

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Month of  
May-2018



Plot-1441, Opp. IOCL Petrol Pump, CRP Square, Bhubaneswar  
**Ph : 8093083555, 8984111101**

Web : [www.vanikias.com](http://www.vanikias.com) | E-mail : [vaniksias@gmail.com](mailto:vaniksias@gmail.com)

facebook [www.facebook.com/vanikias](https://www.facebook.com/vanikias)

## DRAFT MISSION TO KICK-START RENEWABLE ENERGY STORAGE

### Why in News?

The draft National Energy Storage Mission expects to kick-start grid-connected energy storage in India, set up a regulatory framework, and encourage indigenous manufacture of batteries, according to a member of the expert committee set up by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

### Important Points:

The draft sets a “realistic target” of 15-20 gigawatt hours (GWh) of grid-connected storage within the next 5 years.

Power grids do not currently use storage options that would help in smoothly integrating renewable energy resources.

National Energy Storage Mission will focus on seven verticals.

1. indigenous manufacturing;
2. assessment of technology and cost trends;
3. a policy and regulatory framework;
4. financing, business models and market creation;
5. research and development;
6. standards and testing;
7. grid planning for energy storage.

### Inherently intermittent:

Renewable energy sources now make up almost one-fifth of India's total installed power capacity. However, as power grids increase their share of solar and wind energy, the problem remains that the peak supply of renewable sources does not always meet peak demand.

For instance, solar energy generation may be at its peak at noon, but unless stored, it will not be available when needed to light up homes at night. Moreover, renewable sources are inherently intermittent: there are days when the wind doesn't blow or the sky is cloudy.

### About National Solar Mission:

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, also known as the National Solar Mission, is an initiative of the Government of India and State Governments to promote solar power. The mission is one of the several initiatives that are part of the National Action Plan on Climate Change. The program was inaugurated by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 11 January 2010 with a target of 20GW by 2022 which was later increased to 100 GW by the Narendra Modi Government in the 2015 Union budget of India.

The objective of the National Solar Mission is to establish India as a global leader in solar energy, by creating the policy conditions for its diffusion across the country as quickly as possible. Under the original plan, the Government aimed to achieve a total installed solar capacity of 20 GW by 2022.

## PHDCCI, INDIAN YOGA ASSN SIGN MOU TO PROMOTE TOURISM IN KRISHNA CIRCUIT

### Why in News?

The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) and the Indian Yoga Association (IYA) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to facilitate interaction and cooperation between the two organisations to promote wellness, spiritual and cultural tourism in the Krishna Circuit.

## Important Points:

**A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.**

**A Mission Directorate headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders.**

**PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate.**

**The scheme is 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.**

**To leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.**

**Funding of individual project will vary from state to state and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant).**

## Krishna Circuit:

**Krishna Circuit is among the thirteen thematic circuits identified for development under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.**

Twelve destinations have been identified for development under Krishna circuit namely Dwarka (Gujarat), Nathdwara, Jaipur & Sikar (Rajasthan), Kurukshetra (Haryana), Mathura, Vrindavan, Nandgaon, Gokul, Barsana, & Govardhan (Uttar Pradesh) and Puri (Odisha).

## About Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

The Tourism Ministry had launched ‘Swadesh Darshan’ scheme with an objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country. These tourist circuits will be developed on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.

## TEJAS CARRIES OUT SUCCESSFUL TEST FIRING OF BVR MISSILE

### Why in News?

Indigenously developed light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas successfully fired Derby air-to-air beyond visual range missile (BVRM) off the Goa coast. The successful test demonstrated its overall capability as effective supersonic combat jet. It also expands firing envelope as well demonstrated safe operation of Tejas during missile plume ingestion into aircraft engine under worst case scenarios. It will also enable its developers state-run HAL and Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) inch closer to final operational clearance (FOC).

### Derby BVR missile:

Derby is short to medium range BVR Air-to-Air missile. It is a dual-use missile (air-to-air and surface-to-air). It is developed jointly by Israeli armament development agency Rafael and Israel Aircraft Industries MBT. It has maximum effective range of about 50 km.

The missile weighs around 118 kg light and is 3.8 metres long. Its weight allows it to be adapted to various modern fighter aircraft. It is active radar air-to-air missile for fighter aircraft and has capability to be launched at target day or night and in all weather conditions. It has look-down and shoot-down capability, fire and forget mode and advanced Electronic counter countermeasures (ECCM) tailored to customer's operational requirements.

### Aeronautical Development Agency:

ADA, Department of Defence R&D is the nodal agency for the design & development of light combat aircraft (LCA). HAL is the principal partner in LCA Programme with participation of DRDO & CSIR Laboratories, Public & Private sector industries and academic institutions.

## PAKISTAN SET TO LAUNCH SPACE PROGRAMME TO KEEP AN EYE ON INDIAN SIDE

### Why in News?

Pakistan is set to launch an ambitious space programme during the next fiscal year with an aim to keep an eye on the Indian side and reduce its dependence on foreign satellites for civil and military purposes. Several projects will be initiated to develop self-reliance capacity and reduce dependence on foreign satellites, mainly the US and French satellites for civil and military communications.

### Important Points:

The budget of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Organisation (Suparco) for the upcoming fiscal year 2018-19 is Rs 4.70 billion which includes Rs 2.55 billion for three new projects.

Suparco has been regularly conducting activities each year to increase awareness of space technology and to promote its peaceful usage amongst students and the masses in Pakistan since 2005.

The funding includes allocation of Rs 1.35 billion for Pakistan Multi-Mission Satellite (PakSat- MM1) and the country is also planning to establish Pakistan Space Centre in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad with the allocation of Rs 1 billion.

**The third project is establishment of Space Application Research Centre in Karachi with the budget of Rs 200 million in 2018-19.**

The total cost of PakSat-MM1 is Rs 27.57 billion and that of the space centres is Rs 26.91 billion.

Advanced space programme is the need of time not

only due to growing demand from the civil communications, including the GPS, mobile telephony and the internet but due to changing scenario in the region also.

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## 3RD MAY : WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

### Why in News?

World Press Freedom Day is being observed on May 3, with the aim to pay tribute to the journalists around the world sacrificing their lives in the line of duty.

**2018 Theme: Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law.**

### Important Points:

The theme of 2018 World Press Freedom Day - 'Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and The Rule of Law', highlights the importance of an empowering legal environment for press freedom and focuses on the role of an independent judiciary in ensuring legal

security for press freedom and the prosecution of crimes against journalists.

The theme also throws the light upon the role of the media in fostering the sustainable development.

The day was established by the UN General Assembly in December 1993, following the recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference.

The day marks the anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration, a statement of press freedom principles put together by African newspaper journalists, which was produced at a UNESCO seminar that was held from 29 April to 3 May 1991.

On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day, UNESCO also held a ceremony to give away the 2018 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

The 2018 Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize went to jailed Egyptian photographer Mahmoud Abu Zeid, popularly known as Shawkan. Abu Zeid was arrested in August 2013 for covering deadly demonstration between the security forces and supporters of ousted Islamist president Mohammed Morsi at Rabaa Al-Adawiya Square in Cairo, Egypt.

He is one among the 700 defendants facing charges of killing police and vandalising property during the clashes.

The index reflected the growing influence of political heads and rival models. It pointed out that how more and more democratically-elected leaders no longer see media as a part of democracy, but as a rival. For instance, the US Congress narrowed the freedom of press in 2017, which only led to its fall in the index from rank 43 in 2017 to rank 45 this year.

The index was topped by Norway again for the second year, followed by Sweden at second and the Netherlands at third. Although Nordic countries dominate the index, they too were affected by the overall decline.

India's rank dropped down to 138th in the index this year from 136th in 2017.

### Background:

World Press Freedom Day is celebrated annually on May 3, the date on which the Windhoek Declaration was adopted. Although World Press Freedom Day has only been celebrated since 1993, it has much deeper roots in the United Nations. Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone "has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

Each year since 1997, the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize is awarded to honor the work of an individual or an organization defending or promoting freedom of expression, especially if it puts the individual's life at risk. The award is named after a journalist murdered in 1986 after denouncing drug barons. Last year it was awarded posthumously to a Russian investigative reporter who was murdered in a contract-style killing in 2006.

### INDIA JOINS TOP 5 COUNTRIES TO SPEND ON ARMY

#### Why in News?

India has joined the US and China as one of the world's five biggest military spenders, reflecting geopolitical tensions as well as the country's reliance on imported weapons and sprawling personnel costs.

### Important Points:

In 2017, India's military spending has increased by five and a half percent, with this, India has left France behind. This information appeared in the annual report of Sweden's Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

In terms of military expenditures, America is in first place and China is in second place. 60% of the total global military expenditure is from India and China alone.

According to Sweden's Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), global military expenditure has increased by 1.1 percent in the year 2017 compared to the year 2016. The military expenditure figure of 115.92 lakh crores in 2017, which is 2.2% of the global GDP. Total military expenditure was Rs 112 lakh crore in 2016.

Compared to China, India's Military Expenditure As per 2016, India has increased military spending by five and a half percent in 2017. This expenditure includes the needs of 14 lakh existing and nearly 20 lakh retired army personnel. India's military spending was Rs 4.26 lakh crore in 2017. Although China is still 3.6 times ahead of India in terms of military expenditure. China has increased its military expenditure to about Rs. 80 thousand crore rupees, to Rs. 15.19 lakh crore.

Russia's defense spending, on the other hand, declined for the first time since 1998. Russia's defense spending is \$ 66.3 billion in 2017, which is 20 percent less than the year 2016.

### Top 5 countries in military expenditure:

Rank	Country	Expenditure (Lakh Crores)
1	United States	40.68
2	China	15.19
3	Saudi Arabia	4.60
4	Russia	4.40
5	India	4.26

## About Sweden's Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI):

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) is an international institute based in Sweden, dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public. SIPRI is based in Stockholm.

### WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) RELEASE MOST POLLUTED CITIES LIST

#### Why in News?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Global Urban Ambient Air Pollution Database ranked Kanpur as the most polluted city among 4300 world cities which were monitored for their air pollution levels in the year 2016.

#### Important Points:

3.8 million deaths caused by household air pollution globally, the region accounts for 1.5 million or 40 per cent deaths, and of the 4.2 million global deaths due to ambient air pollution, 1.3 million or 30 per cent are reported from the region, it said.

**The PM2.5 includes pollutants like sulfate, nitrate and black carbon, which pose the greatest risk to human health.**

14 Indian cities figure in a list of world's 20 most polluted cities in terms of particulate matter PM2.5 levels in 2016. While, in terms of PM10 levels, 13 cities in India figured among the 20 most-polluted cities of the world in 2016.

To the contrary, Indian Government, in its response to the air pollution data released by the WHO, claimed that various pollution-control measures have led to decline in the pollution levels in 2017.

#### Air pollution in Delhi:

As per the data released by WHO, Delhi's PM2.5 level in 2016 was at 143 microgrammes/cubic metre, making it the sixth most polluted city in the world.

However, as per India's Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data, Delhi's PM2.5 level was 134 microgrammes/cubic metre in 2016 and 125 microgrammes/cubic metre in 2017, showing an improvement.

Moreover, the PM (10) levels of Delhi have also come down in the year 2017 against 2016; PM 10 levels in 2016 were 289 microgrammes per cubic metre and in 2017, the levels dropped to 268 microgrammes per cubic metre. While, WHO reported PM 10 levels of Delhi at 292 microgrammes/cubic metre in 2016.

These Indian cities were followed by Ali Subah Al-Salem of Kuwait, Baoding of China and Ulaanbaatar of Mongolia.

However, India managed to obtain a bright spot with its mention among the countries undertaking measures to tackle and reduce air pollution from particulate matter. India's Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana has served the need by providing free LPG connections to some 37 million women living Below Poverty Line (BPL) line to support them to switch to clean household energy use.

#### World's most polluted cities are in India

Cities	Microgrammes / cubic metre)
Kanpur	173
Faridabad	172
Varanasi	151
Gaya	149
Patna	144
Delhi	143
Lucknow	138
Agra	131
Muzaffarpur	120
Srinagar	113
Gurgaon	113
Jaipur	105
Patiala	101
Jodhpur	98

#### WHO Global Urban Ambient Air Pollution Database:

The data mentions that 9 out of 10 people in the world breathe air containing high levels of pollutants.

Around 7 million people die every year from exposure to fine particles in polluted air that break through the lungs and cardiovascular system, causing stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases and respiratory infections.

Air pollution is also a critical risk factor for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), causing 24 percent of all adult deaths from heart disease, 25 percent from stroke, 43 percent from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and 29 percent from lung cancer.

**Ambient air pollution caused some 4.2 million deaths in 2016, while household air pollution from cooking with polluting fuels caused over 3.8 million deaths in 2016.**

Over 90 percent of air pollution-related deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, mainly in Asia and Africa regions, followed by Eastern Mediterranean region, Europe and the Americas.

The highest ambient air pollution levels are in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and in South-East Asia, followed by low and middle-income cities in Africa and the Western Pacific.

WHO has called upon member-countries in its Southeast Asia Region to address the double burden of household and ambient air pollution as the region, which comprises India, accounts for 34 percent or 2.4 million of the seven million premature deaths globally every year.

Of the 3.8 million deaths caused by household air pollution globally, the Southeast Asia Region accounts for 1.5 million or 40 percent deaths, and of the 4.2 million global deaths due to ambient air pollution, region accounts for 1.3 million or 30 percent of deaths.

### What is PM2.5?

PM2.5 readings are often included in air quality reports from environmental authorities and companies. Find out what they mean and why you should monitor their levels. PM2.5 refers to atmospheric particulate matter (PM) that have a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers, which is about 3% the diameter of a human hair. Commonly written as PM2.5, particles in this category are so small that they can only be detected with an electron microscope. They are even smaller than their counterparts PM10, which are particles that are 10 micrometres or less, and are also called fine particles.

## EXERCISE VIJAY PRAHAR: SOUTH WESTERN COMMAND OPERATIONALISES NEW CONCEPTS

### Why in News?

About 20,000 troops of strike formation of the Army's South Western Command (SWC) are carrying out 'Vijay Prahar' exercise with cutting-edge equipment and state-of-the-art force multipliers in the Mahajan Field Firing Ranges close to Suratgarh in Rajasthan.

### Important Points:

The exercise is being conducted to practice troops in penetrative manoeuvres across the obstacle ridden terrain under a nuclear umbrella. In it, formations of South Western Command will be practising and operationalising certain innovative concepts of operating in network centric environment.

The month-long exercise is aimed to orchestrate wide spectrum of threats which are planned to be tackled through high tempo joint air and land operation. It involves hundreds of aircrafts, thousands of tanks and artillery pieces supported by real time intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and logistic support.

It will also deploy integrated employment of modern day sensors with weapon platforms, employment of attack helicopters in air cavalry role and bold offensive of application of the Special Forces. The formations will refine their drills and procedures for fighting in nuclear environment during course of the exercise.

### About South Western Command:

The South Western Command of the Indian Army was established in April 2005 and became fully operational on 15 August 2005. It is headquartered at Jaipur, Rajasthan. The command's operational units include I Corps, formerly under Central Command, and X Corps transferred from Western Command.

## EPFO INTRODUCES ‘VIEW PENSION PASSBOOK’ SERVICE FOR THE PENSIONERS THROUGH UMANG APP

### Why in News?

Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), which is providing a host of e-services for its stakeholders, has now introduced a new service through ‘UMANG app’. This facility was launched part of EPFO’s plan to go paperless by August this year and provide all services online. It will allow pensioners view their pension passbook on mobile phones with the help of Umang app. EPFO is already providing various e-services for its stakeholders through Umang.

On clicking ‘View Passbook’ option, it requires PPO Number and Date of Birth information to be entered by the pensioner. After successful validation of the information fed, an OTP will be sent to the registered mobile number of the pensioner. On entering OTP, ‘Pensioner Passbook’ will display the details of the pensioner like Name, DOB along with last pension credited information. The facility to download the financial year wise complete pass book details is also available.

### About Umang app:

UMANG or Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance is an app launched by the Government of India to provide access to various government services at one place. UMANG app is a common platform for various government services such as gas booking, Aadhaar, crop insurance, EPF, National Pension System, Rapid Assessment System, DigiLocker and Bharat Bill Payment System etc. and supports 13 Indian languages.

The app was launched with the provisions of 43 government departments that grants access to 150+ services and has a target to reach 200 departments granting access to 1200+ services by December 2019. Currently, the app has 172 services from 36 states and central government departments and four states.

It has been developed by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and National e-Governance Division (NeGD). It had won Best m-Government Service Award for Accessible Government Category at World Government Summit 2018.

### About Employee Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO):

EPFO is a statutory body of Union Government that comes under the aegis of Ministry of Labour and Employment. It is headquartered in New Delhi. It is one of largest social security organisations in India in terms volume of financial transactions undertaken and number of covered beneficiaries. It administers compulsory contributory Provident Fund Scheme (1952), Pension Scheme (1995) and Insurance Scheme (1976).

## 2.12 LAKH INDIAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN US UNIVERSITIES

### Why in News?

The sharp decline in the number of students from Saudi Arabia (-9,971), South Korea (-5,488), and Yemen (-396) outweighed the rapid growth in the number of students coming from Pakistan (+448), Myanmar (+206) and Cambodia (+109).

### Important Points:

During the reporting period, the total number of Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVIS) records for active F and M students decreased by 0.5 per cent, from 12,08,039 in March 2017 to 12,01,829 in March 2018.

India is the second largest source country of foreign students in the US, with over 2 lakh Indians currently studying in various American Universities. China tops the list with 3,77,070 students, the Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVIS) of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Homeland Security Investigations said.

The report said 49 per cent of the F and M student population in the United States hailed from either China or India (2,11,703 students), and interest continues to grow.

Over the reporting period, both China and India saw proportional growth between 1 and 2 per cent, with China sending 6,305 more students and India sending 2,356 more students.

It is this level of participation from China and India that makes Asia far and away the most popular continent of origin. In fact, 77 per cent of all international students in the US call Asia home.

According to the report, despite steady growth from the two most populous nations, there was a slight decrease in the number of Asian students coming to study in the United States over the reporting period.

**There are two different types of non-immigrant student visas in the US: the F-1 and M-1 visas.**

#### Difference between F-1 Visa and M-1 Visa:

The F-1 visa is for non-immigrants wanting to go for academic studies and/or language training programme, and the M-1 visa is for non-immigrants wanting to go for non-academic or vocational studies.

### TELECOM COMMISSION APPROVES IN-FLIGHT MOBILE SERVICES

#### Why in News?

Telecom Commission gave its approval to a proposal for allowing mobile call and data/internet services to passengers on domestic and international flights, with certain riders, reported the Press Trust of India. The Telecom Commission, the highest decision-making body of the telecom department, also approved the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (Trai's) recommendations on internet telephony.

#### Important Points:

According to the telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan, the commission also gave its nod to the creation of an ombudsman for dealing with telecom grievances.

