



Former US President George H.W. Bush passed away on - 30th November 2018

The 41st President of the United States, George Herbert Walker Bush who helped steer America through the end of the Cold War, passed away on 30th November 30, 2018. He is survived by four sons Neil and Marvin, George W Bush, Jeb, and a daughter Dorothy Bush LeBlond.

He was suffering with Parkinson's disease and was using a wheelchair in recent years, and he had been in and out of hospitals in recent months because of rapid declining of his health.

Before this, he was admitted to a hospital with a blood infection on 23rd April 23, 2018, just after a day of the funeral of his wife Barbara Bush, and remained there for 13 days.

India to Chair Kimberley Process from January 2019 by - European Union

India was handed the Chairmanship of the KPCS (Kimberley Process Certification Scheme) by the European Union during the KPCS Plenary 2018, held in Brussels, Belgium between 12th to 16th November 2018. India will be taking over the role from 1st January 2019.

Federica Mogherini, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice- President of the European Commission officially handed over the KPCS Chairmanship to India during the Plenary conclusion . Indian Commerce Secretary, Dr. Anup Wadhawan was also present during the occasion.

Important Highlights

- India as a KPCS Chair will be committed to make the KPCS a stronger process in terms of strengthened administration , inclusiveness, and implementation.

- It will also commit to make it more efficient in terms of delivery of what it promises, more transparent and empathetic towards the living standards of

people who are dependent on the trade, production and manufacture of diamonds.

- In addition to that, recognising the issues and challenges of ASM (Artisanal & Small-Scale Mining), India is aiming to support the ASMs with technical assistance, capacity building and education on valuation, differentiation between natural and diamonds of lab-grown and the importance of legal and formal mining practices.

- The 4-day KPCS Plenary has witnessed discussion on environmental challenges in industry responsibility and diamond mining .

- India held its bilateral meetings during the event with Botswana, US, Russian Federation and the World Diamond Council to discuss on various issues related to KPCS and its working groups.

Government puts imports of Gold dore in which category - Restricted category

Directorate General of Foreign Trade under Ministry of Commerce & Industry has imposed imports of gold Dore in limited category. It means, now, importer requires a license to import gold commodity.

Gold dore

It is semi-pure alloy of gold & silver which is refined for extra purification. Proportions of silver and gold can differ widely. It usually shaped at site of a mine and then further transported to refinery for the purification. Refined gold bars are produced from gold dore bar. India imports approximately 900 tonnes of gold every year making it world's 2nd-biggest gold consumer following China.

Wastage and value addition norms for gold religious idols

Directorate General of Foreign Trade also has prescribed wastage & value addition guidelines for gold religious idols i.e. only gods and goddess, both plain and studded, of 8 carats and up to 24 carats. Under it, % of wastage for plain gold idols will be 2.5 percent, while it will be 5 percent for studded idols. Similarly, % of



value addition for plain gold religious idols will be 10 percent and 14 percent in case of idols studded with coloured gems stones. The % for value addition for idols studded with diamonds will be 15 percent.

FSSAI launches Heart Attack Rewind Campaign for elimination of - Industrially produced trans-fat

Food Safety and Standards Authority of India- FSSAI, released media campaign 'Heart Attack Rewind', aiming for elimination of industrially generated trans-fat in the food supply. It will support Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's global mark of eliminating trans-fat in India by 2022, a year ahead of global mark by World Health Organization. It is in-line with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's aim to get Freedom from 'Trans Fat: India@75'

Heart Attack Rewind Campaign

It 1st mass media campaign of its kind that will educate customers about the injurious effects and its connection to cardio-vascular diseases. It advises citizens about the health hazards of eating trans-fat and offers strategies to evade them with healthier alternatives. The campaign was established by specialists at Vital Strategies.

Background

Globally, trans-fat intake results in to above 500,000 deaths from cardiovascular disease every year. Trans-fats are made by mixing hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them extra solid and to rise their shelf life. In May 2018, World Health Organisation released comprehensive plan to eradicate industrially generated trans-fats from global food supply by 2023.

