# CURRENT CONNECT
# NOVEMBER - 17

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| GS-I | Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times. | Indian history significant events, personalities, issues and the Freedom Struggle | Post independence issues. National boundary and disputes | Indian society features, issues, globalization and diversity | Women - issues and developments | Urbanization - problems and remedies | Distribution of industries and resources - India and world | Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc | Culture-Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times. | | |
| GS-II | Indian constitution-Amendments, acts and bills. | Legislative, executive and judicial processes. | Constitutional, non-constitutional, judicial, quasi judicial, administrative and other types of bodies. | Federal structure and local bodies. Their powers and functions. | Government policies and various governance issues like transparency, accountability and - governance | Committees and schemes. | Non-government issues, self-help groups and role of civil society | Vulnerable sections of our society and social sector issues and initiatives. | International Relation-India and other countries, various Indian and international agreements, effects of other countries on India and international institutions. | | |
| GS-III | Various measures to boost Indian economy-planning, policies, management. | Government budgeting and issues related to budget. | Agriculture, animal husbandry and transport | Food security-measures to boost food security and food processing. Issues related to land- land reforms | Industries and infrastructure their growth and investment model | Space and technology, IT space, robotics and computer | Disease, biotechnology and human welfare | Innovations, intellectual property, Awards, POI and other import ant aspects of S&T | Environment and disaster, government initiatives, various judgment, pollution, degradation and conservation efforts | International agreements and works of various international bodies, awards, effort by individuals and misc. | Challenges to internal security. Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate. Cyber security, money laundering and its prevention. |
| GS-IV | Ethical issues related to family society, education, Corruption etc. | Ethics in public and private administration | Issues | Related laws and rules | Governance/e-Governance | Ethics in international issues | Personalities and their teachings | Other import ant topics | | | |
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# Cauvery Tribunal Gets Six Months Extension

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## In News

Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has extended the term of Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal by six months upto May 02, 2018.

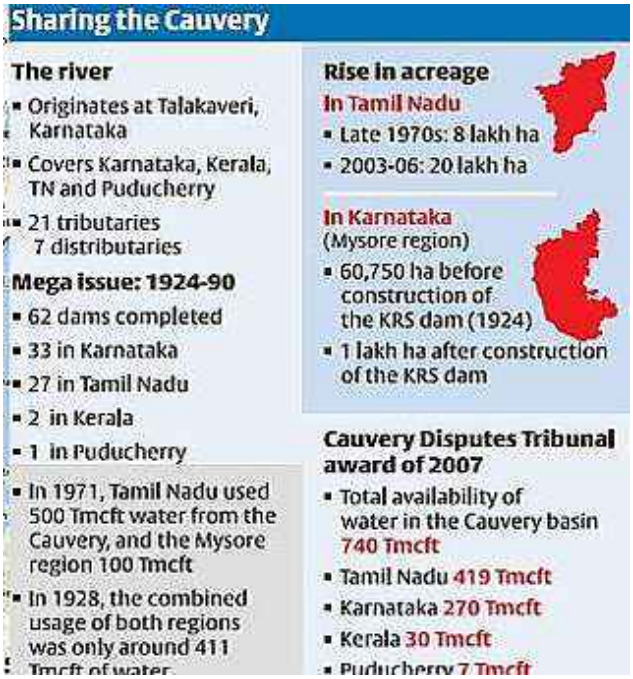
## Background

Cauvery is an inter-State basin having its origin in Karnataka and flowing through Tamil Nadu and Puduchery before outfalling in Bay of Bengal. The sharing of waters of the Cauvery has been the source of a serious conflict between the states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The genesis of this conflict rests in two agreements in 1892 and 1924 between the erstwhile Madras Presidency and Kingdom of Mysore.

In this regard, Government of India on June 02, 1990 constituted the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) to adjudicate the water dispute regarding inter-state river Cauvery and the river valley thereof among the States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.

## Chronology of Reports and Decisions

1. CWDT gave its report and decision u/s 5(2) of the ISRWD Act, 1956 on February 05, 2007.
   - *The Party States also filed Special Leave Petition (SLPs) against the above mentioned report and decision of the Tribunal before the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Hon'ble Supreme Court on 07.05.2007 has granted Special Leave in the matter.*
2. A Protem Supervisory Committee is constituted for implementation of the final order dated February 5, 2007 as notified vide Notification dated February 19, 2013.
   - *The Supervisory Committee shall consists of the Secretary, Union Ministry of Water Resources as Chairman and the Chief Secretaries of the respective States of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Union Territory of Puducherry as Members.*
3. Decision of CWDT has been challenged by party States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala before Supreme Court by filling Civil Appeals. Supreme Court in its order dated December 09,2016 directed that these Civil Appeals are maintainable and the matter is sub judice in the court.
4. The Central Govt. on the requests made by the tribunal from time to time extended the period of the submission of the said further report upto November 02, 2017.
5. Now the tribunal has again sought an extension and hence the Govt. has extended the period upto May 02,2018.




PEPPER IT WITH IRWD Act, CFFC

## Cauvery Facts

- Cauvery River originates in TalaCauvery in Kodagu district of Karnataka. It flows 800 km in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and reaches the Bay of Bengal through Poompuhar in Tamil Nadu.
- Three Islands in Cauvery: River Cauvery splits at two places and forms two islands in Karnataka. One is at Shivanasamudra, where she plunges as Gagana Chukki and



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Bara Chukki Falls and creates the island of Srirangapatna near Mysore. The third island is Srirangam in Tamil Nadu.

- Shimsha, Hemavati, Kabini, Arkavathy, Honnuhole, Bhavani, Lokapavani, Amaravati and Noyil are the tributaries of river Cauvery.
- There are several dams built on the Cauvery River. The most popular ones being the Krishna Raja Sagar Dam (KRS) in Mandya, Upper Anicut in Tamil Nadu, Amaravthi Dam, Mettur Dam and Kallani Dam in Tamil Nadu.
- Srirangapatna is known as Adi Ranga and it is known for Ranganathaswamy Temple in Karnataka. Shivanasamudra is known as Madhya Ranga indicating the mid-way of the river. Srirangam is called as Anthya Ranga where Cauvery finally joins the sea.

## Commercial courts

### In News

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Days after India jumped 30 positions in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business ranking, Law Ministry officials said the Union government proposed to establish commercial courts in districts to further improve the parameters.

### Current Statistics

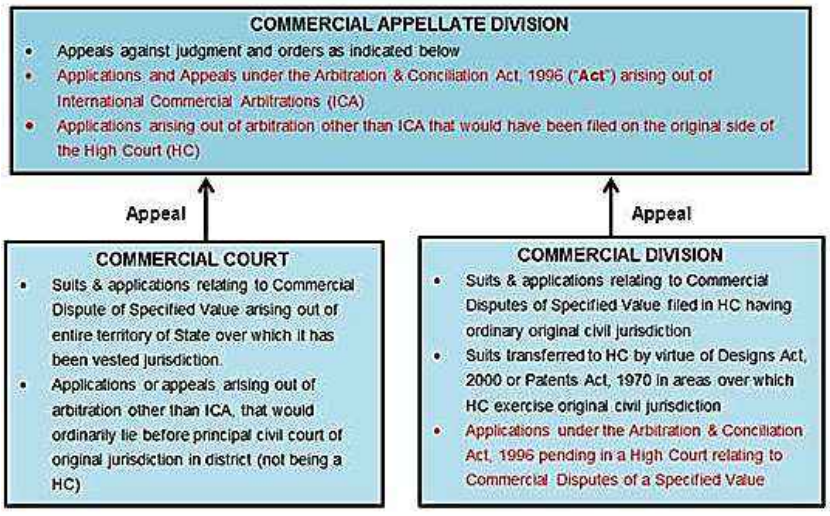
Legal remedy to commercial disputes and enforcement of business contracts are parameters of the World Bank ranking. In terms of ease of enforcing contracts, India jumped from 172 to 164.

India's performance has been varied within the legal framework. For example, the World Bank's ranking marked "court system and proceedings in India" 4.5 out of a total of 5, but in management of cases, it was 1.5 out of 6. India also fared well in alternative dispute redress mechanism and scored 2.5 out of a total of 3 marks.

### The Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act, 2015

#### Introduction

The Indian Government has been quite vocal and serious in their program of 'Make in India' and boosting the 'ease of doing business in India'. The speedy and efficacious enforcement of contracts, recovery of monetary claims and award of just compensation for damages suffered are absolutely critical to encourage investment and economic activity. The enactment of the Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of the High Courts Act, 2015 will act as a catalyst for achieving the above mentioned objectives.




### Key Highlights

The Act enables the creation of commercial divisions and commercial appellate divisions in high courts, and commercial courts at the district level.

PEPPER IT WITH ADR, ARBITRATION

- Commercial courts at the district level: State governments may set up commercial courts, equivalent to district courts, after consulting



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with their respective high courts. However, a commercial court must not be set up in an area where the high court exercises ordinary original civil jurisdiction.

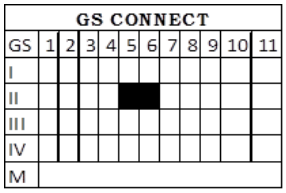
- Commercial divisions in high courts: Commercial divisions may be set up in those high courts which exercise ordinary original civil jurisdiction, that is, the High Courts of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Himachal Pradesh. They will be set up by the Chief Justice of that particular High Court.
- Commercial appellate divisions: Commercial appellate divisions may be set up in all high courts to hear appeals against: (i) orders of commercial divisions of high courts; (ii) orders of commercial courts; and (iii) appeals arising from domestic and international arbitration matters that are filed before the high courts.
  Such commercial appellate divisions in high courts will be set up by the Chief Justice of that High Court.
- Commercial dispute: A commercial dispute is defined to include any dispute related to transactions between merchants, bankers, financiers, traders, etc. Such transactions deal with mercantile documents, partnership agreements, intellectual property rights, etc.
- Specified value of a dispute: The specified value of a commercial dispute that will be dealt with by commercial divisions in high courts and commercial courts will be an amount not below one crore rupees, and will be specified by the central government.

### Way Forward

The Act could, in the long run, change the reasons why the Courts in India are frowned upon such as its long drawn and cumbersome processes. It shall not only change the speed at which Commercial Disputes will attain finality, but also improve the perception of investors about India as an investment destination. We believe that the Act is implemented in its true spirit by all the states and High Courts of the Country, so that it achieves its object.

## VVM and VIBHA

### In News




Recently a mobile App for Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM) called as 'VVM App' was launched in order to provide a platform to the India's next generation to imbibe the values of science and technology for a better future.

### What is VVM ?

1. It is a unique initiative to give a boost to the learning of science, technology and mathematics among the youth-especially the school students, Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM) - a nationwide science talent search examination will be held on 26th November.
2. One of the unique features of this examination is that the test will be conducted online. Students will attend the exam through the various digital devices like, mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop in line with the vision of Digital India Campaign.
3. VVM is going to attempt the Guinness Book of World Record for largest online science examination for school students wherein more than 91 thousand students from 2078 centres across the country will be appearing in the examination.
4. This programme is been organized by eminent scientists and academicians associated with Vigyan Prasar (VP) - an autonomous organisation under Department of Science and Technology and National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) of Ministry of Human Resources and Development and Vijnana Bharati.

### What is VIBHA?

Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA) is one of the largest science movement in the country led by eminent scientists and to inculcate and generate scientific temper, foster excellence in students and nurture and mentor them for their careers in pure sciences.

Swadeshi Science Movement was started in Indian Institite of Science- (Bengaluru) by a few eminent scientists under the guidance of Prof. K I Vasu. This movement gradually gained



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momentum and emerged as an organization with national presence. In 1991(Oct 20-21) at the Nagpur meet, it was decided, to launch the Swadeshi Science Movement at all India Level and named it as Vijnanabharati. The foundation principle of VIBHA is made

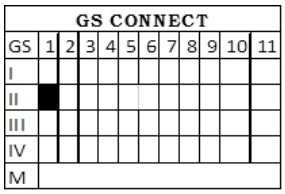
- As a vibrant movement for the development of Swadeshi Sciences
- As a dynamic Science Movement with a Swadeshi Spirit, interlinking traditional and modern sciences on the one hand, and natural and spiritual sciences on the other hand
- As a Swadeshi Movement with modern sciences adapted to national needs.

## Way Forward

India faces critical challenges as a nation in its march towards a welfare state. Considering the nature of the challenges which are so unique, only rapid strides in the sector of science and technology, in resonance with India's heritage can meet those challenges. In this context initiatives like VIBHA and VVM has a greater role to play in the holistic approach towards learning in lieu improving and boosting present education system in India.

# National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Bill, 2017

## In News




The Union Cabinet has given its approval for introduction of a Bill in Parliament to amend the National Council for Teacher Education Act, 1993, namely the National Council for Teacher Education (Amendment) Act, 2017 to grant retrospective recognition to the Central/State/ Universities who are found to be conducting teacher education courses without NCTE permission.

## Key Highlights

1. The amendment seeks to grant retrospective recognition to the Central/State/Union Territory funded Institutions/Universities conducting Teacher Education Courses without NCTE recognition till the academic year 2017-2018.
2. The amendment will make students studying in these Institutions/Universities, or already passed out from here, eligible for employment as a teacher.
3. The retrospective recognition is being given as a onetime measure so as to ensure that the future of the students passed out/enrolled in these institutions are not jeopardized.
4. All institutions running Teacher Education Courses such as B.Ed. and D.El.Ed. have to obtain recognition from the National Council for Teacher Education under section 14 of the NCTE Act.

## Background

The National Council for Teacher Education, in its previous status since 1973, was an advisory body for the Central and State Governments on all matters pertaining to teacher education, with its Secretariat in the Department of Teacher Education of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action thereunder, envisaged a NCTE with statutory status and necessary resources as a first step for overhauling the system of teacher education.

## NCTE Council

The National Council for Teacher Education, commonly known as the Council or the General Body of the NCTE, is constituted

**UNESCO's new Global Education** Monitoring Report 2017/18 is a comprehensive and nuanced look at the role of accountability in global education systems in the effort to achieve the vision of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, and to promote lifelong learning.

An important study of teacher absenteeism in 619 schools across six States carried out by the Azim Premji Foundation. It found that while the overall percentage of teachers not in school was 18.5%, most of these were either out of school on other official duty, or on bonafide leave. Actual teacher absenteeism because of **teachers' truancy was 2.5%**

PEPPER IT WITH
NCTE Regulations 2014, NPE, TEI



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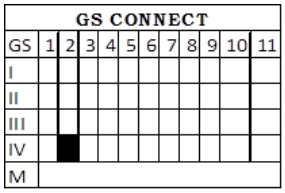
by the Government of India under Section 3 of the NCTE Act. It is the highest decision-making body of the NCTE. It lays down policy, frames regulations and takes final decisions on various aspects of the mandate given to it under the NCTE Act.

### Council Composition

1. Chairperson
2. Vice-Chairperson
3. Member Secretary

## NTPC Unchahar Tragedy

### In News




An unfortunate accident struck NTPC- Unchahar (Rai Bareli, UP) in the boiler of Unit #6 (500 MW) recently reported with at least 32 persons death and more than 97 were injured.

This tragedy underscores the importance of inspections and protocols for hazardous industrial operations.

### Reasons for accident

1. At the Unchahar plant, *prima facie* the cause of blast appeared due to the blocking of an outlet for waste gases by ash, unusual in a fairly new boiler, calls for an inquiry into the quality of the equipment and the fuel used.
2. Industrial regulation has, unfortunately, come to be viewed as a barrier to ease of doing business in India. This is a result of inefficiency and corruption and the typical response of governments has been to relax crucial safety checks.
3. Self-certification and third-party certification of facilities has received support from policymakers even in the case of boilers. This can jeopardize the safety rules and guidelines necessary for creating less hazardous environment of work.
4. Quite clearly, the accident was entirely preventable because boilers are designed to provide warnings as soon as dangerous pressure builds up and trigger automatic safety devices at a critical point.

High pressure boilers are hazardous pieces of equipment, which are strictly regulated with special laws. In fact, the basic objective of the Indian Boilers Act, 1923 is to ensure the safety of life and protection of property by mandating uniform standards in the quality and upkeep of these units.

### Approach to avert these tragedies

- Transparent regulatory mechanism for hazardous industrial activity
- A rigorous approach to accident reporting must become part of the process if the weak spots in regulation are to be addressed.
- Administrative reform can eliminate the corruption of inspector raj and achieve transparent regulation, while keeping the workplace safe.
- The accident should be investigated comprehensively by an external agency and not the NTPC (organization involved).
- Competent Chief Inspection officer should be appointed by state government.
- Heavy penalty for not following the Regulations and guidelines underlined under the Indian Boiler Act.

## Cabinet approves Creation of National Testing Agency (NTA)

### In News

The Union Cabinet has approved creation of National Testing Agency (NTA) as a Society registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860, and as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.



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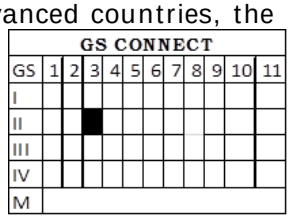
## NTA

In view of the need to have a specialized body in India like the most advanced countries, the Finance Minister in the Budget speech of 2017-18 had announced setting up of a National Testing Agency (NTA) as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organization to conduct all entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.




### Features

- ✓ The NTA would initially conduct those entrance examinations which are currently being conducted by the CBSE.
- ✓ Other examinations will be taken up gradually after NTA is fully geared up.
- ✓ The entrance examinations will be conducted in online mode at least twice a year, thereby giving adequate opportunity to candidates to bring out their best.
- ✓ In order to serve the requirements of the rural students, it would locate the centres at sub-district/district level and as far as possible would undertake hands-on training to the students.

PEPPER IT WITH
NIRF, AISHE Report

### Composition

NTA will be chaired by an eminent educationist appointed by MHRD.

1. The CEO will be the Director General to be appointed by the Government.
2. There will be a Board of Governors comprising members from user institutions.
3. The Director General will be assisted by 9 verticals headed by academicians/ experts

### Budget Allocation

NTA will be given a one-time grant of Rs.25 crore from the Government of India to start its operation in the first year. Thereafter, it will be financially self-sustainable.

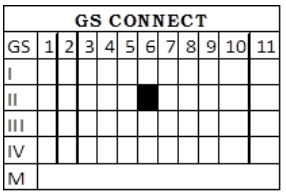
### Impact

1. Establishment of NTA will benefit about 40 lakh students appearing in various entrance examinations. It will relieve CBSE, AICTE and other agencies from responsibility of conducting these entrance examinations, and also bring in high reliability, standardized difficulty level for assessing the aptitude, intelligence and problem solving abilities of the students.
2. Its creation will relieve the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) – which conducts exams like the National Eligibilty-cum-Entrance Test – and the All India Council for Technical Education of the burden of conducting entrance.

## Prime Minister's Ladakh Renewable Energy Initiative

### In News

1.5 MW Small Hydro Power Plant in Biaras Drass, Kargil (J&K) becomes first project to be commissioned under Prime Minister's Ladakh Renewable Energy Initiative. The power project will meet normal power requirement of close to 1,000 families.




### About Project

1. The plant will power the Drass town in Kargil, which is one of the coldest places in India.
2. The Biaras Small Hydro Power Project (SHP) of 1.5 MW capacity, in Biaras Drass, Kargil Jammu & Kashmir, was commissioned on 4th November 2017.
3. The total cost of the project, fully funded by the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, is Rs. 17 crores and this is the first project to be commissioned under the Prime Minister's Ladakh Renewable Energy Initiative (LREI).
4. The project has been developed by Kargil Renewable Energy Development Agency (KREDA) under Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council.

### Ladakh Renewable Energy Initiative (LREI)

- MNRE sanctioned (June 2010) Ladakh Renewable Energy Initiative (LREI) for promotion of RE in Ladakh region. The duration of the project initially was three and a half years.



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- The project was being implemented by two agencies: Leh Renewable Energy Development Agency (LREDA) and Kargil Renewable Energy Development Agency (KREDA). Both these agencies are registered as Societies under the Jammu & Kashmir Societies Registration Act 1941.
- The approach is to meet power requirements through Micro/Mini/Small Hydel Project, Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) System and other Solar Thermal Systems and use solar thermal systems for water heating, space heating, cooking requirements.

The Ladakh Renewable Energy Development Agency (LREDA) is the nodal agency for implementation in Ladakh of all non-conventional energy programmes of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Government of India.
LREDA was first known as the Non-Conventional Energy Cell, established as an act of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council in 1995. In 2000 the name was changed to LREDA.

Recent Important Initiatives in Ladakh Region

PowerGrid completes extending grid connectivity to Leh-Ladakh region region in J&K.

Key Highlights

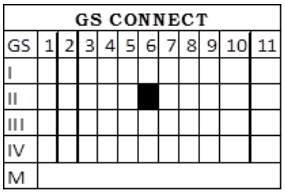
- ❖ First-time ever in India that any 220kV voltage level substation is built at a high altitude of over 11,500 ft.
- ❖ POWERGRID has successfully completed and charged 220 kV S/c Leh - Khalsti Line section of 220 KV S/c Alusteng (Srinagar) - Leh Transmission line, along with 220/66 kV GIS sub-stations at Leh and Khalsti.
- ❖ Balance sections of this project, namely Khalsti-Kargil-Drass-Alusteng(Srinagar) section is under progress, which upon completion, will facilitate Transfer of power to Ladakh region, directly from Northern Grid, in all seasons, with reliability.

PEPPER IT WITH
Nimmo Bazgo HEP, POWERGRID

## National Rural Drinking Water Programme

In News

The Union Cabinet has accorded its approval for continuation and restructuring of National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) to make it outcome-based, competitive and better monitored with increased focus on sustainability (functionality) of schemes to ensure good quality service delivery to the rural population.




Key Highlights

1. A sum of Rs. 23,050 crore has been approved for the programme for the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC) period 2017-18 to 2019-20.
2. A new Sub-programme under NRDWP viz. National Water Quality Sub-Mission (NWQSM) which has been started by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation in February 2017 will address the urgent need for providing clean drinking water in about 28000 Arsenic & Fluoride affected habitations (already identified).
3. The restructuring will make the programme flexible, result-oriented, competitive, and will enable the Ministry to reach the goal of increasing coverage of sustainable Piped Water Supply.

PEPPER IT WITH
Mihir Shah committee on water, NWQSM, IMIS, IWW

NRDWP

- ❖ The aim and objective of National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) is to provide every rural person with adequate safe water for drinking, cooking and other basic domestic needs on a sustainable basis, with a minimum water quality standard, which should be conveniently accessible at all times and in all situations.



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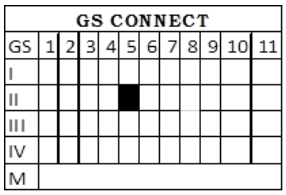
- The NRDWP was started in 2009, with a major emphasis on ensuring sustainability (source) of water availability in terms of potability, adequacy, convenience, affordability and equity. NRDWP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with 50.50 fund sharing between the Centre and the States.

## National Power Portal (NPP)

### In News




Recently the government has launched the National Power Portal )NPP (a Centralized Platform for Collation and Dissemination of Indian Power Sector Information.

### What is NPP?

NPP is a centralised system for Indian Power Sector which facilitates online data capture/ input (daily, monthly, annually) from generation, transmission and distribution utilities in the country and disseminate Power Sector Information (operational, capacity, demand, supply, consumption etc.) through various analysed reports, graphs, statistics for generation, transmission and distribution at all India, region, state level for central, state and private sector.

PEPPER IT WITH DDUGJY, UDAY

### Highlights

1. The NPP Dashboard has been designed and developed to disseminate analyzed information about the sector through GIS enabled navigation and visualization chart windows on capacity, generation, transmission, distribution at national, state, DISCOM, town, feeder level and scheme based funding to states.
2. The Dashboard would also act as the single point interface for all Power Sector Apps launched previously by the Ministry, like TARANG, UJALA, VIDYUT PRAVAH, GARV, URJA, MERIT.
3. The Nodal Agency for implementation of NPP and its operational control is Central Electricity Authority (CEA). The system has been conceptualized, designed and developed by National Informatics Centre (NIC).

### TARANG (Transmission App for Real Time Monitoring and Growth)

This web portal monitors the progress of Transmission System in the country, both Inter State and Intra State Transmission Projects through Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) as well as Regulated Tariff Mechanism.This web portal also shows the prospective upcoming Inter State as well as Intra State Projects along with NITs being floated by different Transmission Utilities Pan India.

### UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All)

The programme is designed to reduce energy consumption in the lighting sector and to promote LED based efficient lighting products to domestic consumers with a target to replace 770 million incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs by March, 2019.

Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), has been designated as the implementing agency for this programme.

### Vidyut PRAVAH- Electricity, Price Availability and Highlights

The mobile application provides highlights of the power availability in the country on real time basis. The mobile application will empower the Common People to demand 24x7 power from the States. The Vidyut PRAVAH mobile application provides data pertaining to market price of power from power exchange, value of current all India demand in GW and all India and State shortage including peak hour and total energy shortage.



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## URJA MITRA App

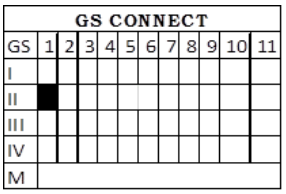
URJA MITRA empowers citizens by real time information sharing on power supply. The app is a first of its kind application which provides a central platform, Web-Portal as well as Mobile App, for State Power Distribution utilities to disseminate power outage information to urban/rural power consumers across India through SMS/email/push notifications.

## MERIT (Merit Order Despatch of Electricityfor Rejuvenation of Income and Transparency)

It is an e-bidding portal for providing e-Bidding solution to States to select Independent Power Producers (IPPs) for procurement of power by transferring their domestic coal under the scheme of flexibility in utilization of domestic coal.

# Anti-superstition Bill

## Introduction




There are several forms of superstitious practices, both in urban and rural areas which result in severe financial exploitation and mental agony for victims. Such practices have no place in a civilised society governed by the rule of law. The wide existence of such practices squarely infringes the right to life with dignity guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution of India and reinforced in several judgments of the Supreme Court.

The much-delayed and debated Karnataka Prevention and Eradication of Inhuman Evil Practices and Black Magic Bill, 2017 – popularly known as the "anti-**superstition" Bill** - which seeks to ban sinister superstitious practices was tabled in the Legislative Assembly recently.

The Bill, if cleared by the State legislature, is expected to put an end to various inhuman practices such as black magic, witchcraft, or any act in the name of religion that causes harm to humans and animals.