The ombudsman will be set up under Trai and will require an amendment to the Trai Act.

Nearly 10 million grievances are received per quarter in the telecom sector, she said adding the new mechanism of the ombudsman will lead to a better and satisfactory consumer grievance redressal.

**Telecom Commission is the highest decision making body of telecom department, it also approved regulator TRAI's recommendations on internet telephony.**

### About Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai):

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) is a statutory body set up by the Government of India under section 3 of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997. It is the regulator of the telecommunications sector in India. It consists of a Chairperson and not more than two full-time members and not more than two part-time members.

Telecom Regulatory authority of India was established on 20 February 1997 by an Act of Parliament to regulate telecom services and tariffs in India. Earlier regulation of telecom services and tariffs was overseen by the Central Government. TRAI's mission is to create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in India to enable the country to have a leading role in the emerging global information society.

One of its main objectives is to provide a fair and transparent environment that promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition in the market. TRAI regularly issues orders and directions on various subjects such as tariffs, interconnections, quality of service, Direct To Home (DTH) services and mobile number portability.

### INDIA, CHINA AGREE TO SET UP ARMY HOTLINE

#### Why in News?

The militaries of India and China have reportedly agreed on the long-pending proposal to set up a hotline between their headquarters after the informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in Wuhan.

India and China have agreed to set up a telephone hotline between their armies at the level of director-general military operation (DGMO) and conduct regular joint patrolling to reduce escalating tension along the disputed Line of Actual Control.

#### Important Points:

The hotline was regarded as a major CBM as it would enable both the headquarters to intensify communication to avert tensions between border patrol in the 3488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) and to avert standoffs like Doklam.

The hotline would build trust between the two militaries. Military trust between China and India is crucial to bilateral relations and demands patience and sincerity from both sides.

**It was mooted by the 2013 Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) between India and China, but was not materialised so far.**

### About Hotline Sewa:

A hotline is a point-to-point communications link in which a call is automatically directed to the preselected destination without any additional action by the user when the end instrument goes off-hook. An example would be a phone that automatically connects to emergency services on picking up the receiver. Therefore, dedicated hotline phones do not need a rotary dial or keypad. A hotline can also be called an automatic signaling, ringdown or off-hook service.

True hotlines cannot be used to originate calls other than to preselected destinations. However, in common or colloquial usage, a “hotline” often refers to a call centre reachable by dialing a standard telephone number, or sometimes the phone numbers themselves.

This is especially the case with 24-hour, noncommercial numbers, such as police tip hotlines or suicide crisis hotlines, which are manned around the clock and thereby give the appearance of real hotlines. Increasingly, however, the term is found being applied to any customer service telephone number.

The most famous hotline between states is the Moscow-Washington hotline, which is also known as the “red telephone”, although telephones have never been used in this capacity. This direct communications link was established on 20 June 1963, in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis, and utilized teletypewriter technology, later replaced by telecopier and then by electronic mail.

## GST NETWORK WILL SOON BECOME A 100% GOVT-OWNED COMPANY

### Why in News?

The Goods and Services Tax Network - Special Purpose Vehicle (GSTN-SPV) will cease to be a private company and morph into a 100 per cent government owned entity.

**The GST Council, headed by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, approved a proposal for the conversion at its 27th meeting.**

### Important Points:

Till now, 24.5 per cent of GSTN was owned by the central government and a similar percentage was held by the state governments collectively.

The remaining 51 per cent was held by five private financial institutions including HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank Ltd, ICICI Bank Ltd, NSE Strategic Investment Co and LIC Housing Finance Ltd.

**The council has agreed to a proposal of buying out the stake of private entities to make GSTN a government-owned entity.**

Following the move, the central government will own 50 per cent stake of GSTN and the remaining 50 per cent would be collectively held by the state governments.

The collective share of state governments will be pro rata, divided among states in accordance with their GST ratios.

However, the GSTN board shall be allowed to continue the existing staff at existing terms and conditions for a period up to five years and shall have the flexibility of hiring people through contract on the terms and conditions similar to those used by GSTN till now while hiring regular employees.

The existing financial commitments given by Centre and States to GSTN to share the capital and O&M cost of the IT Systems shall also continue.

### Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN):

GSTN was set up as not for profit, non-Government, private limited company in 2013. It was established primarily to provide IT infrastructure and services to Central and State Governments, tax payers and other stakeholders for implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST). Currently its 24.5% is owned by central government and similar percentage is held by state governments collectively. The remaining 51% owned by five private financial institutions- ICICI Bank, NSE, HDFC Ltd, HDFC Bank and LIC Housing Finance Ltd. Its revenue model after Goods and Services Tax (GST) was rollout out consisted of User Charge to be paid by stakeholders who will use the system and making it self-sustaining organization.

## Background:

Majority of Goods and Services Tax (GST) processes including registration, filing of returns, payment of taxes, processing of refunds is IT driven and mainly through GSTN. For this, GSTN handles large-scale invoice level data of lakhs of business entities including data relating to exports and imports. Considering nature of state function performed by GSTN, it was felt that the network should be converted into fully government-owned company.

## FIRST ORGANISED CENSUS FOR INDUS DOLPHINS TO BE CARRIED OUT IN INDIA

### Why in News?

The Punjab government along with WWF-India would be conducting the first organised census of Indus Dolphins, one of the world's rarest mammals.

### Objective:

The main aim behind the exercise is to establish the accurate population of the dolphins, in order to plan the conservation of the species accordingly.

### Important Points:

The first organised census will be conducted over period of five days in 185 km stretch between Talwara and Harike Barrage in Beas River in Punjab where riverine fresh water Indus Dolphins are confined.

It will be conducted two joint teams of Department of Forests and Wildlife Preservation, Punjab and WWF-India.

Its main objective is to establish accurate population of dolphins in order to plan conservation of species.

**According to experts, they were also found in Sutlej decades back. However, river pollution is believed to be the major cause of extinction of the species from the habitat.**

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) suspects that the population size of the Indus river dolphins has reduced by more than 50 per cent since 1944.

## About Indus Dolphin:

Indus Dolphin is subspecies of freshwater river dolphin (which also includes Ganges River dolphin) found in Indus river (and its Beas and Sutlej tributaries) flowing through India and Pakistan. It is national mammal of Pakistan. It is a key indicator species of river's health. Its presence is considered as river is healthy. Indus dolphin like Ganges River dolphin is functionally blind and relies on echolocation to navigate, communicate and hunt prey in muddy river water.

Only 1,816 Indus dolphins are reported to exist presently in lower parts of Indus River. They are patchily distributed in five small, sub-populations that are separated by irrigation barrages across course of Indus river and its tributaries. Their numbers have declined dramatically after construction of irrigation system. It is listed by the IUCN as endangered on its Red List of Threatened Species. Indus Dolphin was also found in Sutlej decades back, but river pollution has caused its extinction in river.

## SC SAYS ADULT COUPLE HAS THE RIGHT TO LIVE TOGETHER WITHOUT MARRIAGE

### Why in News?

An adult couple has a right to live together without marriage, the Supreme Court said, while asserting that a 20-year-old Kerala woman, whose marriage had been annulled, could choose whom she wanted to live with.

The top court held that live-in relationships were now even recognized by the Legislature and they had found a place under the provisions of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

The court made the observation while asserting that a 20-year-old Kerala woman, whose marriage had been annulled, could choose whom she wanted to live with.

### Important Points:

The bench stated that the couple's marriage could not be said to be 'null and void' merely because Nandakumar was less than 21 years of age at the time of marriage.

The court stated that the appellant, as well as Thushara, are Hindus and such a marriage is not a void marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

It said that as per the provisions of section 12, which can be attracted in such a case, at the most, the marriage would be a voidable marriage.

It also noted that both the appellant and Thushara are major and even if they were not competent to enter into wedlock, the position of which itself is disputed, they have the right to live together even outside wedlock.

Further, while setting aside the order of Kerala HC granting custody of the woman to her father, the apex court said that “we make it clear that the freedom of choice would be of Thushara as to with whom she wants to live”.

Besides, the court also referred to a recent case involving a woman from Kerala, Hadiya, where it had restored her marriage with Shafin Jahan on the ground that it was a marriage between two consenting adults. The top court also clarified that a court cannot interfere in the marriage of two consenting adults and cannot annul the marriage in a habeas corpus (a writ requiring a person under arrest to be brought before a judge or into court, for securing the person's release) petition.

### Background:

The court's ruling came while it was hearing a petition filed by a man named Nandakumar against a Kerala High Court order annulling his marriage with Thushara on the ground that he had not attained the legal age of marriage.

According to Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, a girl **can't marry** before the age of 18 and a boy before

21.

Nandakumar, who had approached the top court, will turn 21 on May 30, 2018. The high court had also granted the custody of **Thushara** to her father after noting that she was not Nandakumar's lawfully wedded wife.

### About Void Marriage:

A void marriage is a marriage which is unlawful or invalid under the laws of the jurisdiction where it is entered. A void marriage is “one that is void and invalid from its beginning. It is as though the marriage never existed and it requires no formality to terminate.”

A marriage, however, which can be canceled at the option of one of the parties is merely voidable, meaning it is subject to cancellation if contested in court. A marriage that is entered into in good faith, but which is subsequently found to be void, may be recognized as a putative marriage and the spouses as putative spouses, with certain rights granted by statute or common law, notwithstanding that the marriage itself is void.

## DEPWD TO ORGANISE ‘COCHLEAR IMPLANT AWARENESS PROGRAMME’

### Why in News?

A ‘Cochlear Implant Awareness Programme’ is being organized by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWA DEPWD (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in association with Indian Red Cross Society and Sarvodaya Hospital & Research Centre on 6th May, 2018 at Huda Convention Centre, Sector-12, Faridabad (Haryana).

### Significance:

The event named Swar Swagtam was of great importance to create awareness among the public about the Cochlear Implant Programme under the Assistance to Disabled persons (ADIP) scheme of the Department.

### About Cochlear Implant:

The cochlear implant (CI) is a surgically implanted electronic device that provides a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly or severely deaf in both ears; The modern technology mainly aims to help young children who have severe to profound deafness in both ears, as due to hearing impairment, they are not able to speak.

With the help of the implant, such children will not only be able to hear normally through one ear but with post surgical rehabilitation, they will be able to speak also.

## Cost of the Implant:

The Cochlear Implants are costly and not affordable.

Hence, the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry has introduced Cochlear Implant programme under revised scheme of Assistance to Disabled Persons for purchase/fitting of aids and appliances (ADIP) for the poor and needy young children.

## Background:

With the implementation of Cochlear Implant program by the Ministry through Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (Divyangjan), Mumbai, around 1149 surgeries (916 under ADIP Scheme and 233 under CSR) have been conducted across India during the last 4 years, from 2014-15 to 2017-18. Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Speech and Hearing Disabilities (AYNISHD), Mumbai is the Nodal Agency for Cochlear Implant Surgeries.

The government has also empanelled 172 hospitals all over India to conduct the cochlear implant surgery.

Most significant outcome of this program is reduction in the cost of implantation.

The applicants have to apply based on advertisement/details on the website - [adipcochlearimplant.in](http://adipcochlearimplant.in).

All the children are undergoing post-operative rehabilitation. The Ministry has empanelled 172 hospitals all over India to conduct the cochlear implant surgery. Most important outcome of this program is reduction in the cost of implantation and empowers children with deafness to hear and develop speech.

## HARVARD: INDIA WILL BE WORLD'S FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY IN COMING DECADE

### Why in News?

India tops the list of the fastest growing economies in the world for the coming decade and is projected to grow at 7.9 per cent annually, ahead of China and the US, according to a Harvard University report.

### Important Points:

The Centre for International Development at Harvard University (CID) said in new growth projections that countries that have diversified their economies into more complex sectors, such as India and Vietnam, are those that will grow the fastest in the coming decade.

The researchers also find India ranks the best on the criteria termed the Complexity Opportunity Index (COI), which measures how easy it is to redeploy existing know how to enter new complex products.

China is projected to grow at 4.9 per cent annually to 2026, the US three per cent and France 3.5 per cent. The top ranking in COI means India has many “unrealised opportunities” to diversify into related, high-value sectors to continue to drive productivity growth and job creation.

It stressed that ensuring the long-run potential of India's economic growth will rely on realizing diversification into related products.

The other major challenge will be to ensure the inclusive nature of this productive transformation, as the gains made in new chemical, vehicle and electronics exports are highly concentrated in specific localities of the subcontinent.

## INDIA, WORLD BANK SIGN USD 200 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT FOR NATIONAL NUTRITION MISSION

### Why in News?

India signed a loan agreement with the World Bank worth USD 200 million for the National Nutrition Mission (POSHAN Abhiyaan). The loan will support Indian Government's National Nutrition Mission that aims to reduce stunting in 0-6 years old children from 38.4 percent to 25 percent by the year 2022.

### Important Points:

The loan will support the first phase scale up to 315 districts across all the states and union territories (UTs).

A large component of POSHAN Abhiyaan involves gradual scaling-up of the interventions supported by the ongoing World Bank-assisted Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP) to all districts in the country over a 3-year period.

With a focus on improving the coverage and quality of ICDS nutrition services to pregnant and lactating women and children under three years of age, the project will include investments in improving the skills and capacities of ICDS staff and community nutrition workers, and grievance redress and establishing mobile technology based tools for improved monitoring and management of services for better outreach to beneficiaries during the critical 1,000 day window for nutrition impact.

### **Objective of National Nutrition Mission (NNM):**

The mission aims to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls and reduce low birth weight by at least 2 percent per annum. Though the target to reduce stunting is at least 2 percent per annum, the mission will strive to achieve reduction in stunting from 38.4 percent to 25 percent by 2022.

**More than 10 crore people are expected to be benefitted by the programme.**

It will cover all the states and districts in a phased manner. While 315 districts will be covered in 2017-18 and 235 districts will be covered in 2018-19, the remaining districts will be covered in 2019-20.

### **Other key focus areas of National Nutrition Mission (NNM):**

The mission focuses on improving the coverage and quality of ICDS nutrition services to pregnant and lactating women and children under 3 years of age. It will encourage investments in improving the skills and capacities of ICDS staff and community nutrition workers.

It seeks to strengthen the systems of citizen engagement and grievance redressal; and establish mobile technology based tools for improved monitoring and management of services for reaching out the beneficiaries during the critical 1000 day window for nutrition impact.

It will additionally ensure amalgamation of all nutrition related schemes and will provide performance based incentives to states and community nutrition and health workers.

### **About POSHAN Abhiyaan:**

POSHAN Abhiyaan (Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition) was launched in Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan in March 2018. It aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.

It targets to reduce level of under-nutrition and other related problems by ensuring convergence of various nutrition related schemes. It also targets stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and low birth rate. It will monitor and review implementation of all such schemes and utilize existing structural arrangements of line ministries wherever available. Its large component involves gradual scaling-up of the interventions supported by ongoing World Bank assisted Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Systems Strengthening and Nutrition Improvement Project (ISSNIP) to all districts in the country by 2022.

### **NITI AAYOG AND GOOGLE SIGN SOI TO**

### **HELP GROW AI ECOSYSTEM IN INDIA**

### **Why in News?**

Aiming to foster growth for India's nascent artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) ecosystem, NITI Aayog and Google have come together to work on a range of initiatives to help build the AI ecosystem across the country.

### **Important Points:**

The NITI Aayog has been entrusted to setup a national programme to conduct research and development in frontier technologies such as AI. In furtherance of this mandate, NITI Aayog has been developing India's national strategy on AI along with the National Data and Analytics Portal to enable the wide deployment and use of AI.

Under the aegis of this program, Google will train and incubate Indian AI startups in an accelerator program. These startups will be mentored and coached by Google and its affiliates to enable them to better leverage AI in their respective business models.

To help bolster the research ecosystem, one of the initiatives includes funding Indian researchers, scholars and university faculty for conducting AI-based research. Further, Google will also bring its online training courses on AI to students, graduates and engineers to numerous cities across India, in the form of study groups and developer-run courses.

**NITI Aayog and Google will organize a AI/ML hackathon that will be focused on solving key challenges within agriculture, education, healthcare, financial inclusion, transportation/mobility and more. This hackathon may use Kaggle, a global platform, to help facilitate international participation into these planned hackathon challenges.**

Google through the NITI Aayog, will conduct hands-on training programs that aim to sensitise policymakers and technical experts in governments about relevant AI tools, and how they can be used to streamline governance.

### Google and NITI Aayog will work on the following initiatives:

Organise trainings for relevant government functionaries to introduce them to open source AI tools with the goal of enabling more effective governance.

Awarding grants and scholarships to researchers, scholars and university faculty conducting cutting edge research in the field of AI/ML in India.

Organising AI/ML study jams for students and developers based on Google's Machine Learning Crash Course (MLCC) on the fundamentals of machine learning.

Incubating Indian AI/ML startups in a program where they will be mentored by Google to better leverage AI in their respective business models.

Organise a Hackathon focused on using AI/ML and open data sets to solve key challenges within agriculture, education, healthcare, etc. in India.

## AMENDMENTS IN INDIA-KUWAIT TAX TREATY

### Why in News?

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) on Monday notified the protocol amending the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Kuwait.

### Important Points:

**The protocol updates the provisions in the DTAA for exchange of information according to international standards.**

It also enables sharing of information received from Kuwait for tax purposes with other law enforcement agencies, subject to an authorisation of the competent authority of Kuwait and vice versa.

According to the CBDT, the protocol to amend the existing agreement between India and Kuwait was signed in June 2006 for avoidance of double taxation.

Another protocol was signed in January 2017 to prevent fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. This protocol came to effect on 26th March 2018.

### About Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA):

A DTAA is a tax treaty signed between two or more countries. Its key objective is that tax-payers in these countries can avoid being taxed twice for the same income. A DTAA applies in cases where a tax-payer resides in one country and earns income in another.

DTAAs are intended to make a country an attractive investment destination by providing relief on dual taxation. Such relief is provided by exempting income earned abroad from tax in the resident country or providing credit to the extent taxes have already been paid abroad. DTAAs also provide for concessional rates of tax in some cases.

### About Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT):

The Central Board of Direct Taxes is a statutory authority functioning under the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963. The officials of the Board in their ex-officio capacity also function as a Division of the Ministry dealing with matters relating to levy and collection of direct taxes.

## Allocation of work:

- Cases or classes of cases, which shall be considered jointly by the Board.**
- Cases or classes of cases which shall be considered by Chairman, Central Board of Direct Taxes
- Cases or classes of cases, which shall be considered by Member (Income-tax)**
- Cases or classes of cases which shall be considered by Member (Legislation & Computerisation)
- Cases or classes of cases, which shall be considered by Member (Revenue)**
- Cases or classes of cases which shall be considered by Member (Personnel & Vigilance)
- Cases or classes of cases, which shall be considered by Member (Investigation)**
- Cases or classes of cases, which shall be considered by Member (Audit & Judicial)**

## INDIA RANKS 4TH IN ASIA-PACIFIC ON POWER INDEX

### Why in News?

India has ranked fourth out of 25 nations in the Asia-Pacific region on an index that measures their overall power. The US has topped the list. India has been pegged as a "giant of the future". The Lowy Institute Asia Power Index measures power across 25 countries and territories in the Asia-Pacific region, reaching as far west as Pakistan, as far north as Russia, and as far into the Pacific as Australia, New Zealand and the US.