From January 2019, Which country will chair Kimberley Process Certification Scheme - India

India will be leading Kimberley Process Certification Scheme- KPCS from 1/January/2018. It was led Chairmanship by the EU during Kimberley Process Certification Scheme Plenary 2018, which was organised in Brussels, Belgium. India as Kimberley Process Certification Scheme Chair will be committed to-

Make Kimberley Process Certification Scheme stronger procedure in terms of inclusiveness, reinforced administration and implementation.

Make Kimberley Process Certification Scheme much efficient in terms of delivery of what its talents, more transparent and empathetic towards living morals of people who are dependent on generation, trade and manufacture of diamonds.

Support Artisanal & Small-Scale Mining with volume building, technical help and education on valuation, differentiation between natural & lab-grown diamonds and significance of legal and formal mining practices.

Kimberley Process

It is combined initiative of governments, industry and civil societies to stalk flow of 'conflict diamonds', rough diamonds utilised by rebel groups to finance wars against legitimate governments. It is also explained in UN Security Council resolutions. India is one of the founding associates of Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. Presently, Kimberley Process Certification Scheme has 54 members representing 81 nations including European Union with 28 members.

Kimberley Process Certification Scheme came into effect from 1st January, 2003 through UN General Assembly Resolution. It outlines the guidelines that govern trade in rough diamonds. It has grown into effective process for stopping trade in struggle diamonds. It forms minimum necessities that each participant must meet.

Where was First India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit held - New Delhi

The 1st India-ASEAN InnoTech Summit was organised in New Delhi. It was planned by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry- FICCI in collaboration with Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of External Affairs.

Aim



- To explore avenues of cross-nation corporations with Indian R&D-based enterprises.
- To get global trends in technology management and strategy.
- To advance progressive ideas for policy improvements and regulatory environment.
- To form avenues for industry-academia-government associations.
- Generate capacities for market assessment and quick commercialization of research.
- Link local and global research and development community for collective engagement.

Highlights :

Joining ASEAN member nations in this summit were Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam. On side-lines of this summit, an exhibition to demonstrate best Indian Innovative Technologies, with potential implementation in ASEAN region was also planned. Besides this summit also delivered platform for B2G meetings.

Asia Pacific Summit 2018 begins in - Kathmandu

The Asia Pacific Summit 2018 started on December 1st, 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Summit will last till December 3rd, 2018.

The Theme of 2-day Summit is 'Addressing the Critical Challenges of Our Time: Interdependence, Mutual Prosperity, and Universal Values'.

The Summit, held by the South Korea-based Universal Peace Federation and reinforced by the Nepal Government, have participation by the leaders from the Asia-Pacific region including India, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Pakistan and Philippines.

About 1500 participants from 45 nations are attending the summit. They will deliberate various global issues, together with peace, development, good governance and part of parliamentarians, climate change and role of media.

Address by various leaders and participants

The Summit started with an opening address by Nepal's PM K.P.Sharma Oli who called for vigorous partnership between governments, private sector and diverse social groups.

While, former Indian PM H.D. Deve Gowda, who is representing India there, addressed the problems of terrorism and climate change as the biggest challenges worldwide.

Myanmar State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi worried the necessity for collective efforts to combat terrorism, hunger, migration and displacement, poverty, discrimination and injustice.

• Name of India's fastest train which is also engine less - Train 18

India's 1st indigenously developed locomotive-less (engine less) train called Train 18, broken the 180 km/h velocity limit during test route in Kota-Sawai Madhopur section. When this train would be operational, it will become the nation's fastest train. It is advertised as next generation Shatabdi Express and will join metros with other important cities.

Background

Train 18 came out in October 2018 at Chennai's Integral Coach Factory. Earlier in November 2018, Research Designs and Standards Organisation had declared its run trial successful. During this track trial in Moradabad division of Northern Railway, this train run at about 115 km/h speed. The tests proved that train has distinct track geometry parameters, curved alignments of specific radius and station yard areas. Major tests of this train are now finished with just few more remaining. As Train 18 is operational, it will commence its commercial run from January 2019.

Train 18

It is capable of attaining 200 km/h provided the rest of Indian Railways'



system. It will be replacing present 30 years old Shatabdi Express, as next generation Shatabdi Express. It will be 1st long-distance train without separate engine.