PEPPER IT WITH
Maharashtra Anti Superstition Act, 2013, Art 51

## What is not banned

- The form of the worship such as Pradakshina, Yatra, Parikrama performed at religious places
- Harikata, Keerthana, Pravachana, Bhajana, teaching of ancient and traditional learning and arts, practice, propagation and circulation
- Miracles of the deceased saints propagation, publicity and circulation of the same and the propagation, publicity and distribution of literature about miracles of the religious preachers which do not cause physical injury
- Performance of prayers, upasana and religious rituals at home, temple, darghas, gurdwara, pagoda, church, and other religious places which do not cause physical injury
- All religious celebrations, festivals, prayers, procession and other act relating other rituals
- Piercing of ears and nose of children in accordance with rituals and performance of religious ritual such as Kesh Lochan by the Jains
- Advice in regard to vaastu shasthra, and advice by jyothishya and other astrologers

## What is banned

- Facilitating any person or persons roll over (uruli seve) on the leaves of left-over food by other persons in any public or religious places or similar practices that violate human dignity, also known as made snana
- Coercing any person to perform fire-walk at the time of jatras/religious festivals, causing physical injury
- Practice of piercing from rods from one side of jaw to another side of the jaw and including the tongue (*baibiga* practice)
- Forcing person to carry on evil practices such as killing of an animal by biting its neck (gaavu), that cause harm to public health nuisance
- Invoking black magic or performing maata



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- Declaring possession by a purported divine or spiritual entity, and using such exorcism
- Aghory acts and Tantric acts including physical and sexual exploitation
- Claiming to change the sex of a fetus in womb of a woman
- Persuading, propagating or facilitating rituals that involve self-inflicted injuries such as hanging from a hook: inserted into the body (*sidi*) or pulling a chariot by hook inserted into the body
- Practicing evil practices against women by forcing isolation, prohibiting re-entry into the village or facilitating segregation of menstruating, or pregnant women; and subjecting women to inhuman and humiliating practices such as parading them naked in the name of worship, or "betthale seve".

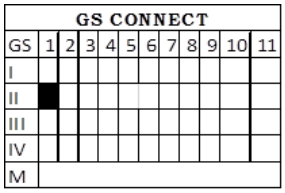
The Bill proposes appointment of police officers as vigilance officers to monitor violations of the provisions of the law and its rules. Persons who obstruct the discharge of duties of the vigilance officer would be punished with imprisonment of not less than three months and a fine up to Rs. 5,000 or both.

Way Ahead

The Bill would thus enable the development of the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform, a fundamental duty of every citizen under Article 51A(h) of the Constitution of India. At the same time by preventing the perpetuation of superstitious practices, it would allow them to lead a life of dignity, guaranteed under the Constitution.

## Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016

Evolution of transgender legislation




1. In February 2014, the Supreme Court passed a landmark judgement, paving the way for enshrining the rights of transgenders in law. The apex court deemed that individuals had the right to the self-identification of their sexual orientation. It ruled that the fundamental rights granted by the Constitution are equally applicable to transgenders who constitute the 'third gender'.
2. The first effort at framing legislation for the same was made in December 2014 by Tiruchi Siva, a Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) Rajya Sabha MP. The Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014, was introduced as a Private Member's Bill in the Rajya Sabha.
3. After consultation with legal experts and transgender activists, the 2015 draft Bill was sent to the Law Ministry. It was introduced in the Lok Sabha in August 2016 after considerable revision to the 2015 draft.
4. The ministry is set to re-introduce its original version of The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) 2016 Bill, in the winter session of Parliament.

Highlights of the Bill

1. The Bill defines a transgender person as one who is partly female or male; or a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male. In addition, the person's gender must not match the gender assigned at birth, and includes trans-men, trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender-queers.
2. A transgender person must obtain a certificate of identity as proof of recognition of identity as a transgender person and to invoke rights under the Bill.
3. Such a certificate would be granted by the District Magistrate on the recommendation of a Screening Committee. The Committee would comprise a medical officer, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government official, and a transgender person.
4. The Bill prohibits discrimination against a transgender person in areas such as education, employment, and healthcare. It directs the central and state governments to provide welfare schemes in these areas.
5. Offences like compelling a transgender person to beg, denial of access to a public place, physical and sexual abuse, etc. would attract up to two years' imprisonment and a fine.

Key Issues

- The Supreme Court has held that the right to self-identification of gender is part of the



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right to dignity and autonomy under Article 21 of the Constitution. However, objective criteria may be required to determine one's gender in order to be eligible for entitlements.

- The Bill states that a person recognised as 'transgender' would have the right to 'self-perceived' gender identity. However, it does not provide for the enforcement of such a right. A District Screening Committee would issue a certificate of identity to recognise transgender persons.
- The definition of 'transgender persons' in the Bill is at variance with the definitions recognised by international bodies and experts in India.
- The Bill includes terms like 'trans-men', 'trans-women', persons with 'intersex variations' and 'gender-queers' in its definition of transgender persons. However, these terms have not been defined.

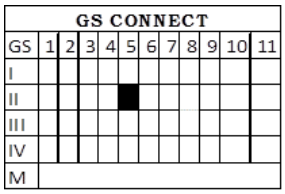
Way Forward

The ambiguity in the definition of the "third sex" lends itself to misinterpretation. Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which has been used to criminalise non-heterosexual sex, draws many transgenders into its net. Non-conformist sexual orientation is scoffed at and transgenders often find themselves at the receiving end of disproportionate attention from law enforcement agencies. However, the Supreme Court ruling on August 24, 2017, that the Right to Privacy was a fundamental right, and was thereby applicable to the protection of sexual orientation of citizens gave a reprieve to the LGBTQ community. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 is slated to be re-introduced in winter session of Parliament which starts on December 15, 2017.

## North East Development Summit

About

"North East Development Summit" was held on 21-22 November 2017 at Imphal, Manipur, is an effort to highlight and explore the potential of North East India in further establishing itself as a land hub of India's Act East Policy.




This is a multi-modal programme, across land, water and air. And it refers both to connectivity within India as well as to connectivity between India and its eastern and Southeast Asian neighbours.

The most prominent is of course the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway. In addition, an air cargo terminal complex is being planned at Imphal International Airport. Rail links are being enhanced. Jiribam is connected by a broad gauge line, and Imphal railway station has already been inaugurated. Finally, the regional connectivity scheme of the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation is giving a push to affordable air links in the region and particularly in Manipur.

The summit opened amid a 26-hour strike called by Coordination Committee, an umbrella organisation of six insurgent groups, as a protest against Kovind's visit.

Key Focus Areas

1. Trade& Investment
2. Connectivity& Infrastructure Development
3. Tourism Development in North-East India
4. Skill Development, Capacity Building and Entrepreneurship

PEPPER IT WITH
Hunar haat, Keibul Lamjao National Park

Manipur Shangai Festival

- Every year the State of Manipur celebrates the "Manipur Sangai Festival" from 21st to 30th November. **The 'Festival' is** named after the State animal, Sangai, the brow-antlered deer found only in Manipur. It started in the year 2010 and has grown over the years into a big platform for Manipur to showcase its rich tradition and culture to the world.
- The Ras Leela will form an important part of the dance performances at the Manipur Sangai Festival 2017 besides the various other folk dance performances like the Kabui Naga dance, Bamboo dance, Maibi dance, Lai Haraoba dance, Khamba Thoibi dance etc. which will be showcased at the festival.



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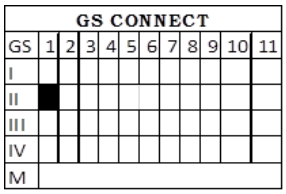
- Manipur's famous martial arts- Thang Ta (a combination Spear & Sword skills), Yubi-Lakpi (a game played with greased coconut like rugby), Mukna Kangjei (a game that combines hockey and wrestling), and Sagol Kangjei- Modern Polo (believed to have evolved in Manipur) will all form part of the festival.
- Manipur's popular dishes include Nga-thongba (fish curry), Eromba (a dish prepared with boiled vegetables and fermented fish), Ooti (mustard beans), Bora (pakoda), Paknam (a baked cake of gram flour mixed with other ingredients), Singju (a spicy hot traditional salad), and Brown-rice Kheer etc.
- The President called Manipur the heartland of Indian football. In the Under-17 World Cup hosted by India, our inexperienced but determined boys put up a fighting show – and eight of the 21 members of our national team were from Manipur. This list included the captain Amarjit Singh Kiyam and the gallant goal-keeper Dheeraj Singh Moirangthem

Way Forward

The Northeast is a natural partner in India's 'Act East Policy', being our land bridge to Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the Act East Policy is a means to strengthen the stability, economy and prospects of our North Eastern region. The Act East Policy can significantly factor in ending the geographical isolation of India's North Eastern Region and transforming it into a bridgehead for India to the booming ASEAN markets and its extended neighbourhood. Given the economic potential as well as the geo-political importance of the region the North East Region lies at the core of India's Act East Policy. The focus is now on economic development and addressing 'trust deficit'. The opening up of the landlocked NER economically to ASEAN countries and extended neighbours is considered as a potent means of conflict transformation. The aspect of economic linkages should be explored and nurtured to further strengthen ties and contribute in the development of the North-East India.

## Space Activities Bill, 2017

Background




Over a period, with the logical evolution of space activities in India from conceptual, experimental, operational, commercial and further expansion phases, the demands for space systems, applications and services for national needs and beyond have been rapidly growing. This scenario also encourages the participation of Indian industry and service providers at much higher levels in all round space activities under the technical guidance and authorization of the Government through Department of Space. Thus there is a need for national space legislation for supporting the overall growth of the space activities in India.

International Treaty Obligations on Outer Space Activities

1. Internationally, the outer space activities are governed by relevant chapters of international law in general and by United Nations' (UN) Treaties and principles evolved under UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) in particular. Basic tenets of treaty obligations, namely, **'bearing International responsibility' and 'liability for damages caused by space activities and space objects' are more applicable to a State** Party, where space activities are performed by non-governmental/ private sectors. Hence, non-governmental space activities are required to be licensed.
2. A Model Law on National Space Legislation was formulated and submitted by International Law Association (ILA), to the UN Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS) in 2013. Based on this reference, the draft Bill on National space activities was taken up for development with necessary customization to match with the Indian context of space activities.

PEPPER IT WITH ILA, UNCOPUOS, SRO

3. Japan and China are in the process of formulating their national space act. France has a Space Authorization Act for providing commercial space activities through Arianespace.
4. India is a State Party to major treaties of UN on outer space activities and has been performing space activities in compliance with the obligations of UN Treaties on Outer Space



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activities under Governmental envelope.

## Key Highlights of Space Activities Bill, 2017

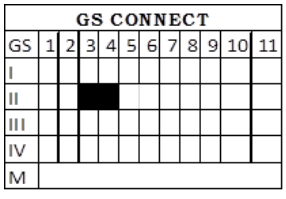
1. The provisions of this Act shall apply to every citizen of India in India or outside India and every legal or juridical person, including Governmental, non-Governmental or private sector agency, company, corporate body registered or incorporated in India and engaged in any space activity in India or outside India.
2. "commercial space activity" means a space activity which generates or is capable of generating revenue or profit;
3. "space object" means,—(i) any object launched or intended to be launched, on an orbital trajectory around the earth or to a destination beyond the earth orbit; (ii) any device, the purpose of which is to launch an object on a trajectory under sub-clause (i), even when such a device is operated without payload for the purpose of its development and validation phase.
4. Regulatory Mechanism: It shall be the duty of the Central Government to put in place a mechanism and to take all such steps to promote the growth of every matter relating to space activity including exploration and use of outer space and foster the development of scientific and technical potential in the sector and for the purposes of performing its functions, namely :
   - ✓ frame policies
   - ✓ grant, transfer, vary, suspend or terminate licence to any person;
   - ✓ regulate the procedures for conduct and operation of space activity;
   - ✓ grant, transfer, vary, suspend or terminate licence to any person;
   - ✓ ensure safety requirements and safety measures in relation to any space activity;
   - ✓ monitor the conformity of space activity with international space agreements
5. Offence & Penalties: Imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than one year but which may extend to three years or with fine which shall not be less than one crore rupees or with both and in case of continuing offence, with an additional fine which may extend to fifty lakh rupees for every day during which the offence (commercial space activity without authorisation) continues.
6. Authorisation and Licence: Establish and notify the appropriate mechanism for licencing and procedures including eligibility criteria, and fees for licence and conduct of any commercial space activity in compliance with any international treaty on outer space activity.

## Way Forward

India's space activities are very unique towards delivering the results through various successful accomplishments. Today, the space technology and applications are used as enabling tools for national development and governance. Hence, it was considered that introduction of a space specific legal regime should only enable further growth of space activities in India, rather than merely a regulatory or restrictive regime. It needs to facilitate private sector participation in space activities under authorization and supervision by the Government.

# Inter-State Council

Article 263 of the Constitution of India provides for the establishment of an Inter-State Council. Government of India accepted the recommendation of the Sarkaria Commission to set-up an Inter-State Council.




## Objectives

1. Create a strong institutional framework to promote and support cooperative federalism in the country.
2. Activate the Inter-State Council and Zonal Councils by organizing its regular meetings.
3. Facilitate consideration of all pending and emerging issues of Centre State and Inter-State relations by the Zonal Councils and Inter- State Council.



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4. Develop a sound system of monitoring the implementation of the recommendations of the Inter-State Council and Zonal Councils.

The Council consists of:-

1. Prime Minister – Chairman
2. Chief Ministers of all States – Members
3. Chief Ministers of Union Territories having a Legislative Assembly and Administrators of UTs not having a Legislative Assembly – Members
4. Six Ministers of Cabinet rank in the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the Prime Minister – Members

The Sarkaria Commission recommendations:

a) A permanent Inter-State Council called the Inter-Governmental Council (IGC) should be set up under Article 263.

b) The IGC should be charged with the duties set out in clauses (b) and (c) of Article 263, other than socio-economic planning and development.

Art 263. Provisions with respect to an inter-State Council – If at any time it appears to the President that the public interests would be served by the establishment of a Council charged with the duty of –

(a) Inquiring into and advising upon disputes which may have arisen between States;

(b) Investigating and discussing subjects in which some or all of the States, or the Union and one or more of the States, have a common interest; or

(c) Making recommendations upon any such subject and, in particular, recommendations for the better co-ordination of policy and action with respect to that subject, it shall be lawful for the President by order to establish such a Council, and to define the nature of the duties to be performed by it and its organization and procedure."

Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommendations:

a) The Inter-State Council must be given the complete role provided to it under the Constitution i.e. both conflict resolution and better coordination of policy and action in matters of interest to the Union and States. For resolution of conflicts, whether inter-State or Union-State, the mechanism of enquiring and advising, even without having the power to adjudicate, envisaged by clause (a) of Article 263 can be an effective method to resolve disputes.

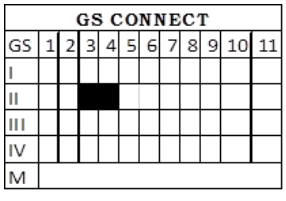
b) The Inter-State Council should be constituted as and when the need in that behalf arises and that the Council need not exist in perpetuity. The Council could best serve its purpose as a pro tem body with a flexible composition suited to its term of reference. The present omnibus Council may be dissolved. There should not be any bar or impediment for constituting more than one Council at a given time with different composition for each to consider different disputes or other matters of concern to different States and the Union. This approach would also facilitate meaningful, result-oriented discussions by parties directly interested in an item and facilitate time-bound solutions.

PEPPER IT WITH
Zonal Council, Punchhi Commission, NCRWC

## Competition Commission of India (CCI)

In News

The CCI has levied a penalty of ₹52.24 crore on the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for abuse of its dominant position under provision of Competition Act 2002.




Competition Act 2002

The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.



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History

In the wake of liberalization and privatization that was triggered in India in early nineties, a realization gathered momentum that the existing Monopolistic and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 ("MRTP Act") was not equipped adequately enough to tackle the competition aspect of the Indian economy. With starting of the globalization process, Indian enterprises started facing the heat of competition from domestic players as well as from global giants, which called for level playing field and investor-friendly environment. Hence, need arose with regard to competition laws to shift the focus from curbing monopolies to encouraging companies to invest and grow.

PEPPER IT WITH
BCCI, Competition Advocacy, Lodha Com.

In line with the international trend and to cope up with the changing realities India, consequently, enacted the Competition Act, 2002 to supersede and replace the MRTP Act.

Objectives

1. To check anti-competitive practices
2. To prohibit abuse of dominance
3. Regulation of combinations.
4. To provide for the establishment of CCI, a quasi-judicial body to perform below mentioned duties

Competition Commission of India

CCI is a statutory body of India entrusted with enforcing Competition Act 2002 and regulating anti-competitive practices in the country to prevent activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.

Composition

CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

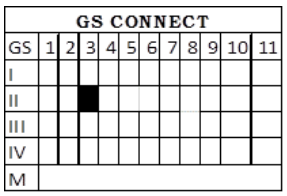
Functions & Powers

1. It is the duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
2. The Commission is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.
3. CCI has the power to enquire into unfair agreements or abuse of dominant position or combinations taking place outside India but having adverse effect on competition in India.
4. CCI has been vested with the powers of a civil court including those provided under sections 240 and 240A of the Companies Act, 1956 on an "Inspector of Investigation" while trying a suit, including the power to summon and examine any person on oath, requiring the discovery and production of documents and receiving evidence on affidavits.
5. To promote professionalism, transparency, resolve and wisdom in enforcement.
6. CCI has power to impose penalties for irregularities from Competition Act

## Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)

In News

The HEFA Board recently approved projects for Rs. 2,066.73 Cr for six institutions – IITs Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Kharagpur, Kanpur and NIT Suratkal.




About HEFA

The HEFA would be formed as a SPV within a PSU Bank/ Government-owned-NBFC (Promoter). It would leverage the equity to raise up to Rs. 20,000 crore for funding projects for infrastructure and development of world class Labs in IITs/IIMs/NITs and such other institutions.

PEPPER IT WITH
HEERA, UGC

Objectives



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- ✓ The creation of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) is to give a major push for creation of high quality infrastructure in premier educational institutions.
- ✓ The HEFA would also mobilise CSR funds from PSUs/Corporates, which would in turn be released for promoting research and innovation in these institutions on grant basis.
- ✓ The fund will be used to finance capital expenditure for building quality infrastructure in IITs, NITs, IIITs and IISERs and central universities.

Operationalising HEFA

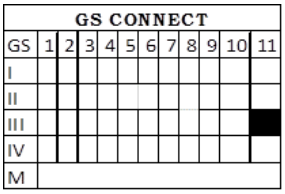
- The HEFA was registered as a Section – 8 Company under the Companies Act on 31st May 2017. Canara Bank has been identified as the partner for setting up the Company.
- Government has released Rs. 250 Cr equity and the Canara Bank has given Rs. 50 Cr equity in the HEFA. RBI has granted a license under the RBI Act for HEFA to operate as NBFC on 21stNovember 2017 and to leverage the equity to mobilise money from market as per the requirements of the institutions.

Modalities of operation of HEFA

- The HEFA would finance the civil and lab infrastructure projects through a 10-year loan. The principal portion of the loan will be repaid through the 'internal accruals' (earned through the fee receipts, research earnings etc) of the institutions.
- For joining as members, the Institution should agree to escrow a specific amount from their internal accruals to HEFA for a period of 10 years.

## Paradise Paper

### What are the Paradise Papers?




The Paradise Papers are a huge leak of financial documents that throw light on the top end of the world of offshore finance.

A number of stories are appearing in a week-long expose of how politicians, multinationals, celebrities and high-net-worth individuals use complex structures to protect their cash from higher taxes.

As with last year's Panama Papers leak, the documents were obtained by the German newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung, which called in the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to oversee the investigation. The Paradise Papers name was chosen because of the idyllic profiles of many of the offshore jurisdictions whose workings are unveiled, including Bermuda, the HQ of the main company involved, Appleby. It also dovetails nicely with the French term for a tax haven - paradis fiscal.

BBC Panorama and the Guardian are among the nearly 100 media groups investigating the Paradise Papers.

Paradise Papers' expose: 714 Indian entities

### Where do the Paradise Papers come from?

There are more than 1,400GB of data, containing about 13.4 million documents. Some 6.8 million come from the offshore legal service provider Appleby and corporate services provider Estera. The two operated together under the Appleby name until Estera became independent in 2016. Another six million documents come from corporate registries in some 19 jurisdictions, mostly in the Caribbean. A smaller amount comes from the Singapore-based international trust and corporate services provider, Asiaciti Trust. The

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists is a global network of more than 200 investigative journalists in 70 countries who collaborate on in-depth investigative stories.

Founded in 1997 by the respected American journalist Chuck Lewis, ICIJ was launched as a project of the Center for Public Integrity, focusing on issues that do not stop at national frontiers: cross-border crime, corruption, and the accountability of power.

ICIJ is governed by three committees – a traditional board of directors with a fiduciary role; an Advisory Committee made of supporters and experienced investigative journalists; and an ICIJ Network Committee.



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leaked data covers seven decades, from 1950 to 2016.

### What is Appleby?

A law firm that helps corporations, financial institutions and high-net-worth individuals set up and register companies in offshore jurisdictions.

Founded in Bermuda and with a history dating back to the 1890s, it has become one of the largest and best known of about 10 major companies involved in the specialist arena. The leak shows the US dominates Appleby's client register, with more than 31,000 US addresses for clients. There were more than 14,000 UK addresses and 12,000 in Bermuda.

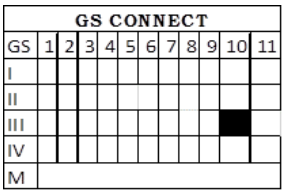
### What exactly is a tax haven?

Tax haven is the term usually used in the media and public, whereas the industry would prefer the term offshore financial centre (OFC). It is essentially a financial jurisdiction outside the regulations of your own nation used by companies and individuals to lower their taxes on profits or assets. They are usually secretive and stable. They are also often small islands, many of them UK Crown Dependencies or Overseas Territories, but not exclusively so. Nations such as Switzerland, Ireland and the Netherlands have similar tax reducing mechanisms, while the UK and the US are leading nations providing services that facilitate the use of OFCs.

PEPPER IT WITH
Panama Paper,
Mossack Fonseca

## Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) goes vernacular

### In News




In the first organised campaign by a terrorist group to use the Internet to recruit support across India, AQIS has begun online distribution of Tamil, Bengali and Hindi translations of key jihadists.

The translations, obtained by 'The Indian Express', range from excerpts from magazines like al-Risalah and Inspire, to ideological tracts by the jihadist leadership.

The organisation's vernacular push reflects the increasing reliance of the jihadist movement on recruits from states in the southern, western and eastern region.

### About AQIS

Type of Organization: Insurgent, non-state actor, terrorist, transnational, violent

Ideologies and Affiliations: Al-Qaeda/affiliate, Islamist, jihadist, Qutbist, Salafist, Sunni, takfiri

Place of Origin: Pakistan (suspected)

Year of Origin: September 2014

Founder(s): Ayman al-Zawahiri and Asim Umar

Places of Operation: Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Bangladesh, and Kashmir

### Counter Extremism Project

The Counter Extremism Project (CEP) is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, international policy organization formed to combat the growing threat from extremist ideologies. Led by a renowned group of former world leaders and diplomats it combats extremism by pressuring financial and material support networks; countering the narrative of extremists and their online recruitment; and advocating for smart laws, policies, and regulations.

Extremists are spreading their ideology and recruiting support across the globe, posing a complex and urgent challenge that cannot be addressed by government alone. There is a responsibility for private groups and individuals to organize in opposition to extremists. To this end, CEP is:

- ✓ Assembling an extensive research and analysis database on extremist groups and their networks of support, providing an indispensable resource to governments, the media, NGOs and civil society organizations, and the general public;
- ✓ Exposing channels of financial and material support to extremist groups;
- ✓ Using the latest communications, social media, and technological tools to identify and reveal the extremist threat and directly counter extremist ideology and recruitment online; and



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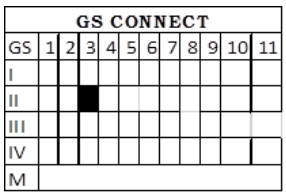
- ✓ Assisting policymakers around the world to devise legislation and regulations that effectively combat extremism.

**India's initiatives against AQIS**

- Operation Chakravyuh
- India-Philippines Counterterrorism Cooperation
- Delhi Dialogue, held earlier this year in July, which discussed connectivity, cybersecurity, and sociopolitical issues.

## National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA)




### In News

The NPPA has capped the prices of 51 essential formulations, including those used for the treatment of cancer, pain, heart conditions and skin problems. The prices have been slashed in the range of 6 to 53 per cent.

### NPPA

- NPPA is an organization of the Government of India which was established, inter alia, to fix/ revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of the medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 1995.
- The organization is also entrusted with the task of recovering amounts overcharged by manufacturers for the controlled drugs from the consumers.
- It also monitors the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels.

### Functions

1. To implement and enforce the provisions of the Drugs (Prices Control) Order in accordance with the powers delegated to it.
2. to deal with all legal matters arising out of the decisions of the Authority;
3. to monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps;
4. to collect/ maintain data on production, exports and imports, market share of individual companies, profitability of companies etc, for bulk drugs and formulations;
5. to undertake and/ or sponsor relevant studies in respect of pricing of drugs/ pharmaceuticals;
6. to recruit/ appoint the officers and other staff members of the Authority, as per rules and procedures laid down by the Government;
7. to render advice to the Central Government on changes/ revisions in the drug policy;
8. to render assistance to the Central Government in the parliamentary matters relating to the drug pricing.

PEPPER IT WITH
DPCO 2013, NLEM, Pharma Jan Samadhan

### Organisation

a) Chairman
b) Member Secretary
c) Advisor

Drugs (Prices Control) Order, 2013 (DPCO) was enacted with a view of enhancing the accessibility and affordability of essential medicines at reasonable prices to the poor and needy while providing sufficient opportunity for innovation and competition to support the growth of the Pharmaceutical Industry.

Under the provisions of DPCO, the prices of only those medicines are fixed which are in the National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM), numbering about 850 against more than 6,000 medicines available in the market of various strengths and dosages. This constitutes approximately 17% of the total pharmaceuticals market, in value terms.