### Important Points:

India was ranked fourth on the parameters of economic resources, military capability and diplomatic influence. It was ranked fifth on resilience.

However, on the parameters of cultural influence and future trends, India scored well by ranking third in both.

India scored low on the measure of economic relationships and defense networks, ranking 7th and 10th respectively.

The index measures a country's overall power through its weighted average across eight measures of power - economic resources, military capability, resilience, future trends, diplomatic influence, economic relationships, defence networks and cultural influence.

The index revealed Japan and India to be countries sharing major power status.

While the report labeled Japan as a smart power, it called India the giant of the future. It also found that US remained to be the pre-eminent power in Asia, while China, the emerging superpower, was found to be rapidly closing in on the United States.

The report revealed that three of the world's four largest economies are in Asia, and the fourth, the United States, is a Pacific power.

It also stated that by 2025, two-thirds of the world's population will live in Asia, compared to just over a tenth in the West.

### Ranks of other nations:

The US claimed the top spot in five of the eight Index measures and a 10-point lead over China in overall power.

The country retains the most powerful military force in Asia and is at the centre of a network of regional alliances that China cannot match. It has a 65-point lead over China in defence networks.

However, in terms of economic relationships the US lags China by more than 30 points.

Future trends also point towards a relative decline in US power even though the nation continues to outspend China in military expenditure.

China held top-two positions across all but one measure and ranked first in economic relationships, diplomatic influence and future trends.

Further, nations including Russia, Australia, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, New Zealand, Vietnam, Pakistan, Taiwan, Philippines and North Korea were ranked as middle powers, while nations such as Bangladesh, Brunei, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Mongolia, Laos and Nepal were ranked as minor powers.

## Measurement Terms:

**Economic relationships:** They are measured in terms of the capacity of states or territories to exercise influence through economic interdependencies; measured in terms of trade relations, investment ties and economic diplomacy.

**Defence networks:** They are defence partnerships that act as force multipliers of military capability. They are measured through assessments of alliances, non-allied partnerships and arms transfers.

**Cultural influence:** It is defined as the ability to shape international public opinion through cultural appeal and interaction. It is measured in terms of cultural projection, information flows and people exchanges.

**Future trends:** It is the projected distribution of economic, military and demographic resources in 2030, which play into perceptions of power today. The trends are measured in terms of GDP, military expenditure and working-age population forecasts.

## Conclusion:

The report said that India ranks third for its aggregate resources score and is set to become the fastest-growing economy in the region, predicted to grow 169% between 2016 and 2030. China holds a top-two position across all but one measure and ranks first in economic relationships, diplomatic influence and future trends.

## INDIA LAUNCHES BIGGEST CITY GAS DISTRIBUTION AUCTION

### Why in News?

In a major step towards ushering in a clean gas-based economy, India launched its biggest auction of city gas distribution (CGD) networks, offering permits for selling compressed and piped natural gas (CNG and PNG) in 86 geographical areas.

### Important Points:

Awards from the 9th CGD licensing round would help bring gas coverage to 174 districts in 22 states and Union Territories, covering 29 per cent of the country's area and 24 per cent of the population. According to the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), which organised a roadshow here to promote the auction, the ninth bid round is expected to attract investment of Rs 70,000 crore.

Cities for which CGD licences are on offer include Bhopal, Ahmednagar, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Barmer, Alwar, Coimbatore, Salem, Allahabad, Amethi, Rai Bareli, Burdwan and Dehradun.

Under the changed parameters, maximum weightage of 50 percent has been given to the number of piped gas connections proposed in previous eight years, as against 30 percent earlier.

**20 percent weightage has been given to the number of CNG dispensing stations.**

10 percent weightage has been granted to the length of the pipeline to be laid in a geographical area and the tariffs proposed for city gas and CNG, each.

**There is a floor tariff of Rs 30 for city gas and Rs 2 per kg for CNG to prevent bidders from quoting low tariffs.**

Companies with net worth of not less than Rs 150 crore can bid for cities with a population of 50 lakh and more, those with Rs 100 crore net worth can bid for cities with 20 lakh to 50 lakh population and firms with Rs 5 crore net worth can bid for cities that have less than 10 lakh population.

**The authorised entity is required to achieve financial closure within 270 days from the date of grant of licence.**

**The winning company will have 8 years of marketing exclusivity in the city, as against the current 5-year licence.**

### Background:

The CGD auctions will help bring gas coverage to 174 districts in 22 states and Union Territories, covering around 29 percent of the country's area and 24 percent of the population.

So far, 91 geographical areas have been awarded to companies like Indraprastha Gas, GAIL Gas and Gujarat Gas, which cover 11 percent of area and 19 percent of the population. These existing CGD networks are concentrated in the northern and western regions of the country.

## IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: TRUMP PULLS US OUT IN BREAK WITH EUROPE ALLIES

### Why in News?

President Trump declared that he was withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, unraveling the signature foreign policy achievement of his predecessor Barack Obama, isolating the United States from its Western allies and sowing uncertainty before a risky nuclear negotiation with North Korea.

### When will the sanctions restart?

The US Treasury said economic sanctions would not be reimposed on Iran immediately, but would be subject to 90-day and 180-day wind-down periods. In a statement on its website, it said sanctions would be reimposed on the industries mentioned in the 2015 deal, including Iran's oil sector, aircraft exports, precious metals trade, and Iranian government attempts to buy US dollar banknotes.

### Iran nuclear deal:

#### Uranium enrichment

Before July 2015, Iran had almost 20,000 centrifuges. Under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it was restricted to 5,060 centrifuges and its uranium stockpile reduced by 98 per cent to just 300 kilograms for the next 15 years. It was also restricted to enrichment of no more than 3.67 per cent of this.

#### Plutonium production

The JCPOA did not permit Iran to build additional heavy-water reactors or accumulate excess heavy-water, which can be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium, for 15 years.

#### What reaction has there been worldwide?

France, Germany and the UK - whose leaders had tried to change Mr Trump's mind - have said they "regret" the American decision. The foreign ministry of Russia, another signatory, said it was "deeply disappointed".

The European Union's top diplomat, Federica Mogherini, said the EU was "determined to preserve" the deal.

## NASA, UBER TEAM UP TO MAKE FLYING CARS A REALITY

### Why in News?

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) signed a space act agreement with Uber Technologies to explore concepts and technologies related to Urban Air Mobility (UAM) for future air transportation such as flying cars in populated areas.

### Important Points:

Urban Air Mobility is a safe and efficient system for air vehicles, piloted or not, to move passengers and cargo within a city.

Under the agreement, Uber will share its plans with NASA for implementing the urban aviation rideshare network.

NASA will use the latest airspace management computer modeling and simulation to assess the impacts of small aircraft from delivery drones to passenger aircraft in crowded environments.

NASA will use the data supplied by Uber to simulate a small passenger-carrying aircraft as it flies through Dallas Fort Worth (DFW) airspace during peak scheduled air traffic.

After thorough analysis, NASA will identify safety issues faced by these new aircraft in already crowded air traffic control system.

In order to ensure that the small aircraft enter the marketplace safely without burdening the national air traffic, NASA is carrying out research in areas including Unmanned Aircraft System traffic management; UAS integration in the National Airspace System; vertical take-off and landing aircraft and more.

Earlier, Uber announced to test these electric flying vehicles by 2020 and their commercial launch in 2023. The company has produced its own designs and is trying to revolutionise the way of commuting across the cities.

## About Urban Air Mobility (UAM)?

Urban Air Mobility is a safe and efficient system for air vehicles, piloted or not, to move passengers and cargo within a city. The system could revolutionise the way people and goods move in crowded cities and vitally change the lifestyle.

### WALMART-FLIPKART DEAL: SOFTBANK, TIGER GLOBAL TO SELL ABOUT 20% STAKE

#### Why in News?

Global retail giant Walmart on May 9, 2018 formally signed a definitive agreement to acquire 77 percent stake in Flipkart with an investment of around USD 16 billion.

The deal will value Flipkart at around USD 20.8 billion, up from its previous valuation of USD 12 billion.

#### Important Points:

The investment will be productive for both the market players, Flipkart will be benefitted by Walmart's retail expertise, grocery and general merchandise supply-chain knowledge and financial strength, while Flipkart's localised service, customer insights and innovative culture will benefit Walmart across the globe.

Though Walmart and Flipkart will leverage the combined strengths, they will continue to maintain distinct brands and operating structures.

Currently, Walmart India operates 21 Best Price cash-and-carry stores and one fulfillment center in 19 cities across nine states in India. However, the Flipkart **investment** will transform Walmart's position in the country of over 1.3 billion people, a **strong GDP growth and significant eCommerce penetration.**

Walmart will pay around USD 16 billion for an initial **stake of approximately 77 percent in Flipkart.** The remaining business will be held by Flipkart's existing shareholders, including Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal, Tencent Holdings Limited, Tiger Global Management LLC and Microsoft Corp. Of the total deal amount of USD 16 billion, USD 2 billion will be new equity funding, while the rest will be utilised to buy stake from existing investors including Softbank, Naspers and co-founder Sachin Bansal.

If the deal closes at the end of the second quarter of 2018-19, Walmart might experience a negative impact of USD 0.25 to USD 0.30 in 2019 earnings per share (EPS), including incremental interest expense related to the investment.

To finance the investment, Walmart will use a combination of newly issued debt and cash on hand.

Upon the closing of the deal, Flipkart's financials will be reported as part of Walmart's International business segment. Now, Flipkart's strong leadership team will be supported by Walmart, Tencent, Tiger Global and Microsoft.

Walmart will support Flipkart's ambition to transform itself into a publicly-listed, majority-owned subsidiary in the future.

#### Impact of the deal on small vendors:

The Walmart-Flipkart deal is expected to impact the whole segment, be it the competitors or the consumers. The deal has worried the small vendors, who fear of being wiped off from the market. Walmart

**has a reputation of killing small businesses with its ultra-low prices.**

If Walmart brings in its own private labels on Flipkart, it might make it difficult for other sellers to operate. This major concern was shared by the All India Online Vendors' Association (AIOVA), which has 3500 sellers on large platforms like Flipkart and Amazon.

Walmart has been trying to enter India for years but all its efforts proved to be futile. However, the company managed to run 'cash-and-carry' wholesale business in the country. It currently operates 21 such stores in India.

#### About Flipkart:

Flipkart was co-founded by Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal in 2007. The company opened its first office in Bengaluru in 2008, followed by offices in Delhi and Mumbai in 2009. In 2011, Flipkart domiciled to Singapore to woo foreign investors to fund rapid growth. Sachin Bansal served as Flipkart CEO for nine years till 2015 and then took over as Executive Chairman. In 2016, Binny Bansal took over as the CEO of the company. Coming to

acquisitions, Flipkart acquired online apparel retailer Myntra at about USD 300 million in 2014 and another fashion retailer Jabong for USD 70 million and payment startup PhonePe in 2016. Flipkart's supply chain arm, eKart, serves more than 800 cities and makes 500000 deliveries daily.

### About Walmart:

Walmart is an American multinational retailer that operates a chain of hypermarkets, discount department stores, and grocery stores. Headquartered in Bentonville, Arkansas, the company was founded by Sam Walton in 1962 and was incorporated on October 31, 1969. The company operates under the name Walmart in the United States and Canada, as Walmart de Mexico y Centroamerica in Mexico and Central America, as Asda in the United Kingdom, as the Seiyu Group in Japan and as Best Price in India. It has wholly owned operations in Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and Canada. Walmart opened its first wholesale store in India in 2009.

## DEATH OR INJURY WHILE BOARDING OR DE-BOARDING TRAIN ENTITLES PASSENGER TO COMPENSATION: SC

### Why in News?

Death or injury while boarding or de-boarding a train is an "untoward incident" which entitles a passenger to compensation and will not be considered his negligence.

### SC Judgement:

The court held that death or injury in the course of boarding or de-boarding a train will be an 'untoward incident' entitling a victim to the compensation and will not fall under the proviso to Section 124A (suicide, self-inflicted injury) merely on the plea of negligence of the victim as a contributing factor.

- ↳ The court said that the initial burden will be on the claimant that can be discharged by filing an affidavit of the relevant facts and the burden will then shift on the railways and the issue can be decided on the facts shown or the attending circumstances.

The court held that the matter would have to be dealt from case to case on the basis of facts found.

The court held that the mere presence of a body on railway premises will not be enough to convince that the injured or deceased was a genuine passenger and is entitled for compensation.

It, however, clarified that the absence of ticket on an injured or deceased will not cancel out his/her right to compensation. In this case, the petitioner would have to prove his case by providing the required documents.

The court made it clear that the railways will not be able to avoid paying compensation citing negligence on the part of passengers.

Death or injury in the course of boarding or de-boarding a train will be an untoward incident entitling a victim to the compensation and will not fall under the proviso to Section 124A (suicide, self-inflicted injury) merely on the plea of negligence of the victim as a contributing factor.

### Background:

The judgment came on an appeal filed by the Centre, which had approached the apex court against an order by the Patna High Court that awarded a compensation of 4 lakh rupees to the wife of a person who fell down from a train due to rush of passengers and died on the spot on August 20, 2002.

The high court had set aside the railway tribunal's order by taking into consideration the statement of an eye witness who had filed an affidavit stating that the deceased had purchased the ticket and had boarded the train.

The tribunal had dismissed the claim on the ground that it was not a case of "untoward incident" but a case of "run over" and that the deceased was not a bona fide passenger.

## INDIA, PANAMA SIGN TWO AGREEMENTS FOR DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT HOLDERS

### Why in News?

India and Panama have signed two agreements on exemption of Visas for holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports and in the field of Agriculture.

The agreements were signed in the presence of Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela Rodrigues and Vice President and Foreign Minister Isabel de Saint Malo and Indian Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu during his visit to the nation.

## Terrorism:

**India has reiterated its zero tolerance level for terrorism and resolves to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.**

**Panama has extended a helping hand by consolidating Latin America's support against the global menace of terrorism.**

## Important Points:

Naidu praised Panama for including India for strengthening relations for its Falcon policies.

He also said that two centres for Biodiversity and Innovation will be setup by India in Panama worth US \$10m and US \$15m each.

**Naidu also implied on having support from Panama for the following:**

Both countries have agreed to promote cooperation in key areas such as tax information, economic cooperation, air services, traditional medicines, culture and strengthening cooperation in space.

The Panama Human Rights Council (HRC) agreed to support India as a member till 2019-2021.

**As a joint statement both countries are determined to combat terrorism.**

## Background:

The Vice President's visit to the three Latin American nations - Guatemala, Panama and Peru mainly aims to strengthen India's relations for enhanced engagement at higher levels in order to improve bilateral relations for mutual benefit.

## 41.6 % BABIES ARE NOT BREASTFED EACH YEAR: UNICEF

### Why in News?

The number of babies missing out on breastfeeding remains high, particularly among the world's richest countries, UNICEF said in a new analysis released. Worldwide, approximately 41.6 % babies each year are not breastfed.

## Important Points:

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) released a report titled 'Breastfeeding: A Mother's Gift, for Every Child', claiming that over 7.6 million babies are not breastfed each year.

The analysis indicates that even though breastmilk saves lives, protects babies and mothers against deadly diseases, and leads to better IQ and educational outcomes, an estimated 21 per cent of babies in high-income countries are never breastfed. In low-and-middle-income countries, the rate is 4 per cent.

The analysis notes that babies are much more likely to be breastfed at least once in low- and-middle-income countries like Bhutan (99%), Madagascar (99%) and Peru (99%) than those born in Ireland (55%) the United States (74%) or Spain (77%). The United States alone accounts for more than one-third of the 2.6 million babies in high-income countries who were never breastfed.

The United States alone accounts for more than one-third of the 21 percent or 2.6 million of babies who are never breastfed in high-income countries.

In low-and-middle-income countries, wealth disparities indicate that how long a mother will continue to breastfeed her child.

Babies from the poorest families are breastfed for 2 years, which is 1.5 times higher than the richest families.

## Initiatives taken by United Nations to promote breastfeeding:

UNICEF launched a global campaign 'Every Child ALIVE' that urges governments, private sector and civil society to increase funding and awareness to raise breastfeeding rates from birth through the age of two.

The United Nations has been observing the 'World Breastfeeding Week' every year since 1992 to promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life. This year

## Recommendations of UNICEF and WHO:

**Initiate breastfeeding within the first hour of life.**

Exclusive breastfeeding, without any additional food or even water, for the first six months of newborn.

Children should receive complementary foods with continued breastfeeding up to 2 years of age or beyond.

**Breastfeed often on demand as the child wants, day and night.**

## GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES DIGITAL INDIA INTERNSHIP SCHEME PORTAL

### Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITY) has launched the website of Digital India Internship Scheme. The portal will facilitate students to apply online for internship. It was launched by Information Technology Minister Ravi Prasad Shankar in New Delhi.

### Digital India Internship Scheme:

The Government of India has launched a limited period chance for students to earn up to Rs 20,000 with the Digital India Internship. With this internship, students can secure a first-hand practical work experience under the guidance of a qualified and experienced Supervisor/Mentor. It is a two-month internship that will be offered twice a year. The summer internship during May and June and winter internship during December and January. While the minimum duration of the internship will be of two months, it is extendable up to three months, depending on the performance of the candidate, requirement of the Ministry and time the intern is willing to spend with the ministry.

### Objectives:

Provide opportunity for student to secure first hand and practical work experience under guidance of qualified and experienced Supervisor and Mentor.

### Digital India Internship scheme:

#### Eligibility Criteria-

Students who wish to apply should fulfil all the below mentioned criteria in order to apply for the Internship-

- (i) Indian students from recognized universities in India who have secured at least 60% marks in the last held degree or certificate examination and:-
- (a) pursuing B.Tech/B.E., and are in the 2nd/3rd year of the 10+2+4 pattern of education

OR

- (b) pursuing integrated degree course or dual degree (B.E./B.Tech, M.E./M.Tech.) and are in the 4th/5th year of the 10+2+5 pattern of education.

- (ii) Possessing minimum qualifications as above shall not guarantee an internship in this Ministry. Candidates having exposure in the area of intended internship with good academic background and having higher qualification, based on need shall be given preference.

**Proposed broad areas for Internship:** R&D, Cyber Laws & Cyber Security, e-Governance, Digital Literacy (HRD), International Cooperation & Industrial Promotion, Hardware Industry and Digital Payments and Electronic Testing.

#### Stipend & Certificate of Internship

**Stipend** – Each Intern will get Stipend of Rs. 10,000 per month on certification by Supervisor / Mentor. This stipend will be given on the completion of internship and final submission of report duly accepted by the ministry.