Train 18 took investment of about Rupees 100 crores to build this prototype and succeeding bulk production will decrease the cost. Thus, it will be inexpensive compared to imported engine-less trains.

It has aerodynamically planned driver cabins at both ends for faster turn-around at destinations. It backs advanced regenerative braking system- ARBS which saves power.

Train 18 is completely air-conditioned and proposes better passenger comfort and safety, as all apparatus are fixed under carriage, so that extra space is available on board. It also has soft lighting, automatic doors, footsteps and GPS-based Passenger Information System.

Government inks \$85 Million Loan Agreement with ADB for - Odisha Skill Development Project

Union Government's Ministry of Finance and Asian Development Bank has inked \$85 million loan contract for Odisha Skill Development Project. It intends to improve the skill development ecosystem in Odisha and found World Skill Centre, an advanced skill training centre in Bhubaneswar.

Important Highlights

The skill development project will benefit more than 150,000 people learn skills in priority sectors, including production, construction and services for formal employment.

It would counterpart the efforts to mark the employment requirements of the emerging sectors in India and globally.

It would engage Singapore's Institute of Technical Education Services to sustenance Odisha Skill Development Authority in forming and operationalising the World Skill Centre.

The World Skill Centre would offer internationally marked advanced training programmes for the working age population of Odisha.

It will issue training to 5,000 teachers, 1000 assessors and provide 8 training courses for 13,000 full-time students.

It will advance the overall eco-system of skill development in Odisha by delivering integrated services through an entrepreneurship incubation centre, a career counselling and placement centre, a curriculum design and development centre and education technology deployment centre.

National Commission for Females to support livelihood programmes for - Females in northeast

The National Commission for Women has finalised to support North-East livelihood programs for females, particularly for those under the younger age group, via skill development and specialised training.

The same was finalised during a meeting between the Minister of State for DoNER Ministry, Dr. Jitendra Singh and the freshly designated member of the 3-member National Commission for Women, Soso Shaiza in New Delhi on December 3rd, 2018.

The main focus behind the move is to empower the young females as individuals and enable them to earn a living for themselves.

Significance

Though the females in the North-East are quite unbound as far as their contribution in outdoor work is concerned, there is still possibility for raising the levels of education among them, especially among females living in remote and rural areas.

The income programs will impart skill training to these females in order to make them independent.



International Day of Persons with Disabilities observed globally on – 3rd December 2018

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated worldwide on December 3rd, 2018 with the theme “Empowering persons with disabilities and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”.

The international day goals to promote the rights of individuals with disabilities in all spheres of society and development. It also goals to upsurge awareness of the situation of individuals with disabilities in every aspect of life, be it political, social, economic or cultural.

Important Points

The International Day of People with Disability is celebrated on December 3rd every year.

The yearly celebration of the day was announced in 1992, by a resolution of the UN General Assembly.

The day goals to upsurge public awareness, understanding and acceptance of people with disability and rejoice their achievements and contributions.

Each year the UN declares a theme to celebrate the International Day of People with Disability.

The annual theme delivers an overarching attention on how society can strive for inclusivity over the removal of physical, technological and attitudinal barriers for individuals with disability.

Abhinav Bindra becomes first Indian to get highest shooting honour Blue Cross

World-class Indian shooter and still India’s only solo Olympic gold medallist Abhinav Bindra was bestowed coveted International Shooting Sport Federation “Blue Cross”. With this, Bindra became the 1st Indian to be presented the Blue Cross award. The prize is conferred for outstanding contribution to sport of shooting and honours distinguished

associates of the international shooting fraternity. Blue Cross is the highest recognition given by parent body of International shooting Sports Federation.

Abhinav Bindra

Abhinav Bindra secured Olympic gold medal in 2008, World Championship gold in 2006, Seven Commonwealth Games medals and three Asian Games medals in shooting. He became 1st Indian to secure individual Olympic gold medal by winning the topmost prize in 10 meters Air Rifle event at 2008 Games organised in Beijing, China.