### Important issues under consideration

i) treating the drugs which have become non-scheduled as non-scheduled drugs without any freezing of their prices for a further year;



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ii) revision of the list of scheduled medicines on the basis of revision of NLEM by incorporating only additions and deletions to the list so that the prices of only "new medicines" which are added to the NLEM will be fixed by NPPA;
iii) limiting the determination of overcharged amount of a medicine found to be sold at higher than the ceiling price to the stock available with the defaulter;
iv) In case of negative WPI, mandating the NPPA to change the ceiling price of scheduled drugs and not require the individual drugs to also reduce their MRPs

## Pradhan Mantri Mahila Shakti Kendra Yojna (PMMSKY)

Ministry of Women and Child Development under Umbrella Scheme "Mission for Protection and Empowerment for Women" with the assent of CCEA (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs) has recently launched PMMSKY.

GS CONNECT

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### Objectives

1. The approved sub-schemes are social sector welfare schemes especially for care, protection and development of women.
2. It will also aim at improvement in declining Child Sex Ratio; ensuring survival & protection of the girl child; ensuring her education, and empowering her to fulfil her potential.
3. It will provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through training and capacity building.

PEPPER IT WITH
Swadhar Grehs, OSC, Mahila Police Volunteers scheme

### Key Highlights

- ✓ The government plans to reach the 115 most backward districts in the country with 920 Mahila Shakti Kendra.
- ✓ The financial outlay during 2017-18 to 2019-20 will be Rs.3,636.85 crore with a Central Share of approximately Rs.3,084.96 crore.
- ✓ The new scheme PMMSK is envisaged to work at various levels i.e. National level, State level, District and Block level Centres will provide support to PMMSK and also give a foothold to BBBP.
- ✓ Student volunteers will encourage the spirit of voluntary community service and gender equality. These students will serve "agents of change" and have a lasting impact on their communities and the nation.

- ✓ One common Task Force shall be created at National, State and district level for planning, reviewing and monitoring all the sub-schemes in this Umbrella, with the objective of ensuring convergence of action and cost efficiency.
- ✓ The outcome based activities of student volunteers will be monitored through web based system. On completion, certificates for community service, will be displayed on national portal for verification and can also be used as resource /asset for the participating students in future.



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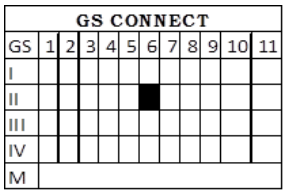
## Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY)

### In News




The Prime Minister reviewed the progress in implementation of the PMKKKY by using PRAGATI. He emphasised on District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) which should be utilized to strategically focus upon to eliminate major development issues or deficits that many districts currently face.

The objective of PMKKKY scheme:

PEPPER IT WITH PRAGATI, MMDRA Act 2015

1. to implement various developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining affected areas that complement the existing ongoing schemes/projects of State and Central Government
2. to minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people in mining districts
3. to ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for the affected people in mining areas

### Implementation

The PMKKKY is implemented by the District Mineral Foundations (DMFs) of the respective districts using the funds accruing to the DMF.

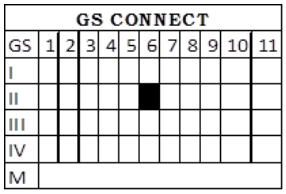
District Mineral Foundation (DMF) is a trust set up as a non-profit body under MMDRA Act 2015, in those districts affected by the mining works, to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining related operations. It is funded through the contributions from miners

### What are Directly and Indirectly affected area under PMKKKY?

a. Directly affected areas – where direct mining-related operations such as excavation, mining, blasting, beneficiation and waste disposal (overburdened dumps, tailing ponds, transport corridors etc.), etc. are located. Waste disposal leads to covering of water bodies, farm lands, road blocking, etc.

b. Indirectly affected areas – Those areas where local population is adversely affected on account of economic, social and environmental consequences due to mining-related operations. The major negative impacts of mining could be by way of deterioration of water, soil and air quality, reduction in stream flows and depletion of ground water, congestion and pollution due to mining operations, transportation of minerals, increased burden on existing infrastructure and resources

## UMANG




- Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG), a Digital India initiative of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) refers to the multiple government services being made accessible to you through UMANG mobile App, Website, SMS short code, and UMANG toll free Integrated Voice Response (IVR).
- UMANG intends to provide major services offered by Central and State Government departments, Local bodies and other utility services from private organizations. It provides a unified approach where citizens can install one application to avail multiple government services.
- UMANG provides seamless integration with popular customer centric services like Aadhaar, Digilocker passport, Pan, book a gas cylinder and know about your Provident fund account.



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# RKVY-RAFTAAR

## In News

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In a bid to incentivise States to increase allocations for agriculture and allied sectors the, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on approved the continuation of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) for three years — 2017-18 to 2019-20 —renaming it as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana-Remunerative Approaches for Agriculture and Allied sector Rejuvenation (RKVY-RAFTAAR).

PEPPER IT WITH
Saffron Mision, BGREI, TRFA

## Key Highlights

1. The financial allocation of the scheme will be Rs. 15,722 crore with the objective of making farming as a remunerative economic activity through strengthening the farmer's effort, risk mitigation and promoting agribusiness entrepreneurship.
2. RKVY-RAFTAAR funds would be provided to the States as 60:40 grants between Centre and States (90:10 for North Eastern States and Himalayan States).
3. Under the revamped scheme, about 50 per cent of the annual outlay will be provided for setting up infrastructure and assets, 30 per cent for value addition-linked production projects and 20 per cent of the outlay will be flexi-funds. (States can use this flexi-funds for supporting projects as per the local needs)
4. In addition, about 20 per cent of the annual outlay would be provided for implementing special sub-schemes of national priorities under RKVY-RAFTAAR.
5. 10 per cent of the annual outlay would be provided for innovation and agri-entrepreneur development through creating end-to-end solution, skill development and financial support for setting up the agri-enterprise.

Areas of focus under the RKVY

Agriculture Mechanization, Soil Health and Productivity, Development of Rainfed Farming Systems, Integrated Pest Management, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries, Sericulture, Organic and Bio-fertilizers

## Way Forward

The scheme will incentivise States in enhancing more allocation to agriculture and allied sectors. This will also strengthen farmers' efforts through creation of agriculture infrastructure that helps in supply of quality inputs, market facilities, etc. This will further promote agri-entrepreneurship and support business models that maximise returns to farmers.

## RKVY

- Concerned by the slow growth in the Agriculture and allied sectors, the National Development Council (NDC), in its meeting resolved that a special Additional Central Assistance Scheme (RKVY) be launched.
- The Department of Agriculture, in compliance of the above resolution and in consultation with the Planning Commission, has prepared the guidelines for the RKVY scheme, to be known as National Agriculture Development Programme (RKVY).
- The scheme provides considerable flexibility and autonomy to States in planning and executing programmes for incentivizing investment in agriculture and allied sectors. States initiate the process of decentralized planning for agriculture and allied sectors through preparation of District Agriculture Plans (DAPs) and State Agriculture Plan (SAP) based on agro-climatic conditions, availability of appropriate technology and natural resources.
- National priorities like Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI), Crop Diversification Program (CDP), Reclamation of Problem Soil (RPS), Foot & Mouth Disease - Control Program (FMD-CP), Saffron Mission, Accelerated Fodder Development Programme, etc. are being implemented through the window of RKVY.

The interim report of RKVY evaluation done by Institute of Economic Growth summarises that the income emanating from agriculture measured as the agricultural state domestic product (AGSDP) is higher in the post-RKVY period than in the pre-RKVY period.



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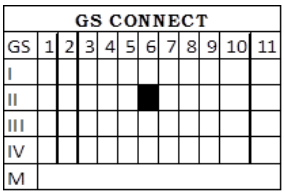
## Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana




### In News

Ministry of Communications launched a Pan India scholarship program for school children called Deen Dayal SPARSH Yojana to increase the reach of Philately.

### SPARSH

Under the scheme of SPARSH (Scholarship for Promotion of Aptitude & Research in Stamps as a Hobby), it is proposed to award annual scholarships to children of Standard VI to IX having good academic record and also pursuing Philately as a hobby through a competitive selection process in all postal circles.

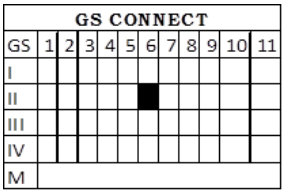
Under the DeenDayal SPARSH Yojana, it is proposed:

- Award 920 scholarships to students at PAN India for pursuing Philately as a hobby.
- Every Postal Circle will give max 40 scholarships to 10 students each from standards 6, 7, 8&9.
- The scholarship amount will be disbursed quarterly to regular students studying in class 6-9 in recognised schools.
- Scholarships will be provided to students who satisfy the eligibility condition and qualify in the selection procedure.
- The amount of Scholarship will be Rs. 6000/- per annum @ Rs. 500/- per month.

Philately is the collection and study of Postage stamps. Philately is called the king of hobbies because Stamp collection as a hobby has lot of educational benefits

Deen Dayal SPARSH scheme would be made based on the evaluation of Project work on Philately & performance in Philately Quiz conducted by the Circles.

## Coastal Berth Scheme of Sagarmala




### In News

The Ministry of Shipping has taken up projects worth Rs 2,302 crore for financial assistance under the Coastal Berth Scheme of the flagship Sagarmala Programme.

The Ministry, after due appraisal in consultation with NITI Aayog and Department of Expenditure, has extended the period of the scheme for three years, upto 31st March, 2020 and expanded its scope to cover capital dredging at Major Ports and preparation of DPR for coastal berth project, in Oct 2017.

### About scheme

- The Coastal Berth Scheme aims to provide financial support to ports or state governments for creation of infrastructure for movement of cargo and passenger by sea or national waterways.
- The projects under Coastal Berth Scheme of Sagarmala programme are distributed over 8 states with the highest number of 12 projects in Maharashtra, 10 projects each in Andhra Pradesh & Goa, 6 projects in Karnataka, 3 projects each in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, 2 projects in Gujarat and 1 project in West Bengal.
- The admissible financial assistance from Central Government is 50% of the total cost of the project subject to:
    a) a maximum of Rs 25 crore for projects relating to construction/up-gradation of coastal berths by Major/Non-Major Ports,

The project at Jawaharlal Nehru Port involves construction of a coastal berth (270m x 30m) and port craft jetty, reclamation and capital dredging in coastal berth. The estimated project cost is Rs. 170.20 crore and the project would be completed by March 2019



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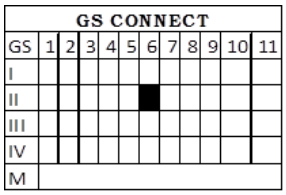
b) a maximum of Rs 10 crore for construction of platforms/jetties for hovercrafts & seaplanes by Ports/State Governments & passenger jetties in National Waterways and islands by State Governments,
c) a maximum of Rs 15 crore for mechanization of berths by Major/Non-Major

PEPPER IT WITH
Sagarmala, JNPT

- It aims to promote coastal shipping and increase its share in domestic cargo movement in India. Better infrastructure for coastal shipping will decongest rail and road network besides ensuring cost competitive and effective multi-modal transportation solution.

## Grahak Sadak Koyla Vitaran App




Recently Ministry of Railways & Coal has launched 'Grahak Sadak Koyla **Vitaran App'** benefitting customers of Coal India Limited (CIL) lifting coal through road mode.

### Objective of App

The App helps achieve transparency in despatch operations, as a tool to monitor, whether the despatches are made on the fair principle of 'First **in First Out'** and keeps track of all the activities from issuance of Sale Order to physical delivery of coal by road.

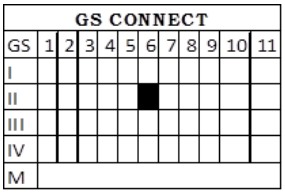
### Main Features

- ❖ The main features of the app are that it provides date-wise, truck-wise quantity of coal delivered against the Sale Orders and information related to Scheme-wise, Colliery-wise, Grade-wise, customer-wise details of Sale Orders issued during a period.
- ❖ In terms of loading it provides allotment verses lifting status in details from different sources truck by truck and summary of the despatch.
- ❖ The app also helps in logistics planning for lifting of coal in tune with the loading programmes.
- ❖ It further helps in improved planning of procurement, production and stock management by the customers.

### Way Forward

Coal India is addressing its customer needs in a big way and made 'ease of doing business' a major consumer commitment. The launching of the app is also one of the initiatives of CIL towards achieving the much cherished goal of 'Digital India' and transparency.

## OHEPEE Project




India Signs Loan Agreement with IBRD (World Bank) for US$ 119 Million for "Odisha Higher Education Programme for Excellence and Equity (OHEPEE) Project.

The Objective of the project is to improve the **quality of 'students'** equitable access to selected institutions and enhance governance of the higher education system in Odisha.

The OHEPEE, will support the Government of Odisha (GoO) in strengthening state-level initiatives of the OHEP through two components:

(i) OHEPEE program for results (PforR) program, and
(ii) a technical assistance (TA) component

Project Component: Result Areas are

1. Improved quality of and students' equitable access to selected institutions of higher education : Institutional Development Plan (IDP) Grants (performance –based Financing
2. Enhanced governance of the higher education system: (i) Improvement of governance in colleges (ii) Improvement of financial and procurement management and accounting in all government and government-aided colleges.

The closing date for the project is 30th November, 2022.



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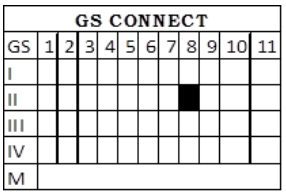
## IBRD

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) is a global development cooperative owned by 189 member countries. As the largest development bank in the world, it supports the World Bank Group's mission by providing loans, guarantees, risk management products, and advisory services to middle-income and creditworthy(mic) low-income countries, as well as by coordinating responses to regional and global challenges.

## IBRD Functions

- IBRD offers innovative financial solutions, including financial products (loans, guarantees, and risk management products) and knowledge and advisory services (including on a reimbursable basis) to governments at the national and subnational levels.
- IBRD supports government efforts to strengthen public financial management as well as improve the investment climate, address service delivery bottlenecks, and strengthen policies and institutions.

# India Youth Development Index and Report 2017




The Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD), Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, an Institute of National Importance has come out with Youth Development Index and Report 2017.

## India Youth Development Index 2017

Youth Development Index is a composite index of 19 indicators that reflect the socio-economic and political status of youth, besides their health and well-being. It is a multidimensional index that measures youth development in India on the basis of six domains that characterise structural features of Indian society. The domains are namely:

1. Education
2. Health
3. Work
4. Political Participation
5. Civic Participation
6. Social Inclusion

| SAARC Countries | YDI Score (2016) | YDI Global Rank 2016 | YDI Score (2010) | YDI Global Rank 2010 | HDI Score 2015 | HDI Rank 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Afghanistan | 0.440 | 167 | 0.407 | 171 | 0.465 | 171 |
| Bangladesh | 0.492 | 146 | 0.492 | 140 | 0.570 | 142 |
| Bhutan | 0.657 | 69 | 0.642 | 68 | 0.605 | 132 |
| India | 0.548 | 133 | 0.494 | 138 | 0.609 | 130 |
| Maldives | 0.665 | 62 | 0.669 | 48 | 0.706 | 104 |
| Nepal | 0.647 | 77 | 0.605 | 96 | 0.548 | 145 |
| Pakistan | 0.470 | 154 | 0.571 | 113 | 0.538 | 147 |
| Sri Lanka | 0.731 | 31 | 0.650 | 60 | 0.757 | 73 |

YDI facilitates comparison of youth development across the Indian states for various indicators. It enables the stakeholders to measure the current progress and assess the future needs of youth in varied segments for a better quality of life. YDI construction for India's youth is guided by Global YDI created by the Commonwealth. Global YDI is different from YDI constructed for India in one way; YDI for India adds a new domain i.e.social inclusion to assess the inclusiveness of societal progress as structural inequalities persist in Indian society. This construction helps to identify the gaps that require intensification of policy intervention.

PEPPER IT WITH
Youth Gender Development Index, National Youth Policy

## Global YDI by the Commonwealth

The YDI is a composite index of 18 indicators that collectively measure multi-dimensional progress on youth development in 183 countries, including 49 of the 53 Commonwealth countries. It has five domains measuring levels of education, health and well-being, employment and opportunity, political participation and civic participation for young people. The YDI is guided by the Commonwealth definition of youth as people between the ages of 15 and 29, while recognising that some countries and international institutions define youth differently.



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## India in Global context

YDI's rank of India at the global level in 2016 was 133 and it has declined from 98 in 2013 among 161 countries. Its position is 25 among the 51 Commonwealth countries.

## Top Indian States Ranking

HP & Puducherry Rank 1
Goa & Tamil Nadu Rank 2
Kerala & Mizoram Rank 3

## Uses of YDI

*1. Policy-Making*

Youth Development Index YDI can help the policy makers to review the present status of youth, identify the range of issues to be addressed, prioritise the areas for development intervention and review the current practices. YDI serves as an effective decision support tool for sound policy development, rational resource allocation, improving investment climate and expanding infrastructure. It can also be used as an observatory of social change.

*2. Programme Implementation*

It can be used as an effective monitoring and evaluation tool to measure the progress made, evaluate the effectiveness of implementation strategies and service delivery, and identify the institutional gaps and barriers. It can help them to improve the programme content and revise the implementation strategies.

*3. Academic & Research Institutions*

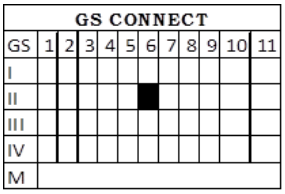
The YDI can be used by the researchers to survey the past trends in youth development and predict future. They can identify the priority areas of seminal research in the sphere of youth development, policy analysis, programme implementation and impact assessment.

## Way Ahead

Youth form an integral part of any society and are an essential part of the development process. India is witnessing a historic demographic dividend with its young population constituting 40% of the total population. Thus, India is gifted with unrivalled youth bulge with a competitive advantage over China, Japan and other developed countries. This young population of India is a valuable resource that can be channelised towards soci-economic development of the nation. To strengthen the policies and to design appropriate youth development programmes at various levels, there is a need for scientific database on the youth i.e. YDI , cutting across various sectors, so as to systematically identify the gaps and clearly delineate the needs and suitable interventions. Reliable data will not only facilitate designing programmes and policies but also enable to evolve measurable indicators and serve as benchmarks for assessing the development.

# Project Saksham

## In News




Under Ministry of Railways & Coal, a comprehensive plan for imparting training to all employees of Indian Railways is being prepared with a view to upgrade skill & knowledge. This comprehensive training programme named as "Project Saksham" will help boost productivity and efficiency.

## Objective

Under this plan, all employees in each zone will be put through a week's training in skills and knowledge relevant to their work area over next one year.

Project Saksham aims to upgrade the skillsets of 13 lakh-strong workforce of Indian Railways within time bound training of nine months.

## Saksham: (Scholarship to Differently Abled Students)

Saksham is a scheme of AICTE aimed at providing encouragement and support to especially abled children to pursue Technical Education. This an attempt to give every young student who is otherwise especially abled, the opportunity to study further and prepare for a successful future.

- ✓ Number of scholarships per annum: 1000



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- ✓ For Specially Abled students whose family income is less than Rs. 6 lakhs per annum

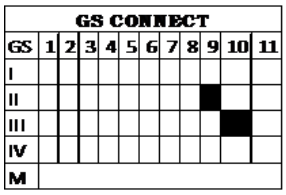
## Saksham in GST

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) recently cleared Rs 2,256 crore IT project Saksham of the Central Board of Excise and Customs, which will help in the implementation of the GST and integrate CBEC's system with the GSTN.

Main Highlights of the Project 'SAKSHAM' in GST are:

1. Expansion of the Indian Customs Single Window Interface for Facilitating Trade (SWIFT)
2. Implementation of Goods and Services Tax (GST),
3. Ease of Doing Business of Central Board of Excise and Customs and taking important initiatives under Digital India

## 7th Asian Energy Minister's Round Table




PEPPER IT WITH
OPEC, G 20

Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas participated in the 7th Asian Energy Ministers' Round Table organised by International Energy Forum (IEF). India is the current Chair of the IEF which is the largest inter-governmental organisation in the field of oil and gas comprising 72 member countries, accounting for 90% of global supply and demand of oil and gas. Members include developing, developed, OPEC, Non-OPEC and G20 countries. 18 of the G20 countries are members of IEF.

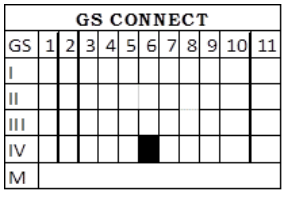
### India's Stand

India highlighted the importance of overcoming market and policy hurdles and move to a flexible, transparent and non-discriminatory global LNG trading regime which would expedite ushering in the golden age of gas. Efforts of the government to move to a gas based economy and the avenues for FDI in building infrastructure for gas including LNG terminals, pipelines, CGD etc were highlighted. The unprecedented leap of 30 places made by India in the ease of doing business and also how PM Ujjwala Scheme can be a model to be adopted in developing countries of Asia and Africa were discussed.

### About IEF

- The International Energy Forum (IEF) aims to foster greater mutual understanding and awareness of common energy interests among its members.
- The 72 Member Countries of the Forum are signatories to the IEF Charter, which outlines the framework of the global energy dialogue through this inter-governmental arrangement.
- Covering all six continents and accounting for around 90% of global supply and demand for oil and gas, the IEF is unique in that it comprises not only consuming and producing countries of the IEA and OPEC, but also Transit States and major players outside of their memberships, including Argentina, China, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa. Sitting alongside other important developed and developing economies on the 31 strong IEF Executive Board these key nations are active supporters of the global energy dialogue through the IEF.
- The IEF and the global energy dialogue are promoted by a permanent Secretariat of international staff based in the Diplomatic Quarter of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

## China offers to mediate dialogue between Bangladesh, Myanmar




China has expressed its willingness to facilitate a dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar to solve the Rohingya refugee crisis proposing a three-stage solution.

- ✓ The first stage is to persuade Myanmar to impose a ceasefire and stop the persecuted Rohingyas from fleeing into Bangladesh. It's also pitching for the return of those who've already entered Bangladesh.
- ✓ As a second step, Beijing wants Bangladesh and Myanmar to strengthen exchanges and find a solution "on the basis of equality".



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- ✓ The third stage involves asking the international community to help develop the backward Rakhine state in Myanmar, which is the home of Rohingyas.

**China's Interest**

1. China has emerged as a major investor in both Bangladesh and Myanmar and has been trying to persuade them to join its One Road One Belt (OBOR) programme.
2. Beijing is making similar attempts in Nepal, another neighbour of both India and China. However, it faced a setback when Nepal cancelled a Chinese proposal for a $2.5 billion hydroelectricity dam recently. Incidentally, Myanmar had cancelled a $3.5 billion hydroelectricity dam project proposed by a Chinese company three years back.
3. Besides resolving the dispute, Beijing is also competing with India's influence in these countries after successfully getting Nepal to accept some of its economic assistance offers.
4. China does not want the Rohingya issue to overshadow or slow down the progress of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor initiative.

The UN General Assembly's Third Committee, which focuses on human rights, called on Myanmar to end operations that have "led to the systematic violation and abuse of human rights" of Rohingya Muslims. A total of 135 countries voted in favour of the resolution and 10, including China, against it, while there were 26 abstentions. They often described by Amnesty International as one of the most persecuted people on earth.

## Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a global movement of more than 7 million people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all.

Through the detailed research and determined campaigning, it help fight abuses of human rights worldwide. These key areas in which AI deals.

1. Women's, children's, minorities' and indigenous rights
2. Ending torture
3. Abolition of the death penalty
4. Rights of refugees
5. Rights of prisoners of conscience
6. Protection of human dignity
7. Sexual and reproductive rights

Founder Peter Benenson (Labour Lawyer)
Headquarter London
Secretary-General Salil Shetty
Motto It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness

PEPPER IT WITH
Cox's Bazar,
ShareTheMeal

## Timeline

1961: A global movement for human rights begins. Lawyer Peter Benenson launches the 'Appeal **for Amnesty'** in the Observer newspaper, after two Portuguese students are jailed for raising a toast to freedom.

1963: The first prisoner of conscience is released, Ukrainian Archbishop Josyf Slipyi in Siberia. It sparks decades of tireless campaigning on behalf of people persecuted for their beliefs.

1972: Amnesty launches its first campaign against torture. 12 years later, the UN votes to combat torture worldwide with the Convention against Torture in 1984.

1980: Amnesty launches its first campaign against the death penalty.

1993: Amnesty campaigns for an International Criminal Court (ICC) to bring those responsible for genocides and war crimes to justice.

2014: After 20 years of pressure from Amnesty supporters, a life-saving global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) comes into force on 24 December 2014. It will help stop the flow of weapons fuelling atrocities around the world.



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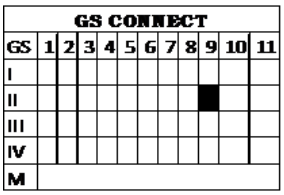
## India and Colombia



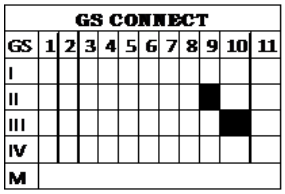

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for signing the Joint Interpretative Declaration (JID) between India and Colombia regarding the existing Agreement for the Promotion and Protection of Investments between India and Colombia signed in November.

Significance

- The JID would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing Agreement as it includes interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses, including, the definition of investor, definition of investment, Fair and Equitable Treatment (FET), National Treatment (NT) and Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment, expropriation, Investor - State Dispute Settlement provision and Denial of Benefits.
- Joint Interpretative Declarations/Statements in general play an important supplementary role in strengthening the investment treaty regime. With increasing Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) disputes, issuance of such statements is likely to have strong persuasive value before arbitration tribunals. Such pro-active approach by partners can foster a more predictable and coherent reading of treaty terms by arbitration tribunals.

PEPPER IT WITH BIT, MFN

## India asks UN to declare 2018 as international year of millets

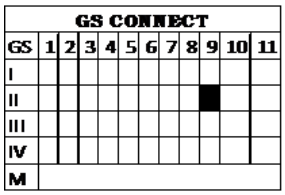



India has asked the United Nations to declare 2018 as the 'International Year of Millets' and promote it as nutrition-rich smart food across the world. A letter in this regard has been written to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres by Union Agriculture Ministry.

Reasons

1. There is a need to promote millets as the "awareness is low" among consumers, policy makers, industry and R&D sector. Sorghum, Bajra and Ragi are some popular millets in India. "Promotion of production and consumption of millets through conscious efforts at global level is likely to contribute substantially in the fight against the targeted hunger and mitigate the effects of climate change in the long run.
2. The yield of millets can be increased three times and they have multiple untapped uses such as food, feed, biofuels and brewing. Therefore, millets are smart food and good for consumers, farmers and the planet.
3. This will go a long way in popularising millets which would benefit future generation of farmers as well as consumers. Millets are nutritionally superior to wheat and rice owing to their higher level of protein with more balanced amino acid profile, crude fibre and minerals. They are traditionally grown in resource poor agro-climatic region.