**Internship Certificate** – All the Interns will get the Internship Certificate on the completion of internship and final submission of report accepted by the concerned authority.

## INDIA, MYANMAR SIGN 7 MOUS

### Why in News?

External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj met Myanmar State Councilor Aung San Suu Kyi during her visit to Myanmar. In this meeting, seven agreements signed between India and Myanmar were signed.

During this visit, Prime Minister Modi's review of the decisions taken during the visit of September 2017 was reviewed. Here he also meets the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Force and Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

According to a statement issued by the External Affairs Ministry here, during the bilateral meetings, boundary, and border-related issues, peace and security matters, developments in the Rakhine State, including the return of displaced Rohingya persons, India's development assistance to Myanmar, ongoing projects, and other issues of mutual interest were discussed.

## Seven agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit. These included:

1. Agreement on Land Border Crossing,
2. MoU on Restoration and Preservation of Earthquake Damaged Pagodas in Bagan,
3. MoU on assistance to the Joint Ceasefire Monitoring Committee,
4. MoU on Training of Myanmar Foreign Service Officers,
5. MoU on Setting up Industrial Training Centre (ITC) at Monywa,
6. Memorandum of Understanding for setting up of Industrial Training Center in Thaton
7. Exchange of Letters on extending a maintenance contract for ITC Myingyan.

## Cross-border movement agreement is most important:

The cross-border agreement between the bilateral relations is most important. The joint statement said that people in both countries will be able to cross the border for health, education, religious travel and tourism with passport and visa. This new agreement can be opened by the recent violence in Myanmar and the people fleeing to India.

Sushma Swaraj expressed confidence in Myanmar government for help in resolving issues related to the maintenance of the province. Due to mass violence during the army's operation, 7,00,000

Rohingya Muslims had to flee Myanmar's Rakhine state last year. Due to a large number of refugees taking shelter, the neighbouring country had a ~~shelter~~ problem in Bangladesh.

## WORLD'S SECOND OLDEST ROCK IS FOUND IN ODISHA

### Why in News?

A rock sample recovered nearly eight years ago from Champua in Odisha's Kendujhar district has put India at the forefront of geological research in the world. Scientists have found in the rock a grain of magmatic zircon (a mineral that contains traces of radioactive isotopes) that is an estimated 4,240 million years old — a discovery of great promise to study the earth's early years.

### Important Points:

The isotopic analysis of Singhbhum rock sample with magmatic zircon was done using Sensitive High Resolution Ion Microprobe (SHRIMP) at the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, Beijing, China.

The analyses confirmed the presence of two zircon grains that were 4,240 million and 4,030 million years old.

The oldest zircon older than this discovery was found in Jack Hill, Western Australia.

It is 4,400 million years old and is the oldest known rock sample. It is metamorphosed sedimentary rock.

This rock sample was recovered nearly eight years ago and has put India at the forefront of geological research in the world.

This discovery of great promise to study the earth's early years.

It will also add valuable information about presence of water in the first few hundred million years of Earth's history. It will also give us clues to when plate tectonics began.

### Significance:

The two geologists examined the rocks collected from Champua in Odisha and examined them under microscope at the Geological Laboratories in Kolkata's Indian Statistical Institute. The machine essential for such isotopic analyses is called Sensitive High Resolution Ion Microprobe (SHRIMP). This machine is not available in India.

## SC DIRECTS COURTS TO FORM ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT PANEL

### Why in News?

The Supreme Court fixed a two-month deadline for all courts in the country to set up anti-sexual harassment committees to examine complaints of women facing sexual harassment at workplace. The Court requested all High Courts in the country to ensure that its order is complied with by all district courts.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013 requires every workplace to set up committees to probe sexual harassment complaints.

The top court also requested Gita Mittal, the Acting Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court to constitute the panel in the high court and in all district courts in the national capital within a week.

### Important Points:

- The ruling was made by a three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud.
- The bench then disposed of a writ petition filed by the lady lawyer against the advocates and some members of Delhi Bar Association for allegedly assaulting her.
- Disposing of the petition, the bench asked those concerned with the case to amicably settle their disputes.
- The court also directed that advocates from both sides should not be arrested in connection with the two cross FIRs filed by them against each other.
- The apex court asked the crime branch of Delhi Police to investigate the two cross-complaints.
- It also transferred the trials, arising from the two cross FIRs, to the Patiala House district court in New Delhi and asked the Bar leaders not to interfere with the administration of justice.
- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act of 2013 requires every workplace to set up committees to probe sexual harassment complaints.

### About Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act:

- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 is a legislative act in India that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work.
- The act applies to any woman who is harassed in any workplace. It is not necessary for the woman to be working at the workplace in which she is harassed. A workplace can be any office, whether government or private.
- Under the Act, which also covers students in schools and colleges as well as patients in hospitals, employers and local authorities are required to set up grievance committees to investigate all complaints.

- The bill proposing the act was passed by Parliament's lower house Lok Sabha on September 3, 2012. The Parliament's upper house Rajya Sabha passed the bill on February 26, 2013.
- The bill got assent from the President on April 23, 2013, after which it became a law and came into force from December 9, 2013.
- It was reported by the International Labour Organization that very few Indian employers were compliant to this statute. Most Indian employers have not implemented the law despite the legal requirement that any workplace with more than 10 employees need to implement it.
- According to a FICCI-EY November 2015 report, 36% of Indian companies and 25% among MNCs are not compliant with the Sexual Harassment Act, 2013. The government has threatened to take stern action against employers who fail to comply with this law.

## BUSINESS OPTIMISM INDEX

### Why in News?

The business optimism in India has deteriorated with the country ranking sixth globally on the optimism index in the first quarter of 2018, said Grant Thornton's International Business Report (IBR). The report was prepared based on the results of a survey of 2,500 businesses in 37 economies.

According to the quarterly global business survey, India has been topping the chart since the new government came into power in 2014.

### Important Points:

With a score of 89, India is at the sixth place in the index. The top five nations are Austria, Finland, Indonesia, the Netherlands and the US. The conclusions are based on a quarterly global business survey of 2,500 businesses in 37 economies. With regard to India, Grant Thornton said the underlying pessimism is reflected in other parameters as well including revenue, selling prices, profitability, employment and exports expectations.

Indian businesses have been citing regulations and red tape, availability of skilled workforce, lack of ICT infrastructure and shortage of finance as the biggest growth constraints. Even after India's significant jump in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking, the country still continues to rank 1st or 2nd in quoting these reasons as the key hurdles for growth.

## About Grant Thornton's International Business Report (IBR):

The Grant Thornton International Business Report (IBR) is the world's leading mid-market business survey. Launched in 1992 in nine European countries, the report now surveys more than 10,000 senior executives in 36 economies on an annual basis, providing insight into the economic and commercial issues affecting both listed and privately-held businesses.

### ARMY FINALISES RS 15,000-CRORE

#### AMMUNITION PRODUCTION PROJECT

##### Why in News?

After years of deliberations, the Army has finalised a mega Rs 15,000-crore project under which a range of ammunition for its critical weapons and tanks will be produced indigenously to overcome long delays in imports and address the problem of a dwindling stockpile.

##### Comment:

The project is seen as first serious attempt by Government to address growing concerns voiced over past many years by Indian Army (world's second largest standing Army) over fast dwindling stockpile of key ammunition considering the evolving security threats in the region and at time when China is significantly ramping up its military capability.

##### Important Points:

- The overall cost of project has been pegged at Rs. 15,000 crore. Indian Army has set specific target for next 10 years in terms of volume of ammunition to be produced.

Initially, ammunition for range of rockets, air defence system, artillery guns, infantry combat vehicles, grenade launchers and various other field weapons will be produced under strict timelines.

The production targets will be revised based on result of first phase of implementation of project.

The immediate aim of this project is to create an inventory for all major weapons to enable forces to fight 30-day war while long-term objective is to cut dependence on imports. For this, 11 private firms will be involved and its implementation will be monitored by the top brass of Indian Army and Defence Ministry.

##### Background:

In July 2017, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in its report tabled in Parliament had mentioned that stock of only 61 types of ammunition out of 152 varieties was available, and these will only last for 10 days in event of a war. It was inadequate according to laid down security protocol which says that stockpile should be adequate for month-long war.

The main reasons cited for the shortages were long delays in negotiations and subsequent procedural hurdles in import of ammunition which had adversely impacted the country's defence preparedness. To overcome this shortage Government had initiated indigenisation programme. It also had empowered Indian Army to directly procure ammunition and spares for 10 types of weapon systems and equipment after internal review found optimum level of 'war stores' was not being maintained.

## SUPREME COURT APPROVES SCHEME TO GRANT COMPENSATION TO RAPE & ACID ATTACK VICTIMS

##### Why in News?

A victim of gangrape in any part of the country would now get a minimum compensation of Rs five lakh up to a maximum of Rs 10 lakh.

This is part of a scheme proposed by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) on compensating the victims of sexual assaults and acid attacks, which was approved on Friday by the Supreme Court, which directed that it would be applicable across the country.

## Important Points:

As per the ‘Compensation Scheme for Women

Victims/ Survivors of Sexual Assault/Other Crimes-2018’, in case of rape and unnatural sexual assault, the victim would get a minimum of Rs four lakh and maximum of Rs seven lakh as compensation.

The scheme says that victim of acid attacks, in case of disfigurement of face, would get a minimum compensation of Rs 7 lakh, while the upper limit would be Rs 8 lakh.

In an acid attack cases, if the injury is more than 50%, a minimum compensation of Rs five lakh would be given, while the maximum would be Rs eight lakh.

Similarly, the scheme also provides for compensation amount in cases of acid attacks where the injury is less than 50% and 20% respectively.

Victims of burning cases would get a minimum compensation of Rs 7 lakh and maximum of Rs 8 lakh in case of disfigurement, the scheme said.

It said that in case of pregnancy on account of rape, the victim would get a compensation ranging from Rs three lakh to Rs four lakh, while for miscarriage or loss of fertility due to such assaults, the victim would get Rs two lakh to Rs three lakh.

Acid attack victims and activists said that it was step in the right direction, but the real challenge would be to implement the court order in its totality.

The apex court had said it would consider in July the issues related to section 228-A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which deals with disclosure of identity of

victims of sexual offences and utilisation of Nirbhaya Fund by states.

## DEPARTMENT OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS APPROVES BHARTI AIRTEL-

### TELENOR INDIA MERGER

#### Why in News?

The Department of Telecom (DoT) approved the merger of Telenor India with Bharti Airtel, according to an official source. The Supreme Court last week rejected DoT's petition for security deposit of around Rs 1,700 crore from the companies and directed it to approve the merger.

## Important Points:

The telecom department was seeking a bank guarantee from Airtel equal to Rs 1,499 crore for one-time charges for spectrum (OTSC) allocated to the carrier without auctions, and over Rs 200 crore for deferred payment for airwaves owed by Telenor, before approving the deal.

The merger will bolster Airtel’s spectrum footprint in seven telecom circles, with the addition of 43.4 MHz spectrum in the 1800 MHz band.

Telenor India runs operations in seven circles — Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, UP (East), UP (West) and Assam.

DoT has asked Airtel to reduce its market share based on adjusted gross revenue (money earned from telecom services) in Bihar service area to the limit of 50 percent, within one year from the date merger of two companies is approved.

## About Department of Telecom (DoT):

DoT used to provide basic telecommunication services. This function was shifted to BSNL after its formation in October, 2000. Presently, the main powers and responsibilities of the DoT as laid down in the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 are:

1. Formulation of policy, allocation of licence and co-ordination with matters relating to telegraphs, telephones, wireless, data, facsimile and telematic services and other like forms of communications.
2. Co-operation with international bodies on matters related to telecommunication
3. Promotion of standardization and research and development in the telecom sector.
4. Promotion of private investment in telecommunication industry
5. Allocation of spectrum mobile and radio communications.
6. Administration of laws with respect to any of the matters specified in this list, namely: The Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 (13 of 1885); The Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 (17 of 1933); and The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997 (24 of 1997).

7. Supervision over the functioning of the following organizations: Telecom Commission, Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, Telecom Disputes Settlement Appellate Tribunal, Centre for Development of Telematics, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited, ITI Limited, Telecommunication Consultants (India) Limited and Administrative office of the Universal Service Obligation Fund.

### FIRST ALL-WOMAN POST OFFICE PASSPORT

#### SEVA KENDRA STARTS OPERATIONS

##### Why in News?

In a first, a Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK) run by an all-woman team started operations phagwara, Punjab. It was inaugurated by Union Minister Vijay Sampla in the local head Post Office of Phagwara.

##### Important Points:

This kendra was 192nd POPSK in the country and first one to be operated by an all-woman team. It was launched as part of Central Government's initiative for women empowerment.

It will cater needs of people from Kapurthala, Nawandhar and Jalandhar rural districts. It will benefit people immensely in this area as town is NRI hub of Doaba region of Punjab.

It will enable people of the region to get all facilities related to applying for and processing of passport applications.

##### Post Office Passport Seva Kendra (POPSK):

POPSK is Government initiative led by Ministry of External Affairs (India) (MEA) and Department of Posts (DoP),<sup>[1]</sup> where Head Post Offices (HPO) and post offices are being utilized for delivery of passport related services to citizens. It aims to develop passport related services on bigger scale and to ensure wider area coverage for simplifying process to traveling abroad. The first POPSK was inaugurated at the Mysuru Head Post office in Karnataka on January 25, 2017.

### JANAKPUR-AYODHYA BUS SERVICE

##### Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart KP Sharma Oli jointly inaugurated direct bus service between Janakpur (Nepal) and Ayodhya (India). Both are sacred cities for Hindus and bus service was launched as part of India's Ramayan Circuit under Swadesh Darshan Scheme to promote religious tourism in Nepal and India.

##### Religious tourism in Nepal and India:

The bus service seeks to promote religious tourism in Nepal and India.

As per mythological story 'Ramayana', Ayodhya is Lord Rama's birthplace, while, Janakpur is the birthplace of goddess Sita.

Janakpur is known as the birth place of Sita, the wife of Lord Rama. The Janaki temple of Janakpur was built in memory of Sita in 1910.

The bus service will provide Janakpur-Ayodhya-Ayodhya transportation facility to pilgrims.

##### About Ramayana Circuit:

The government has identified 15 destinations in India for development under Ramayana Circuit theme under Swadesh Darshan Scheme.

Under the Ramayana Circuit, 15 destinations have been identified for development.

##### 15 destinations of Ramayana Circuit:

Destinations	States
Ayodhya, Nandigram, Shringverpur & Chitrakoot	Uttar Pradesh
Sitamarhi, Buxar & Darbhanga	Bihar
Chitrakoot	Madhya Pradesh
Jagdalpur	Chattisgarh
Nashik & Nagpur	Maharashtra
Mahendragiri	Odisha
Bhadrachalam	Telangana
Hampi	Karnataka
Rameshwaram	Tamil Nadu

All these destinations will have all the necessary facilities like drinking water, lodging and parking for tourists and pilgrims.

### INDIA WITNESSED HIGHEST NUMBER OF INTERNET SHUTDOWNS IN 2017-18: UNESCO REPORT

#### Why in News?

People in South Asian countries experienced at least 97 instances of Internet shutdown, a barometer on freedom of press and expression, between May 2017 and April 2018, with India alone accounting for 82 such cases, according to a UNESCO report.

#### Important Points:

According to the Clampdowns and Courage-South Asia Press Freedom Report 2017-18, released recently by the UNESCO-International Federation of Journalists, Pakistan witnessed 12 instances of Internet Shutdown, while Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka reported one such case each.

In India, Kashmir Valley experienced nearly half of the cases of Internet shutdown in the country. Clamping down on communication generally followed military operations in which militant or civilians were killed, the report said.

Over 10 instances of Internet being affected were witnessed in Rajasthan, while Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab and Haryana were among states in which less than 10 cases of Internet shutdown were recorded, according to the report.

**In the six biggest instances of Internet shutdown, India accounted five of them while one was experienced in Afghanistan.**

It is said in Darjeeling in West Bengal, a 45-day Internet shutdown was ordered due to political demonstration, protest and clashes by activists seeking a separate state

#### Internet Shutdown Reports; Sum and Substance:

As per reports, apart from incurring massive losses in the economic spectrum, it also affects the society. They are major drawbacks in the lucid sharing of vital information by citizens. Furthermore, shutdowns, slowdowns and blackouts, impose dire straits on credible research and essential communication.

The report adds that Internet shutdowns prevent journalists from freely accessing information and broadcasting news. For a country like India, which is the world's second-largest country when it comes to the number of Internet users, this report which bones up such statistics is indeed alarming.

#### About UNESCO International Federation of Journalist:

Safeguard freedom of the press and of journalists engaged in their legitimate professional activities, and preserve the standards of profession; take action whenever a serious threat is made to the rights and liberties of the press and of journalists; promote professional and trade union training of journalists and professional improvement of working journalists; organize or promote collective action to support any member union asking for coordinated international measures as means of attaining aims in accordance with IFJ's constitution;

#### CHINA'S TOP STATE-RUN BANK LAUNCHES FIRST INDIA-DEDICATED INVESTMENT FUND

#### Why in News?

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), a top state-run Chinese bank has launched China's first India-dedicated publicly offered investment fund. The fund has been named as Industrial and Commercial Bank Credit Suisse India Market Fund. ICBC is the largest in the world with over \$3.6 trillion in assets.

#### Important Points:

The ICBC Credit Suisse Indian Market Fund (LOF) will invest in exchange-traded funds listed on more than 20 exchanges in Europe and US that are based on the Indian market. It will invest in future of Indian economy and track distribution of industrial structure across Indian market. For this, ICBC has listed sectors for investments specifically, in terms of the major industries weighted distribution of the index.

**The fund opens way for Chinese investors and provided good tool for low-threshold investment in India.**

It is also regarded as significant by observers to boost investments in India and comes after first ever informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Wuhan, where two leaders sought to give a new direction to bilateral ties to tap their economic potential.

### Sector-wise investment:

The bank listed sectors for investments specifically, in terms of the major industries weighted distribution of the index.

The financial industry will account for the highest proportion, followed by information technology, alternative consumption, energy, essential consumption, raw materials, medicine, healthcare and other industries.

For large investors, adding a low-relevant asset to the allocation tool can effectively improve the effective frontier of the investor's asset allocation, and help the investor to better spread risks and obtain a more stable income.

## INDIA 3RD LARGEST SOLAR MARKET IN WORLD: MERCOM

### Why in News?

India emerged as the third largest solar market in the world in 2017 behind China and the US, according to the report of Mercom Communications India. India has grown at a **CAGR** of approximately 170% since 2010.

### About Mercom India:

Mercom Communications India is a subsidiary of U.S.-based Mercom Capital Group, a leading clean energy communications and consulting firm recognized worldwide for its expertise in renewable energy. Mercom is widely recognized for its leadership and influence in helping shape India's rapidly growing clean energy markets.

