

**NATIONAL****Flight and Maritime Connectivity Rules, 2018**

The government recently notified Flight and Maritime Connectivity Rules, 2018 thereby allowing phone calls and internet on flights and ship voyage within India's territory.

**The guidelines:**

- The in-flight and maritime connectivity (IFMC) can be provided by a valid telecom licence holder in India through domestic and foreign satellites having the permission of the Department of Space.
- In case of using satellite system for providing IFMC, the telegraph message shall be passed through the satellite gateway earth station located within India and such satellite gateway earth stations shall be interconnected with the NLD (national long distance) or access service or ISP licensee's network for further delivery of service.
- The IFMC services will be activated once the aircraft attains a minimum height of 3,000 metres in Indian airspace to avoid interference with terrestrial mobile networks.
- The IFMC licences will be granted against an annual fee of Re 1 for a period of 10 years and the permit holder will have to pay licence fees and spectrum charges based on revenue earned from providing services.

**India's first railway university:**

- India's first railway university has been opened in Vadodara– It is named as the National Rail and Transportation Institution (NRTI).
- The Railway University will be first of its kind institution in the nation and the third in the world after Russia and China.
- It will be a deemed university which will offer professional courses in technology and management of transportation networks.

**NITI Aayog organised Women Transforming India Awards 2018**

15 women entrepreneurs were given awards at the recently concluded Women Transforming India Awards 2018 in New Delhi. The Women Transforming India Awards are organised by NITI Aayog. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of these awards.

Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, the vice-president of India, was the chief guest on this occasion. He also launched the upgraded version of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform web portal at the event. Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu lauded the effort of the NITI Aayog for creating Women Entrepreneurship Platform 2.0 and placing gender equality at the centre of its policy decisions.

**Women Entrepreneurship Platform:** The primary objective of Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) is to promote and support both established and aspiring Indian women entrepreneurs. This platform has been set up by NITI Aayog. Women Entrepreneurship Platform is the first of its kind unified access platform that allows the partner organizations to provide various support services to Indian women entrepreneurs. It aims to transform the entrepreneurial ecosystem for women entrepreneurs in the country.

- It seeks to become a one-stop resource centre for Indian women entrepreneurs.
- It also provides for meeting and working in collaboration of several stakeholders in the entrepreneurial space on a single platform
- Many organisations such as Google, UN India Business Forum, CRISIL, SIDBI, NIC, NASSCOM, WEE Foundation, SEWA bank, MannDeshi Foundation etc. are the partners in the Women Entrepreneurship Platform.

**About Women Transforming India Awards:**

- These awards are given to recognise and celebrate stories of exemplary women from all over India.
- The theme for WTI Awards 2018: "Women and Entrepreneurship".
- WTI Awards 2018 received over 2300 nominations this year. 15 winners were chosen from various sectors such as Renewable Energy, Education, Art and Culture, Social Innovation and Impact, Sanitation and others for these awards.

**INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL****Australia Recognizes West Jerusalem as Capital of Israel**

Australia has recognized West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. With this, Australia has become one of the few countries that officially recognize West Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

**Background:**

- Both Israel and the Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their Capital and this dispute is not resolved yet.
- United States President Donald Trump's administration had also announced recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital on December 6, 2017.
- The UN General Assembly passed a resolution in opposition to declare the US President Donald Trump's declaration of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void". India also supported the resolution, which was approved with a majority of 127-9 at the UN General Assembly calling for the US to withdraw its decision.

**Nepal bans Indian currency notes above Rs 100**

The Nepal government has banned all Indian notes above the denomination of Rs 100 in a move that would impact tourists visiting the Himalayan nation where Indian currency is widely used. New Indian note of Rs 2,000, Rs 500 and Rs 200 denominations were banned as the Nepal government has not yet legalized them in the market.