## G20




The Ministry of Finance on Monday appointed former economic affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das as India's G20 Sherpa till December 31, 2018 for the Development Track of the grouping. There are two tracks in G-20 — Finance Track and Development Track. Finance Track is managed by the secretary (economic affairs) as India's Deputy to G-20 and the Development Track is coordinated by the Sherpa.

The Department of Economic Affairs will provide necessary support to the Sherpa.

Sherpa is a personal representative of the leaders participating at the G-20 and are responsible for thrashing out the details before the meeting of the leaders.



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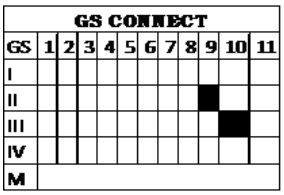
## Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (Apcert) Conference




The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) under the aegis of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology has organized the Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team (APCERT) Conference in New Delhi. This is the 15th Conference of APCERT and first ever conference in India and South Asia and is expected to be attended by 21 economies.

The conference theme is "Building Trust in the Digital Economy". The open session including industry, academia, civil society and Government stakeholders as participants. This conference covered contemporary topics around strategies of CERTs, Technology and Instruments for building trust in digitally evolving economies and best practices for handling cyber security in mobile and social media.

PEPPER IT WITH CERT-In

India was selected to be part of the steering committee of APCERT along with 6 (Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan) other countries to shape the agenda for the next 2 years across the region.

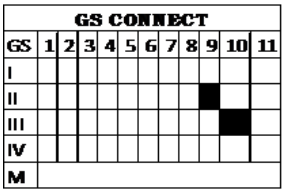
### Significance

1. Innovation in cyber security is a big focus of the Government. There are more than 100 cyber security product companies in India and it was proposed that in furtherance of the Public Procurement (Preference to Make in India) preference shall be provided by all procuring entities in the government to domestically manufactured / produced Cyber Security Products.
2. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology is in the process of working with Data Security Council of India to conduct Challenge Grant for cyber security as a means to encourage budding start-ups to develop innovative technologies.
3. In India, cyber security professionals got an opportunity to attend a highly content rich technical conference, interact with the Asia Pacific incident response leaders in cyber security and the International community got to see the skills and depth of some of the cyber security start-ups from India.

### About APCERT

1. APCERT (Asia Pacific Computer Emergency Response Team) is a coalition of CERTs (Computer Emergency Response Team) and CSIRTs (Computer Security Incident Response Teams) located in the Asia Pacific region, with operational focus to contribute to the Internet security with in the region, based on information sharing, trust and cooperation.
2. Currently, APCERT consists of 30 Operational Members from 21 economies and 3 Supporting Members.
3. APCERT will work to help create a safe, clean and reliable cyber space in the Asia Pacific Region through global collaboration.

## Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)




In a major breakthrough, trade ministers from 11 Pacific Rim countries reached a deal to proceed with the free-trade Trans-Pacific Partnership deal that was in doubt after US abandoned it. A statement was issued which said that an accord was reached on **"core elements" of the 11**-member pact.

The participant countries maintained "the high standards, overall balance and integrity of the TPP while ensuring the commercial and other interests of all participants and preserved the inherent right to regulate, including the flexibility of the parties to set legislative and regulatory priorities.

US pulled out of the deal as it prefers country-to-country deals and is seeking to renegotiate several major trade agreements to "put America first."



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## Significance

When Donald Trump abandoned the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in his very first week after being sworn in as U.S. President, there were doubts whether the trade agreement, painstakingly negotiated over more than a decade, would survive.

PEPPER IT WITH APEC, RCEP

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had termed the TPP without the United States — which contributed 60% of the combined Gross Domestic Product of the 12 members — as "meaningless". For the agreement to take effect, the pact requires domestic ratification, which is expected to be complete by 2019.

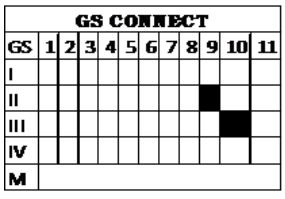
This major step taken by the 11 countries of the Pacific Rim excluding the U.S. is a reflection of two things. First, these countries recognise that multilateral free trade, contrary to any misgivings, is beneficial in the long run. The TPP in its current form has significant protections for labour and environment and is in this regard an advance over other free trade agreements. Second, the U.S.'s self-exclusion reflects a failure on the part of the Trump administration; studies have shown significant benefits in comparison to minor costs — in terms of jobs — to the U.S. on account of the pact.

As things stand, the pact without the U.S. can only be interpreted as yet another step that diminishes American power and the international order that it has so far led. Mr. Trump's agenda to pull his country out of multilateral agreements has coincided, ironically, with the rise of China as the leading world power promoting globalisation. Now the ASEAN-plus-six Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), on which China is pushing for an agreement, could benefit from complementarities with the CPTPP. India, which is also negotiating the RCEP, must utilise this opportunity to win concessions on services trade liberalisation as part of the plan.

## About TPP

- ✓ Twelve countries that border the Pacific Ocean signed up to the TPP in February 2016, representing roughly 40% of the world's economic output.
- ✓ The pact aimed to deepen economic ties between these nations, slashing tariffs and fostering trade to boost growth. Members had also hoped to foster a closer relationship on economic policies and regulation. The agreement was designed so that it could eventually create a new single market, something like that of the EU.
- ✓ The member states other than US are: Japan (the only country to have already ratified the pact) Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Brunei, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, Chile and Peru.

# The Steering Committee of SARTTAC




An Interim Meeting of the Steering Committee of the International **Monetary Fund (IMF)'s South Asia Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) was held to assess the Center's** activities since its inauguration in February 2017 and to review the Fiscal Year 2018 Work Plan.

## About SARTTAC

- ✓ The Center aims at helping its member countries strengthen their institutional and human capacity to design and implement macroeconomic and financial policies that promote growth and reduce poverty in a rapidly growing region that is home to one fifth of the world's population. SARTTAC will allow the IMF to meet more of the high demand for technical assistance and training from the region.
- ✓ SARTTAC is a collaborative venture between the IMF, the member countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka), and development partners.
- ✓ The IMF's South Asia Training and Technical Assistance Center (SARTTAC) was officially inaugurated by India's Ministry of Finance in New Delhi on February 13, 2017.



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- ✓ SARTTAC is a collaborative venture between the IMF, the member countries, and development partners. The center's strategic goal is to help its member countries strengthen their institutional and human capacity to design and implement macroeconomic and financial policies that promote growth and reduce poverty.

## Significance

South Asia is a rapidly growing region that is home to one fifth of the world's population. SARTTAC will allow the IMF to meet more of the high demand for technical assistance and training from the region. Through its team of international resident experts, SARTTAC is expected to become the focal point for the delivery of IMF capacity development services to South Asia.

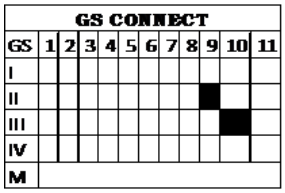
A global network of fourteen regional technical assistance and training centers anchor IMF support for economic institution building and are complemented by global thematic funds for capacity development. They are financed jointly by the IMF, external development partners, and member countries.

SARTTAC, the newest addition to the IMF's global network of fourteen regional centers, is a new kind of capacity development institution, fully integrating customized hands-on training with targeted technical advice in a range of macroeconomic and financial areas, and generating synergies between the two. SARTTAC is located in world class facilities in New Delhi and is financed mainly by its six member countries — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka — with additional support from Australia, the Republic of Korea, the European Union and the United Kingdom.

PEPPER IT WITH IMF reforms, BRICS replacing IMF

# 36th International Geological Congress

A high level delegation of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) comprising its President, visited India during 20-24 November 2017 to discuss the preparatory aspects of the 36th International Geological Congress (IGC) to be held in Delhi, India in the year 2020.




## About International Geological Congress

- ✓ Described as the Olympics of Geosciences, the IGCs are held quadrennially under the aegis of the IUGS through a process of global bidding. India won the bid in 2012 at Brisbane, Australia to host the Congress in 2020. The win is a remarkable achievement as the event makes a come back to the Indian soil after nearly 6 decades much to the excitement of the entire geoscientific community.
- ✓ International Geological Congress (IGC) is the prestigious global platform for advancement of Earth Science.
- ✓ The first session of IGC assembled in 1878 in France with an aim to provide the global geological community with an opportunity to create an organizational frame work for meeting at regular intervals.
- ✓ It envisaged a spirit of fraternal cooperation that transcends boundaries, languages and has the ability to bring together the geoscientific community across the continents and oceans. Founded as a non-profit scientific and educational organization, IGC came under the aegis of International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in 1961. Since then the meetings of IGC are held in collaboration and under scientific sponsorship of IUGS
- ✓ Since the inception of IGC, 33 Congresses have been hosted by 24 countries throughout the world at 3- to 5-year intervals. The 34th Session was held at Brisbane, Australia during August 2012 and the 35th IGC was held at Capetown, South Africa in 2016.
- ✓ The event is being jointly funded by the Ministry of Mines and Ministry of Earth Sciences with the active support of the Indian National Science Academy (INSA), and the Science Academies of the other neighbouring co-host countries, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

PEPPER IT WITH IMO



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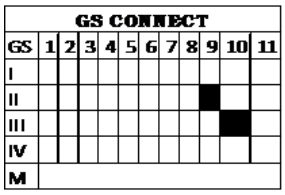
## IMD World Talent Rankings




India has improved its ranking by three notches to 51 globally in terms of ability to attract, develop and retain talent, while Switzerland topped the list compiled by leading global business school IMD.

The annual IMD World Talent Ranking covered 63 countries and assessed the methods the countries adopted to attract and retain talent. The rankings are based on a country's performance in three main categories - investment and development, appeal, and readiness - and India was ranked 62nd, 43rd and 29th on these terms, respectively.

Globally, Europe continues to dominate the rankings, with Switzerland, Denmark, and Belgium being the most competitive countries. Austria, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, Sweden and Luxembourg made up the top 10.

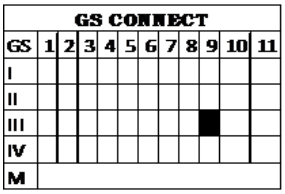
PEPPER IT WITH
SDG, UNFCCC

### India at glance

India is not doing a good job at retaining local talent and attracting foreign labour. Furthermore, relative to other economies, investment in education is still weak. India ranks among the bottom five countries on the list in terms of investment in education as a percentage of GDP, the study found out.

India needs to emphasise the education system as a key to prosperity. It also needs to prevent brain drain by providing better opportunities to local talent. India has the potential to thrive in the age of the digital economy. The country's labour growth provides the necessary domestic talent pool. Besides, the emphasis on science in schools, the availability of finance skills and knowledgeable senior managers are the areas in which India performs relatively well, but the country needs to invest in all levels of education and job-related competence mastering.

## COP23 Bonn




Climate change is back on the agenda, with a global climate conference kicking off in the German city of Bonn. The 23rd meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-23) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change concluded on November 17 in Bonn, Germany. The two-week meeting was regarded by many as primarily intended to clarify processes for the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the creation of a rule book, with technical guidelines and processes.

Up to 25,000 people are expected to attend the talks, which will be presided over by Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji — the first time that the small island nation will be at the helm of a major international climate conference. Participants will include diplomats from 195 nations, as well as scientists, lobbyists and environmentalists.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Energy Guarantee, Kyoto protocol

The US, which has announced its intention to pull out of the landmark Paris climate accord, will be represented by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs.

The 2015 Paris accord set a target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. But diplomats didn't agree on the details of how their nations will reach that ambitious goal. The Bonn talks will flesh out the rule book that countries have to abide by.

Key countries to watch during the talks are emerging economic powers China and India. Other nations — Estonia, Peru, Ecuador, Iran, Mali, Ethiopia and the Maldives — will also be in the spotlight for leading major international groupings.

### India's stand

- ✓ India said that Climate change is a result of unsustainable lifestyle and consumption pattern and hoped that the outcome of the ongoing summit is "balanced" and reached through a party-driven process.
- ✓ India said the outcome of the summit should not result in reinterpretation of the historic Paris Agreement and equal progress should be made "on all pillars".



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- ✓ India said that it has taken ambitious targets in its nationally determined contributions (NDC) and is on a path for achieving those. This is in line with India's glorious traditions which have for centuries stood for sustainable lifestyles and care for nature.

## Outcomes

1. A new initiative, led by the United Kingdom and Canada, to phase-out the use of coal for electricity generation was received with loud cheers in Bonn, and raised the chances of the two-week climate change conference ending on an optimistic note.
2. A important agreement on 'pre-2020 actions', and announcement by four European countries to ratify the Doha amendments to the Kyoto Protocol, the new coal 'alliance' has helped in changing the mood somewhat at the year-ending conference that had begun under the gloomy shadow of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.
3. There were conflicts on financial support at various points, and on this topic, COP-23 was a failure. Without the means of implementation, the targets set by each country in Paris will not be achieved. There is also the promise of $100 billion each year by 2020 into the Green Climate Fund, which has not seen much inflow to meet the goal. There was therefore little progress on the key issue of finance and several important decisions were moved forward to be discussed at the next meeting to be held in Katowice, Poland in 2018.
4. Under pressure from poor and emerging economies, actions on the pre-2020 Kyoto period were added to the agenda in the first week of the Bonn meeting. As a result, in 2018 and 2019 there will be additional stocktaking on progress made on the Kyoto Protocol. There will also be climate finance assessments and all of these will be part of the overall process undertaken before 2020. It is reported that several countries have since expressed interest in ratifying the Doha Amendment and all these changes indicate some advancement.
5. Parties agreed to work over the next few years on a series of issues linking climate change and agriculture. They agreed to streamline two separate technical discussions on this topic into one process. Countries have now been asked to submit their views on what should be included in the work by 31 March 2018, with options including how to improve soil carbon and fertility, how to assess adaptation and resilience and the creation of better livestock management systems.

## The Global Alliance To Power Past Coal

- **'The Global Alliance To Power Past Coal'**, as it was called, seeks to bring together countries, regions and cities to commit themselves to a phase-out of coal within their jurisdictions within their chosen timelines. A 'declaration' by the newly-launched alliance said that coal phase-out needed to be carried out "no later than by 2030" in the OECD and EU countries, and "no later than by 2050" in the rest of the world to meet the temperature goals set in the Paris Agreement.
- "As a result, phasing out traditional coal power is one of the most important steps governments can take to tackle climate change and meet our commitment to keep global temperature increase well below 2 degree celsius (compared to pre-industrial times), and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 degree celsius," the 'declaration' said.
- The conference was also energised by a rousing speech by French President Emmanuel Macron who promised to compensate for the loss of American funding to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which carries out periodic assessments of climate change science and whose recommendations provide the scientific foundation to the international climate negotiations.
- And in comments seemingly directed at the United States, french president also proposed a new 'border tax' to protect the economy of Europe from imports from "countries that do not respect these (climate) goals and are not supporting the environmental transition".

## Way forward

COP23 has been important in getting the technical groundwork laid for the rule book for the Paris Agreement, and ensuring that pre-2020 ambition is not forgotten.

Much more needs to be done for the international community to truly grapple with climate change — we are still far from keeping the world safe from its harmful consequences. And for India, there is unfortunately no time left for delaying action on multiple fronts on the landscape of sustainable development, which itself will be derailed by a warming world.



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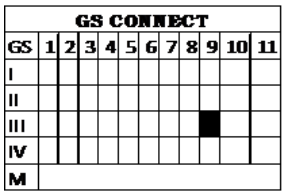
## Creating and Sustaining Markets for Energy Efficiency project




Recognizing India's efforts towards a low emission-economy and focusing on energy efficiency programs, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has now partnered with Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), under Ministry of Power, for the project 'Creating and Sustaining Markets for Energy Efficiency'.

The project will receive a composite funding of $454 million comprised of the GEF grant of $20 million and co-financing of $434 million in the form of loans and equity, including a $200 million loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). EESL further proposes Energy Efficiency Revolving Fund (EERF) for sustainable funding mechanism of energy efficiency projects in the country.

PEPPER IT WITH
Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), Rio Earth Summit

### Significance

The EERF mechanism will support the 'proof of concept' investments for the new technologies of super-efficient ceiling fans, tri-generation technologies & smart grid-applications and ultimately scaling up energy efficiency financing and program development to help cover initial investment costs of identified energy efficiency programs like street lighting, domestic lighting, five-star rated ceiling fans and agricultural pumps, in the country. This unique model will help in addressing the upfront risks of new technologies. Further, the accrued savings from these technologies can then be used to finance additional projects, which would allow capital to revolve as a sustainable funding mechanism.

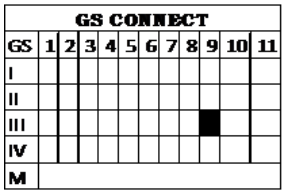
The GEF project further brings together many technical and financing partners including United Nations Environment (UN Environment), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) which aims to mitigate 60 million tons of CO2 eq (carbon dioxide equivalent), that will enable a total direct energy savings of 38.3 million GJ by 2022 and 137.5 million GJ by 2032.

Currently around two-thirds of total power generation capacity in India is based on fossil fuels. By 2030, India is committed to achieve 40% of the installed capacity based on clean energy sources. To achieve this target, it is imperative to create awareness in the citizens, especially among youth, to encourage energy efficiency measures like use of electric vehicles, energy efficient building codes etc.

### About GEF

- ✓ The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided over $17 billion in grants and mobilized an additional $88 billion in financing for more than 4000 projects in 170 countries.
- ✓ GEF is an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that addresses global environmental issues.
- ✓ It is for 5 major international environmental conventions: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

## Blackbuck conservation reserve to come up in U.P




A wildlife conservation reserve dedicated exclusively to the blackbuck is coming up over 126 hectares in the trans-Yamuna region of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. The State cabinet has approved a Blackbuck Conservation Reserve in the Meja forest division that is known for its rocky, undulating and arid terrain. A herd of around 350 blackbucks is estimated to be inhabiting the region.



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## Significance

There are a few national parks and sanctuaries inhabited by blackbuck in the country, like the Velavadar Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat and the Ranibennur Blackbuck Sanctuary in Karnataka. However, there are not many conservation reserves exclusively dedicated to the antelope.

PEPPER IT WITH
Pygmy Hog, Snow white leapord

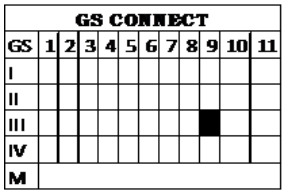
The conservation of blackbuck can now be done in an effective way.

It will also create awareness about biodiversity conservation and provide opportunities for people's participation. Eco-tourism will be encouraged and locals will get opportunities for employment.

## About Blackbuck

1. Blackbucks, known for their majestic spiral horns and coat colour contrasts, are found in grasslands and open forests.
2. They once ruled the open savannahs of north and central India, but are now restricted to just a few patches and habitats, primarily due to human population growth, ecosystem degradation and hunting.
3. The blackbuck also known as the Indian antelope, is an antelope found in India, Nepal and Pakistan.

# New ant species discovered in the Western Ghats




Researchers have discovered a new species of ant in the Western Ghats, recognised as one of the world's 'hottest hotspots' of biological diversity. The new species was found in the Periyar Tiger Reserve.

Belonging to Tyrannomyrmex, a rare tropical genus of ants, the species was discovered by the team from the Vallakadavu range during an expedition a year ago.

## About Tyrannomyrmex

Tyrannomyrmex is a rare myrmicine (subfamily of ants) ant genus that is distributed in the Indomalayan bio-region that extends from southern India and Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia.

## About Western Ghat

PEPPER IT WITH
Madhav Gadgil Panel, Kasturirangan Panel

- Western Ghats is named one of the Hottest Biodiversity Hotspots. It supports the life of 7,402 species of flowering plants, 1814 species of non-flowering plants, 139 mammal species, 508 bird species, 179 amphibian species, 6000 insects' species and 290 freshwater fish species. And many are still to be discovered.
- Western Ghats is a mountain range that runs through the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Running parallel to the western coast and along the western edge of the Deccan Plateau, the hills cover over 1,60,000 square kilometre. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The Western Ghats block southwest monsoon winds from reaching the Deccan Plateau and are consequently an area of high rainfall, particularly on their western side. Anamudi, the highest peak here, is located in Kerala. Outside of the Himalayas, the mountain at an elevation of 2,695 is also the highest peak in India.
- The major river systems originating in the Western Ghats include Godavari, Kaveri, Krishna, Thamiraparani and Tungabhadra. The area covers five percent of India's land with 27 per cent of all species of higher plants, 1,800 of these are endemic to the region.



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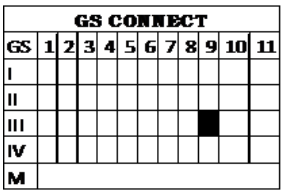
## Air Pollution in Delhi

Pollution levels in the national capital rose, with visibility falling to below 100 meters at several places in the morning.

The PM2.5 and PM10 reading of SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research) was also in the severe category.




The Indian Medical Association (IMA) also declared a public health emergency and wrote to the government to cease all outdoor activities and stop sports activities in schools. They also warned residents against venturing outdoors.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT), issued a slew of directions to deal with the situation, including banning construction and industrial activities and entry of trucks, while lambasting the Delhi government and civic bodies over the worsening air quality in Delhi and neighboring states.

### Cause

The smog that envelops the region is exacerbated by the burning of biomass in Punjab and Haryana, and the winter atmosphere is marked by weak ventilation. An analysis of local sources by IIT-Kanpur last year pointed to construction dust, vehicular pollution, and domestic and industrial emissions as other major factors. Clearly, the burden of such chronic problems has outweighed the benefits conferred by measures such as the ban on Deepavali crackers, and in the past, the shift to compressed natural gas for commercial vehicles and restricting car use to odd and even number plates on alternate days.

### Way Forward

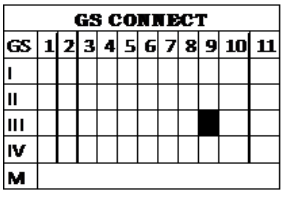
PEPPER IT WITH SAFAR, Odd-Even scheme, Pet Coke ban

Delhi's air quality deteriorates with unfailing regularity at this time of the year, with large swathes of north India in the grip of a suffocating smog. It is unconscionable for governments, through indifference and inaction, to subject citizens to such toxic air, and cause extreme suffering especially among people with respiratory ailments and impaired lung function. A comprehensive solution demands that the governments of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, assisted by the Centre, address farm residue burning and construction dust.

The post-monsoon — as opposed to pre-monsoon — burning of rice and wheat residue releases maximum aerosols that contribute to the volume of PM2.5, which gets embedded in the lungs. Automation of farm operations leaves root-bound crop waste after machine harvesting, running to millions of tonnes, requiring a solution of scale. Sustainable residue removal cannot be achieved by the farmers alone, and requires help from the state machinery. Here, Delhi Chief Minister should be commended for his initiative to discuss the modalities of joint action with the Punjab and Haryana governments. The national capital needs a major greening effort. Unpaved surfaces raise dust levels as in all Indian cities, but civic agencies ignore the problem. There is every reason to think that even the Ministry of Environment's orders issued in 2015 under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 to comprehensively green Delhi's road margins and open spaces were not pursued seriously. Shifting more of the city's travel to comfortable public transport can cut fine particulates in congested areas and improve the air for residents. Many such initiatives were taken up by China in its cities to reduce exposure to PM2.5 that produces morbidity from cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and leads to premature death. Only a determined response to the crisis can spare Delhi of its infamous tag as one of the most polluted cities on the planet.

## Facebook brings in disaster response tools to India

### About Initiative




- ✓ Facebook has partnered with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and a non-profit body, SEEDS in India, to offer tools to these agencies to help them respond more effectively to natural disasters.

- ✓ The United States-based firm will offer **'disaster maps data'** that illustrate aspects like people's movement and concentration of Facebook users in the given area before and after a calamity. The intention of introducing these initiatives is to help improve response efforts to natural disasters in India.
- ✓ Facebook is also holding its first annual Disaster Response Summit in India with NDMA, which will bring together many humanitarian organisations to help train and discuss how technology can be used to devise better responses to natural disasters and subsequent recovery.
- ✓ The social networking giant is also supporting the pilot of the Aapda Samachar Karyakarta-Disaster Information Volunteers (ASK-DIV) scheme where a network of trained volunteers provide supplementary information to inform government relief efforts through the Facebook Workplace platform.
- ✓ The programme, which is being executed by SEEDS, will establish a network of volunteers to provide real-time, first-hand information on disasters in their local communities.
- ✓ The programme will be piloted in two disaster-prone States — Assam and Uttarakhand.

PEPPER IT WITH
Project Aquila, Project Loon

## Background

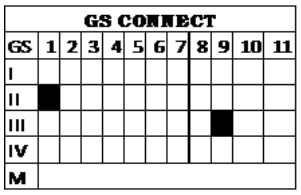
Disaster Maps was introduced globally in June and uses aggregated location information that users have chosen to share with Facebook. These tools have been deployed in Peru and the US. A lot of insights for developing the tools came from India. People used Facebook intensively during Chennai floods to connect and extend support to each other. Facebook already has a safety check feature that allows users to notify their friends and family that they are safe.

## Significance

During and after these crises, response organisations need accurate information to help communities response, recover and rebuild. Traditional communication channels are often offline and it can take significant time and resources to understand where help is desperately needed.

If there is an area which has a high concentration of Facebook users that suddenly goes offline, even that data insight can be used to rush services to the area.

# Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 to Encourage Bamboo Cultivation




Union Government has promulgated the Indian Forest (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 to exempt bamboo grown in non-forest areas from definition of tree, thereby dispensing with the requirement of felling/transit permit for its economic use.

Bamboo, though, taxonomically a grass, was legally defined as a tree under the Indian Forest Act, 1927. Before this amendment, the felling and transit of bamboo grown on forest as well non-forest land attracted the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA, 1927). This was a major impediment for bamboo cultivation by farmers on non-forest land.

## Significance

The major objective of the amendment is to promote cultivation of bamboo in non-forest areas to achieve twin objectives of increasing the income of farmers and also increasing the green cover of the country. Bamboo grown in the forest areas shall continue to be governed by the provisions of Indian Forest Act, 1927.