Mercom Communications India is located in Bangalore and provides research, news, and communications services for clean energy organizations in the Indian market.

### Important Points:

India has set new record with 9.6 GW of solar installations in 2017, which was more than double the 4.3 GW installed in 2016.

In 2017, India's solar market had grown at Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 170% since 2010.

The robust growth boosted India's total solar installed capacity to 19.6 GW as of December 2017.

As of 2017-end, large-scale solar project development accounted for 92% of the all-time cumulative solar installations in India with 19.6 GW and 2017 alone made up 90% of such installations with 8.6 GW.

Of the total 1.6 GW cumulative solar rooftop installations in India by 2017, 995 MW was installed last year.

## GREEN SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

### Why in News?

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched full-fledged Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP). It aims to train over 5.5 lakh workers in environment and forest sectors in the country through 30 courses by 2021 for sustainable conservation and management of natural resources. GSDP-ENVIS mobile application was also launched to provide more information and applying to courses under GSDP programme.

### Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP):

GSDP was launched as pilot project in 2017 by MoEFCC in partnership with National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) to develop green skilled workers having technical knowledge and commitment to sustainable development.

Under it, skilling of youth (especially 10th and 12th dropouts) will be undertaken for increasing availability of skilled workforce in environment and forest sector to provide them gainful employment or self-employment.

The green skills under it will be imparted in more than 30 programmes in diverse fields identified, which will be conducted in 84 institutions across country. Moreover, vast network and expertise of Environmental Information System (ENVIS) hubs and Resource Partners (RPs) will be utilized for implementation of this programme.

In the first stage, pool of master trainers and specialists is being created, who can further train youth across the country. All skilling courses under this programme will be National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant. The MoEFCC will give certificates indicating skilling levels to all successful candidates.

### **Highlights of the Green Skill Development Programme:**

The Green Skill Development Programme was initially launched in 2017 as a pilot project in 10 districts only wherein 154 youths, mainly school dropouts, were trained as parataxonomists and biodiversity conservationists.

However, the programme is now launched on a large scale. Around 80000 youths will be trained at 80 institutions in a time frame of one year.

By 2020, over 2 lakh youths will be trained and by 2021, a total over 5.5 lakh youths will be trained as green skilled workers.

### **How the courses will be carried out under the programme?**

The government aims to train the youth by 2021 through the launch of 30 courses.

It will carry out the skill development of youth in the environment and forest sectors through 30 courses with the help of its Environment Information System (ENVIS) hubs, resource partners as well as other institutions across the country.

The certificate courses with duration of 80 hours to 560 hours will be open for admission from July 2018 onwards.

Many of these courses will be open for admission to 10th and 12th dropouts.

Few of the interesting courses will be - River Dolphin conservator, water budgeting and auditing, forest fire management, management of small botanical gardens, propagation and management of bamboo, bird identification and basic ornithology, city environment surveyors, among others.

These 30 courses will be taught across 84 institutes like WII-Delhradun, Bombay Natural History Society in Mumbai, Botanical Survey of India in Pune and WWF in Delhi.

The ministry will be open to any collaboration or partnership with national and international organisations to build a strong network which can be utilised for green skilling under GSDP for sustainable conservation and management of natural resources.

The cost of the programme will be supported by the Union Environment Ministry.

### **Union Environment Ministry launches Green Skill Development Programme:**

The Union Environment Ministry on May 15, 2018 launched the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) with an aim to train over 5.5 lakh workers in environment and forest sectors in the country.

### **GSPD-ENVIS mobile app:**

Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan also launched a related mobile app 'GSDP-ENVIS' to boost employability and entrepreneurship of the youth in the country. The app can be used for information and for applying to the courses.

The GSPD-ENVIS app can be downloaded on android mobile phones without any hassle.

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### MOUS WORTH RS 1,500 CR SIGNED WITH UK

#### Why in News?

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar signed ten memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with the UK for various projects entailing investment of around Rs 1,500 crore with employment potential for around 1,000 persons.

#### Important Points:

The MOUs would facilitate investments in Haryana in diverse fields, including fintech, smart cities, emerging technologies, transfer of advanced technology and setting up of an IoT Innovation Centre in Gurugram.

The MOU with UK India Global Business Limited (UKIGB) seeks to promote development of smart technology infrastructure (STD), especially focused on aerospace and defense companies. It would include investments, transfer of technology, support services and establishing UK/European companies.

Under the MOU, the two parties have agreed to develop strong institutional, trade and business relations between Haryana Government and UKIGB in order to establish a sustainable smart technology infrastructure to host foreign companies.

The Chief Minister signed an MOU with Pontaq, a UK India Innovation Fund, focussing on Fintech, Smart Cities and Emerging Technologies. Under this MoU, the Haryana Government would provide necessary grants, subsidies, tax breaks and infrastructure to the portfolio companies of Pontaq aiming to set up their operation in Haryana.

He also signed an MOU with Xelba Limited, under which Xelba will provide intellectual property and knowledge and hardware and software tools to deploy such a project, along with the creation of an IoT innovation centre in Gurugram.

The Chief Minister signed an MOU with Relmatech Limited, a leading provider of Remote ID and Tracking Systems for unmanned aircraft systems or drones. Under this MoU, Haryana would provide assistance of Relmatech to continue to increase development activities in the field of remote ID and tracking of unmanned aircraft systems in Haryana. Under the MOU with GoodBox, the company will offshore a multitude of functions, including both manufacturing and services.

The Chief Minister also signed an MOU with ZapGo Limited, developer of a new generation of fast-charging energy storage devices. Under this, ZapGo Limited would establish a manufacturing site in Haryana.

### DELHI TO OVERTAKE TOKYO AS WORLD'S MOST POPULOUS CITY BY 2028: UN REPORT

#### Why in News?

According to the United Nations Delhi is projected to become the most populous city in the world around 2028. India is expected to add the largest number of urban dwellers by 2050.

## Important Points:

The 2018 Revision of World Urbanisation Prospects produced by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) said that 68 per cent of the world population is projected to live in urban areas by 2050.

**Currently, 55 per cent of the world's population lives in urban areas.**

The report notes that future increases in the size of the world's urban population are expected to be highly concentrated in just a few countries. Together, India, China and Nigeria will account for 35 per cent of the projected growth of the world's urban population between 2018 and 2050. By 2050, it is projected that India will have added 416 million urban dwellers, China 255 million and Nigeria 189 million.

Tokyo is the world's largest city with an agglomeration of 37 million inhabitants, followed by New Delhi with 29 million, Shanghai with 26 million, and Mexico City and São Paulo, each with around 22 million inhabitants. Cairo, Mumbai, Beijing and Dhaka all have close to 20 million inhabitants.

**"By 2020, Tokyo's population is projected to begin to decline, while Delhi is projected to continue growing and to become the most populous city in the world around 2028.",**

By 2030, the world is projected to have 43 megacities with more than 10 million inhabitants, most of them in developing regions. However, some of the fastest-growing urban agglomerations are cities with fewer than a million inhabitants, many of them located in

**Asia and Africa.**

Projections show that urbanisation, the gradual shift in residence of the human population from rural to urban areas, combined with the overall growth of the world's population could add another 2.5 billion people to urban areas by 2050, with close to 90 per cent of this increase taking place in Asia and Africa, according to the new United Nations data set launched.

The urban population of the world has grown rapidly from 751 million in 1950 to 4.2 billion in 2018. Asia, despite its relatively lower level of urbanization, is home to 54 per cent of the world's urban population, followed by Europe and Africa with 13 per cent each.

Today, the most urbanized regions include Northern America (with 82 per cent of its population living in urban areas in 2018), Latin America and the Caribbean (81 per cent), Europe (74 per cent) and Oceania (68 per cent). The level of urbanization in Asia is now approximating 50 per cent. In contrast, Africa remains mostly rural, with 43 per cent of its population living in urban areas.

Some cities have experienced population decline in recent years. Most of these are located in the low-fertility countries of Asia and Europe where overall population sizes are stagnant or declining.

The report added that understanding the key trends in urbanization likely to unfold over the coming years is crucial to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including efforts to forge a new framework of urban development.

As the world continues to urbanize, sustainable development depends increasingly on the successful management of urban growth, especially in low-income and lower-middle-income countries where the pace of urbanization is projected to be the fastest.

## GENDER BIAS KILLS ABOVE 2 LAKHS OF GIRLS IN INDIA EVERY YEAR : LANCET STUDY

### Why in News?

Apart from the rising number of female foeticide cases in India, more than 200,000 girls under the age of five die each year in the country, finds a Lancet study led by an Indian-origin researcher.

The study, published in the journal Lancet Global Health, has found that there is on an average 239,000 excess deaths each year of girls under the age of five owing to neglect due to gender discrimination.

### Important Points:

This problem was most prominent in northern India, where the four largest states Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh accounted for two-thirds of the total avoidable deaths of infant girls under the age of five.

These deaths amount to about 2.4 million deaths in a decade, however, this number does not include pre-natal mortality rates. According to the study, 29 out of Indian 35 States and UTs contributed to the death of these girls. Moreover, additional deaths were found in 90 percent of districts in the country. The report is the first to examine the number of avoidable deaths among girls under the age of five in India at a district level, showing avoidable female mortality across India's 640 districts. The researchers utilised the UN population data from 46 countries to calculate the difference between the expected mortality rate of girls under the age of five in countries without gender discrimination and the reality inside India. Avoidable mortality is defined as the difference between observed and expected mortality rates. The average level of avoidable mortality in 0-4 years age of girls in India was 18.5 per 1000 live births between 2000-2005. The worst affected areas were typically in rural regions, having low levels of education, high population densities and high birth rates.

#### Gender bias:

Gender bias towards girls doesn't simply prevent them from being born; it also leads to the death of those who are born.

#### Gender equality:

Gender equality is not only about rights to education, employment or political representation. It is also about care, vaccination, and nutrition of girls, and ultimately survival.

#### Outlook:

The findings press for the need of addressing the issue of gender discrimination in addition besides encouraging social and economic development.

Many of the deaths of girl child are partly due to unwanted female child attitude in a society that has a preference for sons.

A preference for boys and the availability of sex-selective operations, although illegal in India, has led to gender gap of as many as 63 million girls, showcasing India as a country with one of the most distorted sex ratios in the world.

For every 107 males born in India, there are 100 females.

## SWACHH SURVEKSHAN 2018: HERE ARE INDIA'S TOP 3 CLEANEST CITIES

#### Why in News?

Results declared under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan under the survey. Indore was declared the cleanest city for the second time in this year's survey results, while in the category of capital, Mumbai got first place in the country in terms of sanitation.

#### Important Points:

- A cleanliness survey was conducted in more than 4,000 cities across the country.
- Like this last time in this survey, Indore is also at the top, while Bhopal is second.
- Data collected from 3 sources for sanitation survey conducted by an independent agency:
  1. Progress in service level
  2. Direct Inspection
  3. Citizens Feedback

#### Cleanest City:

##### The cleanest city - Indore:

Most Clean Big City (1 million Population) - Vijayawada

Most Clean Middle City (3-10 Million Population) - Mysore

##### The cleanest small town (1-3 million population) - NDMC

Most Clean Capital - Greater Mumbai

Most Clean Cantonment - Delhi Cantt.

The government's Swachh Survekshan survey, which is in its third edition, assessed all the 4,203 cities and towns in the country, where an estimated 400 million people reside.

The 2016 and 2017 editions of the survey covered roughly 40% and 60% of the country's urban population, respectively.

Madhya Pradesh's Indore is number one in this ranking. Bhopal is second and Chandigarh is in third place.

According to the Clean Survey 2018 report, Ghaziabad of Uttar Pradesh is considered to be a big city for rapid change.

In the case of cleanliness, Jharkhand is declared the best performance city after which Maharashtra is number one.

Last year 2000 cities were surveyed, but this time more than 4000 cities have been included in the survey.

### Purpose of clean survey:

Its aim is to assess the level of hygiene in cities across the country. The names of the worst performing cities will be announced on the day the award will be given. For the Clean India Campaign, the Central Government has allocated Rs 33,875 crore in the budget since the financial year 2014-15. A clean survey is conducted every year to know the real ground reality of the campaign. This survey is done by the Quality Council of India.

## WHO PLANS TO ELIMINATE TRANS FAT BY 2023

### Why in News?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has set an ambitious goal to cut the worldwide rate of premature deaths from non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030. As part of this effort, the WHO just released “REPLACE,” a step-by-step guide for eliminating unhealthy trans fatty acids from industrially-produced foods in the global food supply. The UN agency estimates that trans fat contributes to more than 500,000 deaths each year from heart disease.

The REPLACE program involves these six actions:

1. RE view dietary sources of industrially-produced trans fats.
2. Promote the replacement these trans fats with healthier fats and oils.
3. Legislate or enact regulations to eliminate industrially-produced trans fats.
4. Assess and monitor trans fats in food and changes in trans fat consumption.
5. Create awareness about the negative health effects of trans fats.
6. Enforce compliance of new and existing policies and regulations.

### Important Points:

Some countries have already implemented nationwide bans on partially hydrogenated oils, the main source of trans fats.

Several high-income countries have almost eliminated industrially-produced trans fats through legal measures.

Denmark was the first country to mandate restrictions on industrially-produced trans fats.

Among cities, the New York City eliminated industrially-produced trans fats a decade ago. Action is now needed in low- and middle-income countries to ensure that the benefits are felt equally around the world.

WHO has identified elimination of industrially-produced trans fats from food as one of the priority targets of its draft 13th General Programme of Work (GPW13) which will guide the work of WHO in 2019 - 2023.

GPW13 is on the agenda of the 71st World Health Assembly that will be held in Geneva during May 21-26, 2018.

### About Trans Fats:

Industrially-produced trans fats are contained in vegetable fats like margarine and ghee, and are often present in snack food, baked foods, and fried foods.

Manufacturers often use them as they have a longer shelf life than other fats.

There are two main sources for trans fats - natural sources such as dairy products and meat of ruminants such as cows and sheep; and industrially-produced sources such as partially hydrogenated oils.

Unfortunately, trans fats increase the levels of LDL-cholesterol, a biomarker for cardiovascular disease risk and decrease the levels of HDL-cholesterol, which carry away cholesterol from arteries and transport it to the liver, that secretes it into the bile.

Diets high in trans fat increase heart disease risk by 21 percent and deaths by 28 percent.

These trans fats can be replaced by healthier alternatives that do not affect taste or cost of food.

The total trans fat intake should be limited to less than 1 percent of total energy intake, which amounts to less than 2.2 g/day with a 2000-calorie diet.

**The successful implementation of these six strategic actions in the REPLACE package will help in achieving the elimination of trans fat, thus, combating the cardiovascular disease.**

## FIRST ESSENTIAL DIAGNOSTICS LIST PUBLISHED BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

### Why in News?

The first Essential Diagnostics List is recently published by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which is a catalogue of tests needed to diagnose most common diseases along with number of global priority diseases.

It aims to address people's inability to access diagnostic services, which results in them from receiving correct treatment.

### Essential Diagnostics List:

The essential diagnostics list concentrates on in-vitro tests like tests of blood and urine. It contains overall 113 products which comprises 58 tests for detection and diagnosis of a wide range of common conditions. Remaining 55 tests for detection, diagnosis and monitoring of 'priority' diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, HIV, hepatitis B and C, syphilis and human papillomavirus.

For each category of test, list specifies type of test and intended use, format and if appropriate for primary health care or for health facilities with laboratories. It also provides links to WHO guidelines or publications and to pre-qualified products. Some of tests enlisted in it are particularly suitable for primary health care (PHCs) facilities, where laboratory services are often poorly resourced and sometimes non-existent.

### Updation:

WHO will update list on regular basis and will also issue call for applications to add categories to next edition. It is expected to expand significantly over next few years to incorporate other important areas including emerging pathogens, neglected tropical diseases, antimicrobial resistance and additional non-communicable diseases.

### Significance:

The list provides an essential package that can form the basis for screening and management of patients.

According to WHO, an estimated 46 per cent of adults with Type 2 diabetes worldwide were undiagnosed, risking serious health complications and higher health costs.

WHO stated that late diagnosis of infectious diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis increases the risk of their spread and makes them more difficult to treat.

### Important Points:

The essential diagnostics list concentrates on in-vitro tests like tests of blood and urine.

It comprises 58 tests for detection and diagnosis of a wide range of common conditions.

It also comprises 55 tests for the detection, diagnosis and monitoring of 'priority' diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis B and C, human papillomavirus and syphilis.

Some of the tests are particularly suitable for primary health care facilities, where laboratory services are often poorly resourced and sometimes non-existent for example, tests that can rapidly diagnose a child for acute malaria or glucometers to test diabetes. These tests do not require electricity or trained personnel.

The list also provides links to WHO guidelines or publications and to pre-qualified products.

### World Health Organization (WHO):

WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that acts as a coordinating authority on international public health. Established on 7 April 1948, it succeeded the Health Organization, which was an agency of the League of Nations. It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and its headquarters is located at Geneva. WHO flag features the Rod of Asclepius as a symbol for healing.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MASCOT ‘IP NANI’

### Why in News?

The Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Suresh Prabhu launched the Intellectual Property (IP) mascot – IP Nani – at the conference on National Intellectual Property Rights Policy in New Delhi. An anti-piracy video featuring Mr. Amitabh Bachchan was also launched by the Minister at the event.

### About Mascot IP Nani:

#### IP Nani

Mascot IP Nani is a tech-savvy grandmother who is shown helping the government and enforcement agencies in combating the Intellectual Property crimes with the help of her grandson ‘Chhotu’, also known as Aditya. This IP mascot will spread awareness about the importance of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) among people, especially children, in an interesting manner. This mascot is also in line with the World Intellectual Property Organization’s (WIPO) campaign for the World IP Day 2018 which celebrated the brilliance, ingenuity and courage of the women who are driving change in our world. It also depicts that a strong IP system can support innovative women and everyone in their quest to bring their amazing ideas to the market.

### IP Nani: A part of National IPR Policy:

Considering that the Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are increasingly becoming the crucial drivers of social and economic growth, the Union Cabinet approved the National IPR Policy on May 12, 2016. The first and foremost objective of the Policy is “IPR Awareness: Outreach and Promotion”, aimed at raising awareness on IPR for school children to nurture creativity and the ability to innovate from a very young age.

In this context, the Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), a professional body under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) produced a series of animated videos on IPRs for children with IP Nani as their central character.

For creating such inspirational videos, CIPAM collaborated with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EU-IPO).

### Seven Objectives of National IPR Policy:

**Intellectual Property Right Awareness: Access and Incentives** - To raise awareness of the economic, social and cultural benefits of intellectual property rights in all sections of the society.

**Creation of Intellectual Property Rights** - Promote the creation of intellectual property rights.

**Legal and legislative framework** - To adopt strong and influential intellectual property rights rules, in order to maintain a balance between authorized individuals and large public interest.