He was bestowed with Arjuna award in 2000, Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award in 2001 and Padma Bhushan in 2009. He narrowly had missed out on 2nd Olympic medal at 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro, after which he declared to retire from sport at the age of 33 to pave path for coming generation of Indian shooters.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to be chief guest at Republic Day celebrations 2019

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will be chief guest at India’s 70th Republic Day celebrations on 26th January 2019. Cyril Ramaphosa was given invitation to be chief guest by Indian PM Narendra Modi during the meeting of leaders on side-lines of G20 summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The statement comes month after United States President Donald Trump refused India’s invitation to be chief guest. The reason given was “scheduling constraints” of President.

Significance

It honours date on which Constitution of India came into effect on 26th January 1950 replacing Government of India Act (1935) as the governing document of India. Constitution was accepted by Indian Constituent Assembly on 26th November 1949 and came into existence on 26th January 1950, completing the nation’s transition towards becoming an Independent nation.

26th January was selected as Republic day because it was on this day in 1930



when Purna Swaraj was announced by Indian National Congress at Lahore session 1929 as conflicted to Dominion status proposed by British Regime.

India, US Air Forces exercise Ex Cope India-2018 begins in West Bengal

Air Forces of India and United States started their 12 days combined exercise 'Ex Cope India-2018' in West Bengal. It is 4th edition in series of bilateral joint exercise organised by Air Forces of both countries conducted in India. This year for 1st time exercise will be organised at 2 Air Force bases in West Bengal's Kalaikunda and Panagarh.

Important Points

This edition of exercise is focused at delivering operational exposure to air force personnel of both nations and undertake mutual exchange of best practices for upgrading operational capability. It will be aimed on developing United States-Indian mutual co-operation and developing on existing capabilities, aircrew tactics and force employment. It will present United States and India's efforts and commitment to free and open Indo-Pacific region. United States Air Force is taking part with 12 F15 C/D, 3 C-130. Indian Air Force is participating with Su-30 MKI, Jaguar, Mirage 2000, C-130J and AWACS airplanes.

Background

Cope India is series of International Air Force exercises among Indian Air Force and US Air Force conducted on and over Indian land. The 1st such exercise was directed at Indian Air Force station in Gwalior from February 2004. The exercise was repeated in 2005, 2006, 2009 and was last organised in 2010.

India to host G20 Summit in 2022

India will arrange G20 Summit In 2022, when it will bosome its 75th year of Independence. It was declared by PM Narendra Modi during current G20 meet of international grouping in Buenos Aires, Argentina. This comes after Italy acknowledged India's official request to organise this summit in 2021 as earlier it was going to arrange it in 2022. During the

Buenos Aires G20 meet, India presented a 9-point schedule to the G20 nations calling for strong and active co-operation among them to comprehensively deal with fugitive economic offenders.

G20

G20 is premier forum for international economic co-operation and decision-making for governments and central bank governors from 20 mega economies to emphasis on economic issues and other crucial development challenges.

It consists of total 19 nations in addition with EU, representing 85 percent of global GDP, 80 percent of international trade, 65 percent of world's population. Its members consist Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, India, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States and European Union.

In 2008, the 1st G20 Leaders' Summit was arranged in Washington DC, United States. Earlier to this, it was merely forum for meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. The G20 has played crucial role in responding to the global financial crisis.

First India, Japan air exercise SHINYUU Maitri 18 initiated in Agra

The 1st bilateral air exercise SHINYUU Maitri-18 among Japanese Air Self Defence Force and Indian Air Force started at Air Force Station Agra. The main theme of this exercise is combined Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief on Transport aircraft.

SHINYUU Maitri-18

The emphasis of the exercise is set for Indian Air Force and Japanese Air Self Defence Force crews to undertake Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations. Indian Air Force and Japanese Air Self Defence Force will also rehearsal display of heavy loading or offloading during this exercise. In this exercise, Japanese Air Self Defence Force will be taking part with C2 aircraft along with aircrew and spectators. Indian Air



Force is participating with C-17 and An-32 aircraft with aircrew and observers.

Qatar to leave OPEC- Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries from January 2019

Qatar has declared its withdrawal from Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries- OPEC from January 2019 and emphasis more on the production of natural gas. It makes Qatar 1st Gulf nation to leave Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries bloc of oil-producing nations led by Saudi Arabia.

Qatar has been member of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries since 1961 and its result to pull out after above 5 decades comes at turbulent time in Gulf politics. It is under boycott and proscribe from its neighbouring gulf associates including Saudi Arabia for 18 months in August 2017.

