 'ITB- Berlin World Tourist Meet' 2018 was convened at Berlin, Germany.

EXERCISE SAMVEDNA

A Multilateral Air Force exercise, 'Ex Samvedna', is being spearheaded by Indian Air Force and conducted by Southern Air Command (SAC).

HIGHLIGHTS

- It is the first composite HADR Air exercise in the South Asian region and would be focused on practicing Air Force centric HADR solutions in a Multi-national cooperative Disaster Management environment.
- It is aimed at setting up a scenario of pre and post Tsunami disaster requirements and guide participants to work out Air Force Centric HADR solutions.
- 'Samvedna' means 'Empathy' and will ensure better understanding and sharing of response procedures between a number of friendly neighbouring nations.

MAHANADI WATER DISPUTE

The Centre notified a three-member tribunal chaired by Supreme Court judge A M Khanwilkar to resolve the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

'The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal' will be headquartered in New Delhi.

Major Disputes and Present Status			
River(s)	States	Date of Constitution of Tribunal	Date of Award
Krishna	Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka	April 1969	May 1976
Godavari	Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa	April 1969	July 1980
Narmada	Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra	October 1969	December 1979
Cauvery	Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Union Territory of Pondicherry	June 1990	Report u/s 5(2) received 5.2.2007
Krishna	Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra	April 2004	Report u/s 5(2) pending
Model/Mandovi/Mahadayi/	Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra	Under Construction	-
Vansadhara	Andhra Pradesh & Orissa	Under Construction	-

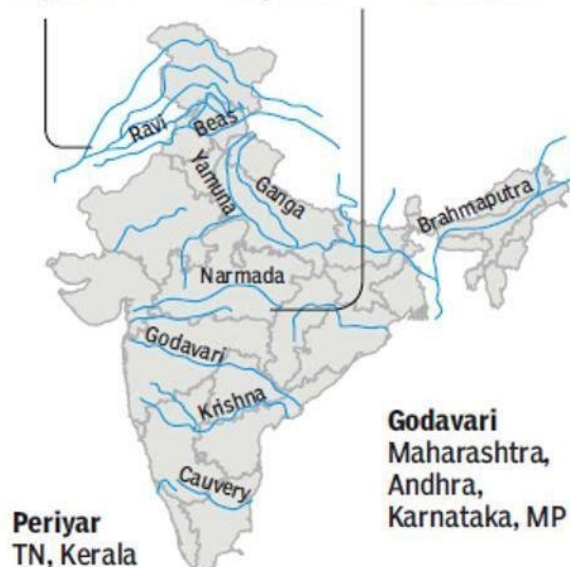
Source: Ministry of Water Resources, Govt. of India

Other major inter-state river disputes

Ravi & Beas
States fighting
Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan

Narmada
MP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan

Krishna
Maharashtra, Andhra, Karnataka



ICE-VII

Trapped in the rigid structure of diamonds formed deep in the Earth's crust, scientists have discovered a form of water ice that was not previously known to occur naturally on our planet.

- Ice-VII is about one-and-a-half times as dense as the regular ice we put in our drinks and skate on in winter, and the crystalline structure of its atoms is different as well.
- In normal ice, known as ice-I, the oxygen atoms arrange themselves in a hexagonal shape. In ice-VII these atoms are arranged in a cubic shape.
- There are actually several known phases of water ice that form under different pressure and temperature conditions.
- Generally, when you subject a solid phase of matter to increasing amounts of pressure, the space between the chemical bonds will decrease a little, and the bonds will tilt slightly toward each other. That's called compressibility.
- But water ice has very low compressibility. When it gets subjected to too much pressure, the atoms don't scooch together. Instead, they rearrange themselves into different patterns.
- For example, if you press down hard enough on ice-I, it will transform into ice-II, which has a rhombohedral structure. Increase the pressure once again and the atoms will rearrange themselves into ice-III, then IV, V, VI and VII.
- Unlike the other phases of ice, however, ice-VII remains fairly stable even as the pressure increases.
- Scientists believe that ice-VII may be found in great abundance in the solar system, perhaps in the interior of ice moons like Enceladus and Europa, or as part of the ocean floor of Titan. But they did not think it could naturally occur on Earth.
- The pressures ice-VII requires to form can be found on our planet, but they exist only deep in the mantle where the temperature is too warm for this form of ice to be stable.
- Diamonds can form very deep in the Earth's mantle, as much as 400 miles beneath the crust. As part of their formation process they will occasionally encapsulate teeny bits of the chemical environment around them in what are called inclusions.
- The natural convection of the mantle will eventually transport a portion of these diamonds to the surface of the Earth. When that happens, they also bring up other deep-Earth materials in the form of these inclusions.
- What's special about inclusions in diamonds is that the material entrapped within them remains under the same pressure as it was during the time it was encapsulated.
- Diamonds can trap small bubbles of extremely dense pressurized water when they form. Then, as the diamond moves up through the mantle, the water inclusion is subjected to cooler temperatures while remaining under the same pressurized conditions. In that very specific case, ice-VII can occur.

KINZHAL MISSILE

The Russian Aerospace Forces have conducted the first successful test firing of the air-launched Kinzhal (Dagger) hypersonic missile.

- Kinzhal is air-to-surface strike missile.
- The missile is claimed to have manoeuvrable flight characteristics not typically seen in hypersonic, solid fuel missiles.
- The missile is reported to have a range of 1,200 miles (approximately 2,000 kilometers).

INDIA LARGEST IMPORTER OF ARMS

India has emerged as the largest importer of major arms according to a latest research released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

HIGHLIGHTS

- India became the world's largest importer of major arms in 2013-17 accounting for 12% of the total global import.
- The country that accounts for the maximum arms import of India is Russia with 62%.
- America is the second largest arms supplier to India.
- The US emerged as the world's top exporter of weapons accounting for 34% of global arms sales in the last five years.
- Russia accounted for 20% of the export ranking second in the list.