**Administration and Management - Modernization of Service-based Intellectual Property Rights Administration**.

**Commercialization of Intellectual Property Rights** - Pricing of Intellectual Property Rights through Commercialization.

**Enforcement and Tribunal** - Strengthen enforcement and judicial systems to combat intellectual property rights violations.

**Human Resource Development** - Strengthening human resources, the teaching of institutions, training, research capabilities, and building skills in intellectual property rights.

## ANTI-NAXAL ‘BASTARIYA’ BATTALION

### Why in News?

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh will attend the commissioning of the much talked about ‘Bastariya’ battalion of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), in Raipur (Chhattisgarh). The anti-Naxal battalion, created for the first-time with more than 534 tribal youth from Chhattisgarh, has 33 per cent representation of women combatants with 189 women constables. The Passing out Parade will be held at a training centre at Ambikapur, a city in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh.

## Important Points:

The troops will be given their ranks of constables and take up arms against the Naxals, like regular security forces personnel. Rajnath Singh would be awarding the best performers of the new unit after they present him with a guard of honour and a military parade. The localised battalion of the young combatants will be immediately deployed for anti-Naxal operations in some of the worst Naxal-hit areas such as Sukma, Dantewada and Bijapur. The battalion was named 'Bastariya', as its members were recruited from Sukma, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Bijapur districts of undivided Bastar region in southern Chhattisgarh, bordering Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Telangana. The new recruits were trained for about 44 weeks in jungle warfare, weapons firing, map reading, police laws and unarmed combat.

The total strength of the 'Bastariya' battalion will be 743 personnel, as it will include some of the young but regular combat personnel besides officers to ensure a blend of both young blood and experience.

This new personnel will be deployed as small 'hit' teams, along with regular CRPF and CoBRA battalions, for operations and other duties in south Bastar.

## Objective:

The battalion has been raised with the aim of strengthening the security forces' operations in the areas where they have witnessed maximum fallouts for a few years owing to a lack of concrete intelligence, familiarisation with the locals and the topography.

## Background:

- ◆ The Centre had sanctioned the battalion in July 2017.
- ◆ The concept to raise the team was taken forward with the aim that the recruits, mostly tribals, will help address local issues such as unemployment, provide a tactical advantage to CRPF in operations, intelligence collection and language benefits.
- ◆ The CRPF is the leading anti-Naxal operations force of the country and has deployed over 35,000 personnel for these tasks in Chhattisgarh alone.

## RUSSIA UNVEILS FIRST FLOATING NUCLEAR POWER STATION

### Why in News?

Russia unveiled world's first floating nuclear power station at port city of Murmansk. It will be loaded with nuclear fuel at Murmansk and will be towed to port of Pevek in autonomous Chukotka region in Russia's far northeast in Arctic Circle region.

### About Akademik Lomonosov:

Akademik Lomonosov was constructed by Russian state nuclear power firm Rosatom. It has length of 144 metres and width of 30 metres. It has displacement of 21,500 tonnes and crew of 69 people.

It has been fitted with two modified KLT-40 naval propulsion nuclear reactors(each of 35 MW capacity) together providing up to 70 MW of electricity and 300 MW of heat. It is named after Russian Academician Mikhail Lomonosov. It has latest security systems and is considered as one of safest nuclear installations in the world. However, environmentalists have dubbed it as 'nuclear Titanic' or 'Chernobyl on ice'. It will be primarily used to power oil rigs in remote areas of Artic region where Russia is pushing to drill for oil and gas.

### Importance:

The 21,000-tonne barge will be towed in the summer of 2019 to the port of Pevek in the autonomous Chukotka region in Russia's extreme northeast, 350 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. It can save upto 50,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year.

The project is part of Russia's greater aims to secure rich deposits of oil and gas in North Pole region in Artic. Due to climate change, new shipping routes are opening up in Russia's north and as result, it is strengthening its military position in the region.

### Nuclear Titanic?

- While, according to project in-charge Vitaly Trutnev, the power plant has the latest security systems and should be one of the safest nuclear installations in the world, environmental activists think otherwise.

- Activists at the environmental group Greenpeace have called for international monitoring on the issue.
- The activists fear that the nuclear plant could become a ‘nuclear Titanic’ or a ‘Chernobyl on ice’ 32 years after the Soviet nuclear disaster.
- Besides Russia, China is also building a floating nuclear power plant.

## INDIA SIXTH WEALTHIEST NATION IN WORLD

### Why in News?

India is the sixth wealthiest country in the world with a total wealth of USD 8,230 billion, while the US is the richest nation globally.

According to the AfrAsia Bank Global Wealth Migration Review, the US is the wealthiest country in the world with a total wealth of USD 62,584 billion, followed by China (USD 24,803 billion) at the second place and Japan (USD 19,522 billion) at the third place.

### Important Points:

Total wealth refers to private wealth held by all individuals living in each country. It includes all their assets (cash, equities, property, business interests) less any liabilities. It excludes government funds.

**Top 10 wealthiest countries:** US (\$62,584 billion), China (\$24,803 billion), Japan (\$19,522 billion), UK (\$9,919 billion), Germany (\$9,660 billion), India (\$8,230 billion), Australia (\$6,142 billion), Canada (\$6,393 billion), France (\$6,649 billion) and Italy (\$4,276 billion).

**Global Wealth:** Globally, total private wealth held worldwide amounts to around \$215 trillion and there are around 15.2 million High Net Worth Individuals (HNWIs) in world, each with net assets of \$1 million or more. There are about 584,000 multi-millionaires in world, each with net assets of \$10 million or more and 2,252 billionaires in world, each with net assets of \$1 billion or more.

**India:** Factors that will help India in wealth creation include, good educational system, large number of entrepreneurs, robust outlook for Information Technology (IT), business process outsourcing, real estate, healthcare and media sectors which will result in 200% rise 10 year wealth growth forecast. Over the next 10 years, India will overtake Germany and the UK to become the 4th largest wealth market worldwide by 2027.

**China:** In the coming decade, it will witness significant rise in total wealth to \$69,449 billion by 2027, while wealth of US would be around \$75,101 billion.

### Define AfrAsia Report:

This bank is headquartered in Mauritius. It is a regional bank with a strong international footprint. This bank specializes in banking that builds bridges between Africa, Asia and the world.

The AfrAsia Bank Global Wealth Migration Review 2018 provides insights gathered by our research partner on worldwide wealth and wealth migration trends over the past 10 years, with projections for the next 10 years. Wealth migration figures are a very important gauge of the financial health of an economy. For instance, if a country is losing a large number of High Net Worth Individual (HNWIs) to migration, it is probably due to serious problems in that country (i.e. crime, lack of business opportunities, religious tensions etc.). Conversely, countries that attract HNWIs tend to be very healthy and normally have low crime rates, good schools and good business opportunities.

## NIPAH VIRUS (NIV)

### Why in News?

Kerala was on high alert as rare and deadly Nipah Virus (NIV) infection which was detected for the first time in the state. Its traces were found in blood and body fluid samples of two persons who died of viral fever in Kerala’s coastal Kozhikode region. It was confirmed by laboratory results from National Institute of Virology, Pune.

This is the first time the Nipah virus has been detected in this state which has high fatality rate and spreads mainly through bats, pigs and other animals. However, According to World Health Organisation (WHO), India has in the past documented human-to-human transmission of the rare Nipah virus.

In the backdrop of such scenario, it is important for us to know some of the important facts about Nipah Virus, how the transmissions happen, what are its symptoms etc.

## What is the Nipah virus infection?

The infection causes severe diseases in both animals and humans. The natural hosts of the virus are fruit bats. The virus has also been isolated from environmental samples of bat urine and partially eaten fruit in Malaysia. Due to the migratory habit of the locally abundant fruit bats in South Asia, Nipah outbreaks occur more in this region. Transmission of Nipah virus to humans may occur after direct contact with infected bats, infected pigs or from other people infected with the virus.

The organism which causes Nipah Virus encephalitis is an RNA or Ribonucleic acid virus of the family Paramyxoviridae, genus Henipavirus, and is closely related to Hendra virus.

However, in subsequent NiV outbreaks, there were no intermediate hosts. In 2004, in Bangladesh, humans infected with Nipah Virus as a result of consuming date palm sap that had been contaminated by infected fruit bats. Human-to-human transmission has also been documented, including in a hospital setting in India.

Nipah Virus infection is also capable of causing disease in pigs and other domestic animals.

Till date, there is no vaccine for either humans or animals.

However, as per WHO, the primary treatment for human cases is intensive supportive care.

## How this virus got its name?

Nipah virus infection gets its name from the village in Malaysia where the person from whom the virus was first isolated succumbed to the disease. The NiV has been listed in the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Terrestrial Animal Health Code and must be reported to the OIE (OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code).

## Zoonosis:

The Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus, which means it spreads to humans from either air or through saliva. Doctors are theorising that it is not an airborne disease, but one that spreads through direct contact; either with the bats or through consuming fruit that bats have nibbled on.

## Symptoms:

Nipah virus infection is associated with encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US), after exposure and an incubation period of 5 to 14 days, illness presents with 3-14 days of fever and headache, followed by drowsiness, disorientation and mental confusion. These signs and symptoms could lead to coma within 24-48 hours. Some patients have a respiratory illness during the early part of their infections, and half of the patients showing severe neurological signs showed also pulmonary signs.

## NSE TO DELIST KINGFISHER, PLETHICO PHARMA, 16 OTHER COMPANIES

### Why in News?

National Stock Exchange (NSE) has decided to delist Kingfisher Airlines and Plethico Pharmaceuticals and 16 other companies from May 30. This comes after Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) delisted over 200 companies from May 11 as trading in their shares remained suspended for over six months.

### Important Points:

The decision comes at a time when authorities are clamping down on shell companies - listed as well as unlisted - for being allegedly used as conduits for illicit fund flows.

In August, markets regulator Sebi had directed exchanges to act against 331 suspected shell companies, while the government has already deregistered more than 2 lakh firms that have not been carrying out business activities for long.

In a latest circular, National Stock Exchange (NSE) said it has "decided to delist (withdraw the admission to dealings in) the equity shares of companies with effect from May 30, 2018 which have been compulsorily delisted by BSE".

Apart from Kingfisher Airlines and Plethico, the other firms that will be delisted are Agro Dutch Industries, Broadcast Initiatives, Crest Animation Studios, KDL Biotech, Kemrock Industries and Exports, Lumax Automotive Systems, Nissan Copper, Shri Aster Silicates and Surya Pharmaceuticals.

In addition, NSE said seven firms will be delisted due to liquidation on the same day. These firms are - Brandhouse Retails, Elder Pharmaceuticals, First Leasing Company India, Glodyne Technoserve, Helios and Matheson Information Technology, Tulip Telecom and Varun Industries. Under the compulsory delisting regulations, the delisted company, its whole-time directors, promoters and group firm would be debarred from accessing the securities market for ten years from the date of compulsory delisting. Promoters of these delisted companies will be required to purchase the shares for the public shareholders as per the fair value determined by the independent valuer appointed by BSE.

### About National Stock Exchange:

The National Stock Exchange of India Limited (NSE) is India's largest financial market. Incorporated in 1992, the NSE has developed into a sophisticated, electronic market, which ranked fourth in the world by equity trading volume in 2015. Trading commenced in 1994 with the launch of the wholesale debt market and a cash market segment shortly thereafter.

### About Bombay Stock Exchange:

The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) is the first and largest securities market in India and was established in 1875 as the Native Share and Stock Brokers Association. Based in Mumbai, India, the BSE lists close to 6,000 companies and is one of the largest exchanges in the world, along with the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE), NASDAQ, London Stock Exchange Group, Japan Exchange Group, and Shanghai Stock Exchange.

The BSE has helped develop the country's capital markets, including the retail debt market, and helped grow the Indian corporate sector.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY 2018

### Why in News?

The Convention on Biological Diversity is celebrating the International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22, 2018, with the theme "Celebrating 25 Years of Action for Biodiversity".

### Aim:

The celebration comes with an aim to highlight the progress made in the achievement of its objectives at the national and global levels on biodiversity.

The aim to celebrate the International Day for Biological Diversity is to make people aware of the importance of biodiversity issues. The United Nation had declared May 22 as the International Day for Biological Diversity.

### Important Points:

The International Day for Biological Diversity falls within the scope of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations General Assembly, by its resolution 55/201 of December 20, 2000, proclaimed 22 May as the International Day for Biological Diversity.

The day was proclaimed with an aim to commemorate the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on May 22, 1992 by the Nairobi Final Act.

### Convention on Biological Diversity:

The Convention on Biological Diversity is the international legal instrument that has been ratified by 196 nations. The convention calls for: Conservation of biological diversity  
Sustainable use of its components  
Fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources

### Background:

The Convention entered into force on December 29, 1993 and since then, it has been implemented through the vision and leadership of several countries, non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities and individuals.

## UNION FINANCE MINISTRY TIES UP WITH 40 COMPANIES UNDER MUDRA SCHEME

### Why in News?

The Union Finance Ministry has tied up with 40 entities including Flipkart, Swiggy, Patanjali and Amul for extending loans to small entrepreneurs under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY).

In order to identify people who can be given funds under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), the ministry will organise an event in Mumbai to extend loan under the scheme.

### Important Points:

For funding the small entrepreneurs, the ministry has identified 40 companies as the biggest job creators.

These companies will identify people who need loans under the Mudra Yojana, endorse them and the loans will be extended to them under the scheme.

The CEOs of various Banks like SBI, ICICI, BOB, PNB; senior officials in the rank of MD or CEO from Oil Companies, Railway Board would be part of the event.

The companies which have tied up with the financial services department for this include Make My Trip, Zomato, Meru Cab, Muthoot, Edelweiss, Amazon, Ola, Amazon, Big Basket, Carz on Rent and Habib Salon.

### About Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):

PMMY was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 8, 2015, for providing loans of up to Rs 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/ micro enterprises.

In 2016-17, the government has extended Rs 2.53 lakh crore credit under the Mudra Yojana.

The loans are classified as MUDRA loans under PMMY and these loans are given by Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, Cooperative Banks, MFIs and NBFCs.

The borrower can approach any of the lending institutions or can apply online through this portal.

Under the aegis of PMMY, MUDRA has created three products namely 'Shishu', 'Kishore' and 'Tarun' for loans upto Rs 50000, Rs 50000-5lakhs and Rs 5-10 lakhs respectively.

The scheme also provides a MUDRA card that allows credit in a hassle free and flexible manner.

## CHHATTISGARH TO GET SPECIALISED COMBAT UNIT 'BLACK PANTHER'

### Why in News?

The 'Black Panther' squad was formed in Chhattisgarh. Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh informed about the formation of 'Black Panther'. This will be the specially trained commando force of Chhattisgarh police on the lines of Andhra Pradesh's famous gray-hounds. The 'Black Panther' squad has been formed to combat the Maoists.

### Important Points:

The 200 soldiers who have been selected for the Black Panther Squad. They range from inspector rank officers to soldiers. They are undergoing training at Jungle Warfare College, Kanker. Most of them have a long experience of working in Naxal areas.

Chhattisgarh Government started the Jungle Warfare College in Kanker district in the year 2005. The establishment of this college after the retirement of

the army, Brig BS Ponwar, who participated in the Bangladesh war.

This college is spread over 300 acres. Most of this college is wild and mountainous. Every soldier and officer in the state police, whether it is an IPS, it is mandatory to take the training of Jungle Warfare.

In this college, the NSG personnel with the force of the Central Force come to take the training.

### What is Greyhound?

The Greyhounds are a special force in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh that specialise in anti-insurgency operations against Naxalites and Maoists.

Greyhound Jawans have been given special training to run operations in dense forests and to fight the guerrilla fighting of Maoists. The young men of Gray Hound identify the paths where the Maoists have the possibility of movement. The youngsters wait for the enemy for a long time by placing an ambush in one place. The Black Panther crew will also work on the same lines.

## About Black Panther:

This team will be able to take action against Maoists anywhere in the state on the basis of IB input. These soldiers will also get the help of Air Unit. Senior officials say that after the rains, these soldiers will be dropped into the ground. The planning and monitoring of the operation of Black Panther will be directly from the Police Headquarters. Black Panther will report directly to the Special DG Naxal Operation.

## MY MP ROJGAR PORTAL FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

### Why in News?

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan launched the 'My MP Rojgar Portal' at Model School, Bhopal. This Portal has been prepared by Madhya Pradesh Skill Development and Employment Generation Board under the Youth Empowerment Mission.

Through match-making, efforts have been made to bring employer companies and young people interested in employment, through the 'My MP Rojgar Portal'.

### Objective:-

This portal is designed to provide employment to the youth as per their educational qualification, capacity and interest, and to fulfill the purpose of ensuring the availability of the eligible candidate according to the needs of the employer.

### Important Points:

The employer can seek application and can call the applicant for an interview through the portal.

The youth will be able to open their employment account on the portal by registering their profile as per their qualification.

The portal will enable submission of online applications for jobs in the companies.

The portal will enable the user to choose the place of employment, job sector and job role.

The user would be able to gain information on the number of jobs, posts and employers as per this interest and ability, on searching in profile account.

The employment account details can be updated online and the account can be used even after getting a job.

The employer company would also be able to open an account without any charge. The employer will be able to fill information regarding necessary qualification, training in the account. As the employer would update the job role and required skill set, the portal would avail a list of job seekers and their profile on the portal before the employer.

### Portal's main features:

#### Portal for youth

The youth will get the facility of online registration available on the basis of automatic registration on the portal, updating job preference, employer information, sector and job roll. Interviews and job-fair information can be obtained on registered e-mail and mobile.

#### Portal for the employer

Planners will be able to update the automatic registration, sector and job rolls on the portal, and on the basis of which the demand will be uploaded to the portal. A list of qualified applicants will be available on demand basis.

## GOVERNMENT TO SET UP NATIONAL REGISTRY OF CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

### Why in News?

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is in the process of creating a national registry of crimes against women. The move comes against the backdrop of an around three-percent increase in crimes against women and a 12-percent rise in incidents of rape in 2016 as compared to 2015.

### Important Points:

The records will be sourced from the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).

The Crime Bureau is in the process of hiring an agency to prepare the whole database.

The NCRB functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

In 2015, as many as 34,651 cases of rape were registered. The number increased to 38,947 in 2016.

Overall crimes against women rose from 3,29,243 in 2015 to 3,38,954 in 2016, as per NCRB data.

A majority of cases, almost 33 per cent, categorised as crimes against women were reported under “cruelty by husband or his relatives”, another 25 per cent under “assault on woman with intent to outrage her modesty”, 19 per cent under “kidnapping and abduction of women” and 11.5 per cent under “rape”.

According to NCRB data, the highest number of rapes were reported from Madhya Pradesh (4,882), followed by Uttar Pradesh (4,816) and Maharashtra (4,189) in 2016

### About National Crime Records Bureau:

The crime bureau was set up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals, in order to assist investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators. It was set up based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's task force (1985), by merging the Directorate of Coordination and Police Computer (DCPC), Inter State Criminals Data Branch of CBI, Central Finger Print Bureau of CBI and Statistical Branch of Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).