The move can affect the Indian tourist and Nepali people working in India, who carry the currency in Nepal for the transaction. Even though Indian currency is accepted in Nepal, people would often face difficulties while using higher denomination notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 since they were not easily accepted. This is even before the demonetization exercise of November 2016.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY****High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE)**

High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE)- A camera aboard Nasa's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) has captured the image of the InSight lander, which recently touched down on the Red Planet.

**High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE):**

- The High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE) will photograph hundreds of targeted swaths of Mars' surface in unprecedented detail.
- HiRISE operates in visible wavelengths, the same as human eyes, but with a telescopic lens that will produce images at resolutions never before seen in planetary exploration missions.
- HiRISE also makes observations at near-infrared wavelengths to obtain information on the mineral groups present.
- These new, high-resolution images will provide unprecedented views of layered materials, gullies, channels, and other science targets, as well as characterize possible future landing sites.

**ENVIRONMENT & GEOGRAPHY****National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):**

The National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) has released a report tiger mortality in the country.

The NTCA maintains the official database of tiger mortality in the country, and compiles figures from reports sent by different States on the basis of recovery of bodies or seizure of body parts. According to the records till December 15, 2018, there were 95 cases of tiger deaths in the country. Of this, 41 cases of tiger deaths outside tiger reserves have been reported. Of them, 14 occurred in Maharashtra, which accounted for over 34% of all deaths outside tiger reserves in the country. A total of 19 tiger deaths were recorded in Maharashtra in 2018, so deaths outside tiger reserves comprise more than 70% of all tiger deaths in the State.

**NTCA:** The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.

**The functions of NTCA are as follows:**

- Ensuring normative standards in tiger reserve management

- Preparation of reserve specific tiger conservation plan
- Laying down annual/ audit report before Parliament
- Instituting State level Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister and establishment of Tiger Conservation Foundation.
- According approval for declaring new Tiger Reserves.

### **India, Nepal, Bhutan plan joint task force to protect wildlife**

The governments of India, Nepal and Bhutan are actively considering having a joint task force for allowing free movement of wildlife across political boundaries and checking smuggling of wildlife across the Kanchenjunga Landscape, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India and Bhutan. The developments comes up after forest officials and representatives of non-government organisation of the three countries visited parts of the landscape and later held a meeting at Siliguri in north Bengal earlier this month.

#### **Need for a joint task force:**

- Setting up of a joint task force is a key requirement in the road map on achieving the objectives of free movement of wildlife and checking smuggling of wildlife.
- According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), a regional knowledge development and learning centre, 1,118 sq km of riverine grassland and tree cover were lost in the landscape between 2000 and 2010. 74 % of the area was converted into rangeland and 26% to agricultural land.
- Other than seven million people, the Kanchenjunga Landscape is also home to 169 species of mammals and 713 species of birds. Studies by the ICIMOD suggest that between 1986 and 2015, as many as 425 people were killed by elephants and 144 elephants were killed between 1958 and 2013.

### **Campaign launched to save the Great Indian Bustard from extinction:**

Wildlife organisations have got together to launch a campaign to save the Great Indian Bustard which in recent years has come under the critically endangered list. With the total global population of the Great Indian Bustard reaching an all time low at fewer than 150 individuals, this campaign is the need of the hour.

The wildlife organisations that have launched the campaign are The Corbett Foundation in collaboration with Conservation India and Sanctuary Nature Foundation.

The campaign aims at highlighting the overhead power transmission lines that result in the death of these low flying birds with a limited field of vision. This is the primary threat to the survival of the species especially in the Great Indian Bustard Habitat.

### **Mount Soputan Volcano erupts on Sulawesi Island of Indonesia**

Central Indonesia's Mount Soputan volcano erupted on 16th December 2018, sending ash about 7.5 km high in the sky. Mount Soputan erupted twice on the same day, forcing local residents to move to safer places. Mount Soputan volcano is one of the most active volcanoes of Indonesia. It is located on the Sulawesi island in Indonesia. Indonesia has around 129 active volcanoes and Mount Soputan is one of them. The country of Indonesia is an archipelago which is highly prone to earthquakes and volcanoes as it is located on the "the Pacific Ring of Fire". The most active volcanoes of Indonesia are Kelud and Merapi. Both these volcanoes are located on the Java island of Indonesia and have claimed the lives of many people in the region.