Important Points

Qatar is the world's biggest exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas and 17th mega producer of crude oil which is around 600,000 barrels/day. It also only grasps around 2 percent of the world's global oil reserves.

The withdrawal conclusion reflects Qatar's desire to emphasis its efforts on plans to develop and upsurge its natural gas production from 77 million tonnes every year to 110 million tonnes in the forthcoming years. Being part of Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, its oil production was steady with partial prospects for surges. Since 2013, amount of oil Qatar produced has steadily failed from about 728,000 barrels/day in 2013 to about 607,000 barrels/day in 2017.

The reason behind Qatar's withdrawal

Qatar's pure asset is the production of Gas. Qatar is the world's biggest supplier of Liquefied Natural Gas, generating almost 30% of the world total with world's largest known natural gas field, the "North Field" with Iran.

The country plans to upsurge the supply of natural gas by developing a future

strategy grounded on growth and expansion, both in its activities at home as well as abroad.

It needs focused efforts, commitment and devotion to maintain and strengthen Qatar's position as the leading natural gas producer.

In September 2018, Qatar declared to upsurge its production of natural gas by accumulation of a 4th production line to raise capacity from the "North Field" to 110 million tonnes per year.

Most of Qatar's yearly Liquefied Natural Gas supplies, almost 80 million tonnes, are shipped in tankers to different nations, including the UAE, one of the nation's striking the blockade on Qatar.

Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries was founded in 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, 5 major oil-producing nations.

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries is an organisation of 15 oil-exporting nations and has its HQ in Vienna.

It arranges regular meetings among the oil ministers of its member countries. Mohammed Barkindo of Nigeria is presently the Secretary-General of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador sworn in as 58th President of Mexico

Veteran leftist leader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador took oath as the 58th President of Mexico on December 1st, 2018 in the presence an enormous crowd that included world leaders United States Vice President Mike Pence, Ivanka Trump and King Felipe VI of Spain.

Lopez Obrador, sworn to bring a finish to corruption, chronic poverty and extreme violence that have inundated the country for above a decade.

The 65 years old Lopes Obrador would clutch the position of President of Mexico for a term of 6 years.

"Radical" rebirth of Mexico



Lopez Obrador, reaffirmed his purposes to sell Mexico's official presidential plane and to not live in the presidential palace, Los Pinos and uncluttered its doors to public visitors.

Obrador informed that he will save money by living in much modest confines. He also informed that he will get 40% of his presidential salary. He has also dissolved the thousands robust presidential guard, opting instead for a small group of armless bodyguards.

In an extraordinary initiative, he also declared his intention to promote a recall survey during his administration, counting the promise that he will never pursue re-election.

Important Promises

Obrador issued reassurance to the productions regarding his policies, which contains the abrupt dissolution of a \$13 billion New Mexico City airport.

He repeated that investments in the country of 130 million people would be nonviolent and pledged to respect central bank independence.

He assured that his government would make savings by ending corruption with no increase in national debt/taxes and also assured higher wages for the poor and zero-tolerance for dishonesty in his administration.

He assured that his government would make sure a division between economic and political power in the country and sworn to eliminate the regime that the neo-liberal policies of the earlier governments had created.

47th Navy Day observed across India

The 47th Indian Navy Day was observed on December 4th, 2018 across India. The day is celebrated every year to rejoice the achievements and role of the naval force in the country.

The Navy day is observed every year to honor the success of Operation Trident of Indian Navy on Karachi Harbour all

through the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

Under Operation Trident, the Indian Navy dropped 4 vessels near the largest Pakistani port of Karachi and wasted the Karachi harbour fuel fields, assassinated more than 500 Pakistani Navy personnel. To rejoice the occasion, the naval forces displayed acrobatic skills from Army choppers in Rameswaram, at the Dhanushkodi beach Rameswaram Island, Tamil Nadu.

On the eve of the Indian Navy Day, Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lamba declared that the Indian Navy is the net security provider in the Indian Ocean region. Till date, the navy has been effective in thwarting 44 piracy attempts and arresting 120 pirates.

Since 2008, 70 Indian naval warships have been positioned, which have safely escorted more than 3440 ships with above 25000 mariners on board.