- The amendment and the resultant change in classification of bamboo grown in non-forest areas will usher in much needed and far-reaching reforms in the bamboo sector.

As per the assessment of United Nation's Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the bamboo business in the North-East Region alone has a potential of about Rs. 5000 crores in the next ten years. "The amendment will therefore, help in harnessing this great potential and enhance the scope to increase the present level of market share and improve the economy of the entire country, particularly the North Eastern region".



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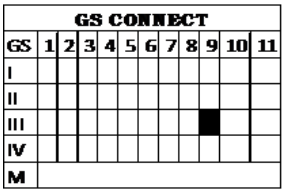
- While on the one hand, the legal and regulatory hardships being faced by farmers and private individuals will be removed and on the other hand, it will create a viable option for cultivation in 12.6 million hectares of cultivable waste land.
- The measure will go a long way in enhancing the agricultural income of farmers and tribals, especially in North-East and Central India.
- The amendment will encourage farmers and other individuals to take up plantation/ block plantation of suitable bamboo species on degraded land, in addition to plantation on agricultural land and other private lands under agroforestry mission.
- The move is in line with the objective of doubling the income of farmers, besides conservation and sustainable development.
- Bamboo grows abundantly in areas outside forests with an estimated growing stock of 10.20 million tonnes. About 20 million people are involved in bamboo related activities. One tonne of bamboo provides 350 man days of employment. An enabling environment for the cultivation of bamboo will help in creation of job opportunities in the country.
- The amendment will unleash the potential of bamboo in terms of rural and national economy apart from ecological benefits such as soil-moisture conservation, landslide prevention and rehabilitation, conserving wildlife habitat, enhancing source of bio-mass, besides serving as a substitute for timber.

## India ranks 20th on Climate Change Performance Index




India has been ranked 20th on Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2017, which underlined that countries like India are making "great efforts" in the fields of renewables and energy efficiency.

With the historic Paris Agreement having recently entered into force, the latest CCPI confirms a boost for renewable energy and positive developments in energy efficiency.

The publication was issued by Germanwatch and Climate Action Network Europe.

### Important observations

- While encouraging trends are happening on a global scale, the necessary energy revolution is still happening too slowly.
- Positive trends are seen as well among emerging economies of G20 like India (rank 20), Argentina (36) and Brazil (40), which all improved their ranking.
- Some developing countries like Morocco, India, and South Africa are starting to catch up and are already making great efforts in the fields of renewables and energy efficiency.
- In terms of climate policy, India, Sweden, Luxembourg, Norway, and Germany managed to hold their positions.
- All countries are now expected to put forward national emissions reduction plans, and the G20 countries have to take a leading role in doing so by 2018.
- Although, India belongs to the ten largest CO2 emitting countries, per capita emissions are still relatively low, resulting in a good performance in this category.
- National experts value that the Indian government runs one of the largest renewable capacity expansion programmes in the world, which leads to a good policy performance for the country.
- Canada (55), Australia (57) and Japan (60) are in the bottom group (rated "very poor") of the index while Japan once again dropped two places as national experts criticize their government for a very poor climate policy.

PEPPER IT WITH
GCF, National Green Tribunal

### About Index

✓ The Climate Change Performance Index is an instrument designed to enhance transparency in international climate politics and aims to put political and social pressure on those countries which have, up until now, failed to take ambitious action on climate protection.



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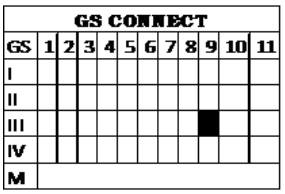
- ✓ On the basis of standardised criteria, the index evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of 58 countries that together are responsible for about 90% of global energy-related CO2 emissions.

## New species of large gecko discovered




A team of scientists have discovered a new species of gecko (house lizard) from the Eastern Ghats. The Kanger valley rock gecko Hemidactylus kangerensis is the newest addition to India's lizard species.

The gecko was discovered from **Chhattisgarh's Kanger** Ghati National Park. Though named after this park, the species is also found in Jagdalpur and Sukma in Chhattisgarh and in Khamman in the adjoining State of Telangana, which are part of the Eastern Ghats.

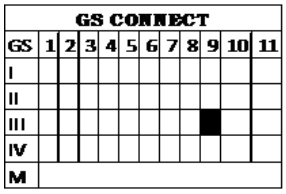
Growing to over eight inches long, the adult Kanger valley rock gecko is fairly large. The distinct black-bordered beige bands that the new species sports right from its neck to its tail tip and specific scales on its thighs (which are visible only on closer inspection) set the Kanger valley rock gecko apart from the commonly-found rock gecko.

PEPPER IT WITH
Jindhagada Peak, Lion-tailed macaque

### Significance

According to the researchers, the discovery highlights the need for dedicated surveys across the Eastern Ghats, where biodiversity has not been quantified too well. Most areas here also need protection from various anthropogenic pressures.

## An app to get tiger numbers right




Field data collection for tiger enumeration in the country is set to go digital in order to reduce human error and provide more reliable estimates. In the forthcoming All-India Tiger Estimation, to be taken up in December-January, the authorities plan to eliminate the process of manual recording of signs of the carnivore and other habitat details. Instead, an app named M-STRiPES (Monitoring System For Tigers-Intensive Protection and Ecological Status) developed by the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, will be used for the first time. Though the app has already been in place in some national parks, its usage and application has been made mandatory only now, for the fourth All-India Tiger Estimation.

PEPPER IT WITH
NTCA, Project Tiger

It is a free app that will be made available to staff participating in the tiger census exercise, and they will feed in their observation during the carnivore sign survey and transect marking. Details such as pellet density, vegetation status and human disturbance, if any, will also be recorded.

The last nationwide assessment, held in 2014, pegged the tiger figures across the country at 2,226. Karnataka alone was home to 400 tigers, a bulk of them in Bandipur and Nagarahole.

### Facts

- Use of the app in habitat monitoring is not new. Bandipur had Hejje or Pugmark, an Andrioid-based app, while BRT started with Huli.
- The GIS-based app will give real-time data on forest habitats besides providing live update of monitoring and patrolling activities. But the nationwide introduction of M-STRiPES paves the way for greater standardisation and elimination of inconsistencies in data interpretation.
- The national tiger estimates are conducted once in four years, with the first conducted in 2006.
- The Western Ghat landscape, comprising Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Goa, accounted for 776 tigers in 2014, with the Bandipur-Nagarahole-Mudumalai-Wayanad complex harbouring 570 tigers — reckoned to be the world's single largest tiger population in a landscape.



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## NOAA's JPSS-1 satellite

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NASA successfully launched for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) a highly advanced polar-orbiting satellite to improve weather forecasts up to seven days in advance. The Joint Polar Satellite System-1 (JPSS-1) lifted off on a United Launch Alliance Delta II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

### Benefits

PEPPER IT WITH SCATSAT, INSAT-3D

1. Launching JPSS-1 underscores NOAA's commitment to putting the best possible satellites into orbit, giving our forecasters — and the public — greater confidence in weather forecasts up to seven days in advance, including the potential for severe, or impactful weather. This is the first in a series of four such satellites in a collaborative programme between NOAA and NASA.
2. JPSS-1 will be renamed NOAA-20 when it reaches its final orbit. Following a three-month checkout and validation of its five advanced instruments, the satellite will become operational. The satellite will improve weather forecasting, such as predicting a hurricane's track, and will help agencies involved with post-storm recovery by visualizing storm damage and the geographic extent of power outages.
3. JPSS-1 data will also improve recognition of climate patterns that influence the weather, such as El Nino and La Nina, according to NASA.

### NOAA

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. governmental agency established in 1970 within the Department of Commerce to study Earth's oceans, atmosphere, and coastal areas insofar as they affect the land surface and coastal regions of the United States.

## Aditya - L1 First Indian mission to study the Sun

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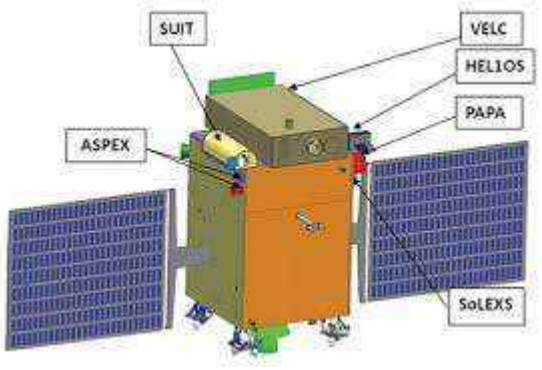
By 2020, ISRO would launch **'Aditya-L1', the first Indian mission to** study the sun.

### About Aditya L1

- ✓ The Aditya-1 mission was conceived as a 400kg class satellite carrying one payload, the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC) and was planned to launch in a 800 km low earth orbit.
- ✓ The satellite carries additional six payloads with enhanced science scope and objectives.
- ✓ The project is approved and the satellite will be launched during 2019 – 2020 timeframe by PSLV-XL from Sriharikota.
- ✓ A Satellite placed in the halo orbit around the Lagrangian point 1 (L1) of the Sun-Earth system has the major advantage of continuously viewing the Sun without any occultation/ eclipses. Therefore, the Aditya-1 mission has now been revised to "Aditya-L1 mission" and will be inserted in a halo orbit around the L1, which is 1.5 million km from the Earth.




- ✓ Aditya-1 was meant to observe only the solar corona. The outer layers of the Sun, extending to thousands of km above the disc (photosphere) is termed as the corona. It has a temperature of more than a million degree Kelvin which is much higher than the solar disc temperature of around 6000K. How the corona gets heated to such high temperatures is still an unanswered question in solar physics.



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- ✓ Aditya-L1 with additional experiments can now provide observations of Sun's Photosphere (soft and hard X-ray), Chromosphere (UV) and corona (Visible and NIR). In addition, particle payloads will study the particle flux emanating from the Sun and reaching the L1 orbit, and the magnetometer payload will measure the variation in magnetic field strength at the halo orbit around L1. These payloads have to be placed outside the interference from the Earth's magnetic field and could not have been useful in the low earth orbit.

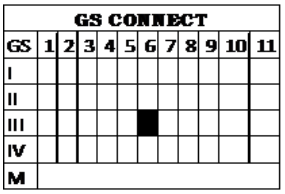
PEPPER IT WITH

Parker Solar Probe, DART mission

## Bad Rabbit

Bad Rabbit ransomware has infected several big Russian media outlets, with Interfax news agency and Fontanka.ru among the confirmed victims of the malware.

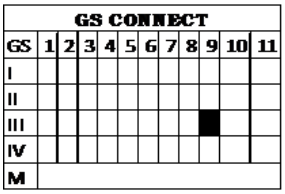
The criminals behind the Bad Rabbit attack are demanding 0.05 bitcoin as ransom — that's roughly $280 at the current exchange rate.




## Edible wild banana species discovered

A species of wild banana named Musa paramjitiana has been discovered in Andaman and Nicobar islands. It is named so in honour of Paramjit Singh, who happens to be the director of the Botanical Survey of India (BSI). The species was found in North Andaman's Krishnapuri forest, 6 kilometres from any human habitation.

The plant grows to a height of nine metres and bears an edible, sweet-and-sour tasting fruit that is boat-shaped and has numerous bulb-shaped seeds. Its conservation status has been declared as 'Critically Endangered' as it has so far been spotted in only two locations on the islands, each with 6 to 18 plants in a clump.




PEPPER IT WITH

Musa indandamanensis

## India donates 2 rice varieties to IRRI gene bank

India contributed two Indian rice seed varieties to the gene bank of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines.

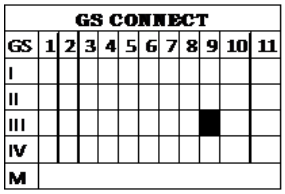
The Prime Minister visited the IRRI in Los Banos, 65 km from capital Manila, and interacted with a large number of Indian scientists working at the institute.

Several scientists briefed the Prime Minister on flood-tolerant rice varieties which, they said, can withstand 14-18 days of submergence and can provide 1-3 tonnes more yield per hectare in flood-affected areas.

PM inaugurated a 'rice field laboratory' named after him at the institute.

The IRRI, which has offices in 17 countries, is known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution of the 1960s. IRRI has successfully collaborated with the Indian Council for Agricultural Research to introduce drought-tolerant, flood-tolerant and salt-tolerant varieties of rice in India.

IRRI and its partners have provided assistance to 2,00,000 women farmers in Odisha which included providing capacity building programmes, and improved agriculture technology. India is also setting up a regional centre of the IRRI in Varanasi to develop high-yielding rice varieties.




India recently donated 500 metric tonnes of rice to the Kingdom of Lesotho, in Southern Africa, which is facing acute food shortage due to famine.



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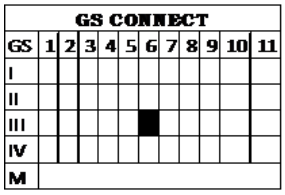
## Cobots

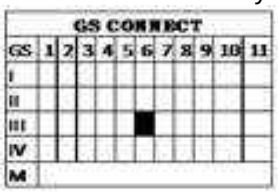



A cobot is intended to work hand-in-hand with humans in a shared workspace. This is in contrast with full-fledged robots that are designed to operate autonomously or with limited guidance. They support and relieve the human operator of his excess work.

In an auto factory, while the the cobot tightens the bolts, the human worker places the tools in front of the cobot. In a biscuit factory, the cobot would package the biscuits while the worker segregates burnt ones not fit for consumption. In a small-scale industry, the cobot is placed on the drilling job while the worker performs a quality check. It's a phenomenal success story in India where cobots are creating jobs and making small businesses competitive.

Universal Robots of Denmark was the first to develop cobots commercially, and the first units were sold in 2008. Collaborative robots are 'completely' different from traditional robots. Cobots are easy to use, flexible and safe.

## CZT Imager of AstroSat measures first phase resolved X-ray polarisation of Crab pulsar




AstroSat, India's multi-wavelength space telescope, has successfully accomplished the extremely difficult task of measuring X-ray polarisation. It has studied Crab pulsar in the Taurus Constellation and measured the variations of polarisation as this highly magnetised object spins around 30 times every second. This landmark measurement puts up a strong challenge to prevailing theories of high energy X-ray emission from pulsars.

### About AstroSat

1. ASTROSAT is India's first dedicated multi wavelength space observatory. This scientific satellite mission endeavours for a more detailed understanding of our universe.
2. One of the unique features of ASTROSAT mission is that it enables the simultaneous multi-wavelength observations of various astronomical objects with a single satellite.
3. ASTROSAT observes universe in the optical, ultraviolet, low and high energy X-ray regions of the electromagnetic spectrum, whereas most other scientific satellites are capable of observing a narrow range of wavelength band.
4. Multi-wavelength observations of ASTROSAT can be further extended with coordinated observations using other spacecraft and ground based observations. All major astronomy Institutions and some Universities in India are participating in these observations.

## India Hypertension Management Initiative (IHMI)

The India Hypertension Management Initiative (IHMI) is a collaborative project of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), State Governments, World Health Organization (WHO), and Resolve to Save Lives initiative of Vital Strategies. The primary goal of this project is to reduce morbidity and mortality due to CVDs, the leading cause of death in India, by improving the control of high blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for CVDs among adults in India.

The IHMI aims to reduce disability and death related to cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading cause of death in India, by improving the control of high blood pressure (hypertension), reducing salt consumption and eliminating artificial trans-fats, leading risk factors for CVD.

The IHMI is focused on five essential components of scalable treatment of hypertension. It will support the adoption of standardized simplified treatment plans for managing high blood pressure, ensure the regular and uninterrupted supply of quality-assured medications, task sharing so health workers who are accessible to patients can distribute medications already prescribed by the medical officer, and patient-centered services that reduce the barriers to treatment adherence. Data on hypertension will be improved through streamlined monitoring



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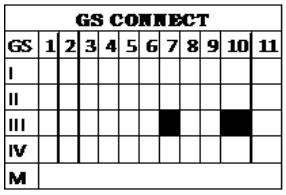
systems, and the lessons learned and practice-based evidence will inform further interventions to improve cardiovascular care. IHMI will be progressively rolled out in 25 districts in the first two years across districts selected by the Health Ministry for expansion of active screening and intensification of treatment activities for hypertension.

### Significance

Creating awareness about NCDs is vital as it is a silent disease. There is urgent need to raise awareness about NCDs amongst families regarding packaged food and processed foods with excessive salt and trans-fat. The need for incorporating yoga in one's life for prevention and management of hypertension was also highlighted.

Around 200 million adults in India have high blood pressure, yet control rates for the condition remain low. Studies suggest that in rural areas in India, only one quarter of people with hypertension are aware of their condition, and only around 10 percent have their blood pressure controlled. In urban areas, around 40 percent of people with hypertension are aware of their condition, and only around 20 percent have their blood pressure controlled. This initiative aims to strengthen the cardiovascular disease component of the Health Ministry's National Program for Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS). It will focus on strengthening hypertension management and monitoring at the primary health care level, within the existing healthcare system, and is aligned with WHO's Global HEARTS Initiative and National Guidelines.

## 21st World Congress of mental health




The President of India inaugurated the 21st World Congress of Mental Health being organised by the World Federation for Mental Health in partnership with Caring Foundation and other institutions in New Delhi. World Congress of Mental Health is taking place in India for the first time. World Congress will have sessions on yoga, meditation and traditional approaches to mental health.

### Present Scenario

Mental health issues are acquiring a serious magnitude in our country. Our National Mental Health Survey 2016 found that close to 14 per cent of India's population required active mental health interventions. Those living in metropolitan cities and those who are young – whether in the productive age group, or children and teenagers – are most vulnerable to mental illnesses. In India, we have a young population, with 65 per cent of our people below the age of 35. And our society is rapidly urbanizing. This leaves us staring at a possible mental health epidemic.

PEPPER IT WITH

National Mental Health Programme

The biggest obstacle that mental health patients have to encounter is stigma and denial. This leads to the issue being ignored or simply not discussed. We need to talk about mental health issues and treat ailments such as depression and stress as diseases that can be cured – not as guilty secrets that must be pushed under the carpet. A major gap in combating the mental health challenge is that of human resources. India is a country with 1.25 billion people but just 700,000 doctors – less than one million. In the field of mental health, the scarcity is even more acute. There are only about 5,000 psychiatrists and less than 2,000 clinical psychologists in our country.

### India's effort

India's National Mental Health Programme is building 22 centres of excellence in the field of mental health. In parallel, the District Mental Health Programme has already covered 517 of the approximately 650 districts in India. It is taking the conversation about mental health to the grassroots of our society.



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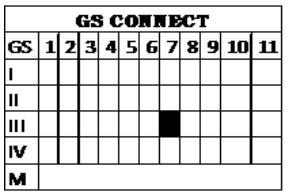
## New global commitment to end tuberculosis




Health ministers, NGOs, and private sector representatives from 120 countries adopted the Moscow Declaration, committing themselves to eliminating additional deaths from HIV co-infection by 2020 and achieving synergy in coordinated action against TB and non-communicable diseases. A co-infection is when a person suffers from two infections at the same time.

### Significance

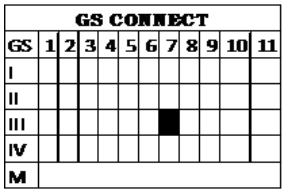
The Moscow declaration emphasised the need for fixing multisectoral responsibility towards ending TB by 2035, the global target. This framework is critical to creating an enabling operational environment for multisectoral action, fast-tracking priority interventions, monitoring overall progress, and accelerating advocacy at all levels within different sectors, all of which is necessary to achieve committed milestones and the targets to end the TB epidemic. It said that multi-drug resistant TB would be tackled as a national public health crisis.

PEPPER IT WITH MDR TB, 90:90:90 program

A national inter-ministerial commission will be set up by 2018 to achieve "fast-tracking universal access to health care through all state and non-state care providers by adopting WHO-recommended TB diagnostics, drugs, technologies and standards of care, and ensuring attention to high-risk groups and vulnerable populations such as migrants, refugees and prisoners.

In less than a year, the TB report card will be reviewed by the UN General Assembly in 2018 during a high-level meeting.

## World Diabetes Day 2017



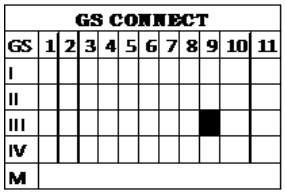

Started in 1991 by the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Diabetes Day creates awareness about the effects of diabetes globally. The United Nations declared November 14 as an official World Diabetes Day (WDD). The day also marks the birth anniversary of scientist and Nobel laureate Frederick Banting who is the co-discoverer of insulin.

Every year IDF celebrates the day with a lot of awareness activities and sets a theme to narrow down the effects of diabetes. In 2016 the theme set by the IDF was 'Eyes on Diabetes' whereas this year the IDF has decided to concentrate on the effects of diabetes on women.

On World Diabetes Day 2017, WHO joins partners around the world to highlight women's right to a healthy future. Around 8% of women – or 205 million women – live with diabetes worldwide, over half in South-East Asia and the Western Pacific. During pregnancy high blood glucose substantially increases the risk to health for both mother and child as well as the risk of diabetes for the child in the future. Almost half of women who die in low-income countries due to high blood glucose die prematurely, before the age of 70 years.

IDF has shortlisted nine countries in the South-East Asia (SEA) Region as the most afflicted with the highest number of people suffering from diabetes, India being one of them. The Federation did a data study on India and it was found that out of the 79.8 million adults living in India, a shocking 69.1 million adults suffered from diabetes.

## Swachh Bharat Mission celebrates World Toilet Day




On the occasion of World Toilet Day, large number of behaviour change and toilet usage activities were undertaken by the States and districts around the country as part of Swachh Bharat Mission. Processions were taken out, discussions were held, and school children joined in large numbers in several innovative activities to highlight the importance of toilet access and usage.



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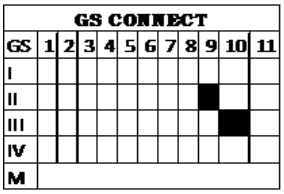
## World toilet day

World Toilet Day (WTD) is an official United Nations international observance day on 19 November to inspire action to tackle the global sanitation crisis. World Toilet Day 2017 continues the theme from World Water Day earlier this year, with the focus on wastewater.

## 42nd International Congress of Military Medicine

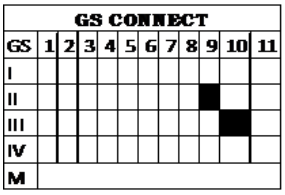



The 42nd World Congress of the International Committee of Military Medicine (ICMM) organised by the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) under the aegis of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was organised. The five-day event is being organised for the first time in India, and is the largest medical conference ever organised by the AFMS. The theme of **this 42nd World Congress is "Military Medicine in Transition: Looking** Ahead."

Around 350-400 foreign delegates from 80 countries attended the event. In addition, about 300 Indian delegates comprising Armed Forces Medical, Dental, Nursing and Veterinary Officers participated in it. Top Indian scientific institutions, MoD, Ministry of Health, the United Nations and the International Committee of Red Cross were also represented at the Congress.

The ICMM is an international inter-governmental organisation created in 1921 with its secretariat at Brussels in Belgium and currently has 112 nations as members.

## WHO releases guidelines on responding to child sex abuse



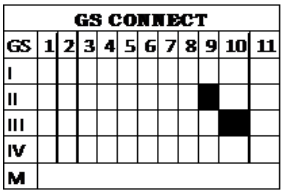

World Health Organisation has formulated clinical guidelines on responding to children and adolescents who have been sexually abused. The guidelines put forward recommendations for the frontline health care providers — general practitioners, gynaecologists, paediatricians, nurses and others — who may directly receive a victim of sexual abuse or may identify sexual abuse during the course of diagnosis and treatment.

The guidelines focus on the recommendations and good practice suggestions in terms of disclosure made by the child, obtaining medical history, conducting physical examinations and forensic investigations, documenting findings, offering preventive treatment for HIV post exposure, pregnancy prevention, and other sexually transmitted diseases, psychological and mental health interventions among others.

PEPPER IT WITH CARA, Bachpan Bachao Andolan, Hausala 2017

The guidelines highlight that child sexual abuse has a short-term as well as long-term mental health impact like lifetime diagnosis of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, externalising symptoms, eating disorders, problems with relationships, sleep disorders and suicidal and self-harm ideation and behaviours. Health consequences of the abuse include the risk of pregnancy, gynaecological disorders such as chronic non-cyclical pelvic pain, menstrual irregularities, painful periods, genital infections and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

## Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities




ESCAP, in cooperation with the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), organized the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, in Beijing.

### Objectives of the Meeting

- To undertake a midpoint review of the progress made, including gaps and challenges, in the implementation of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific;



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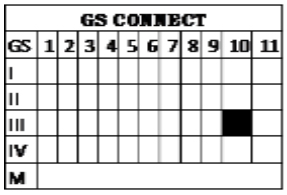
- To discuss the future policy direction for building disability-inclusive societies in Asia and the Pacific, bearing in mind the synergies between the Incheon Strategy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- To consider and adopt an outcome document to accelerate the implementation of the Incheon Strategy for the remainder of the Decade.

Significance

PEPPER IT WITH
Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan, Sugamya Pustakalaya, ESCAP

The Meeting is taking place at a critical juncture when ESCAP member States and associate members are striving to build more inclusive societies at a time of global economic uncertainties and rising inequality, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a unique opportunity to "leave no one behind" in development, and to support disability-inclusive development across Asia and the Pacific.

## 1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products and International Laws for Trade and Health



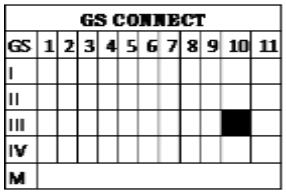

During the World Health Assembly 2017 discussions on the UN High Level Report on access to medicines, it was decided by all Member States to bring up the matter in the Executive Board of WHO, to inform the proposed special session UN discussions in 2018. To enable deeper discussions and a holistic view on access to medicines (including all medical products: medicines, vaccines, devices, diagnostics) the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Indian Society of International Law (ISIL) with the support of WHO is organizing the "1st World Conference on Access to Medical Products and International Laws for Trade and Health in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

The aim of Conference is to provide a forum for stakeholder participation in access to medicines debate including trade and health policy. The Conference seeks to inform policy in the framework of globalization and trade agreements for access to medical products for achieving SDGs.

The main objective of the Conference is exchange of knowledge and expand understanding on contemporary issues in international trade laws and research and innovation for access to medical products to achieve SDG 2030 agenda.