#### **Pacific Ring of Fire:**

The Ring of Fire is a major area in the Pacific Ocean, approx 25000 miles, where about 75% of the world's volcanoes are located. The Ring-of-Fire is also called as the Circum-Pacific belt. Many major and minor tectonic plates such as the Eurasian, North American, Juan de Fuca, Cocos, Caribbean, Nazca, Antarctic, Indian, Australian, Philippine, and other smaller plates meet at the Ring of Fire. The movement of these tectonic plates leads to volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and formation of deep trenches in the ocean. The Mariana trench which is the deepest ocean trench is also located in the Ring-of-Fire.

### **Operation Oliva**

The Indian Coast Guard has launched the 'Operation Oliva' exercise as part of its annual mission to ensure the safe mid-sea sojourn of breeding Olive Ridley sea turtles. The exercise launched along the serene sea waters of Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Odisha. The Coast Guard has chalked out a pro-active plan for these marine animals conservation.

#### **Olive Ridley Turtles**

The olive ridley sea turtle, also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, is the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtles found in the world. These sea turtle is found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. They can also be found in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean. These turtles, along with the related Kemp's ridley turtle, are best known for their unique mass nesting called arribada, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs. The olive ridley sea turtle has been listed on Schedule – I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (amended 1991). The species is listed as vulnerable under IUCN.

## **DEFENCE**

### **Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN)**

India has signed the ascension agreement to the Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN). The multilateral construct comprises of 30 countries and is steered by Italy. India already has bilateral White Shipping Agreements with 36 countries.

### **Trans Regional Maritime Network (T-RMN):**

- The network facilitates information exchange on the movement of commercial traffic on the high seas.
- The information is available primarily through the Automatic Identification System (AIS) fitted on merchant ships with more than 300 gross registered tonnage as mandated by the International Maritime Organisation.
- The AIS information comprises name, MMSI number, position, course, speed, last port visited, destination and so on. This information can be picked up through various AIS sensors including coastal AIS chains and satellite based receivers.

### **Significance:**

- Such multilateral agreements are necessitated due to the large traffic in the Indian Ocean which cannot be entirely monitored by any one nation.
- This is a significant move as it will help the Indian Navy keep a watch over the vast Indian Ocean and boost maritime security of the country. India is part of several such agreements, which help the nations to coordinate and share information to keep tabs on suspicious activities and illegal trade across the oceans.

### **Army chief confirms induction of women into the force**

Chief of the Army Staff Bipin Rawat on Saturday said the Army would induct women jawans in the corps of military police, and further scope of recruiting women in Army posts would be explored thereafter. There were several other fields where the Army was thinking of inducting women. Last year, the Army chief had announced that women would be recruited in ranks other than officers, citing various reasons. It was expected that the Army would induct 800 women military police.

Gen. Rawat, who was in the city as reviewing officer of the Combined Graduation Parade of 139 Indian Air Force flight cadets at the Air Force Academy, Dundigal, said the Army already had women Judge Advocate General (JAG) and they were into education also.

Earlier, Gen. Rawat said the Indian Air Force was the best among the air forces of the world and would continue to touch the skies with glory. As many as 139 trainee officers, including 24 women, joined the elite cadre of the Air Force as commissioned officers.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Catriona Gray from Philippines wins Miss Universe 2018 Title**

Catriona Elisa Gray from the Philippines was crowned as the Miss Universe 2018, beating 93 contestants from other countries. She was crowned by Demi Leigh Nel-Peters from South Africa, the Miss Universe 2017 title winner. India was represented by Nehal Chudasama in the beauty pageant. Nehal Chudasama failed to enter the final 20 of the Miss Universe 2018 competition. After Lara Dutta had won the crown in 2000, no Indian contestant has been able to win the Miss Universe title in all these 18 years.