PHILIPPINES WITHDRAW FROM ICC

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has announced that the country will withdraw from the International Criminal Court "effective immediately", just weeks after the tribunal announced its investigation into possible crimes against humanity over his deadly war on drugs.

ICC

- The International Criminal Court (ICC or ICtC)[2] is an intergovernmental organization and international tribunal that sits in The Hague in the Netherlands.
- The ICC has the jurisdiction to prosecute individuals for the international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
- The ICC began functioning on 1 July 2002, the date that the Rome Statute entered into force.
- The Rome Statute is a multilateral treaty which serves as the ICC's foundational and governing document. States which become party to the Rome Statute, for example by ratifying it, become member states of the ICC.
- Currently, there are 123 states which are party to the Rome Statute and therefore members of the ICC.

TWO METEORITES FELL IN INDIA

A study of two meteorites which fell in Assam and Rajasthan over a span of 13 hours in 2017, by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), has concluded that they may contain "significant clues to the origins of life.

A meteorite weighing 3.014 kg fell in Natun Baliyan village in Tinsukia, Assam. Thirteen hours later, early on June 6, another meteorite, weighing 2.23 kg, fell in Mukundpura village near Jaipur.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The one METEORITE is a carbonaceous meteorite, one of the most primitive types. They contain grains of calcium and iron, which date to a time before the sun came into existence.
- The GSI says this is a rare type of meteorite, since carbonaceous meteorites constitute only 3%-5% of all meteorite falls. Analysis has also revealed the presence of water-bearing minerals in the meteorite.
- The GSI report says the meteorite is “believed to have the most pristine primordial matter recovered from space, which might carry important clues to the origin of early life.”
- Meteorites mostly originate from the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter.
- The meteorite that fell in Natun Baliyan in the flood plains of Lohit River, has been classified as an “ordinary chondrite.”
- According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, this is the most common type of meteorites, made of small grains of rock and believed to be mostly unchanged since the formation of the solar system.

WORLD HINDI SECRETARIAT BUILDING INAUGURATED

World Hindi Secretariat building has been inaugurated in Mauritius.

WORLD HINDI SECRETARIAT

- It is an international organisation representing countries and regions where Hindi is the first or customary language, where a significant proportion of the population consists of Hindi speakers or where there is a notable affiliation with North Indian culture.
- The organisation was set up by the governments of India and Mauritius to promote Hindi across the world.
- The main objective of the WHS is to promote Hindi as an international language and further its cause for recognition at the United Nations as an Official Language.

ANNUAL SURVEY OF INDIA'S CITY SYSTEM (ASICS)

Mumbai has topped the third Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS), which covered 21 cities across 18 states.

- The survey uses the ***Janaagraha City-Systems Framework*** as its basis and asks 11 principal questions with 83 detailed parameters on four major subheads—urban planning and design, urban capacities and resources, empowered and legitimate political representation, and transparency, accountability and participation.
- The parameters studied include whether a city has a centralized system of spatial development planning, adequate skilled human resources, and if leaders have adequate power. The survey outlines a reform agenda to ensure sustainable development of cities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The survey is a departure from recent city rankings in that it evaluates the fundamental ability of a city's institutions to deliver a better quality of life over the medium and long term.
- It also makes the case that all the cities surveyed perform poorly because interventions in urban governance have focused largely on the symptoms as opposed to underlying systemic causes.
- Overall, the survey clearly indicates that all 21 cities have very low scores when compared to the global benchmarks—London and New York. Indian cities continue to score in the range of 2 to 4.2 out of 10, as against London's 9.4 and New York's 9.7.
- The lowest ranked city is Chandigarh, perhaps one of the few "planned cities" to have the dubious distinction of coming last for the second time in a row.
- Delhi slips one place and is now at No. 6, while Bengaluru moves up to 12 from 18 in 2014 and Chennai to 7 from 12.
- Bhubaneswar which ranks first in the government's smart cities mission, comes in at 18 in the survey.

E-OFFICE PROGRAMME

E-Office is one of the Mission Mode Projects under Digital India Programme.

- The e-Office solution enables core operations of the Government at all levels to be performed in a virtual 'paper-less' environment.
- The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR&PG) is the nodal Department for implementation of e-Office project. National Informatics Centre (NIC) is the technical partner in this project.

OBJECTIVES

- To improve efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of government responses.
- To reduce turnaround time and to meet the demands of the citizens charter.
- To provide for effective resource management to improve the quality of administration.
- To reduce processing delays.
- To establish transparency and accountability.

QAL'AT AL-BAHRAIN

- The Qal'at al-Bahrain is an ancient harbor and Capital of Dilmun heritage site in Bahrain, near its capital city of Manama.
- It comprises four main elements - an archaeological tell, a sea tower near the tell, a sea channel near the sea tower and palm groves.
- A typical tell is an artificial mound created by many successive layers of human occupation.
- It is believed to have been occupied for over 4,000 years and is considered the capital of the Dilmun civilization.

- Dilmun (Telmun) was a civilization located in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula which was contemporary to Indus and Mesopotamian civilization.
- The site was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2005.
- Excavation was carried out in this region that found a fortification wall around the tell.
- Other artifacts found during the process were barbar pottery, relics of copper and ivory, pots and vessels, fishing tools and a socketed spearhead.

CENTRAL ELECTRIC AUTHORITY

The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has set up a task force that will formulate testing standards and procedures, and identify requirement of infrastructure up gradation, by creating a separate test bed for cyber security in power sector.

- A test bed is a restricted ecosystem where various experiments can be conducted without affecting the entire set up.
- The CEA is the apex policy advisory body in the electricity sector that urges to develop a cyber security framework to address security needs in the country's power sector especially after the advent of smart grids.
- Central Electricity Authority (CEA) is a statutory organization originally constituted under repealed Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948, since substituted by Electricity Act 2003.
- The functions and duties of CEA are delineated under the Electricity Act, 2003.

NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

The North-Atlantic right whale is one of the most endangered of all large whales, with a long history of human exploitation and no signs of recovery despite protection from whaling since the 1930s.