## Global Ministerial Conference on Ending TB in the Sustainable Development Era

It was held on 16–17 November in Moscow (Russian Federation).




Objective

The WHO Global Ministerial Conference "Ending TB in the Sustainable Development Era: A Multisectoral Response" aims to accelerate implementation of the WHO End TB Strategy - with immediate action addressing gaps in access to care and the MDR-TB crisis - in order to reach the End TB targets set by the World Health Assembly and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through national and global commitments, deliverables and accountability.

The Ministerial Conference will inform the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on TB in 2018.

Who will be there?

- ✓ Ministers of Health and Ministers from other sectors (e.g. finance, social development, justice) were invited to attend, including from the top 40 highest TB and Multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) burden countries
- ✓ Leaders of UN organizations, development agencies and regional bodies



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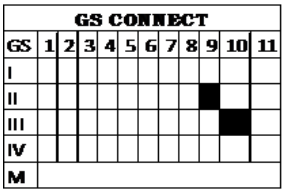
- ✓ Nongovernmental organizations, including faith-based organizations, civil society representatives, affected people and communities, as well as academic and research institutions, philanthropic foundations and private sector entities.

Outcome

A Ministerial Declaration was signed at the Conference, containing bold commitments by countries to accelerate action to end TB and meet the milestones towards the 2030 SDGs.

## India to Host Global Conference on Cyber Space 2017




India, for the first time ever, recently hosted the Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS), **one of the world's largest conferences in the field** of Cyber Space and related issues at Aerocity, New Delhi.

Themed on Cyber4All: A Secure and Inclusive Cyberspace for Sustainable Development, this is the fifth edition of GCCS wherein international leaders, policymakers, industry experts, think tanks and cyber experts will gather to deliberate on issues and challenges for optimally using cyber space. The overall goals of GCCS 2017 are to promote the importance of inclusiveness and human rights in global cyber policy, to defend the status quo of an open, interoperable and unregimented cyberspace, to create political commitment for capacity building initiatives to address the digital divide and assist countries, and to develop security solutions in a balanced fashion that duly acknowledge the importance of the private sector and technical community.

PEPPER IT WITH

Wannacry

Ransomeware

GCCS 2017: Key Highlights

- ✓ Representatives from 124 countries
- ✓ 15 Parallel sessions & 12 Side events
- ✓ Participation of policy makers, industry, academia, civil society and think tanks
- ✓ Grand Finale of worldwide Peace-a-thon Events

Significance

It is great for India to host the Fifth edition of the Global Conference of Cyberspace. It is recognition of India's emerging role as a massive cyber power, accelerated by the Digital India push, which has acquired international acknowledgment. The GCCS 2017 is certainly in accord with the vision to transform India into a digitally empowered country. GCCS 2017 will give the world's cyber community a unique opportunity to learn from global experience and expert insight, and discover more about the technology led transformation being engineered in India. As India is poised to become a US$1 Trillion digital economy and lead the digital revolution in the world, it is imperative to formulate and put across a robust cyber space.

About GCCS

Global Conference on Cyber Space (GCCS) is a prestigious global event where international leaders, policymakers, industry experts, think tanks, cyber wizards etc gather to deliberate on issues and challenges for optimally using cyber space. GCCS was launched with a view to establish internationally agreed 'rules of the road' for behavior in cyberspace, and create a more focused and inclusive dialogue between all those with a stake in the internet (governments, civil society and industry) on how to implement them.

Incepted in 2011 in London, second GCCS was held in 2012 in Budapest with focus on relationship between internet rights and internet security, which was attended by 700 delegates from nearly 60 countries. The third edition of GCCS was held in 2013 in Seoul with commitment to Open and Secure Cyberspace. The fourth version GCCS 2015 was held in The Hague, Netherlands which saw participation from 97 countries.



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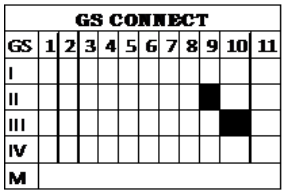
## Global Entrepreneurship Summit




Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES-2017), a gathering of hundreds of budding, ambitious and well-known entrepreneurs as well as investors and supporters of the eco-system was held at Hyderabad.

An event that serves as a forum to celebrate and nurture entrepreneurship besides providing opportunities to network, this is the 8th edition of the GES and coming for the first time to South Asia.

Co-hosted by the United States and India, the 3-day event with **'Women First, Prosperity for All,'** as the theme was the first of the annual series in which women were the majority – over 52.5% – of the participants. More than 10 countries were represented by an all-female delegation, including Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.

The theme demonstrates the commitment of the US and Indian governments to the principle that when women are economically empowered, their communities and countries thrive, he said here on Monday, addressing the media along with US Ambassador Kenneth I. Juster and Telangana Chief Secretary S.P. Singh.

PM of India presented Ivanka Trump with a wooden box of Sadeli craft in GES. Sadeli is a highly skilled craft of Surat-Gujarat.

It is a form of marquetry that involves decorating the surface of wooden articles with delicate pieces of wood and other materials in precisely cut geometrical shapes.

The artform which is traditionally used for decorating doors, windows and furniture, is now also used for embellishing jewelry boxes, containers and photo frames.

### Significance

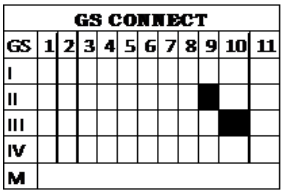
The Global Entrepreneurship Summit 2017 being hosted by India along with the US is a testament to the "strong friendship" between the two countries. For the first time, in its eight editions, the summit has been themed "Women First and Prosperity for All," which "demonstrates" the administration's "commitment to the principle that when women are economically empowered, their communities and countries thrive.

The summit, to be attended by 1,500 entrepreneurs from 170 countries, would have around 350 participants from the US, a large number of whom are Indian-Americans.

The entrepreneurs attending the GES also reflect a very young team with nearly 31.5 per cent of them being either aged 30 or below. The youngest entrepreneur is aged 13 while the oldest one is 84.

PEPPER IT WITH
MUDRA yojana

## INSPIRE 2017




The first edition of the International Symposium to Promote Innovation & Research in Energy Efficiency (INSPIRE 2017) was held in Jaipur. The five-day symposium was organized by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) in partnership with The World Bank, and Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE).

The highlight of the symposium was the high-level deliberations driven by policy makers and experts from Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), The World Bank Group, The Energy Institute (TERI), International Energy Agency (IEA), Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), USA and representatives of the Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM) - a high-level global forum to promote policies and programmes that advance clean energy technology.

PEPPER IT WITH
TERI, African Development Bank

Several global organizations like the Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, International Finance Corporation, The World Bank, International Energy Agency, International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation, Clean Energy Ministerial, Copenhagen Center on Energy Efficiency, GIZ, also shared their perspectives at INSPIRE.

### About INSPIRE 2017

INSPIRE 2017 is an International Conference that brings together various stakeholders such as policy makers, innovators, financiers, influencers to showcase best practices in the sector. It



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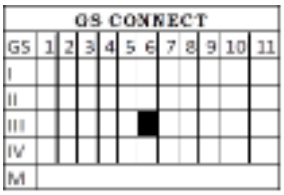
provides a platform for energy efficiency community to discuss energy efficiency policies, market transformation strategies, emerging technologies, delivery and business-model driven transformations. The event is further designed to provide global and national thought-leaders and implementers to expand perspectives on energy efficiency and spur ideas and solutions that will help leverage the full potential of energy efficiency and bring its multiple co-benefits to the fore.

### Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL)

1. Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) is a joint venture of four National Public Sector Undertakings – NTPC Limited, Power Finance Corporation Limited, Rural Electrification Corporation Limited and POWERGRID Corporation of India Limited, set up under Ministry of Power, Government of India. EESL is a Super Energy Service Company (ESCO).
2. It acts as the resource center for capacity building for State Distribution Companies (DISCOMs), Energy Regulatory Commissions (ERCs), State Development Authorities (SDAs), upcoming ESCOs, financial institutions, etc.
3. Founded in 2010 by the Government of India, EESL today is implementing the largest energy efficiency portfolio in the world. EESL's energy efficient appliances and technologies have saved India over 35 billion kWh energy annually.

## Global Clubfoot Conference

### Why in News?




President of India inaugurated the Global Clubfoot Conference being organised by CURE India in partnership with Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Clubfoot is a complex, congenital deformity of the foot also known as **'congenital talipes equinovarus' (CTEV) caused by the abnormal development of a baby's bones, ligaments and muscles whilst in the** womb. It severely twists the foot both downward and inward, making walking difficult or impossible. Clubfoot is one of the most common orthopedic birth defect which can cause permanent disability if not treated early. It can occur in one or both feet.

### Symptoms of clubfoot

- Foot twisted, usually inward and downward
- Increased arch, with heel turned inward
- Short or tight Achilles tendon
- Soft, "empty" heel pad with deep crease above the heel
- Calf muscles in the same leg may be underdeveloped
- Foot may be smaller than a typical foot

CURE International India began its services in 2009 with a goal to eradicate disability caused by clubfoot in India.

CIIT functions on behalf of CURE International, a global Healthcare NGO committed to establish teaching hospitals, wherever there is a need, and establish specialty programs globally.

1st and 2nd clubfoot conference was organized in 2013 in 2015 respectively.

The exact causes of clubfoot are not known. Scientific studies have found that familial inheritance, genetics and environment are all likely to be factors which interact to cause clubfoot but how this happens is not well understood.

2 out of every 1000 children are born with clubfoot in every country of the world regardless of race or geographic region. In India more than 50,000 children are born with Clubfoot every year if not treated all these children will become differently abled.

PEPPER IT WITH

Ponseti Method, World Clubfoot Day, Down Syndrome, Rickets

The irony is clubfoot is curable. But without treatment, clubfoot deformity causes a lifetime of disability as the affected individual experiences pain and difficulty in walking. People with untreated clubfoot find it difficult to access education, employment and experience exclusion from society and also affects the child's mobility and confidence.



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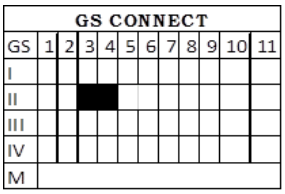
# Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)

## In News

IBBI has amended its Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process Regulations to ensure that as part of due diligence, prior to approval of a Resolution Plan, the antecedents, credit worthiness and credibility of a Resolution Applicant, including promoters, are taken into account by the Committee of Creditors.




## About IBBI

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India was set up on 1st October 2016 under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code). It is a unique regulator: regulates a profession as well as transactions. It has regulatory oversight over the Insolvency Professionals (IP), Insolvency Professional Agencies (IPA) and Information Utilities (IU).

It is a key pillar of the ecosystem responsible for implementation of the Code that consolidates and amends the laws relating to reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner for maximization of the value of assets of such persons, to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit and balance the interests of all the stakeholders.

PEPPER IT WITH
IBC 2016, Model Bye-Laws, NeSL

## Functions

1. Register insolvency professional agencies, IP and IU and renew, withdraw, suspend or cancel such registrations.
2. Specify by regulations standards for the functioning of IPA, IP and IU.
3. Carry out inspections and investigations on IPA, IP and IU.
4. Monitor the performance of IPA, IP and IU.

## Composition

The IBBI has a ten-member board including a Chairman.

1. One Chairperson
2. Three members from Central Government officers not below the rank of Joint Secretary or equivalent.
3. One nominated member from the RBI.
4. Five members nominated by the Central Government; of these, three shall be whole-time members.

## Responsibility of IBBI

1. The IBBI's primary responsibility is to create and amend laws relating to reorganization as well as insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time-bound manner.
2. It must create regulations for insolvency procedures, institutions and professionals. So far, the IBBI has produced three sets of regulations. These include – regulations for Insolvency Professionals, Insolvency Agencies and Model Bye-Laws and Governing Board of Insolvency Professional Agencies.
3. The IBBI regulations aims to create a complete framework for the voluntary liquidation of any corporate person.

## Definitions

Insolvency professional means any individual or partnership firm enrolled as a member of an insolvency professional agency and registered as an insolvency professional with the Board in accordance with these Regulations.

Information utility is an information network which would store financial data like borrowings, default and security interests among others of firms. The utility would specialise in procuring, maintaining and providing/supplying financial information to businesses, financial institutions, adjudicating authority, insolvency professionals and other relevant stake holders.

Insolvency Professional Agency as defined under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 means any person registered with the Board under section 201 as an insolvency professional agency. In simple terms Professional Agency is a section 8 Company registered with Board of



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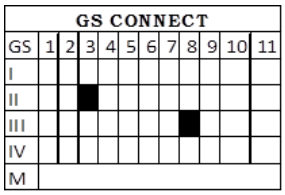
Insolvency & Bankruptcy of India (herein after referred to as "the Board") to discharge the following functions as specified under The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016:

- Grant membership to Insolvency Professionals who wants to be its member and fulfil all requirements set out in its byelaws on payment of membership fee.
- Lay down standards of professional conduct for its members. Monitor the performance of its members.
- Safeguard the rights, privileges and interests of insolvency professionals who are its members.

## India's Second Technology and Innovation Support Center (TISC)

### In News

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, has signed an Institutional agreement with Anna University to establish India's second TISC at the Centre for Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR), Anna University, Chennai, under the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) TISC program.




### What is WIPO TISC program?

The WIPO TISC program provides innovators in developing countries with access to locally based, high quality technology information and related services, helping them to exploit their innovative potential and to create, protect, and manage their intellectual property (IP) rights.

### Significance of TISC for India

The objective of the TISC is to stimulate a dynamic, vibrant and balanced Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) system in India to foster creativity and innovation, thereby promoting entrepreneurship and enhancing social, economic and cultural development by establishing a network of TISCs in India.

### Services Offered by TISC

- ✓ Access to online patent and non-patent (scientific and technical) resources and IP-related publications;
- ✓ Assistance in searching and retrieving technology information;
- ✓ Training in database search;
- ✓ On-demand searches (novelty, state-of-the-art and infringement);
- ✓ Monitoring technology and competitors;
- ✓ Basic information on industrial property laws, management and strategy, and technology commercialization and marketing.

### Key Highlights

- The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM) is designated as the National Focal Point for the TISC national network.
- CIPAM shall identify potential host institutions, assess their capacities and support them in joining the TISC programme.
- CIPAM will also act as the main intermediary between WIPO and TISC host institutions and coordinate all the activities of the national TISC network.
- CIPAM plans to establish TISCs in universities, state science councils and research and development institutions to give an impetus to knowledge sharing, sharing of best practices among the TISCs, capacity building, generation and commercialization of IPs.

India's first TISC will come up at Patent Information Centre, Punjab. The DIPP signed the institutional agreement with Punjab State Council of Science and Technology to establish the TISC at Patent Information Centre, Punjab, under the WIPO TISC programme.

### Centre for Intellectual Property Rights

1. Centre for Intellectual Property Rights and Trademarks was established in Anna University in the year 2005 as per the approval of Syndicate of Anna University at 170th meeting held on August 24th 2005. Subsequently the name of above Centre is changed to Centre for Intellectual Property Rights (CIPR) in the year 2009.



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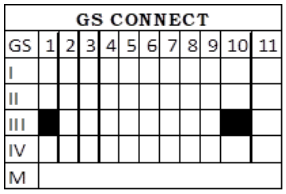
2. CIPR was established to create awareness and offer assistance to academicians, researchers, entrepreneurs and innovators to identify, protect and manage IPR effectively. CIPR actively involves in educating the importance of IPR for various communities. CIPR is functioning as the nodal centre for Industries, Small and Medium Entrepreneurs, Educational and Research Institutions for IPR related matters.
3. CIPR successfully conducted number of Certificate Courses on Intellectual Property Rights in collaboration with Tamil Nadu Technology Development and Promotion Center (TNTDPC) of Confederation of Indian Industries (CII), Chennai.

## Credit Rating

Why in News?




US-based global credit rating agency Moody's recently upgraded India's sovereign rating to Baa2 from Baa3 (lowest investment grade) and changed outlook on the rating to stable from positive. Moody's has also raised India's long-term foreign-currency bond ceiling to Baa1 from Baa2, and the long-term foreign-currency bank deposit ceiling to Baa2 from Baa3.It had last upgraded India's rating to 'Baa3' in 2004.

What is Credit Rating?

A credit rating is an assessment of the creditworthiness of a borrower. Individuals, corporations and governments are assigned credit ratings — whoever wants to borrow money. Individuals are **given 'credit scores', while corporations and governments** receive **'credit ratings'**.

The decision to upgrade the ratings is underpinned by Moody's expectation that continued progress on economic and institutional reforms will, over time, enhance India's high growth potential and its large and stable financing base for government debt, and will likely contribute to a gradual decline in the general government debt burden over the medium term. The global ratings agency, however, cautioned that high debt burden remains a constraint on the country's credit profile.

The Reserve Bank of India has constituted a 10-member 'High Level Task Force headed by Y M Deosthaloeeon Public Credit Registry (PCR) for India', which will, among other things, suggest a roadmap for developing a transparent, comprehensive and near-real-time PCR for India.

- It has been driven by some of the recent structural reforms — including the implementation of a long-delayed nationwide goods and services tax (GST), and moves to address the logjam of mounting bad loans in the banking sector through an Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- These are expected to help ensure a healthier enabling environment to realise high growth potential over the longer term.
- The ratings agency has said the reforms undertaken until now would "advance the government's objective of improving the business climate, enhancing productivity, stimulating foreign and domestic investment, and ultimately fostering strong and sustainable growth."
- Viewed in conjunction with the sizeable foreign exchange reserves, India's overall capacity to absorb shocks is now seen as much better.

After Pokharan nuclear tests in 1998, global credit rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's and Moody's downgraded India's sovereign credit rating from investment grade to junk. Moody's upgraded India's rating from Ba1 to Baa3, indicating that it was now "stable" in 2004

PEPPER IT WITH
Resurgent India bonds, India Millenium Deposits,

Moody's also changed the ratings outlook to '**stable' from 'positive'** with the explanation that "high public debt burden remains an important constraint on India's credit profile relative to peers." At 68% of its GDP in 2016, general government debt in India is significantly higher than the 44% median for other similarly ranked economies which sees the debt-to-GDP ratio widening by about 1 percentage point this fiscal year to 69%. Moody's cites "the large pool of private savings available to finance governme



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nt debt", the steps taken to enlarge the formal economy by mainstreaming more and more businesses from the informal sector, and measures aimed at improving spending efficiency through better targeting of welfare measures, as all broadly supportive of a gradual strengthening of the fiscal metrics over time. In 2015, the rating outlook was changed to 'positive' from 'stable'.

Criteria behind Ratings

There are several criteria behind rating a government's creditworthiness. Among them are taxation; currency value; economic growth and prospects; labour laws; the ability to repay debt obligations on time; the level of public debt, especially compared to peers; political stability which in turn is believed to have the potential to lead to economic and institutional reforms; strength of the financial sector and banks; monetary policy and the size of foreign exchange reserves, which determine the ability to repay foreign debt; sovereign risk where a country's central bank can change its foreign exchange regulations etc. These risks are taken into account and ratings assigned accordingly.

| Govt | S&P | | Moody's | | Fitch | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Singapore | AAA | Stable | Aaa | Stable | AAA | Stable |
| Hong Kong | AAA | Negative | Aa2 | Stable | AA+ | Stable |
| South Korea | AA | Stable | Aa2 | Stable | AA- | Stable |
| China | A+ | Stable | A1 | Stable | A+ | Stable |
| Japan | A+ | Stable | A1 | Stable | A | Stable |
| Malaysia | A- | Stable | A3 | Stable | A- | Stable |
| Thailand | BBB+ | Stable | Baa1 | Stable | BBB+ | Stable |
| Philippines | BBB | Stable | Baa2 | Stable | BBB- | Positive |
| India | BBB- | Stable | Baa2 | Stable | BBB- | Stable |
| Indonesia | BBB- | Stable | Baa3 | Positive | BBB- | Positive |

What is Baa2

It is the ninth highest rating in Moody's Long-term Corporate Obligation Rating. Obl igations rated Baa2 are subject to moderate credit risk. They are considered medium grade and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.

Why do countries get credit ratings?

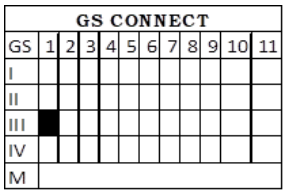
National governments, not countries, are assigned credit ratings by agencies like Standard & Poor's, Moody's and Fitch. Governments require ratings to borrow money. They are also given ratings on their worth as investment destinations. A country requests a credit rating agency to evaluate its economic and political environment and arrive at a rating. This is done to position itself as a destination for foreign direct investment.

Conclusion

For India, these sovereign ratings are, in a way, unsolicited but they are important from the perspective of investors who may be looking for an independent assessment from an external agency, or for those investing in debt.

## Logistics Sector Granted Infrastructure Status

The inclusion of "Logistics Sector" in the Harmonized Master List of Infrastructure Sub-sectors was recommended by the Institutional Mechanism and subsequently approved by the Union Finance Minister. "Logistics Infrastructure" is included by insertion of a new item in the renamed **category of 'Transport and** Logistics', with a footnote stating that "Logistics Infrastructure" means and includes Multi-modal Logistics Park comprising Inland Container Depot (ICD) with minimum investment of Rs. 50 crore and minimum area of 10 acre, Cold Chain Facility with minimum investment of Rs.15 crore and minimum area of 20,000 sq. ft, and/or Warehousing Facility with investment of minimum Rs. 25 crore and minimum area of 1 lakh sq ft.




- The need for integrated Logistics sector development has been felt for quite some time in view of the fact that the logistics cost in India is very high (Approx. 13% of GDP) compared to developed countries.

- High logistics cost reduces the competitiveness of Indian goods both in domestic as well as export market.
- Development of logistics would give a boost to both domestic and external demand thereby encouraging manufacturing and 'job creation'. It will make Indian companies more competitive. This will in turn be instrumental in improving country's GDP.
- Inclusion of logistics sector in harmonized list will attract private investment which is immensely required for cold chain and warehousing facility because a study conducted by the government titled Assessment of Quantitative Harvest and Post-Harvest Losses of Major Crops and Commodities in India reported that the annual value of harvest and post-harvest losses of major agricultural produces at the national level was about Rs 92,651 crore calculated using production data of 2012-13 at 2014 wholesale prices. This is more than the loan waivers announced recently.
- It will enable the Logistics Sector to avail infrastructure lending at easier terms with enhanced limits, access to larger amounts of funds as External Commercial Borrowings (ECB), access to longer tenor funds from insurance companies and pension funds and be eligible to borrow from India Infrastructure Financing Company Limited (IIFCL).

IIFCL is a wholly-owned Government of India company set up in 2006 to provide long-term financial assistance to viable infrastructure projects through the Scheme for Financing Viable Infrastructure Projects through a Special Purpose Vehicle called India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL), broadly referred to as SIFTI.

The sectors eligible for financial assistance from IIFCL are as per the Harmonized list of Infrastructure Sub-Sectors.

In 2017, India's logistics performance improved from 54 to 35 under World Bank Logistics Performance Index (LPI).

About Infrastructure Status

'Infrastructure', in general, is understood as the elementary structure or service required for an economy to function. It is recognised as the vital ingredient for economic development. Infrastructure spurs growth, creates jobs and enhances an economy's competitiveness. In India, there existed no uniform definition of the term as different organisations used to include different sectors or industries or areas under "infrastructure". Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure in 2012 came up with a harmonised master list of 5 main infrastructure sectors (transport, Energy, Water sanitation, Communication and social and commercial Infrastructure) and 29 infrastructure sub sectors. This is a flexible list to enable each financing agency to draw up its own list of subsectors out of the master list, with proper justification for inclusion/non-inclusion of a particular sub sector.

PEPPERT IT WITH

Bharatmala, Sagarmala, Dedicated Freight Corridor, IDFC, Greenfield and Brownfield Projects

Any new sub sector will be included in the master list only if it satisfies the six characteristics of infrastructure (namely natural monopoly, high sunk costs and asset specificity, non-tradability of output, non-rivalness in consumption, possibility of price exclusion, and presence of externalities) and after one or more of the three parameters (namely its importance to the scheme of economic development, its ability to contribute to human capital and the specific circumstances under which it has developed in India) has been evaluated.



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## EBRD

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The Union Cabinet recently approved India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (EBRD) and so necessary steps will be initiated by the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance to acquire the membership of the EBRD.

About EBRD

EBRD is a development bank headquartered in London which was founded in 1991 to help build a new, post-Cold War era in Central and Eastern Europe. It has since played a historic role and gained unique expertise in fostering change in the region and beyond. The EBRD is committed to furthering progress towards market-oriented economies and the promotion of private and entrepreneurial initiative. It is committed to the highest standards of corporate governance. Presently headed by Sir Suma Chakrabarti, EBRD consists of more than 60 countries (shareholders) plus the European Union and the European Investment Bank. Each shareholder is represented on the Board of Governors, which has overall authority over the EBRD. Under the guidance of the Board of Directors, the President manages the EBRD's work.

- China is also a member of EBRD and EBRD is a natural partner for China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) and EBRD recently signed a Joint Financial Partnership Declaration for the promotion of solar energy.

A clearly defined set of standards governs all the work as EBRD strives to develop a sound investment climate and promote environmentally and socially sound and sustainable development. The minimum initial investment towards the membership of EBRD will be **approximately €1 (one) million**. However, this assumption is based on the country deciding to buy the minimum number of shares (100) required for obtaining the membership.

Benefits For India

PEPPER IT WITH IBRD, IFC, IDA, ADB, AIIB, NDB, AfDB

- It will enhance India's international profile and promote its economic interests. Access to EBRD's Countries of Operation, sector knowledge & India's investment opportunities would also get a boost.
- It would increase the scope of cooperation between India and EBRD through co-financing opportunities in manufacturing, services, Information Technology, and Energy.
- EBRD's core operations pertain to private sector development in their countries of operation. The membership would help India leverage the technical assistance and sectoral knowledge of the bank for the benefit of development of private sector.
- The membership will also enhance the competitive strength of the Indian firms, and provide an enhanced access to international markets in terms of business opportunities, procurement activities, consultancy assignments etc.
- This would open up new vistas for Indian professionals on the one hand, and give a fillip to Indian exports on the other. It will also result in an improvement in investment climate of the country.
- Increased economic activities would have the employment generating potential.

## World Bank's doing Business Report, 2018

| GS CONNECT | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Why in News

India ranked 100 among 190 countries in this year's doing business (DB) report. Present government has set the target of entering the top 50 in the DB report, from the 142nd rank India was placed at in 2014.