The NCRB developed Crime Criminal Information System (CCIS) in 1995, Common Integrated Police Application (CIPA) in 2004 and Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & System (CCTNS) in 2009. The CCTNS connects approximately 15000 police stations and 6000 higher offices in the country. The NCRB also compiles and publishes National Crime Statistics, which includes crime in India, accidental deaths and suicides and prison statistics. *OVE*

### MULTI COMMODITY EXCHANGE OF INDIA LAUNCHED COUNTRY'S FIRST COPPER OPTION

#### Why in News?

India's Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) launched the country's first copper options contracts. The option contract will provide physical market participants additional instrument to hedge their price risk. Three contracts expiring in June, August and November with a lot size of 1 tonne were launched, the exchange said in a statement.

#### Important Points:

Options are an instrument that gives buyer right to buy or sell an underlined at present price on a future date. They are of two types: puts (right to sell) and calls (right to buy). According to market experts, options are also a much better hedging instrument as compared to futures for hedgers.

It will provide optimal tool for stakeholders to hedge and mitigate price risk in copper. It gives copper industry greater flexibility with alternative opportunities to take on price risk.

It will help corporates to do better budgeting exercise as premiums will be known.

This will help us to procure material at prices that have been envisaged specially in situations like tender or open orders. It will also complement current futures contracts on MCX and bring greater vibrancy to metals market and give stakeholders opportunity to better manage their price risk.

#### About Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX):

MCX is country's first listed commodity futures exchange that facilitates online trading, and clearing and settlement of commodity futures transactions, thereby providing platform for risk management. It was launched in November 2003 and operates within regulatory framework of Forward Contracts Regulation Act, 1952 (FCRA, 1952) under SEBI. MCX offers futures trading in bullion, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, energy, and a number of agricultural commodities (mentha oil, cardamom, potatoes, palm oil and others). Globally, MCX ranks no. 1 in silver, no. 2 in natural gas, no. 3 in crude oil and gold in futures trading.

#### Background:

Copper is third-most-consumed industrial metal in the world, after iron and aluminium. In last few years, world's refined copper usage has surged, owing to growing demand in sectors like electrical and electronic products, industrial machinery and equipment, building construction, transportation equipment and consumer and general products. Copper ore production in India stood at 3,846 thousand tonnes in 2016-17 and its consumption demand for refined copper was 820 thousand tonnes in the FY16.

## CABINET APPROVES ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH INDIA'S FIRST SPORTS UNIVERSITY

### Why in News?

The Union Cabinet has approved an ordinance to set up the country's first national sports university in Imphal (west), Manipur. The ordinance is on the lines of National Sports University Bill, 2017 which is pending in Parliament (introduced in Lok Sabha in August, 2017).

### Important Points:

It may be noted that the proposal to build a national sports university in the state of Manipur was first announced by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. A fund of Rs 100 crore was also allocated to the proposed university in the annual budget of 2014-15. Currently, there are some institutes in the country that offer different courses for athletes as well as coaches. However, in the absence of a sports university, a void exists in areas such as sports technology, sports science and high performance training for different sports. A sports university once established is expected to fill this void and bring up even better sportspersons in future.

### Objectives of National Sports University:

Research, development and dissemination of knowledge in physical education and sports sciences.

Strengthening physical education and sports training programmes.

- Generating knowledge capabilities, skills and competence at various levels.
- Training talented athletes to help them to evolve into international level athletes.

### National Sports University Bill, 2017:

The Bill establishes National Sports University in Manipur. It is mandated to promote sports education in areas of sports sciences, sports technology, sports management, and sports coaching. It will function as national training centre for select sports disciplines. It also empowers the University to grant degrees, diplomas and certificates. It also allows Government to establish campuses and study centres in other parts of the country.

## INDIA RANKS 145TH IN HEALTHCARE ACCESS: LANCET STUDY

### Why in News?

As per Lancet's Global Burden of Disease study, India ranked 145th among 195 countries in terms of quality and accessibility of healthcare on the Healthcare Access and Quality Index (HAQ Index). The index was released as part of Global Burden of Disease study released by Lancet, one of the world's oldest and best known peer-reviewed general medical journal. However, despite such low rankings, India saw improvements in healthcare access and quality since 1990.

### Important Points:

Top five countries with highest levels of healthcare access and quality in 2016 are Iceland (rank-1st, score-97.1 points), Norway (2nd, 96.6), Netherlands (3rd, 96.1), Luxembourg (4th, 96.0), and Finland and Australia (5th, each with 95.9). The global average healthcare access and quality score in 2016 was 54.4, increasing from 42.4 points in 2000. The countries with lowest scores are Central African Republic (18.6), Somalia (19.0), Guinea-Bissau (23.4), Chad (25.4), and Afghanistan (25.9).

**India's Neighbours:** India lags behind China (48th), Sri Lanka (71st), Bangladesh (133rd) and Bhutan (134th) in terms of levels of healthcare access and quality. But it is better than Nepal (149th), Pakistan (154th) and Afghanistan (191st). For the first time, the study also analysed healthcare access and quality between regions within seven countries: Brazil, China, England, India, Japan, Mexico, and the United States.

The study used an index to measure the quality and accessibility of healthcare, based on 32 causes of death which should be preventable with effective medical care.

### About Healthcare access and quality (HAQ) Index:

The study used an index to measure the quality and accessibility of healthcare, based on 32 causes of death which should be preventable with effective medical care. Each of the 195 countries and territories assessed were given a score between 0-100 (lowest-highest).

For the first time, the study also analysed healthcare access and quality between regions within seven countries: Brazil, China, England, India, Japan, Mexico, and the US.

## US DIPLOMATS ARE BEING EXPELLED BY THE VENEZUELA

### Why in News?

President Nicolas Maduro ordered the expulsion of two top US diplomats in Caracas in retaliation for a new round of sanctions over Venezuela's election, accusing them of a "conspiracy" that was denied by the State Department.

US President Donald Trump responded to the election results on May 21 by issuing an executive order limiting Venezuela's ability to sell state assets.

### Important Points:

The US State Department rejected Maduro's allegations against the two diplomats.

- Robinson assumed the role of charge d'affaires in December 2017.
- Venezuelan President Maduro responded to Trump's sanctions by ordering US charge d'affaires Todd Robinson to leave the nation after accusing him of being involved in a military conspiracy.
- Maduro gave no details of the accusations but said that the US Embassy had been meddling in military, economic and political issues and vowed to present the evidence shortly.
- Maduro also ordered another senior diplomat, Brian Naranjo, to leave the nation. Both the diplomats have been given 48 hours to make the move.

### Impact:

However, both China and Russia are unlikely to heed the US warnings. While Russia stated that it would not comply with the sanctions, China said that it believed that the United States and Venezuela should resolve their differences through talks.

The latest round of US sanctions is expected to have a serious impact on Venezuela's financial system.

- The previous sanctions had been limited to the assets linked to individual Maduro administration members.

- The Trump administration has also tried to convince China and Russia to stop issuing new credit to Venezuela. The two countries have provided billions of dollars in funding to Venezuela in recent years.
- The new executive order will prohibit US citizens from being involved in the sales of Venezuela's pending invoices related to oil and other assets. However, the country's shipments of fuel and crude to the United States would continue as usual.

## MADRASAS IN UTTAR PRADESH TO FOLLOW NCERT SYLLABUS, BOOKS

### Why in News?

The Uttar Pradesh cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath approved the introduction of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks in the Madrasa Board.

NCERT books in Urdu, Hindi and English languages will be introduced to give students a better training and enhanced skill set in madrasas.

### Important Points:

According to some sources, madrasas have been asked to follow the NCERT curriculum and introduce subjects like Science, Mathematics and Social Science.

Earlier also Adityanath stressed the importance of introducing modern education in madrasas. Madarsas are minority educational institutions offering study in Islamic theology and religious law. Currently, there are about 19,000 recognised and 560 aided madarsas operating in the state.

Subjects like Hindi, English, Science, Mathematics and Social Science would be introduced in the curriculum, the official said.

The State Madrasa Board in a meeting with the government officials on May 15 had suggested that all Islamic institutions should teach English and Hindi languages along with Urdu. Uttar Pradesh has Madaris spread across the state, including the places where there is no school. This is why in many Madaris, along with Muslims, non-Muslims also take admission for studies.

India is not a stranger to non-Muslims studying in Madaris. A number of reports published recently pointed out that there are a large number of non-Muslims studying in Madaris not only in Uttar Pradesh but also in Bihar, West Bengal and even in Gujarat. There is a Madrasa in Surat, Gujarat where 70% students are non-Muslims.

## MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND SINGAPORE ON PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

### Why in News?

The Union Cabinet approved Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Singapore on Cooperation in the field of Personnel Management and Public Administration.

### Important Points:

The MoU aims at improving the current system of governance, particularly in the areas of Workforce, Workplace and Jobs, Public Service Delivery, Human Resource Management, Public Sector Reform, Leadership/Talent Development and E-Governance/Digital Government.

### Benefits:

The MoU will provide a framework for cooperation between India and Singapore in the field of Public Administration and Governance Reforms.

It aims at achieving excellence in public administration, good governance and public service reform, which in turn, would ensure and promote greater public accountability.

It also aims to bring about innovative best practices, so as to achieve excellence in public administration in the context of improving online public service delivery.

### About Public Administration:

- ❖ Public administration is the field of service that maintains a civil society and provides for the needs of the public. There are many career paths and degree programs in this field.

Public administrators perform a wide range of functions, including managing city budgets, developing policy and legislation, implementing policies, and analyzing data to determine public needs.

These functions provide for the well-being of citizens. Public administration is the responsibility of governmental agencies.

## US DISINVITES CHINA FROM MULTINATIONAL MILITARY EXERCISE

### Why in News?

The Pentagon has disinvited China from an international military exercise over its militarization of islands in the South China Sea.

An official statement from Pentagon read that “China’s behaviour is inconsistent with the principles and purposes of the RIMPAC exercise and so, it has disinvited the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy from the 2018 Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise.”

The exercise, held in every two years in Hawaii, involves more than 20 countries from across the world including India, Australia, Japan and the UK.

### Why was China separated from the naval exercise?

The US has withdrawn the invitation given by citing the behavior of China which created instability in the South China Sea. China has increased the tension by removing bombers on the Woody island of the disputed area. Because of this, China has been separated from the military.

China’s approach is against the principles and objectives of RIMPAC military practice, and therefore the China Navy has been eliminated from the 2018 RIM of the Pacific (RIMPAC) paramilitary. China has deployed anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems and electronic jammers in the Spratly Islands of South China Sea.

### China’s claim:-

China almost claims its entire South China Sea. While Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan oppose this claim China has deployed military equipment on many islands in the disputed region. In this area, he has also built several artificial islands.

## US and China's relations?

However, with the current, the relationship between the two nations looks to be veering toward increasingly intense competition.

The two sides had reached a consensus and agreed not to fight a trade war by increasing tariffs on each other. The small truce followed months of increasing tensions that had set the markets on edge over fears of a damaging trade war.

Despite the concern and tension between the two nations, US President Donald Trump had praised China in recent months for its help in putting pressure on North Korea.

The United States has dispatched warships to disputed areas of the South China Sea in a bid to challenge China's extensive sovereignty claims in the territory, which is subject to various claims by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Brunei and Malaysia.

## About RIMPAC:

Rimpac is the largest naval exercise in the world in the Navy. It is organized every two years at intervals. This practice is organized in the Honolulu area in the Western Pacific Ocean. It is organized and administered by the US Naval Pacific Fleet.

It is hosted and administered by the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet, headquartered at Pearl Harbor, in collaboration with the Marine Corps, the Coast Guard and Hawaii National Guard forces under the control of the Governor of Hawaii.

The first RIMPAC, held in 1971, involved forces from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US). Australia, Canada and the US have participated in every RIMPAC since then.

## JOINT MILITARY EXERCISE SURYA KIRAN-XIII

### Why in News?

Joint military exercise SURYA KIRAN-XIII will be conducted between India and Nepal at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand from May 30 to June 12, 2018. This will be the thirteenth edition of the military exercise between India and Nepal.

## About SURYA KIRAN-XIII:

The exercise will comprise of nearly 300 soldiers from both Indian and Nepal Army who would be sharing their experiences gained during conduct of various counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations in the past.

Exercise SURYA KIRAN is a biannual event which is conducted alternatively in Nepal and India.

Notably in the series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries, Exercise SURYA KIRAN with Nepal is the largest in terms of troop participation.

The aim of this exercise is to conduct battalion level joint training with emphasis on counter terrorism operations in mountainous terrain.

During the exercise, aspects of disaster management and joint effort towards relief work have also been included.

The joint military exercise will enhance the level of defence cooperation which will further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two nations.

The SURYA KIRAN-XIII will be first exercise to be held under the surveillance of Nepal's newly-appointed Defence Minister Ishwor Pokharel.

## Surya Kiran Practice:

Surya Kiran military exercise occurs twice in a year, which is organized in both countries in a sequential manner.

India participates in training exercises with many countries, but according to the number of soldiers, Surya Kiran military practice is the largest.

Combined military exercises will increase cooperation between the two countries in the defense sector and bilateral relations will be strengthened.

India-Nepal joint military maneuvers Sun Kiran-XII was inaugurated at Nepal Army Battle School (NABS) located in Saljhandi, Nepal.

## ‘SAMAGRA SIKSHA’ SCHEME

### Why in News?

The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar launched the ‘Samagra Shiksha’ - an integrated Scheme for school education extending support to States from pre-school to senior secondary levels for the first time in New Delhi. The Scheme is a paradigm shift in the conceptual design of school education by treating ‘school’ holistically as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary levels.

### Important Points:

Under the scheme every school will get sports equipment under the Samagra Shiksha, at the cost of Rs. 5000 for Primary, Rs. 10,000 for Upper Primary & up to Rs. 25,000 for SSC & HSC schools to inculcate & emphasize relevance of sports to realise the dream of "Khelega India Khilega India". According to the HRD Ministry, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) will be expanded from Class 6-8 to Class 6-12 with allocation of Rs. 4385.60 crores in 2018-19 & Rs. 4553.10 crores in 2019-20 to fulfil Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's commitment to Beti Bachao Beti Padhao. The scheme will build on the grade-wise, subject-wise Learning Outcomes and the largest National Achievement Survey (NAS) conducted in 2017-18 to strategize district level interventions for improving quality of education.

The Scheme will support 'Operation Digital Board' in all secondary schools over a period of 5 years, so as to enhance the use of digital technology through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTH channels. The Digital initiatives like Shaala Kosh, Shagun,

#### Shaala Saarthi will be strengthened.

The Ministry of HRD has taken a landmark step and completely overhauled the existing Schemes in School Education to treat schooling as a smooth transition from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary and senior secondary level. It focuses on improving quality of education at all levels by integrating the two T's – Teachers and Technology.

It was also said that this Endeavour of the Government to equip our children with all-round skills – academic, extracurricular and vocational, so that they lay a strong foundation for the future development of India.

The Website provides details about the Scheme for information of the States/UTs, teachers, children, institutions and public at large. It details out the interventions for which financial support is provided under the Scheme to States and UTs.

All notifications, correspondences and circulars are uploaded on the website for ready reference of States and UTs.

An online Project Monitoring System is linked to the website which measures progress against targets and monitors processes of implementation of various interventions of the Integrated Scheme.

## MOU BETWEEN INDIA AND NETHERLANDS

### Why in News?

India and the Netherlands signed more than 50 pacts to deepen cooperation in areas like education, water and waste management, agriculture food processing, information technology and the development of smart cities.

The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, and the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Mark Rutte, who came on a two-day visit to India, took part in the CEO conference in Hyderabad House, New Delhi.

Netherlands is by far the fifth largest source of foreign direct investment in India. After the CEO conference, various agreements have been signed to strengthen economic and bilateral relations between the two countries.

### Main points of Indo-Netherlands agreements:

Both sides clean uncompromising focus on Ganga Campaign field of water management signed in June 2017 Memorandum of Understanding (agreed to enhance cooperation under the Memorandum of Understanding). To ease the contact and business exchanges between the people of India and the Netherlands, Visa has agreed to make rules flexible.

The Netherlands and India signed ten agreements in the field of smart cities, knowledge institutions, hi-tech IT and space, biology and health.

**The Netherlands Prime Minister signed the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched by India.**

Related institutions of both countries have joined hands for the ‘West Two Wealth’ project in solid waste and wastewater in the Hindan basin. To cooperate in Kanpur and Unnao leather industry environmental friendly technologies adoption and was also agreement on the measures to be taken to conserve water by using an agricultural Uttar Pradesh’s sugarcane industry.

Cooperation in agriculture and food processing, horticulture, water management, logistics, along with other areas such as biology and life went to identify prospects to be strengthened.

**The two leaders welcomed the opening of the Dutch Consulate General in Bengaluru.** India and the Netherlands have pledged to work together to ensure that globalization, poverty, hunger, unemployment, energy security, human rights, prevent erosion of gender inequality, climate change, terrorism and natural resources.

### Indo-Netherlands Relations:

There is a long-standing relationship between India and the Netherlands. Both countries have been supporting each other on business and commercial issues. According to the figures released by the Ministry of External Affairs, between India and the Netherlands (April 2017–February 2018), there is a bilateral trade of \$ 7.621 billion. There are 2,35,000 Indian migrants in the Netherlands, which is the highest in Europe. Route visits are expected to boost economic and political cooperation between India and the Netherlands.

### MAJORITY VOTERS IN FAVOR OF SCRAPPING ANTI-ABORTION LAWS IN IRELAND'S REFERENDUM

#### Why in News?

Thousands of Irish citizens took to the polls to vote on whether to overhaul the country's Eighth Amendment which makes abortions illegal except in cases where it endangers a mother's life.

The final tally, announced on the steps of Dublin Castle in the country's capital city, found 66.4% voted yes to amend the constitution while 33.6% voted no. Prime Minister Leo Varadkar said the country's resounding vote to overturn a constitutional ban on abortion represented the culmination of a 'quiet revolution'.

#### Important Points:

At the center of it all was the Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution, a 1983 law which recognizes a fetus' right to life from the moment of conception.

The Eighth Amendment, or simply called the eighth by locals, is an article written into the Irish constitution after a 1983 referendum, which stresses equal importance of right to life for the unborn child and its mother and does not permit abortions unless the life of the mother is in danger or the foetus is proven by doctors to be dead before or shortly after birth.

Due to the strict abortion laws in Ireland, many pregnant women, especially those who get pregnant because of rape and **incest** or face foetal abnormalities in development, either have to travel to the neighbouring country of Britain for terminations of pregnancy or secretly take abortion pills sought illegally without proper counselling or medical care.

Statistics released by the Irish government officials say that each year over 3,000 Irish women have to take a flight or a boat to travel abroad for abortions and an estimated 170,000 Irish women have reportedly received abortions overseas since 1980s.