- The dwindling North Atlantic right whale population is on track to finish its breeding season without any new births.
- They primarily feed on phytoplankton.
- The North-Atlantic right whale is mostly found along the Atlantic coast of North America, where it is threatened by entanglement in fishing gear and ship collisions.
- The combination of rising mortality and declining fertility is now seen as potentially catastrophic.
- It was once the target of major commercial whaling, but now it is not harvested.
- There are estimated to be as few as 430 North Atlantic right whales left in the world, including just 100 potential mothers.
- It is classified as ***endangered*** under the IUCN Red list.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Melting of Glaciers and appearance of animals in the areas where they didn't exist are the visible consequences in the southernmost continent.

- Measurements taken last year in Antarctica's Palmer Archipelago showed water temperature had risen to 2.5 degrees Celsius, up from its normal range of between 0 and 1.5 degrees.

- However, at a depth of 130 feet, it was still at 2.0 degrees.
- The warming waters have attracted species previously unseen in the Antarctic, such as a spider crab normally found south of Chile.
- Antarctica holds 62 % of the planet's freshwater reserves, so the melting there could have far-reaching consequences.
- One of them would be diminishing salinity of the seas, which could prove fatal for many marine species.
- The white continent also may hold the key to plant and animal life adapting to changing temperatures.

INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS

South Court, informally known as Jinnah House, in Mumbai is now under the possession of ICCR.

- Indian Council for Cultural Relations is an autonomous organization under the administrative control of Ministry of External Affairs.
- The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, independent India's first Education Minister.
- Its objectives are
 - To** actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and program pertaining to India's external cultural relations.
 - To** foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries.
 - To** promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people.
 - To** develop relations with nations.
- The Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding is administered by ICCR.

CHILIKA LAKE

Chilika Lake, a shallow lagoon and a lake of brackish water, is located in the eastern State of Odisha and spread across over 1,000 sq.km.

- A number of islands are present in the lagoon, prominent among which are Krushnaprasad, Nalaban, Kalijai, Somolo and Birds Islands.
- The Chilika Lake comprises the Chilika Bird Sanctuary and Nalbana (Forest of Reeds) bird sanctuary.
- Chilika was designated as the 1st Ramsar Site of India.
- Also, it was removed from the Montreux record in 2002.
- River Daya flows through Khurda and Puri district before merging the Chilika lake

"SAFE HEAVEN FOR WILD TIGERS": REPORT

The Conservation Assured / Tiger Standards (CA/TS) recently published a report titled 'Safe Havens for Wild Tigers'.

FINDINGS

- Only 13% of the tiger conservation areas met the global standards of an accreditation system.
- Of the 112 global sites surveyed, only 12.5% was currently able to meet the full CA|TS criteria.
- Nearly half of the assessed sites reported fairly strong management, although improvements are needed.
- South Asian and East Asian countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Russia had management plans.
- The remaining 35% did not have management plans and showed relatively weak management.
- Notably, a majority of these are in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand.
- Three of the 13 tiger range countries, Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia have lost all their tigers.

To date, only three sites have been awarded CA|TS Approved status. These are

- Lansdowne Forest Division in Uttarakhand, India.
- Chitwan National Park in Nepal.
- Sikhote-Alin Nature Reserve in Russia.
- Lansdowne Forest Division, Uttarakhand, accredited in May 2017, is the third CA|TS accredited site globally and the first in India.
- It is significant since it is a crucial link between the Rajaji and Corbett tiger reserves.

CA|TS REPORT

- CA|TS report was on the results of a survey of site-based tiger conservation across Asia.
- The survey assessed the current management methodologies at 112 sites located in 11 tiger-range countries, including India.
- The survey is the first and largest rapid assessment of site-based tiger conservation across Asia.
- It has been driven by 11 conservation organisations and tiger-range governments that are part of the CA|TS coalition.
- The results show whether or not governments are investing sufficient funds into tiger conservation.
- This study also shows the reality of the progress made under the St Petersburg Declaration.

CA|TS

- CA|TS is an important tool in the achievement of the Convention on Biological Diversity - CBD's Global Aichi Targets.
- CA|TS is a management tool which sets basic criteria such as the minimum standards for effective management of tiger conservation reserves.
- It also applies to other conservation reserves and protected areas which have tiger populations.
- It contributes to the implementation of the Programme of Work on Protected Areas.

- The CA|TS team has been working closely with the IUCN.

St Petersburg Declaration

- In November 2010, the first “Tiger Summit” in St Petersburg, Russia, endorsed a Global Tiger Recovery Programme.
- The programme aimed at reversing the rapid decline of tigers and doubling their numbers by 2022.
- India was one of the 13 tiger range countries that participated in the gathering.
- The leaders committed to drawing up action plans to - strengthen the tiger reserves; crack down on poachers; provide financial assistance to maintain a thriving tiger population

Tiger Range Countries

- The Tiger Range Countries (TRC) are the countries where tigers still roam free i.e. in the wild.
- The 13 tiger range countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam.
- Sometimes North Korea is also included.
- While there have been no recent tigers sightings in North-Korea, it is the only country listed which has not ratified CITES.

ENERGY EFFICIENT SERVICES LTD

EESL is to provide 10,000 electric vehicles and 4,000 chargers would be supplied to various Government departments in the state of Andhra Pradesh as part of its green initiative.

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of four National Public-Sector Undertakings, ***NTPC Limited; Power Finance Corporation Limited; Rural Electrification Corporation Limited; POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited***
- EESL is a Super Energy Service Company (ESCO) set up under the Ministry of Power.
- As South Asia's first and foremost energy efficiency leader, EESL leads the market-related activities of the National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency (NMEEE).
- Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) is EESL's flagship initiative.
- The company has established global operations in the UK and South-East Asia.

KONARK DANCE & MUSIC FESTIVAL

At the 32nd Konark dance and music festival, various dance forms were performed that celebrated the heritage, history and arts.