Overview of the Report

*Doing Business 2018*: Reforming to Create Jobs, a World Bank Group flagship publication, is the 15th in a series of annual reports measuring



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the regulations that enhance business activity and those that constrain it. It presents quantitative indicators on business regulations and the protection of property rights.

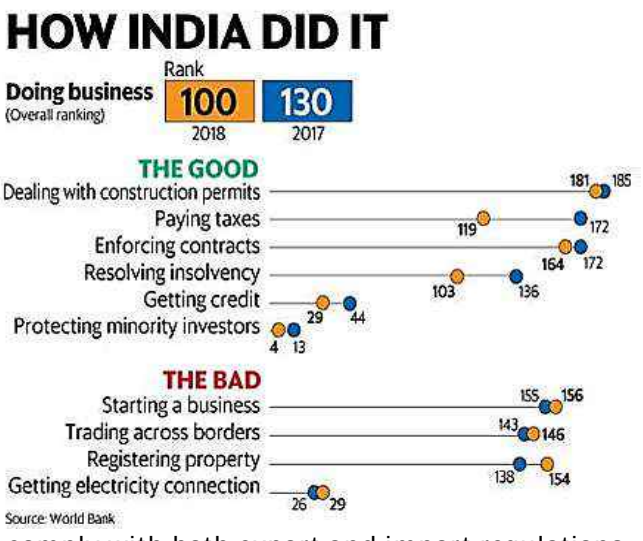
- *Doing Business* measures regulations affecting 11 areas of the life of a business. Ten of these **areas are included in this year's ranking on the ease of doing business.** *Doing Business* **also measures labor market regulation, which is not included in this year's** ranking. The indicators are used to analyze economic outcomes and identify what reforms of business regulation have worked, where and why.
- Reforms reducing the complexity and cost of regulatory
- processes in the area of starting a business and getting credit were the most common in 2016/17. The next most common reforms were in the area of trading across borders.
- Economies in all regions are implementing reforms but Brunei, Darussalam, Thailand, Makawi, Kosovo, India, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Nigeria, Djibouiand & El Salvador were the most improved economies in 2016/17 in areas
- tracked by the report.

The distance to frontier (DTF) measure shows the distance of each economy to the "frontier," which represents the best performance observed on each of the indicators across all economies in the Doing Business sample since 2005. **An economy's distance to** frontier is reflected on a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 represents the lowest performance and 100 represents the frontier. India's DTF was 60.76 while that of China was 65.29 (rank 78).

Among BRICS nations India just ranks above Brazil (125) while Russia leads with 35th rank.

**What led to improvement in India's rankig?**

- ✓ Starting a business: Starting a business became faster by merging the applications for the Permanent Account Number (PAN) and the Tax Account Number (TAN) and by improving the online application system. Mumbai also made starting a business faster by merging the applications for value added tax and the Profession Tax (PT).
- ✓ Dealing with construction permits: Reduction in the number of procedures and time required to obtain a building permit by implementing an online system.
- ✓ Getting credit: Strengthened access to credit by amending the rules on priority of secured creditors outside reorganization proceedings and by adopting a new law on insolvency that provides a time limit and clear grounds for relief to the automatic stay for secured creditors during reorganization procedures.
- ✓ Protecting minority investors: By increasing the remedies available in cases of prejudicial transactions between interested parties.
- ✓ Paying taxes: In both Delhi and Mumbai, paying taxes was made easier by requiring payments to the Employees Provident Fund to be made electronically, and introducing administrative measures.
- ✓ Trading across borders: In Mumbai, reducing the time taken to comply with import regulations at Nhava Sheva port made it much quicker to trade across borders. In Delhi and Mumbai, the elimination of merchant overtime fees and the increased use of electronic and mobile platforms reduced the time taken to comply with both export and import regulations.

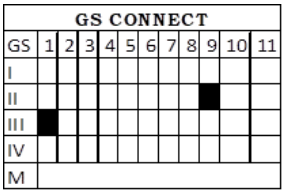


- ✓ Enforcing contracts: The introduction of the National Judicial Data Grid made it possible to generate case management reports on local courts, thereby making it easier to enforce contracts.
- ✓ Resolving insolvency: India made resolving insolvency easier by adopting a new insolvency and bankruptcy code that introduced a reorganization procedure for corporate debtors and facilitated continuation of the debtor's business during insolvency proceedings.

Way forward

India's 30-place elevation is the highest jump that any country has made in this index and shows big acknowledgement of the structural reforms that the present government has been undertaking. The report is based on executive actions and ground-level feedback from businesses in Mumbai and Delhi only till June 1 this year 2017 & does not take into account the impact of the goods and services tax launched a month later. The quality and pace of course correction on the GST in the coming months will determine if India can hold its 100th position or move up further.

## Gender Gap Report




India slipped 21 places on the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap index to 108 primarily due to less participation of women in the economy and low wages. Moreover, India's latest ranking is 10 notches lower than its reading in 2006 when the WEF started measuring the gender gap.

- According to the Report, India has closed 67% of its gender gap, less than many of its international peers, and some of its neighbours like Bangladesh ranked 47th while China was placed at 100th.
- The scale of India's gender gap in women's share among legislators, senior officials and managers as well as professional and technical workers highlights that continued efforts will be needed to achieve parity in economic opportunity and participation.

| | 2006 | | 2017 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rank | Score | Rank | Score |
| Global Gender Gap Score | 98 | 0.601 | 108 | 0.669 |
| Economic participation and opportunity | 110 | 0.397 | 139 | 0.376 |
| Educational attainment | 102 | 0.819 | 112 | 0.952 |
| Health and survival | 103 | 0.962 | 141 | 0.942 |
| Political empowerment | 20 | 0.227 | 15 | 0.407 |

- On a positive note, India succeeded in fully closing its primary and secondary education enrolment gender gaps for the second year running and for the first time has nearly closed its tertiary education gender gap. However, it continues to rank fourth-lowest in the world on health and survival, remaining the world's least-improved country on this sub-index over the past decade.
- The findings in this year's report showed that an overall 68% of the global gender gap has been closed. This is a slight deterioration from 2016 when the gap closed was 68.3%.
- At the current rate of progress, the global gender gap will take 100 years to bridge, compared to 83 last year. The case is worse in terms of workplace gender divide, which the report estimates will take 217 years to close.
- At the top of the Global Gender Gap Index is Iceland. The country has closed nearly 88% of its gap. It has been the world's most gender-equal country for nine years.
- A decade of slow but steady progress on improving parity between the sexes came to a halt in 2017, with the global gender gap widening for the first time since the WEF's Global Gender Gap Report was first published. The WEF began measuring the gap across four pillars — health, education, the workplace and political representation.

Gender Vulnerability Index (GVI) released by Child development NGO Plan India ranks the states of India. The composite index has been developed within research for the NGO's *Plan for Every Child* campaign which has been calculated by analysing four issues pertinent to the situation of girls — child safety/protection, poverty, health and education.



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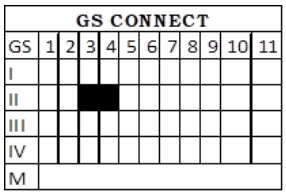
## Contract Farming




Contract farming (CF) is a type of agricultural production carried out according to an agreement between a investor/sponsor/buyer and farmers, which establishes conditions for the production and marketing of a farm product or products. Typically, the farmer agrees to provide agreed quantities of a specific agricultural product. These should meet the quality standards of the purchaser and be supplied at the time determined by the purchaser. In turn, the buyer commits to purchase the product and, in some cases, to support production through, for example, the supply of farm inputs, land preparation and the provision of technical advice.

Advantages of Contract Farming

- Makes small scale farming competitive by providing small farmers access to technology, credit, marketing channels and information while lowering transaction costs. Moreover, it opens up new markets which would otherwise be unavailable to small farmers.
- CF provides assured market for farmer's produce at their doorsteps, reducing marketing and transaction costs and it reduces the risk of production, price and marketing costs to the farmers.
- It can open up new markets which would otherwise be unavailable to small farmers.
- It also ensures higher production of better quality, financial support in cash and /or kind and technical guidance to the farmers.

Agricultural marketing is regulated by the States' Agricultural Produce Marketing Regulation (APMR) Acts. In order to regulate and develop practice of contract farming, Government has been actively advocating to the States/UTs to reform their agri marketing laws to provide a system of registration of contract farming sponsors, recording of their agreements and proper dispute settlement mechanism for orderly promotion of contract farming in the country.

- In case of agri-processing level, it ensures consistent supply of agricultural produce with quality, at right time and lesser cost.
- In case of agri-based firms, it optimally utilizes the installed capacity, infrastructure and manpower, and responds to food safety and quality concerns of the consumers.

Challenges

- It is often criticized for being biased in favor of firms or large farmers, while exploiting the poor bargaining power of small farmers.
- Problems faced by growers like undue quality cut on produce by firms, delayed deliveries at the factory, delayed payments, low price and pest attack on the contract crop which raises the cost of production.
- The agreements are often verbal or informal in nature, and even written contracts often do not provide the legal protection in India that may be observed in other countries. Lack of enforceability of contractual provisions can result in breach of contracts by either party.

PEPPER IT WITH

Model APMA 2003, NABARD's Initiatives for CF, NITI Ayog's considerations, Pepsico India, Amul, NDDB, World Food India

- Adverse gender effects - Women have less access to contract farming than men.
- Single Buyer – Multiple Sellers (Monopsony).

Way Forward

Contract farming has been in India since the 1960s and amendments to the APMC Act at State levels in the last decade have made it legal. Contract farming can fill the gap of lack of investment and land improvement by supplying quality inputs, giving technical guidance and management skills. To make contract farming inclusive, farming groups like cooperatives should be encouraged. Contract farming is best suited to special types of crops and not all farming activities. In China, only specific agricultural produce is under contract farming.



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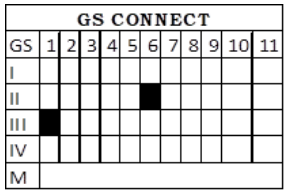
## Task Force for drafting a New Direct Tax Legislation




Why in News?

Recently, during the Rajaswa Gyan Sangam held in September, 2017, Prime Minister of India had observed that the Income-tax Act, 1961 was drafted more than 50 years ago and it needs to be re-drafted.

In order to review the existing act and to draft a new direct tax law in consonance with economic needs of the country, a 6 member Task Force has been constituted with Shri Arbind Modi as its convener and Dr. Arvind Subramanian, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) as its permanent Special Invitee.

PEPPER IT WITH
Differences b/w direct & Indirect Tax, HUF, GST

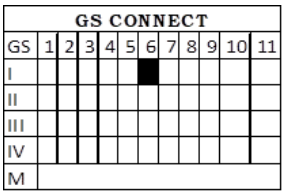
The Task Force shall submit its report to the Government within six months. The Terms of Reference of the Task Force is to draft an appropriate Direct Tax Legislation keeping in view:

(1) The direct tax system prevalent in various countries,
(2) The international best practices.
(3) The economic needs of the country and
(4) Any other matter connected thereto.

The previous government had also undertaken a re-write of the I-T Act and had also finalised the Direct Taxes Code. The Direct Taxes Code (DTC) Bill was introduced in Parliament in 2010 but lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lok Sabha.

- Income Tax Act-1961 came into force on 1st April 1962 and it extends to the whole of India.
- Direct tax is a type of tax where the incidence and impact of taxation fall on the same entity.
- Income tax, corporation tax, property tax, inheritance tax and gift tax are examples of direct tax.

## Siang River




Why in News

The sudden change of the water of Siang River in Arunachal Pradesh from crystal clear to thick dark black containing large volume of heavy slag has created panic to the local people. The East Siang district authorities have pressed the alarm bell as the water of the river, the lifeline for centuries for northern Arunachal Pradesh, is no longer fit for human consumption.

The Siang is the principal constituent river of the Brahmaputra and flows for 1600 km through southern Tibet as the Yarlung Tsangpo or Yarlung Zangbo before entering India.

Siang is also known as Dihang in India, which after flowing for 230 km joins the Lohit and the Dibang join at about 35 km downstream of Pasighat in Esat Siang district to form the Brahmaputra River.

River Yarlung Tsangpo originates in the Angsi Glacier near Mount Kailash meandering eastwards, taking a U turn known as the 'Great **Bend'** between Namche Barwa and the Gyala Peri mountains that mark the north-eastern point where the Himalaya begins.

Probable Reasons

- According to Central Water Commission preliminary reports, a landslide triggered by an earthquake in Tibet between November 17 and 20 led to the water turning brackish.
- It could also be the result of glacial breach. However, the level of dissolved oxygen in the river is within permissible limits.
- China has been planning to dig the world's longest tunnel to change the course of Yarlung Tsangpo from Tibet towards Taklimakan desert in Xinjiang (Siang to Xinjiang through a 1,000-km tunnel) but has been denying the same at public platforms.

PEPPER IT WITH
Daying Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, Zangmu Dam, Donyi Polo, Lalho Project



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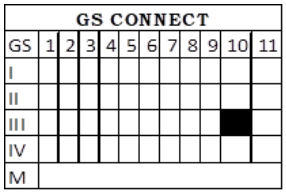
## South Asia Economic Summit

Why in News




The 10th South Asia Economic Summit (SAEC) was held in Nepal recently with the theme "Deepening Economic Integration for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in South Asia.

National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Commerce of the Government of Nepal, and South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) jointly organised the tenth edition of the summit.

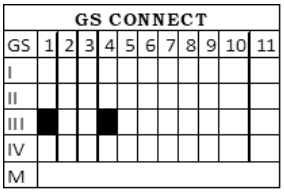
- Envisaged as a Davos-like event in South Asia, the SAES brings together stakeholders from the government, private sector, research and academic community, and civil society to generate innovative and actionable ideas for consideration by the region's policymakers and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- Launched in 2008, SAES is a premier regional platform for discussing and analysing economic and development issues and challenges facing South Asian countries, and advancing the cause of regional integration and cooperation.

PEPPER IT WITH
Diaspora, SAARC, Reimagining South Asia in 2030

- The whole process of SAES is led by a group of five eminent think tanks that take turns to organize the annual event in one of the SAARC countries.
- The think tanks are Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Bangladesh; Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), India; South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal; Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan and Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), Sri Lanka.
- The 8 nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Maldives are part of the region of South Asia.

## Price Stabilisation Fund

Why in News?




Recently in a meeting of Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee (PSFMC) it was decided to import onions through Government Agency to augment the availability of onions in market to moderate prices.

Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) refers to any fund constituted for the purpose of containing extreme volatility in prices of selected commodities. It is generally conceived to be operative in both directions of price movement, subject to prices crossing some threshold level.

PSF is managed centrally by PSFMC which approves all proposals from State Governments and Central Agencies.
Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), a society promoted by Ministry of Agriculture for linking agriculture to private businesses and investments and technology acts as Fund Manager.

- PSF Scheme was launched initially for a period of ten years in 2003 and was administered by Ministry of Commerce. It was intended for growers of tea, coffee, natural rubber and tobacco, having operational holdings of upto 4 hectares.
- A Price Stabilization Fund of Rs. 500 Crore for agricultural commodities was announced in the Union Budget 2014-15 with a view to mitigate volatility in the prices of agricultural produce.
- So, in 2015 GOI approved the creation of PSF with the same corpus as a central sector scheme set up under the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Famers Welfare (DAC&FW), Ministry of Agriculture but was later transferred to the Department of Consumer Affairs (DOCA) w.e.f. 1st April, 2016.

PEPPER IT WITH
Revolving Fund, NAFED, MSP, NCCF, Consumer Federations

- It was created to support market interventions for price control of perishable agri-horticultural commodities during 2014-15 to 2016-17. Initially the fund was proposed to be used for market interventions for onion and potato only and pulses were added subsequently.



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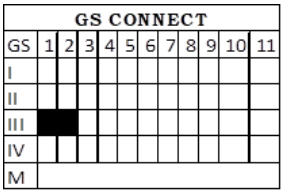
- Procurement of these commodities is undertaken directly from farmers or mandi and made available at a more reasonable price to the consumers. Losses incurred, if any, in the operations is shared between the Centre and the States.
- The PSF scheme of 2015 is focused more at consumers while the earlier one was more like insurance cover for growers.

## Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)

Why in News?




In light of the major challenges being faced by Indian exporters in the backdrop of the global economic slowdown, Department of Commerce recently announced increased support for export of various products and included some additional items under the MEIS.

Merchandise Exports from India Scheme was launched with an objective to offset infrastructural inefficiencies and the associated costs of exporting products produced in India giving special emphasis on those which are of India's export interest and have the capability to generate employment and enhance India's competitiveness in the world market.

The scheme came into existence under Foreign Trade Policy of India (FTP 2015-20) with replacing five other similar incentive schemes present in the earlier Foreign Trade Policy 2009-14. The replaced schemes include:

1. Focus Product Scheme (FPS)
2. Focus Market Scheme (FMS)
3. Market Linked Focus Product Scheme (MLFPS)
4. Agri. Infrastructure incentive scheme
5. Vishesh Krishi Gramin Upaj Yojna (VKGUY)

The duty credit scrip is a pass that allows the holder to import commodities by not paying a specified amount in import duties including basic Customs Duty. It can also be transferred.

It is the most important export promotion incentive provided by the government at present to exporters. The approach of the scheme is to promote exports by giving tax incentives to the exporters.

The scheme was introduced in FTP 2015-20, as a part of Exports from India Scheme simultaneously with Service Exports from India Scheme (SEIS). Exports of more than 4000 items are eligible to get benefit under MEIS. For the first time exports from SEZ also covered under this incentive scheme.

With the aim of making India's products more competitive in the global markets, the scheme provides incentive in the form of duty credit scrip to the exporter to compensate for their loss on payment of duties. The incentive is paid as percentage of the realized Freight on Board or Free on Board (FOB) value (in free foreign exchange) for notified goods going to notified markets.

PEPPER IT WITH

SEIS, FTP 2015-20, FOB, e-commerce, Foreign Post Offices

To determine the quantity of incentive, the countries have been segregated into three groups. Group A has India's traditional destinations such as the EU countries and USA. Group B has the maximum number of countries and covers almost all of India's major export destinations globally and the highest quantum of incentive. Group C on the other hand has no incentive at all.



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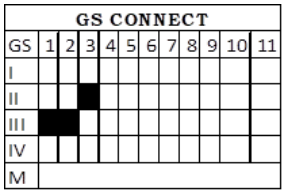
## National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) under GST

Why in News?




The Government has approved the constitution of NAA, the institutional mechanism under the GST law to check the unfair profit-making activities by the trading community. The "anti-profiteering" measures enshrined in the GST law provides an institutional mechanism to ensure that the full benefits of input tax credits and reduced GST rates on supply of goods or services flow to the consumers.

This institutional framework comprises the NAA, a Standing Committee, Screening Committees in every State and the Directorate General of Safeguards in the Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC).

The authority can order businesses to reduce product prices or refund to consumers 'undue **benefits'**. In extreme cases it can impose a penalty on errant firms and cancel their registration as taxpayers. Where the consumers are difficult to trace individually, the amount construed by the authority to be the extent of undue benefit will be deposited in a consumer welfare fund.

In the context of the newly launched GST, profiteering means that traders are not reducing the prices of the commodities when the GST Council reduces the tax rates of commodities and services. In general, traders have a strong tendency to quickly increase the price of a commodity whose tax rate has been increased but they may delay the price reduction of a commodity whose tax rate has been cut by the government.

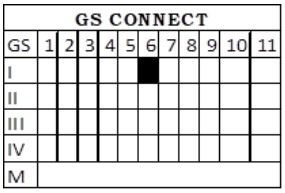
The National Anti-Profiteering Authority will be a five member committee which can determine the methodology and procedure for determination as to whether the reduction in the rate of tax on the supply of goods or services or the benefit of input tax credit has been passed on by the registered person to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices.

The Authority shall cease to exist after the expiry of two years from the date on which the Chairman enters upon his office unless the Council recommends otherwise.

PEPPER IT WITH
GST, Fair Profit, CCI

## Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference

Why in News?




With a theme of Intelligent, Inclusive and Sustainable Mobility', the 10th UMI conference and Expo was held at Hyderabad recently.

The Urban Mobility India (UMI) Conference and Expo is an annual event with the overarching theme which runs across all the aspects of urban mobility and is organized by the Institute of Urban Transport (IUT) [India] under the aegis of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. This year CODATU was also the organizer of the event.

CODATU is a French organization which promotes sustainable urban mobility in the developing world. Since 1980, every 2-3 years, it organizes International conferences on urban transport with the aim of promoting sustainable urban mobility policies in emerging cities.

- IUT was established in 1997 as a premier professional non-profit making organization and registered under the Societies Registration Act 1860. Moreover, it manages National Urban Transport Information Centre (NUTIC).
- UMI is mandated by the National Urban Transport Policy of the Government of India, 2006 (NUTP) and was first held in 2010.
- The objective of UMI is to bring together urban transport professionals and officials in the country as well as international experts to enable them to share views and to share their experiences.



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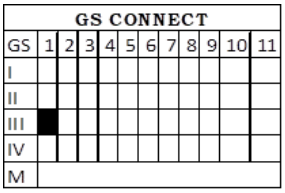
- The conference is an established international forum to deliberate on important issues and challenges related to urban transportation.
- It provides a platform to discuss ideas and thoughts for promoting best practices across India and in other parts of the world and also enhances business promotion opportunities for government and private sectors.

PEPPER IT WITH RERA, NUTP, NUTIC

## Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre at Dwarka, New Delhi by 2025




The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved development of Exhibition-cum-Convention Centre (ECC) at Dwarka and allied infrastructure in PPP and non-PPP Mode at an estimated cost of Rs. 25,703 crore by year 2025. It was proposed by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion

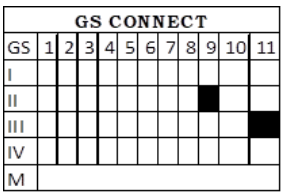
- The cabinet also passed the order for incorporation of a new Government company as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for the implementation and development of the project with 100% equity from Government through DIPP.
- It is estimated that the proposed ECC facility, once fully operational, will infuse a demand for more than 100 major international and local exhibition events annually.
- Project is estimated to generate over five lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities. The job creation will happen in core ECC facilities as well as in supporting ECC land uses like retail, office and hospitality.
- It will give a boost to the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Events (MICE) market.

Asia accounts for only 14.3 per cent of the MICE market in the world and, out of that, India's share accounts for just 4.9 per cent. In comparison, China accounts for 68 per cent of the Asian share in MICE business and trails only the US in the market globally.

- Conferences and Exhibitions are vital links to connect local manufacturers with global buyers and to serve as a platform for exchange of business ideas.
- India presently lacks an integrated world class facility which can meet the requirements of global exhibition-cum convention operators in terms of space, project facilities, transportation linkages, etc. at a large scale.
- Development of ECC accompanied with supporting components, once fully operational is expected to bring New Delhi in the league of Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore in the area of exhibition market.
- The driving factor behind the project is also to promote schemes like Make in India, tourism, trade and commerce, exports, business tourism etc. with the aim of assisting and influencing policy makers.

PEPPER IT WITH Gift City, MCIA

## Prabal Dostyk




- It is a 14 days joint training exercise between the Indian Army and the Kazakhstan Army which commenced recently at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh.
- The joint exercise is aimed at enhancing the military ties between the two countries as also at achieving interoperability between the two armies.
- The aim of the joint exercise is also to acquaint both forces with each other's operating procedures in the backdrop of counter insurgency and counter terrorism operations under UN mandate.
- The overall aim is to enhance the existing military relationship between the Indian Army and the Kazakhstan Army and achieve synergy for joint conduct of operation as and when the requirement arises.
- The first edition of 'Prabal Dostyk' was held in Kazakhstan in 2016.



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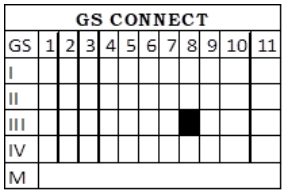
## Successful Flight Test of Guided Bombs

Indigenously developed light weight Glide Bomb, SAAW (Smart Anti Airfield Weapon) was successfully tested from Indian Air Force aircraft in the ranges at ITR, Chandipur, Odisha. The guided bomb released from the aircraft and guided through precision navigation system, reached the targets at greater than 70 km range, with high accuracies. A total of three tests with different release conditions and ranges were conducted and all were successful. It will soon be inducted in the Indian armed forces.




The guided bombs have been developed by the Research Centre Imarat, Hyderabad along with the DARE, Bengaluru; TBRL, Chandigarh and ARDE, Pune all laboratories under the DRDO (Defence Research Development Organisation) and the Indian Air Force.

There are two variants of the guided bombs-Garuthmaa (winged version with range upto 100 kms) and the Garudaa (non winged with range of 30 kms to scalable upto 100 kms). The latter also has on board navigation and guidance systems.

DRDO was formed in 1958 from the amalgamation of the then already functioning Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army and the Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP) with the Defence Science Organisation (DSO).

The main vision of DRDO is to make India prosperous by establishing world class science and technology base and provide our Defence Services decisive edge by equipping them with internationally competitive systems and solutions.

About SAAW

- SAAW, an indigenously designed and developed 120 kg class smart weapon, developed by DRDO, is capable of engaging ground targets with high precision up to a range of 100 kms.
- **India's MOD touts the light weight high** precision guided bomb as one of the world class weapon system.
- This will allow the IAF to easily hit targets across the border without putting the pilot and aircraft at risk.
- It can be integrated into almost all types of fighter jets with the IAF.
- The weapon can be used to destroy bunkers, runways, aircraft hangers and other reinforced structures.
- They are considered Force Multipliers and add Punch to a Force.

PEPPER IT WITH

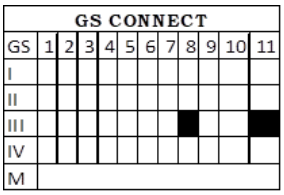
Antrix Corporation Limited, Indian Ballistic Missile defence Programme,

In 2016 India also tested a one tonne guided glide bomb. A glide bomb or stand-off bomb is described as a standoff weapon with flight control surfaces to give it a flatter, gliding flight path than that of a conventional bomb without such surfaces. This allows it to be released at a distance from the target rather than right over it, allowing a successful attack without the aircraft needing to survive until reaching the target.

The Germans are said to have pioneered the use of remote control systems during World War II, with glide bombs like the Fritz X and Henschel Hs 293, which allowed the controlling aircraft to direct the bomb to a pinpoint target as a pioneering form of precision-guided munition.