Abortion is still banned in some 20 countries worldwide, while others have highly restrictive laws in place. In the European Union, predominantly Catholic Malta is the only country with a total ban.

#### About Ireland's Law:

When doctors felt a woman's life was at risk due to complications from the pregnancy, or from suicide, they were permitted to carry out an abortion. Ireland introduced a constitutional ban on abortion following a 1983 referendum. Terminating a pregnancy carries a 14-year maximum jail term.

The law was tweaked in 2013 to allow terminations if the mother's life is at risk.

The ban has led to thousands of women travelling each year to neighbouring Britain, where terminations are legal, or increasingly turning to abortion pills sold online.

### Background:

Savita Halappanavar an Indian, who worked as a dentist, was admitted to University Hospital Galway on 21 October 2012 when she was 17 weeks pregnant with her first child. Medical staff concluded that a miscarriage was inevitable but did not intervene – despite requests from Halappanavar and her husband for an abortion – as a foetal heartbeat could be detected.

A few days later, medics diagnosed infection as a result of ruptured membranes and later septic shock. Halappanavar died on 28 October.

There has been protests from time to time in this Irish country about this law, but after the death of Indian origin Savita's death, these demonstrations became more intense. This is the reason that people voted against this strict law.

## INDIA OPENS SECOND IT CORRIDOR IN CHINA

### Why in News?

India launched its second IT corridor in China to benefit from the nation's growing software market. The IT corridor, Digital Collaborative Opportunities Plaza (SIDCOP) platform, was established in China's Guiyang city by the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).

**Objective:** The main aim behind the move is to provide market access to Indian IT firms in the vast Chinese market.

### Important Points:

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) has established one more Digital Collaborative Opportunities Plaza (SIDCOP) platform in China in an effort to provide market access to Indian IT firms in the huge Chinese market.

Agreements worth RMB 36 million (about \$6 million) were signed between Indian service providers and Chinese customers at the launch of the corridor by China's Guiyang Municipal government and the NASSCOM.

The pilot projects launched on the SIDCOP platform would be executed during 2019.

NASSCOM had established its first SIDCOP platform in the Chinese port city of Dalian, which is India's first IT hub in China, in December 2017. The Dalian IT corridor was formally launched a few days ago.

While the focus of Dalian corridor was on IOT (Internet of Things), the Guiyang corridor will focus on Big Data.

The launch ceremony saw the participation of more than 350 representatives from Indian and Chinese companies.

The initiative is being replicated in other Chinese cities as well.

### Background:

For India, getting access to China's IT market, valued at over \$493 billion in 2013 by the ministry of industry and information technology of China, is important to address the massive trade deficit which has now spiralled to over \$51 billion. The Chinese IT market grew exponentially since then. India has been demanding China to provide market access to Indian IT and pharmaceutical firms for several years to reduce the bilateral trade deficit.

The two corridors, which were started in collaboration with China's provincial governments, are expected to provide the much-needed big opening for Indian IT firms.

India is a world leader in the area of Information Technology and IT-enabled services with annual revenue of over \$164 billion and exports of over \$120 billion.

In China, Indian IT companies are present in 10 cities with a total work-force of around 25000 employees.

## GDPR: EU'S NEW DATA PROTECTION RULES COMES INTO FORCE

### Why in News?

The General Data Protection Regulation — better known as GDPR — that gives citizens of the European Union (EU) more rights to control their personal information comes into effect. The new data privacy rules clarify individual rights to the personal data collected by companies around the world for targeted advertising and other purposes.

### Objective:

The GDPR was enacted back in April 2016 with the goal of giving citizens and residents of the EU better control of their personal data and simplifying related regulations for businesses. There was a two-year delay in its passage and start date, in order to give the businesses a grace period to mold themselves in line with its measures.

### What is GDPR?

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will regulate the processing by an individual, a company or an organisation of personal data relating to individuals in the EU.

The regulation will not apply to the processing of personal data of deceased persons or of legal entities.

The rules will also not apply to data processed by an individual for purely personal reasons or for activities carried out in one's home, provided there is no connection to a professional or commercial activity.

### Important Points:

The GDPR sets new rules for how companies manage and share personal data.

Though the rules apply only to the citizens of the European Union, the global nature of the internet means that nearly every online service will be affected.

While the regulation largely builds on the rules set by earlier EU privacy measures like the Privacy Shield and Data Protection Directive, it expands on those measures in two crucial ways:

The GDPR sets a higher bar for obtaining personal data on the internet, higher than ever seen before.

So, any time a company will want to collect personal data of an EU citizen, it will require explicit and informed consent from the concerned person. The rule explicitly extends to companies based outside the EU.

The companies will have to clarify how long they retain data.

The rules will also force companies that suffer data breaches to disclose them within 72 hours.

### Penalty for violation of GDPR:

In case of violation of the rules, the GDPR has set maximum fines per violation at 4 percent of a company's global turnover or \$20 million, whichever is larger.

## VISA PROGRAMME FOR 'EXCEPTIONAL TALENT'

### Why in News?

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) adopted a new system of entry visas, as per which it would be issuing long-term residency visas for up to 10 years to international investors and 'exceptional talents' including professionals and students.

### Important Points:

The move is expected to attract talent to the UAE. Foreign students will also be able to avail a 5-year visa while 'exceptional' graduates can secure a 10-year visa, the report suggests. Right now, students are required to apply for a renewal of their visa every year.

The UAE is also set to allow foreign firms to own 100 percent of their business. Currently, foreign companies are required to have an Emirati partner to hold a majority stake, unless the business is based in a free trade zone.

The new system will increase the chances of attracting investors and competencies, increasing the country's economic competitiveness globally.

The system will grant 10-year residency visas for specialists in medical, scientific, research and technical fields, as well as for all scientists and innovators.

The new decision will also review the current residency system to extend the residency time for the dependent students after completing their university studies.

**The decision is in line with the country's position as a primary destination for international investors and global talents.**

The system will also give the students studying in the UAE with the opportunity to study their practical options in the future.

### How will this benefit India?

Indians will be significant beneficiaries of the new policy. As many as 2.8 million Indians live in the Gulf country, forming the largest expatriate community there. Of the total, 15-20 percent are professionally qualified personnel. Another 20 percent have white-collar non-professional jobs, while the remaining 65 percent are blue-collar workers.

The changes are likely to take effect by the end of this year. However, it remains unclear if the visa for professionals will be a 10-year employment visa or a 10-year residency visa.

At present, visas of most professionals living in the Emirates is linked to their employer and cannot be carried forward in case one decides to change jobs. If the changes lead to a residency visa, professionals will have better mobility in jobs.

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS 2018

### Why in News?

On May 29th, 1948, the United Nations Security Council authorized the first United Nations peacekeeping operation – the UN Truce Supervision Organization in the Middle East. On this 70th anniversary, we express our gratitude to the more than one million men and women who have served under the UN flag, saving countless lives.

The theme of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers 2018 was 'UN Peacekeepers: 70 Years of Service and Sacrifice'.

### Important Points:

Over the last seven decades, over 1 million men and women have served under the United Nations flag in 71 peacekeeping operations. From Sierra Leone to Cambodia, Timor Leste, Namibia, El Salvador and elsewhere, United Nations Peacekeeping has helped countries transition from war to peace.

On the occasion of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers, the UN Secretary-General presides over a wreath-laying ceremony at the UN Headquarters in New York to honour all peacekeepers who lost their lives while serving under the UN flag.

In addition, the Dag Hammarskjold Medal is awarded posthumously to the peacekeepers who have fallen while serving in the cause of peace during the preceding year.

### Background:

The UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was founded on May 29, 1948. UNTSO's task was to assist peacekeepers to observe and maintain a cease-fire. This cease-fire marked the end of the hostilities between Israel and the Arab League forces. The hostilities started after the end of the British Mandate of Palestine on May 14, 1948. On December 11, 2002, the UN General assembly designated May 29 as the International Day of United Nations

Peacekeepers. The day was first observed on May 29, 2003.

**The International Day of United Nations**

Peacekeepers is a tribute to people who serve or have served in UN peacekeeping operations. The peacekeepers are honored for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage. People who died for peace are also remembered.

### Symbols:

UN Peacekeepers are usually clearly recognizable. They often display the UN flag and the letters "UN" on their clothing, equipment and vehicles. They also wear hats, helmets or other clothing with UN colors.

## COLOMBIA JOINS NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

### Why in News?

Colombia would be formally joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) next week. The announcement was made by the country's President Juan Manuel Santos on May 25, 2018.

With the move, Colombia will become the first Latin American nation to be a part of the alliance. It would be joining the bloc as a ‘global partner’, which means it will not necessarily have to take part in any joint military action and will be fully accredited in Brussels.

The announcement came after Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) approved Colombia as a new member.

### Important Points:

The other global partner nations of NATO include Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan.

The partnership with Colombia will include cooperation on global security areas such as cyber and maritime security, terrorism and links to organised crime.

The partnership will enable Colombia to have a bigger role on the international stage.

As a global partner with NATO, Colombia will not necessarily have to take part in active military actions of NATO but will be fully accredited to 29-nation military alliance. It will cooperate on global security areas like cyber and maritime security, terrorism and links to organized crime.

Other global partners of NATO include

Afghanistan, Australia, Iraq, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan.

### About North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO):

ATO is an intergovernmental military alliance between 29 North American and European countries based on the North Atlantic Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949. It is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, while headquarters of its Allied Command Operations is near Mons, Belgium.

NATO system constitutes of collective defence whereby its independent member states agree to mutual defence in response to attack by any external party. The combined military spending of all NATO members constitutes over 70% of the global defence spending.

## GLOBAL WIND SUMMIT

### Why in News?

The first edition of the Global Wind Summit will be held here from September 25-28, 2018 at Hamburg (Germany). The organisers of the four-day event are expecting speakers from about 100 countries, including India, China, the US, Spain and Denmark.

### Important Points:

The summit combines will have two main conferences, WindEnergy Hamburg and WindEurope, Holinsky. Both events together will witness participation of about 1,400 exhibitors and 250 speakers from all over the world. The summit will provide platform for experts from across globe to discuss innovative and green technologies for harnessing wind energy making.

It will provide a platform for experts from across the globe to discuss innovative and green technologies for harnessing wind energy making.

The conferences will deliberate on the ways to develop new markets, make product competitive in auctions and use wind power for all energy applications.

The focus of the conferences will be on three major subjects viz. dynamic markets, cost efficiency and smart energy. It will discuss ways to develop new markets, make product competitive in auctions and use wind power for all energy applications.

### India's participation in the summit:

A number of Indian companies would be participating in the global event. India is fourth largest country in terms of wind energy installation capacity at around 33 GW after China, the US and Germany. Indian government has set a target of achieving 60 GW by 2022.

As per Steve Sawyer, Secretary General, Global World Energy Council, ‘India is a huge market for wind energy sector. Today many companies are eyeing India’.

## WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY : 31 MAY

### Why in News?

Every year, on 31 May, WHO and partners mark World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), highlighting the health and other risks associated with tobacco use, and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption.

### Theme of World No Tobacco Day 2018: 'Tobacco and heart disease'

The focus of World No Tobacco Day 2018 is "Tobacco and heart disease."

The campaign will increase awareness on the:

link between tobacco and heart and other cardiovascular diseases (CVD), including stroke, which combined are the world's leading causes of death;

feasible actions and measures that key audiences, including governments and the public, can take to reduce the risks to heart health posed by tobacco.

### Important Points:

- The World No Tobacco Day 2018 coincides with a range of global initiatives and opportunities that are aimed at addressing the tobacco epidemic and its impact of public health, particularly in causing the death and suffering of millions of people globally.
- The actions include the WHO-supported Global Hearts and RESOLVE initiatives, which aim to reduce cardiovascular disease deaths and improve care and the third United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, being held in 2018.
- Tobacco use is an important risk factor for the development of coronary heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.
- Despite the known harms of tobacco to heart health and the availability of solutions to reduce related death and disease, knowledge among large sections of the public that tobacco is one of the leading causes of CVD is low.
- Currently, cardiovascular diseases (CVD) is known to kill more people worldwide than any other cause and tobacco use and passive smoking exposure contribute to approximately 17% of all heart disease deaths.
- Tobacco use is the second leading cause of CVD, after high blood pressure.

- Globally, tobacco consumption claims the lives of more than 7 million people each year, of which close to 900 000 are non-smokers dying from inhaling second-hand smoke.
- Moreover, nearly 80 per cent of more than 1 billion smokers worldwide live in low and middle-income countries, where the burden of tobacco-related illness and death is heaviest.

### What is Nicotine?

Nicotine is a colorless alkaloid chemical that is most commonly sourced from the tobacco plant, which is in the nightshade family of plants. Nicotine is also present in small amounts in tomato, potato, green pepper, eggplant and coca plants.

Most commonly known as the addictive ingredient in tobacco products, nicotine is often mistakenly thought to be a harmless chemical otherwise.

## INDIA, INDONESIA ELEVATE TIES

### Why in News?

India and Indonesia elevated their bilateral ties to that of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and issued a shared vision for maritime cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region following a bilateral summit between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Joko Widodo here.

The two sides also signed 15 agreements, including on defence and economic cooperation.

### Important Points:

India and Indonesia have agreed to double their efforts to take bilateral trade to USD 50 billion by 2025.

According to Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS), trade between the two countries in 2016 was USD 12.9 billion.

The leaders reaffirmed that their countries, as strategic partners and maritime neighbours, will work to further strengthen and broaden the already robust defence cooperation.

The leaders reaffirmed their commitment in the field of defence with the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement between the two countries.

They also agreed to further enhance mutual trust through regular meetings and staff talks between armies, navies and air forces of the two countries. They further took note on the progress made through the joint production of military equipment and identified cooperation in defence industry and technology as areas of great potential.

The two sides agreed to work intensively for the early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and reiterated that it needs to be comprehensive, fair and balanced with benefit to all member states.

The two leaders reiterated their strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations including cross-border terrorism and terror-related incidents in Indonesia and India and affirmed that perpetrators of such acts should be punished.

As maritime neighbours, the two countries underlined the importance of stronger connectivity, particularly on sea links, in order to facilitate economic cooperation and people-to-people contact.

**The two leaders welcomed the plan to build connectivity between Andaman Nicobar in India and Aceh in Indonesia to unleash the economic potentials of both areas.**

**The two sides also looked forward to the speedy conclusion of the ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement.**

In the view of the growing geostrategic importance of the Indo-Pacific region, the two sides issued a separate statement on “Shared Vision of Indo-Indonesia Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific”.

### **MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS LAUNCHES NEW USER INTERFACE OF ITS E-TICKETING SYSTEM**

#### **Why in News?**

Union Ministry of Railways has launched new user interface of its Next Generation e-Ticketing (NGeT) System on Indian Railway's Online Travel Portal [www.irctc.co.in](http://www.irctc.co.in). Through NGeT system, Indian Railways new online ticket booking system provides user-friendly, easy and fast way of booking rail tickets by automating journey planning and purchase of tickets. It was launched as part of Union Government's 'Digital India' initiative to harness power of technology and in making lives easier for citizens of India.

**E-ticketing today constitutes about two third of total reserved tickets on Indian Railways.**

#### **Important Points:**

With the launch of new interface of e-Ticketing Website, user can now enquire / search trains and check availability of seats without login also, thereby saving precious time of the users. User can now change font size throughout the website for comfortable viewing experience.

The new look and feel will have enhanced class-wise, train-wise, destination-wise, departure/arrival time wise and quota-wise filters for facilitating customer while planning their journeys. Single screen information about the train including the train no, train name, originating and destination station and distances between them, arrival and departure time and journey time has now been arranged.

In addition, more features such as new filters on ‘My Transactions’ where user can also view their booked tickets based on Journey Date, Booking Date, Upcoming Journey and completed journey. To enhance customer’s booking experience, interesting features like ‘Waitlist prediction’, etc have been introduced. Using this feature, user can get the probability of a Waitlisted or RAC ticket getting confirmed. This technique uses algorithm based on historical booking trends of the particular train. This feature will add new value to the online e-ticket booking system of the railways. New attractive colour scheme for different trains with facility to modify the journey details on the journey planner page itself will bring further ease of booking to the users.

The new look and feel is providing the facility for the user to find out the availability up to the entire Advance Reservation Period i.e. 120 days at present, except few trains. In the new system, user can perform multiple activities through booked history with improved interface for cancellation of tickets, printing of tickets, request for additional SMS, selecting alternative train by exercising the option of ‘Vikalp’ and change of boarding point if required. Technological advancements in the development of New User Interface also facilitate seamless navigation in mobiles, desktops, laptops and tablets.

Users have been invited to initially, switch to the beta version of the website and get the first hand experience of its look, feel and usage for a period of 15 days during which Railways will take suggestions from them for further changes and improvement of the site. After this the beta version of the new interface will replace the old interface of IRCTC e-ticketing portal enabling a smooth transition of the users to the new interface.

## US RENAMED IT'S PACIFIC COMMAND

### Why in News?

Defence Secretary James Mattis said the US Pacific Command would now be called the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM). The command oversees US operations in Asia. It has about 375,000 military and civilian personnel. The name change comes amid tensions with China, which has been expanding its military activity in the region.

Henceforth, the US Pacific Command (USPACOM), which was formed after World War II, will be known as the US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM).

### Important Points:

The move is reflective of the growing importance of the Indian Ocean in US strategic thinking. It also recognises India's growing role in providing regional security.

The name change is largely symbolic as India is already considered as part of PACOM's area of responsibility which also includes China, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, Australia, Antarctica and the entire Pacific Ocean.

The move signals towards the 2018 National Defence Strategy of the United States which acknowledges Pacific challenges and signals America's lasting commitment to the Indo-Pacific.

However, for now, the name change will not immediately result in any shifts in the command's boundaries or assets across the vast area stretching from the western part of India to America's Pacific coastline. The US has been pushing for stronger military relations with India since 2016. In 2016, the United States and India signed an agreement governing the use of each other's land, air and naval bases for repair and resupply, a step toward building defence ties. It was in 2016 itself when the US designated India as a "Major Defence Partner" with the aim of improving military cooperation and increasing information-sharing to ease defense deals.

The United States is also eager to enter into India's large defence market. India emerged as No. 2 weapons supplier, closing USD 15 billion worth of deals over the last decade.

### About US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM):

The US Indo-Pacific Command is the oldest and largest among the six geographic Unified Combatant Commands of the United States Armed Forces and is responsible for the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

The Command has about 375000 civilian and military personnel assigned to its area of responsibility, which covers about half of the Earth's surface, stretching from the waters off the US West Coast to the western border of India and from Antarctica to the North Pole. US Pacific Fleet consists of approximately 200 ships, nearly 1100 aircraft, and more than 130000 sailors dedicated to protect mutual security interests.

USINDOPACOM headquarters is located in the Nimitz-MacArthur Building on Camp H.M. Smith just outside of Honolulu, Hawaii.



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