Some of the dances performed:

- **Mahari** is a dance form that is performed as a special service to Lord Jagannath, Odisha by the devdasis (temple dancers) called mahari for centuries. It spurred the development of Odissi and Gotipua dance forms of Odisha.
- **Gotipua** (Goti – Single; Pua – Boy) dance has been performed in Orissa by young boys who dress up as female to praise Lord Jagannath and Lord Krishna.

- **Kathak** is one of the classical dance forms and only one belonging to northern part of the country. It is about story telling from episodes in myths and puranas.
- **Odissi** is a highly stylized dance and to some extent is based on the classical Natya Shastra and the Abhinaya Darpana. Odisha is the home of Odissi.
- **Mangaiyar** is a Muslim community who perform folk music with their traditional instrument is kamaicha. They are found in the Sindh, Pakistan and Rajasthan, India regions.

HOMES

Huron Ontario Michigan Erie Superior –HOMES.

- Lake Superior is the largest fresh water lake in the world in terms of surface area and the deepest among the 5. (Note that Lake Baikal in Russia is largest fresh water lake by volume)
- Lake Erie is the shallowest with the most fish species.
- Water from Lake Superior, Erie, Michigan and Huron flows into Ontario via Niagara Falls.
- Except Lake Michigan, which is completely inside USA, other lakes form the USA – Canada border.

HAZRAT AMIR HASAN DEHLVI

Amir Hasan Sijzi or Hazrat Amir Hasan Dehlvi is a sufi saint and also one of the two famous disciples ,the other being Amir Khusro, of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.

- Amir Sijzi was born in Badaun in Uttar Pradesh in 1254 and died in Daulatabad in 1337.
- Amir Sijzi in his famous literary discourse titled Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad, wrote about the teachings of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya.
- The book deals with the day-to-day interactions, reactions and teachings of a Sufi Shaikh in his khanqah.
- This book is an important historical, social and literary document as it records contemporary life and society.
- Amir Sijzi became Auliya's disciple quite late in life, when he was already an established poet and called the Saadi-e-Hind
- It is believed that the original copy of the Fawa'id-al-Fu'ad is buried with Amir Hasan Sijzi as per his will.

ENERGY MANAGEMENT CENTRE

The 'Global Status Report 2017: Towards a zero-emission, efficient, and resilient buildings and construction sector,' published by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), has listed the EMC campus as one of the recent achievements in the deployment of key technologies for energy-efficiency in buildings.

- The Energy Management Centre (EMC), an autonomous institution under the Kerala government, has grabbed the global spotlight for its energy-positive campus.
- The EMC's energy-positive campus was designed to allow natural cross-flow ventilation from building forms and openings.
- The EMC campus was built with assistance from Global Environment Fund (GEF).
- Building-related carbon emissions have been rising by around 1% per year since 2010, and more than four million deaths are attributable to illness from household air pollution.

BLIZZARDS

Blizzards across Europe killed around 50 people and halted the transport network affecting the normal life of the people.

- It is a local cold wind mostly experienced in the North eastern part of the North American Region.
- Blizzard is a severe storm condition characterized by low temperatures, heavy snow and strong winds.
- Europe is now experiencing blizzards as the plume of cold air from Russia has swept the continent leading temperatures to drop to -20 degrees.

BLACK TIP SHARK

Black tip sharks that gather off the South Florida every year coast are shrinking in number.

- The Blacktip Shark is widespread in warm temperate, subtropical and tropical waters.
- The species are found in the western Atlantic it ranges from United States to southern Brazil, eastern Atlantic it is known from the Mediterranean Sea southwards to central Africa, in the Indian Ocean from South Africa to western Australia, including the Red Sea and Persian Gulf.
- In the Pacific Ocean it is recorded from throughout the Indo-Australian Archipelago.
- In the eastern Pacific from California, USA, to Peru.
- Black tip Shark meat is primarily consumed locally and fins are dried and shipped to the Far East where they are used in preparing shark-fin soup.
- It is a near threatened species under the IUCN red list.

ECO-CIRCUITS PROJECTS-SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

Tourism Ministry has sanctioned Rs. 460.74 Crore for Five Ongoing 'Eco Circuit' Projects.

- The Swadesh Darshan Scheme (Central Sector Scheme) was launched by Ministry of Tourism (MoT) – for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country.
- Eco Circuit is one of the thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.
- The five eco circuit projects are in the states of Uttarakhand, Mizoram, Kerala, Telegana and Madhya Pradesh.

- The completion of the projects sanctioned under the scheme would result in increased tourist inflow thereby creating employment opportunities for the local community.

<u>SWADESH DHARSHAN</u>	<u>PRASAD SCHEME</u>
Swadesh dharshan is a theme-based tourist circuit's development scheme.	The scheme is a National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD).
Under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, the following thematic circuits have been identified, for development namely: North-East India Circuit, Buddhist Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tirtankar circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Sufi circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.	Under the PRASAD scheme thirteen sites have been identified for development, namely: Amritsar, Ajmer, Dwaraka, Mathura, Varanasi, Gaya, Puri, Amaravati, Kanchipuram, Vellankanni, Kedarnath, Kamakhya and Patna.
In the 'Spiritual Circuit' identified under the Swadesh Darshan scheme; the thrust is on development of particular thematic circuit consisting of various religious/spiritual destinations in a State and Union Territory.	Under the 'PRASAD' scheme the focus is on development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations.

CHILD LABOUR

As per 2011 Census, the number of main workers in the age group of 5-14 years in the country is 43.53 lakh.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This shows a decline from 2001 Census of 57.79 lakh.
- After strengthening the legislative framework through amendment in Child Labour Act, Government has framed the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017 which ensures effective enforcement of the provisions of the Act.
- To provide an enforcement mechanism an online portal PENCIL (Platform for Effective Enforcement of No Child Labour) has been launched by the Ministry of Labour & Employment.

- Government is also implementing the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme for rehabilitation of child labour.

NATIONAL MISSION FOR MANUSCRIPT

National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) is engaged in documentation of Indian manuscripts.

A manuscript is a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value.