## DRDO conducts successful flight trial of 'NIRBHAY'

India recently conducted a successful flight test of its indigenously designed and developed longrange sub-sonic cruise missile 'Nirbhay', which can carry warheads of up to 300 kg from Integrated test range at Chandipur. This was the fifth experimental test of the homegrown missile system. Out of four earlier trials since its maiden launch in 2013, only one was successful.




- It is powered by a solid rocket motor booster developed by the Advanced Systems Laboratory (ASL).



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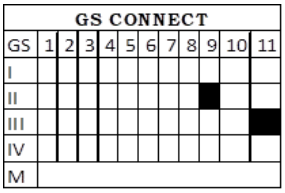
- Nirbhay missile can travel with a turbofan or turbojet engine and is guided by a highly advanced inertial navigation system indigenously developed by the Research Centre Imarat (RCI).
- The missile has an operational range of 1000 km.
- It is a two-stage missile which can carry a warhead of 200 kg to 300 kg at a speed of 0.6 to 0.7 Mach. Its launch weight is about 1500 kg.
- After the missile achieves designated altitude and velocity, the booster motor is separated and the engine automatically switches on taking further propulsion. Mid-way in its flight, the missile's wing opens up by the commands generated by the sophisticated on-board computer for stabilising the flight path.
- All along its trajectories from lift off to splash down, the missile is to be tracked with the help of ground based radars and IAF aircraft.

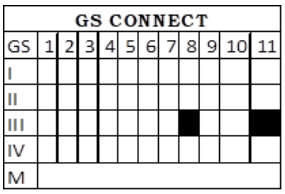
PEPPER IT WITH
BRO, LOMADS, Nirbhaya Fund

## IMBAX




- The first India-Myanmar bilateral military exercise 2017(IMBAX – 2017) was held recently in Umroi, Meghalaya.
- The 6 day joint exercise is the first of its kind military training exercise on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) between India and Myanmar.
- The aim of this bilateral training event was to train the Myanmar delegation for participation in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) under the UN Flag.
- The main focus was on training the Myanmar Army delegation on the tactics, procedures, expertise and methodology required by the contingent of the member nations for serving in UNPKO.

## Brahmos ALCM




Why in News

India conducted successful maiden test-firing of Brahmos Air Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM) from Su-30MKI. It will significantly bolster the IAF's air combat operations capability from stand-off ranges.

The missile was gravity dropped from the Su-30MKI from its fuselage, and the two-stage missile's engine fired up and was propelled towards the intended target in the Bay of Bengal.

Brahmos ALCM, which weighs 2.5 tonnes, is the **heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su**-30 fighter aircraft. It has a range of 290 km.

The SU-30MKI is developed by Russia's Sukhoi and is built under **license by India's Hindustan** Aeronotics Limited. It has a maximum speed of 2 Mach with a single in-flight range of 300km. A total of 8000kg payload can be carried by it in a maximum altitude of 17km.

About Brahmos

- The supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos is a joint venture between India and Russia and named after the Brahmaputra and Moscowa rivers.
- It is a two stage missile and operates on fire and forget principle.
- The first successful test fire of Brahmos took place in 2001.
- Brahmos, the world class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role is now capable of being launched from land, sea and air, completing the tactical cruise missile triad for India.
- The land and sea variants of Brahmos are already operational with the Army and the Navy.
- Brahmos Aerospace is a joint venture between India's DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyenia.

PEPPER IT WITH
MTCR, Waasenaar Arrangement, HAL



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## Sampriti 2017

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Why in News

India recently hosted the 7th Joint India-Bangladesh Training Exercise "Sampriti 2017" at Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, Vairengte in Mizoram and joint training Node, Meghalaya.

The exercise is aimed at strengthening and broadening the aspects of interoperability and cooperation between the Indian and Bangladesh Armies while working together in a counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment under the UN mandate.

Exercise was conducted under the aegis of the Red Horns Division of Gajraj Corps and had two distinct components which included Command Post Exercise (CPX) and Field Training Exercise (FTX). The joint exercise was first held in Assam in 2011 and since then both the countries have been hosting the exercise alternatively.

France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Poland, Israel and the United States participated in the third iteration of blueflag aerial training exercise held in Israel.

Joint Exercises between Armies across the world are increasingly becoming an important aspect of the bilateral relations. Exercise SAMPRITI between the armies of India & Bangladesh is not only symbolic of their maturing relationship but will also built trust and confidence between both Armies. Besides promoting understanding and interoperability between the two armies, it will also help in strengthening bilateral ties.

PEPPER IT WITH
Mitra Shakti, United Shield-2017, Negev desert

## IMMSAREX-17

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- The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise-2017 (IMMSAREX-17), is the first ever operational exercise held under the aegis of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in Bangladesh.
- Ships, naval chiefs, high ups and maritime experts from 32 countries, including 23 member countries and 9 observers from the IONS took part in the exercise held in the Bay of Bengal.
- Bangladesh Navy was elected to hold the post of chairman of IONS from 2016-18.
- The international exercise was arranged by Bangladesh to increase regional cooperation between IONS member states.
- An 'Extraordinary Conclave of Chiefs (ECoC)' meeting of IONS was also scheduled by Bangladesh which was attended by the Chiefs of the Navy.
- The ECoC deliberated upon activities being undertaken by IONS in-addition to reviewing the progress made by three IONS Working Group (IWG) namely **'HADR', 'Maritime Security' and 'Information Exchange and Interoperability'**.
- The IONS is an initiative with inaugural seminar held at New Delhi in 2008. It aims at ensuring maritime security and develops friendly relations between members, as well as to stop terrorism, smuggling and other criminal activity.

PMs of India and Bangladesh along with CM of West Bengal recently inaugurated connectivity projects between India and Bangladesh which include weekly "**Bandhan Express"**, newly refurbished immigration and customs facilities at Kolkata station and two rail bridges on rivers Meghna and Titas.

PEPPER IT WITH
WPNS, Article 52 of UN charter, IOR-ARC



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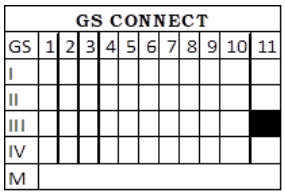
## Island Developent Agency




Union home minister recently chaired the second meeting of Island Development Agency (IDA). The IDA reviewed the concept development plans and detailed master plans for holistic development of 09 islands (four in A&N Islands i.e. Smith, Ross, Long, Avis) and (five in Lakshadweep i.e. Minicoy, Bangaram, Thinnakara, Cheriyam, Suheli).

- The concept development plans and detailed master plans were prepared for with principles of sustainability, people's participation, eco-system preservation and determination of carrying capacity as the guiding principles.
- The Union Home Minister emphasized upon the need for sustainable development of islands with people's participation and presented the vision for developing India's maritime economy while preserving the natural eco-system and addressing the security concerns.
- The project being steered by NITI Aayog aims at promoting and implementing development based on sustainable approach to building a thriving maritime economy of the project islands.
- The IDA was set up in June 2017 following the Prime **Minister's review meeting for the holistic development of** islands.

Joined training doctrine of Indian armed forces was released recently to promote 'Synergy' and 'Integration' amongst the three Services and other stake-holders leading to an enhanced efficiency and optimum utilisation of resources.

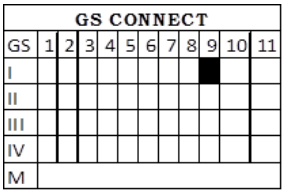
PEPPER IT WITH
Chief of staff committee (COSC), Strategic Forces Command (SFC)

DANX-17

With the objective to practice & validate procedures and drills of all the Command forces aimed at defending Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India conducted a five day exercise named Defence of Andaman and Nicobar Islands Exercise (DANX-17) under the aegis of its Andaman & Nicobar Command in November 2017.

The Andaman and Nicobar Command is the only tri-service theater command of the Indian Armed Forces, based at Port Blair in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a Union Territory of India. Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) was formed in 2001, following the Group of Ministers' report on national security, after the Kargil War. It is a very small command, with limited resources, and there has been a demand to revert the control of command permanently to the Navy.

## GI tag for Etikoppaka toys




In News

Etikoppaka toys, popularly known as Lakkapidathalu in the local parlance, finally received Geographical Indication by the Registration of Geographical Indication, categorised in class 20 of the toys category.

About Etikoppaka toys

- Located on the banks of the river Varaha in Vishakhapatnam district of AP, is a small village called Etikoppaka. Made in the Etikoppaka region of Andhra Pradesh, these toys are made with lacquer color and are traditionally known as Etikoppaka toys or Etikoppaka Bommalu.
- The toys are also called as lacquer toys because of the colours used.
- The toys are made out of wood and are coloured with natural dyes derived from seeds, lacquer, bark, roots and leaves.
- The wood used to make the toys is soft in nature and the art of toy making is also known as Turned wood Lacquer craft.

Some famous elite products from Andhra Pradesh such as Tirupati laddu, Srikalahasthi Kalamkari, Uppada Jamdani sarees and Shadow puppets.



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- While making the Etikoppaka toys, lac, a colourless resinous secretion of numerous insects, is used.

## Challenges

1. The exports to the US and Europe, which were to the tune of Rs 50 to 80 lakh per annum, were stopped in 2007 when the importers insisted on GI certification and heavy metal analysis, both not in the hands of the villagers.
2. It has finally received Geographical Indication by the Registration of Geographical Indication. The artisans are yet to get heavy metal analysis certificate for exporting to the US and European countries.
3. Facing a new threat from dumping of identical Chinese wooden toys into the markets

GI tag this year include Pochampally Ikat of Telangana; Gobindobhog rice and Tulaipanji rice of West Bengal; Durgi stone carvings and Banaganapalle mangoes of Andhra Pradesh, Chakshesang shawl of Nagaland; Banglar Rasogolla of West Bengal and Mamallapuram stone sculptures of Tamil Nadu.

PEPPER IT WITH
Kollu Dolls, Kondapalli toys, Bobbili Veena

# UNESCO award for Srirangam temple

The massive renovation and restoration effort at the Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam, Tamil Nadu executed through the public-private partnership model, has won the UNESCO Asia Pacific Award of Merit 2017 for cultural heritage conservation.

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## History

Srirangam is the foremost of the eight self-manifested shrines (Swayam Vyakta Kshetras) of Lord Vishnu. It is also considered the first, foremost and the most important of the 108 main Vishnu temples (Divyadesams). This temple is also known as Thiruvaranga Tirupati, Periyakoil, Bhoologa Vaikundam, Bhogamandabam. The temple complex is 156 acres in extent. It has 7 prakaras or enclosures. There are 21 magnificent towers in all prakaras providing a unique sight to any visitor. This temple lies on an islet formed by the twin rivers Cauvery and Coleroon.

## Structure

- The gopuras of the seventh enclosure/prakaras are called Rayagopuram.
- The fifth enclosure contains the Shrine of Manavala Mamunigal in the Chola Style.
- The Hall of Thousand Pillars in 4th Enclosure, wherein the Statues of God and Goddesses, Alwars and Acharyas are set out for the great annual festival of Ekadesi in December and January.
- The sacred tank (Chandrapushkarani) in 3rd Enclosure, which has been hollowed out in the form of a circle with flights of steps in the east and west.

The famous Christ Church in Mumbai and Royal Bombay Opera House are the other historic Indian monuments that received the Award of Merit this year.

## About UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage

In conserving the heritage of Asia and the Pacific, UNESCO seeks to encourage the role of the private sector and local communities in preserving their cultural heritage.

The Awards are set in two categories:

1. The Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation
   a) Award of Excellence
   b) Award of Distinction



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c) Award of Merit
d) Honourable Mention

2. The Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts

Honourable Mention Category:
- ✓ Bomonjee Hormarjee Wadia Fountain and Clock Tower, Mumbai, India
- ✓ Gateways of Gohad Fort, Gohad, India
- ✓ Haveli Dharampura, Delhi, India
- ✓ Wellington Fountain, Mumbai, India

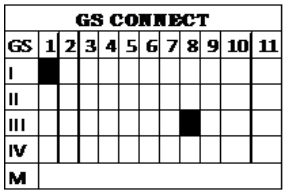
The Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation

The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation were established in 2000 to recognize and encourage private efforts and public-private initiatives in successfully restoring structures of heritage value in the region.

The Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts

Previously known as the Jury Commendation for Innovation, this special award was established in 2005 and is given in addition to the conservation award categories. It recognizes newly built structures that demonstrate outstanding design well-integrated into historic contexts.

## Indologist award




President of India confered 3rd ICCR Distinguished Indologist award on Professor Hiroshi Marui of Japan.

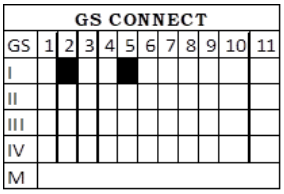
Professor Hiroshi Marui was awarded for his contribution to Indology. Professor Marui has spent over 40 years working on Indian philosophy and Buddhist Studies. His many acclaimed publications and research papers are considered a final authority on several subjects the world over. As President of the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies, he has made a significant contribution to Indology in Japan.

### About Indologist Award

The annual 'Distinguished Indologist' Award has been instituted by ICCR to recognize eminent Indologists working abroad who have made outstanding contribution to the study/teaching/research of India's philosophy, thought, history, art, culture, languages, literature, civilization, society etc. The Award amount is US$ 20000/-.

The first 'Distinguished Indologist' Award was presented to Prof. Heinrich Freiherr Von Stietencron of Germany.

## Cornelia Sorabji




- Cornelia Sorabji, India's first female lawyer was born in Nashik in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency of colonial India in 1866 (1866-1954).
- She was the first women to be graduated from Bombay University and completed her law degree from Oxford in 1894. But the university did not award her degree as Oxford University started awarding degrees to women only since 1922.
- She took the cause of purdahnashins, the veiled women who were forbidden to interact with men outside their families.
- She helped widowed purdahnashins get their rightful share of the property, helped them pursue education and secure employment.
- She succeeded in pursuing the government to appoint Lady Assistants to the courts to help women litigants.

PEPPER IT WITH
National Indian Association



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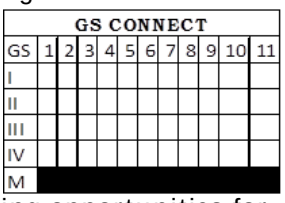
## UNESCO Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies in the Arab Region

The overall purpose of this framework is to launch the UNESCO Strategic Framework for Education in Emergencies in the Arab Region (2018-2021), which aims to support Member States in meeting educational needs in times of crisis, while striving to meet the commitments in Sustainable Development goals. The Strategic Framework consists of four strategic goals anchored in the three pillars of education: Access, Quality and System Strengthening.




The Strategic Framework therefore aims to increase access to quality learning opportunities for children and youth, to empower them with values, knowledge and skills for life and work, to support teachers and enhance the resilience of education systems.

Capitalizing on UNESCO's achievements in education in emergencies, it aims to reduce the negative effects of crisis on education in the affected Arab countries by prioritizing its areas of comparative advantage, such as promoting sector-wide lifelong learning, system strengthening and improving the quality of education, and ensuring that post-basic education for youth is not overlooked.

Recently Chennai was included in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network for its rich musical tradition.



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# CONCEPT CLEARING ASSIGNMENT

1. The Cauvery dispute highlights the need for a campaign to dispel the misunderstanding that clouds public opinion in both States and educate the people, particularly farmers in the Cauvery basin, on the facts and the issues involved. Suggest steps to achieve solution in light of CWDT reports and SC decisions and also bring out powers of tribunals in India.
2. Explain the jurisdiction of Commercial Courts under The Commercial Courts, Commercial Division and Commercial Appellate Division of High Courts Act, 2015. Critically analyse the difference between Commercial Court and Arbitration Ordinance 2015 and also highlight why a party should select Commercial Court over Arbitration. With suitable examples.
3. An important study of teacher absenteeism in 619 schools across six States carried out by the Azim Premji Foundation. It found that while the overall percentage of teachers not in school was 18.5%, most of these were either out of school on other official duty, or on bonafide leave. Mention recent initiatives/scheme to improve the quality of education as per SDG 4 goal of UNESCO. Critically analyse the problem of absenteeism and enumerate methods to put a check on it.
4. Given the vulnerability of Indian agriculture sector discuss the need for steps to be taken to stabilize, develop and transform Indian agriculture sector in light of recent initiatives taken by government. Bring out the salient features of RKVY-RAFTAAR.
5. An unfortunate accident struck NTPC- Unchahar recently reported with at least 32 persons death and more than 97 were injured. The investigation of the accident is done by NTPC only. Is it ethically correct that the organization involved in accident is conducting the investigation, shouldn't an external agency be involved for investigation? Elucidate. Also comment, on pretext of Ease of Doing Business the industrial safety regulation is seen as barrier and has been been down-trodden.
6. Briefly explain APCERT. The APCERT conference themed "Building Trust in the Digital Economy was recently held at Delhi. How this confrence will help India improve its cyber security at par with International security moguls like USA, China, Japan etc.
7. Hundreds of thousands of children in India are estimated to be victims of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse. Although society recognizes the harm caused by the abuse and neglect of children, many cases go unreported. Enumerate initiatives and legislations in India to curb child abuse and compare its implementation as per the new Guidelines released on Child Abuse by WHO.
8. Conference of the Parties (COP-23) in Bonn, Germany a two-week meeting held primarily to clarify processes for the implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement through the creation of a rule book, with technical guidelines and processes. Enumerate the important outcomes and what was India's stand at COP-23?
9. What is Facebook's initiative to bring 'disaster response tool' in India? How NDMA can use social media and print media to spread awareness among citizens to prepare them for future disasters and hazards. Comment Social media plays a vital role in disaster management.
10. Briefly explain Moscow Declaration on TB. Elucidate initiatives and scheme taken up by India to prevent TB spread. Compare its implementation w.r.t to international standards.
11. India's sovereign credit rating was recently upgraded by Moody's after almost 14 years. Discuss how Indian economy can capitalize this upgrade. Also discuss the structural reforms taken by India which led to this up gradation.
12. Logistics plays a crucial role in any nation's development. In India the sector has been given the Infrastructural status. Discuss how it will benefit the logistics sector. Also discuss about the harmonized list of infrastructural status.



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13. The World Bank's ease of doing business report ranked India 100 out of 190 countries surveyed. India jumped up 30 notches in the ranking. Critically analyse the major improvements that led to this jump. Also discuss the steps that India should take to move in top 50.
14. India has the world's second-largest arable land area and 127 diverse agro-climatic zones but still agriculture is a problem in India. Can contract farming become a solution to India's agricultural problems? Also critically analyse the role of private investment in Agriculture in India as compared to other developing nations.
15. Goods and Services tax is an indirect tax which was introduced in India by a constitutional amendment. It completely changed the story of indirect taxes in India. Do we also need to draft a new direct tax law? Discuss.



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# P. T ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following statements about Congenital Talipes Equinovarus' (CTEV).
   1. It is an orthopedic birth defect
   2. It is caused due to genetic disorder only
   3. It can occur in one or both feet

   Which of the statements given above are correct?
   (a) 1 and 2 only
   (b) 2 and 3 only
   (c) 1 and 3 only
   (d) All of the above

2. In the recently concluded UNESCO Asia Pacific Award which among the following places were given Award of Merit.
   1. Royal Bombay Opera House
   2. Sri Ranganathaswamy temple
   3. Christ Church- Mumbai

   Code:
   (a) 1 and 2 only
   (b) 2 and 3 only
   (c) 1 and 3 only
   (d) All of the above

3. Consider the following statements about Baa2, credit rating given by Moody's to India and mark the INCORRECT one/one.
   1. It is subject to very low capital risk
   2. They possess certain speculative characteristics
   3. It is the highest credit rating that can be given to a developing nation like India

   Code:
   (a) 1 and 2 only
   (b) 1 and 3 onl
   (c) 2 and 3 only
   (d) All of the above

4. Consider the following statements given below.
   1. Cornela Sorabji was the first female lawyer of Independent India
   2. She fought hard for Purdahnashins

   Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. What is CODATU?
   (a) It is a bilateral exercise between India and Malaysia
   (b) It is an international organization that promotes sustainable urban mobility
   (c) It is a treaty for international taxation
   (d) It is a type of crypto currency

6. Consider the following statements about Institute of Urban transport and choose the correct one/ones.
   1. It organizes urban mobility conference
   2. It is a non-profit organization

   Code:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 only
   (c) Both 1 and 2
   (d) Neither 1 nor 2

7. Government of India has recently constituted National Anti-Profiteering Authority under GST. Consider the following statements about it and mark the correct ones.
   1. It will be headed by Finance Minister of India
   2. It will cease to exist after 2 years of its constitution
   3. It checks the unfair profit making activities of trading communities

   Code:
   (a) 1 only
   (b) 2 and 3 only
   (c) 1 and 3 only
   (d) Only 3



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8. Which among the following given below acts as the fund manager of Price Stabilisation Fund?
   (a) Price Stabilization Fund Management Committee
   (b) Department of consumer affairs
   (c) Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Famers Welfare
   (d) Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium

9. Which among the following are correctly matched?
   1. DAN-X - Indonesia
   2. Prabal Dostyk - Kazakhstan
   3. Sampriti - Bangladesh
   4. Mitra Shakti - China

   Code:
   (a) 1, 2 and 3
   (b) 2, 3 and 4
   (c) 2 and 3
   (d) All of the above

10. Gender Gap Report is published by?
    (a) World Economic Forum
    (b) International Monetary Fund
    (c) World bank group
    (d) Gallop world Poll

11. Government of India recently approved India's Membership for European Bank for Reconstruction & Development (EBRD). Consider the following statements about it and mark the correct one/ones.
    1. It promotes private and entrepreneurial initiative
    2. International Solar Alliance (ISA) recently signed a Joint Financial Partnership Declaration with EBRD
    3. It is a partner of Belt and Road Initiative

    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 2 and 3 only
    (c) 1 and 3 only
    (d) All of the above

12. Which among the following come under Infrastructure in India
    1. Energy
    2. Water sanitation
    3. Commercial Infrastructure
    4. Agriculture
    5. Logistics

    Code:
    (a) 1, 2, 3 and 5 only
    (b) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
    (c) 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
    (d) All of the above

13. Which among the following is/are direct taxes in India?
    1. Corporation tax
    2. Gift tax
    3. Wealth tax

    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 2 and 3 onl
    (c) 1 and 3 only
    (d) All of the above

14. Consider the following statements about Smart Anti Airfield Weapons and choose the correct one/ones.
    1. It is indigenously designed and developed by DRDO
    2. It can be integrated with all types of Aircraft under Indian Air Force

    Code:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) Both 1 and 2
    (d) Neither 1 nor 2

15. Consider the following statements and mark the INCORRECT one/ones.
    1. Siang river is also known as Dihang in India
    2. Lohit and Dibang join Siang to form Brahmaputra
    3. Yarlung Tsangpo originates from kailash Glacier

    Code:
    (a) 1 and 2 only
    (b) 2 and 3 only
    (c) 1 and 3 only
    (d) All of the above



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16. Which of the following is not a member of G20
    1. Argentina
    2. India
    3. Singapore
    4. Neitherland
    5. Saudi Arabia

    Code:
    (a) 1,2 and 3
    (b) 2, 3 and 4
    (c) 3 and 4
    (d) 2 and 4

17. Which one of the following groups of animals belongs to the category of endangered species?
    (a) Great Indian Bustard, Musk Deer, Red Panda and Asiatic Wild Ass
    (b) Kashmir Stag, Cheetal, Blue Bull and Great Indian Bustard
    (c) Snow Leopard, Swamp Deer, Rhesus Monkey and Saras (Crane)
    (d) Lion-tailed Macaque, Blue Bull, Hanuman Langur and Cheetal

18. Consider the following about International Maritime Organization (IMO) and choose the correct one/s
    1. It is a specialized agency of the United Nations
    2. It creates a regulatory framework for the shipping industry all over the world

    Code:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2
    (d) None

19. Consider the following statements about CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) and choose the correct one/s
    1. It is a legally binding treaty.
    2. Appendix III of CITES deals with plant species.

    Code:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2
    (d) None

20. Consider the following about Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) and choose the correct one/s
    1. It is a executive body of Ministry of Women & Child Development.
    2. It primarily deals with adoption of orphan, abandoned and surrendered children through its associated /recognised adoption agencies.

    Code:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2
    (d) None

21. Consider the following about Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyaan) and choose the correct one/s
    1. It seeks to make 75 percent of all government buildings in the country fully accessible for the disabled by July 2018.
    2. Accessibility Index will be launched for this purpose.

    Code:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 only
    (c) 1 and 2
    (d) None

22. Consider the following pairs:
    1. Nokrek Bio-sphere Reserve: Garo Hills
    2. Logtak (Loktak) Lake: Barail Range
    3. Namdapha National Park: Dafla Hills

    Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

    Code:
    (a) 1 only
    (b) 2 and 3 only
    (c) 1, 2 and 3
    (d) None

23. Consider the following and choose the correct one/s



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1. DAWN space mission is a mission of European Space Agency.
2. It was aimed to orbit and explore giant protoplanet Vesta.

Code:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None

24. SCATSAT of ISRO is for
(a) Weather forcasting
(b) Mining
(c) Both (a) and (b)
(d) None

25. Which of the following are part of committee to appoint Chief Information Commissioner.
1. Prime Minister
2. Home Minister
3. Leader of Opposition
4. Chief Justice of India
5. Speaker of Lok Sabha

Code:
(a) 1 and 3
(b) 1,2 and 3
(c) 1,2 and 4
(d) All the above

26. Which of the following DPSP were added by 42nd Amendment 1976.
1. To promote equal justice and to provide free legal aid to the poor
2. To protect and improve the environment and to safeguard forests and wild life
3. State shall, in particular, strive to minimize the inequalities in income, and endeavor to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.

Code:
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 1 and 3
(c) 2 and 3
(d) All the above

27. Which of the following are North Bank tributories of Brahmapitra.
1. Subansiri
2. Manas
3. Kopili
4. Sankosh

Code:
(a) 1 and 3
(b) 1, 2 and 3
(c) 1, 3 and 4
(d) 1,2 and 4

28. Which of the following are GI.
1. Etikoppaka toys
2. Banglar Rosogolla
3. Gobindobhog Rice

Code:
(a) 1 and 2
(b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3
(d) All the above

29 Which of the following statements are correct
1. Pygmy Hog is endangered according to IUCN.
2. It is endemic to western ghats.

Code:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None

30. Consider the following about ICJ (International Court of Justice) and choose the correct one/s
1. It is primary judicial branch of the United Nations.
2. P5 always hold seat in ICJ.

Code:
(a) 1 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 1 and 2
(d) None



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