HIGHLIGHTS

- NMM was established by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India.
- The Mission has the mandate of identifying, documenting, conserving and making accessible the manuscript heritage of India.
- India possesses an estimate of 10 million manuscripts, probably the largest collection in the world, which covers a variety of themes, textures and aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations.
- NMM is working towards fulfilling its motto, 'conserving the past for the future'.

COFFEE OF ARAKU VALLEY

Coffee Board has applied for registration of Araku coffee under Geographical Indications to protect the unique identity of the coffee grown by the tribal communities of Araku Valley in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Arabica coffee from the Araku Valley area has gained popularity as a high quality speciality coffee internationally, through the "Integrated Coffee Development Project."
- Araku valley is situated near the Odisha border in Vishakapatnam District of Andhra Pradesh.
- It is a valley in the Eastern Ghats inhabited by different tribes.
- It is also home to several tribes and they perform the Dimsa and Mayur dances during the Itika Pongal, the popular hunting festival in the month of April.

80:20 SCHEME

A 2016 CAG report has observed that the scheme had resulted in a loss of over Rs 1 lakh crore to the exchequer.

80:20 SCHEME

- The scheme was introduced in August 2013.
- Under the scheme, 80% of gold imports under the scheme could be sold in the country.
- And at least 20% of imports had to be exported before importers could bring in new consignments.

- The permission to import the next lot was to be given upon the fulfilment of the export obligation.

BACKGROUND

- India is one of the biggest importers of gold globally.
- In 2013, the country's macroeconomic indicators, especially the current account deficit, were weak.
- The rising gold import and its impact on the current account deficit was further a cause of concern.
- It posed a risk of capital outflows and further weakening of the rupee.
- Coupled with this, the high crude oil prices forced the authorities to implement preventive measures.
- The 80:20 scheme thus aimed to discourage gold imports to rein in the widening current account deficit.
- Subsequently, the rupee recovered after the RBI announced a slew of measures to boost inflows and stabilise the currency.

DECLINE IN CHILD MARRIAGE

UNICEF lauds India for a sharp decline of 20 per cent in child marriages during the last decade.

HIGHLIGHTS

- According to UNICEF, India saw a sharp decline in child marriages over the last ten years with 27% of girls getting married before their 18th birthday as against 47% a decade ago.
- Globally, the proportion of girls who were married as children decreased by 15% in the last decade, from 1 in 4 to approximately 1 in 5.
- Also 25 million child marriages were prevented globally in the decade of 2005-06 to 2015-16.
- The largest reduction was seen in South Asia with India being at the forefront.
- The UN children's agency stated the following reasons for the decline: Increasing rates of girls' education; Proactive government investments in adolescent girls & Strong public awareness about the illegality of child marriage and the harm it

CYBER SPACE

The Ministry of Home Affairs has recently set up a Cyber & Information Security Division to look into matters relating to cyber-crime & information security.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Ministry of Home Affairs is implementing the 'Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)' scheme from NIRBHAYA funds during the period 2017-2020.
- The home ministry will train 27,500 police personnel across the country to tackle cyber-crimes against women and children under the scheme.

- It also aims at setting up an online cyber-crime reporting platform to allow public to report complaints of cyber-crime including child pornography and facilitate removal of child pornographic content in coordination with concerned ministries.

MICROFIBER POLLUTION

Microfibers are tiny threads shed from fabric that have been found in abundance on shorelines where waste water is released.

- Microfibers are too small to be caught in conventional filters, so they eventually pass through sewage plants, wash out to waterways, and can be eaten or absorbed by marine animals.
- Synthetic microfibers are particularly dangerous because they have the potential to poison the food chain.
- The fibers' size also allows them to be readily consumed by fish and other wildlife.
- These plastic fibers have the potential to bioaccumulate, concentrating toxins in the bodies of larger animals, higher up the food chain.

RANTHAMBORE TIGER RESERVE

The tiger reserve, named after the Ranthambore fort, is situated in Karauli and Swai Madhvpur districts of Rajasthan.

- The reserve is located at the junction of Aravallis and Vindhyan ranges.
- The reserve was established in the year 1969.
- It was earlier the private hunting grounds of Maharajas of Jaipur.
- The reserve comprises Ranthambore national park and two sanctuaries namely Sawai Mansigh and Keladevi.
- Poaching, habitat loss and fragmentation are the threats to the reserve.
- Tiger populations in Ranthambore are smaller, isolated populations.
- This makes them less genetically diverse due to lesser intermixing of different populations.

SWATANTRA SAINIK SAMMAN YOJANA

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the continuation of Swatantra Sainik Samman Yojana (SSSY) during 2017-2020 beyond the 12th Five Year Plan.

- In 1969, Government of India introduced the 'Ex-Andaman Political Prisoners Pension Scheme'.
- This was to honour the freedom fighters who had been incarcerated in the Cellular Jail at Port Blair.
- Later, a liberalized scheme, namely the 'Swatantrata Sainik Samman Pension Scheme, 1980' was implemented.
- From the financial year 2017-18 onwards, the nomenclature of the Scheme has been changed as 'Swatantrata Sainik Samman Yojana'.
- Besides the freedom fighters, spouses (widows/widowers), unmarried and unemployed daughters and parents of deceased freedom fighters are eligible for pension under the scheme.

- The scheme is implemented by the Division of Freedom Fighters and Rehabilitation under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

RADIATION TECHNOLOGIES

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) in particular are engaged in extensive research on use of radiation processing.

- Irradiation is very effective process in treating agricultural produce to enhance its shelf life.
- Unique advantages of radiation processing of products (including fruits, vegetables, cereals, pulses, spices, sea foods and meat products) are:
 - *Cold and clean process.
 - *Effective elimination of harmful bacteria and insects/pests.
 - *Treatment after final packaging to avoid recontamination.
 - *Significant increase in shelf life.
- DAE has developed crop varieties with desirable traits such as higher yield, seed size, improved agronomic and quality traits, early maturity and resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses.
- These were achieved using radiation induced mutation (and conventional) breeding.
- Two technology demonstration plants were set up based on R&D carried out at BARC:
 - *KRUSHAK at Lasalgaon, Nashik, Maharashtra.
 - *Radiation Processing Plant at Vashi, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra.
- These plants are set up under the guidance of Board of Radiation & Isotope Technology (BRIT) under the Department of Atomic Energy.

CONFERENCE ON MARINE DEBRIS

Marine Biological Association of India (MBAI) has organized a national conference to draw an action plan to control marine debris (CoMaD – Conference on Marine Debris) at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

- There are 5.25 trillion pieces of plastic debris in the ocean, of which 269,000 tones float on the surface.
- Further, four billion plastic microfibers per sq km litter the deep sea.
- In India, micro and macro plastics have been observed at all tropic levels from sardines to tunas and sea birds.
- The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute was established by Government of India on 1947 under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- Later it joined the ICAR family in 1967.
- Kochi is the head quarter of the Institute.

CHINDU BHAGVATHAM

- Chindu Bhagavatham is an art form dating back to second century BC.
- It is popular in the Nizamabad district, Telegana.
- Chindu is derived from the artistes' caste - Chindu Madiga - a sub-caste of Madiga among the Scheduled Caste community.

- The Chindu Bhagavatam is also called Chindu Yakshaganam, as it is similar to Yakshaganam of Karnataka.
- The Chindu artistes lead a nomadic life.
- They camp in a particular place for about eight months where they stage plays and during rainy days they work as agriculture laborers.

E-IAGARTA

- e-jagrata is a novel initiative to ensure safe, secured and effective Internet usage by schoolchildren.
- It was launched by the district administration of Ernakulam.
- The project is being implemented with the support of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and State Bank of India (SBI).
- Students of standards eight and nine from government schools and aided schools will be trained under the program.
- The current training phase will cover cloud computing, android development, ethical hacking, robotics, and Internet payment among other topics.
- The previous phases focused on basic IT and safe and responsible usage of Internet.

RANGANATHITU BIRD SANCTUARY

The Forest Department and Mysore Bird Watchers' group will soon conduct the first bird census at Ranganathittu Bird sanctuary.

- Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary is situated in Srirangapatna of Mandya district, Karnataka.
- Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary located on the islands of river Cauvery.
- It is an example of riverine ecosystem.
- The flying fox, bonnet macaque, common otter, common mongoose, palm civet, marsh crocodile are found here.
- Rich avifauna includes the large cormorand, darter, spoonbill, open-billed stork, painted stork, egret, heron, and the lesser whistling teal.
- It is an Important Bird Area (IBA) that is identified by Birdlife International and Bombay Natural History Society.

IIIDEM

The India International Institute for Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) is conducting a training program on 'Capacity Development for Election Management'.

- It is conducted under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- IIIDEM is an advanced resource centre of learning, research, training and extension for participatory democracy and election management.
- The Institute is being developed in collaboration with the Government of India, United Nations, the Commonwealth and inter-governmental organizations like International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA).

- IIDEM has four components which are: *Training and Capacity Development, Voter Education and Civic Participation, Research, Innovation and Documentation & International Projects and Technical Collaboration.*
- IIDEM will work for promoting democratic values and practices, enhancing voter education and awareness and developing efficient human resources.

SAFE & NUTRITIOUS FOOD INITIATIVE

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has undertaken several initiatives under 'Safe and Nutritious Food' (SNF) for citizen guidance and behavioral change viz:

1. SNF@ Home.
 2. SNF@ School.
 3. SNF@ Workplace.
 4. SNF@ Eat-out
 - The SNF portal serves as an online resource centre containing information pertaining to this initiative.
 - Resource materials, interactive guides on understanding food safety and nutrition are developed by FSSAI.
 - For the campaign it has published resource book regarding the steps to be taken
1. SNF@ Home: Pink book
 2. SNF@ School: Yellow Book
 3. SNF@ Workplace: Orange Book

ASIATIC LIONS

India's endangered Asiatic lion population rose to 600, following the conservation efforts.

- The species, which was found in the South West Asian region, is now restricted to the Gir Sanctuary in India.
- Five protected areas currently exist to protect the Asian lion: Gir Sanctuary, Gir National Park, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala & Girnar.
- The lions face the usual threats of poaching and habitat fragmentation.
- Conservationists have suggested selective relocation of big cats to another sanctuary, to reduce human-animal conflict and avoid the risk of getting wiped out by disease or natural disaster.
- It is an endangered species according to the IUCN Red list.
- It is listed in Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 and also in Appendix I of CITES.

CBRN EMERGENCIES

National Disaster Management Authority conducted training program for CBRN emergencies at Mumbai airport recently.

- CBRN emergencies pertain to threats emanating due to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear material.

- It is aimed at enhancing the preparedness of Airport Emergency Handlers (AEHs) to respond to CBRN emergencies at the airports.
- The training program is being conducted in collaboration with the Airport Authority of India (AAI) and Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences (INMAS).

GLOBAL TECHNICAL STRATEGY FOR MALARIA

The WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016-2030 was adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2015.

- It provides a comprehensive framework to guide countries in their efforts to accelerate progress towards malaria elimination.
- The strategy sets the target of reducing global malaria incidence and mortality rates by at least 90% by 2030.
- It emphasizes the need for universal coverage of core malaria interventions for all populations at risk.
- It highlights the importance of using high-quality surveillance data for decision-making.
- The WHO strategy was developed in close alignment with the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership's Action and Investment to defeat Malaria 2016-2030.

CORAL REEF THREATENED

Ocean acidification is eroding the coral reef systems.

- Coral reefs are formed by the calcium carbonate skeletons and also carbonate sediments which accumulate on them over thousands of years.
- Calcium carbonate skeletons are created by tiny animals called coral polyps.
- Ocean acidification is lowering of sea water's pH when it absorbs the excess, human-caused carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- It prevents polyps from building their stony skeletons.
- Coral reefs span 3,062 sq. km in India.
- Many coral species are included in the Schedule 1 of the Wildlife protection Act.

BIO NEST

University of Hyderabad (UoH) had launched the Bio-Incubator to facilitate start-ups and entrepreneurship ventures.

- The BioNEST (Bio-Incubator Nurturing Entrepreneurship for Scaling Technologies) was inaugurated on the occasion of 'National Science Day'.
- It was supported by the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a unit of the Department of Biotechnology.
- The BioNEST will incubate start-ups and entrepreneurs in the life sciences, biotechnology, healthcare and allied areas of research.

THUNDER SNOW

Recently, New Yorkers and others on the East Coast of USA experienced the thundersnow in the middle of a macro-scale cyclone, Nor'easter, in USA.

- It is a rare phenomenon which means thunder and lightning occur during a snowstorm.
- It is rare phenomenon as, unlike rain, snow mostly absorbs the light of lightning and the sound of thunder.
- The ways in which a thundersnow can develop are as follows

When warmer, moist air close to the ground rises and mixes with colder, denser air higher up, which is observed in central USA.

When a thunderstorm develops, in spite of a prevailing cold temperature, due to the relatively warm moist air that comes from the lakes.

When a low pressure of a powerful winter storm creates strong upward motions in the air that generates the atmospheric instability.

- A 2009 analysis found that only 0.07% of snowfalls are accompanied by thunder.

ICEGATE & e-SANCHIT

ICEGATE stands for the Indian Customs Electronic Commerce/Electronic Data interchange (EC/EDI) Gateway.

- The national gateway is under Central Board of Customs and Exercise (CBEC).
- It is an ecommerce portal of the Indian Customs that provides e-filing services to the trade and cargo carriers and other clients of Customs Department.
- By this facility, the department offers electronic filing of the Bill of Entry, Shipping Bills and related electronic messages between Customs and the Trading Partners.

e- SANCHIT was launched on a pilot basis by the Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC).

- It is mainly for paperless processing, uploading of supporting documents, to facilitate the trading across borders which will reduce the precious time and provide digital easing.

FEM TECH

- “FemTech” refers to software, diagnostics, products and services that use digital technology to improve women’s health.
- It is emerging as the next big disruptor in the global health care market, according to Frost & Sullivan.
- The following are the reasons for its emergence are:
 - *50 per cent of global health care customers are women.
 - *They are the primary caregivers for the elderly and children.
 - *90% women are primary health care decision makers for their family and key influencers for friends.
 - *80 % of the household health care spending is done by women.
 - *Earlier, women’s health was side-lined as a niche market but now it can attribute to the rise of the ‘she-economy’.

RIVER TERRAPIN

In Bengal, U.P., M.P. and Assam conservation steps are taken to save the Northern River Terrapin.

- The terrapin is one of the most threatened freshwater turtles among the world's 50 most-threatened turtles.
- The terrapin is also called as Batagur and Four-toed Terrapin.
- Turtle Conservation Coalition, a consortium of conservation organizations, accounted its fragile state in the 'Turtles in Trouble' Document.
- India's top five turtles at risk are

TURTLES	LOCATION	IUCN STATUS
Northern River Terrapin (Batagur baska)	Sunderbans	Critically Endangered
Red-Crowned Roof Turtle (Batagur kachuga)	National Chambal Sanctuary, spread across Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.	Critically endangered
South Asian Narrow-Headed Softshell Turtle (Chitra indica)	Gangetic river system	Endangered
Black Softshell Turtle (Nilssononia nigricans)	Temple ponds in Assam and Bengal.	Extinct in Wild
Asian Giant Softshell Turtle (Pelochelys cantorii)	In the eastern part of the country	Critically Endangered

- Turtle habitat is being lost due to development, expansion of agriculture, land and water pollution and consumption of the animals and their eggs.

PROJECT UNNATI

Project UNNATI was launched by the Ministry of shipping in 2014.

- In nutshell it is a port transformation project.
- Under the project, the global benchmarks were adopted to improve the efficiency and productivity, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of major ports.
- The aims and objectives of Project, which is focused on 12 major ports, are as follows:

- *Benchmark operational and financial performance of the major ports.
- *Undertake capability maturity assessment for key processes and functional capabilities.
- *Detailed diagnosis and root cause analysis for the identified opportunity areas to understand underlying reasons for performance bottlenecks.
- *Develop practical and actionable solutions on the basis of root cause findings, and develop a comprehensive improvement roadmap

TB FREE INDIA CAMPAIGN

The campaign launched by the Prime Minister during the The Delhi End TB Summit, at Delhi.

- The campaign took up the activities of National Strategic Plan for TB elimination forward in Mission mode.
- The vision to end TB by 2025, five years ahead of the SDG's has galvanized the efforts of the Revised National Tuberculosis Program.
- One of the new digital initiatives under the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program is Comprehensive Management Information System for TB (NIKSHAY).

BODI HILLS

A massive forest fire in Tamil Nadu's Theni district has claimed ten lives of trekkers who had gone mountain trekking in Kurangani hills in Bodi foothills.

- Bodi hill is located in the Theni district, Tamil Nadu bordering the state of Kerala.
- It is part of the southern Western Ghats.
- Munnar, the popular hill station is near to this region.
- West Bodi hill was selected as the site for the India's ambitious INO project.

Indian-based Neutrino Observatory

- The India-based Neutrino Observatory (INO) project was granted environmental clearance by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)
- The initial goal of INO is to study neutrinos.
- Neutrinos are subatomic particles produced by the decay of radioactive elements and are elementary particles that lack an electric charge.
- The site of INO is in the West Bodi Hills of Theni district in the state of Tamil Nadu.

The project includes

- (a) Construction of an underground laboratory and associated surface facilities at Pottipuram in Bodi West hills.
- (b) Construction of an Iron Calorimeter (ICAL) detector for studying neutrinos.
- (c) Setting up of National Centre for High Energy Physics at Madurai, for the operation and maintenance of the underground laboratory, human resource development and detector R&D along with its applications.

IONIZATION RADIATION

Ionizing radiation is radiation with enough energy so that during an interaction with an atom, it can remove tightly bound electrons from the orbit of an atom, causing the atom to become charged or ionized.

- Ionizing radiation is a permanent feature of the upper atmosphere.
- At airlines' cruising altitude, particles periodically ejected by the sun and cosmic radiation coursing through the universe are 100 times more potent than down below.
- The protection at these altitudes is thinner compare to the natural protection at the ground.
- Airline employees face more radiation exposure than radiology workers or nuclear power plant engineers, according to the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements.
- Ionizing radiation exposure is measured using the Sievert
- A dose of 4 Sieverts or more at once is often fatal.

POSHAN ABHIYAN

PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment (POSHAN) Abhiyan.

- POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched by the Prime Minister recently in Jhunjhunu ,Rajasthan.
- The abhiyan may include the following nutrition strategies and interventions
 - *supplementary nutrition.
 - *IYCF (Infant and Young Child Feeding) immunisation.
 - *Food fortification.
 - *Adolescent nutrition.
 - *Dietary diversification.
 - *maternal health
- Behavior change communication is the key component of POSHAN Abhiyaan for converting it into Jan Andolan (People's movement).
- The Executive Committee is the Apex body for all Nutrition related activities under the POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- National Council on India's nutritional challenges under chairmanship of Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, has been set up under the POSHAN Abhiyaan.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP MODEL IN DEFENCE ACQUISITION

The policy on Strategic Partnerships in Defence sector was approved by Defence Acquisition Council last year.

- The policy is intended to institutionalize a transparent, objective and functional mechanism to encourage broader participation of the private sector and the manufacture of defence platforms and equipment.
- The following four segments have been identified for acquisition under Strategic Partnership (SP) route: Fighter Aircraft, Helicopters, Submarines & Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) / Main Battle Tanks (MBTs).

NORTH EAST SPECIAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

In 2017, Government of India approved North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) for the period of 2017-18 to 2019-20

- The scheme is completely funded by the central government.
- The funds under the scheme, will be distributed among eight North Eastern States.
- The distribution of funds will be on the basis of well-defined criteria on certain parameters e.g. Area, Population, Human Development Index, Road density, etc.
- The new scheme will broadly cover creation of infrastructure under following sectors:
 - *Physical infrastructure relating to water supply, power, connectivity and specially the projects promoting tourism;
 - *Infrastructure of social sectors of education and health.
 - *In addition, the scheme will also cover the projects that promote tourism.
- The scheme will act as a catalyst in overall development of the region.

CYBER GRAM PROJECT FOR DIGITAL LITERACY OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has launched a pilot project for minority Cyber Gram for digital literacy in a minority dominated village Chandauli in Alwar district of Rajasthan.

- The Ministry mainstreamed the Cyber Gram project with the Multi-sectoral Development Program in the year 2014-15 as a special initiative.
- The aim of the initiative is:
 - *To provide hands on training in computers for students from minority community.
 - *To enable them to acquire basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills to become digitally literate.
 - *To actively involve them in knowledge based activities, access financial, social and government services and to use internet for communications.
- The initiative covers students of Class VI to Class X belonging to notified minority communities residing in minority concentration areas indentified under Multi-sectoral Development Program (MsDP).
- Minority communities include Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis and Jains.
- The project is being implemented through Common Service Center (CSC) e-governance India Ltd-a company under Department of Electronics and Information Technology with support of States/UTs.

FACTS

- Ace wrestler Navjot Kaur won gold medal in the 65kg freestyle wrestling category of Senior Asian Championships held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. With this, she created history by becoming first Indian woman wrestler to win gold medal in Senior Asian Championships. This was also India's first gold in the ongoing championships. In the final match the women's 65kg freestyle wrestling category, Navjot defeated Japan's Miya Imai by 9-1 score.

- Iraq has overtaken Saudi Arabia to become India's top crude oil supplier by supplying 38.9 million tonnes (MT) crude oil in the current financial year. It was fifth of the India's oil needs.
- India's first Heli-Taxi service launched in Bengaluru
- The headquarters of the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has been shifted from Chennai to Haryana's Ballabhgarh for "better coordination" between the environment ministry and the the board.
- After Mirai and Reaper, cybersecurity agencies have detected a new malware called Saposhi, which is capable of taking over electronic devices and turning them into 'bots', which can be then used for any purpose, including a Distributed Denial Of Service attack which, with enough firepower, can cripple entire industries.
- In a first for both countries, the director generals of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) declared an 8.3 km stretch of the Indo-Bangladesh border as a 'crime-free zone'.
- The Union home ministry recently sanctioned the launch of the National Academy of Coastal Policing (NACP) from a campus of Gujarat's Fisheries Research Centre located in coastal Okha in the newly created Devbhoomi Dwarka district.
- ***The Indian Air Force's largest transport aircraft C-17 Globemaster landed at Arunachal Pradesh's Tuting airfield which is close to the Chinese border.*** The landing of the US-manufactured aircraft is seen as part of the IAF's move to strengthen its overall operations in the strategically-key border state.
- The first Mega Food Park in the state of Maharashtra. This is the 12th Mega Food Park operationalized in the country so far.
- Scientists have announced the discovery of a previously unknown "super colony" of more than 1,500,000 Adélie Penguins in the Danger Islands, a chain of remote, rocky islands off of the Antarctic Peninsula's northern tip.
- Diu becomes the first and only Union Territory to be 100% solar energy efficient:
- The largest national flag in the country was recently hoisted at Belagavi. The national flag is 110m (365 feet) high from the base plate to the top. The size of the flag is 120X80 ft. It will weigh 500 kg.
- ***Haryana government*** announced that a Cooperative Election Authority would be set up in the State for supervising the election process in cooperative bodies.
- Prime Minister launched the pan-India expansion of ***Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) programme*** on International Women's Day.
- ***Phirangipuram is all to be Andhra Pradesh's first all-women rail station.*** It will be the third-of-its-kind railway station in the country after Jaipur's Gandhi Nagar and Mumbai's Matunga.