Indian Navy to conduct TROPEX Exercise to test robustness of coastal security apparatus

Indian Navy will plan its flagship large-scale coastal defence exercise TROPEX-Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise from January-March 2019 to test sturdiness of entire coastal security devices. As part of Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise, Indian Navy will conduct large-scale coastal defence exercise 'Exercise Sea Vigil'. This exercise will consist all shareholders across mainland and island terrains. It will witness participation of all operational ships, submarines, aircraft and units of Indian coast guards, Indian Army and Indian Air Force.

Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise

It is annual exercise that planned on Western Seaboard. It is organised to test various aspects of not only joint fighting capabilities but also to test war capabilities of 3 services in war like situation. This exercise benefits in validating operational warfighting ideas and delivers very crucial



lessons that will help services to further improve their skills. In the present security scenario and with India's raised role in Indian Ocean Region and Indo-Pacific, Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise assumes great worth.

India, Peru sign pact for co-operation and mutual assistance in Customs Matters

India and the Republic of Peru on December 5th, 2018 inked a pact for cooperation and mutual assistance in customs issues.

The pact was inked on the side-lines of the 80th Session of the Policy Commission meeting of the World Customs Organisations which was organised in Mumbai during December 3rd-5th, 2018.

The Pact was inked by S Ramesh, Chairman of Central Board of Indirect taxes and Customs of India and Rafael Garcia, the National Superintendent of Customs of Peru.

Pact for co-operation in Customs Matters

- The Pact provides a legal framework for sharing of data and intelligence between the Customs authorities of the two nation.
- It will benefit in the proper application of Customs laws, prevention and investigation of Customs crimes.
- The Pact will also benefit in the availability of relevant data for the prevention and investigation of Customs crimes.
- It is believed to facilitate trade and ensure well-organized clearance of goods traded between the nations.

World Soil Day observed globally on 5th December

The World Soil Day was celebrated worldwide on December 5th, 2018. The day is celebrated yearly to highlight the significance of healthy soil and advocate for the sustainable management of soil resources.

2018 Theme

The theme of the day present year is "Be the Solution to Soil Pollution". The campaign intends to increase awareness regarding soil pollution and call people to #StopSoilPollution.

Soil Pollution

As pollution increases worldwide, the soil is also getting affected. Around 1/3 of global soils have already tarnished.

Soil pollution can be invisible and noticed far away but everyone universally is affected due to it.

With the population predictable to reach 9 billion by 2050, soil pollution is an around the world problem that is not only leading to the degradation of soil globally but is also resulting in the poisoning of food, water and air.

World Soil Day in India

On the eve, Indian Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu called upon all the residents of the India to take a pledge to maintain the purity of soil.

In a tweet, the Vice President informed, it is the duty of every humans to protect the most perilous component of nature, thus, people should move towards nature and organic farming techniques and must learn to protect the purity of mother earth.

More than 100 new exoplanets discovered using NASA's Kepler Space telescope

Researchers have located more than 100 new exoplanets using data from National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Kepler Space telescope as well as ground-based observatories. Exoplanet also known as extrasolar planet, is planet that orbits star other than Sun. The discovery of 100 fresh exoplanets is believed to play large role in developing research field of exoplanets and life in universe.

Kepler Space Telescope

Kepler Space telescope is an unmanned space observatory released in 2009 by NASA. It was tasked with decisive



how many Earth-like planets exist throughout the Milky Way galaxy.

It was intended for statistical mission and not to probe into environmental conditions of planets that occur in so-called Goldilocks zone of their stars. It locates planets by using transit method. It is detection of tiny brightness dips resulted by planet after it crosses its host star's face from spacecraft's perspective. Transit method technique needs extremely detailed pointing of spacecraft.

Kepler Space telescope had experienced mechanical trouble in 2013, which resulted into successor mission called K2. Astronomers worldwide are competing to authorize exoplanets suggested by K2 data. National Aeronautics and Space Administration had retired Kepler Space telescope in November 2018 after it ran out of fuel required for further science activities. In its mission lifespan of 9.5 year, it had located more than 2,600 intriguing exoplanets from outside our solar system some of which may harbour life.

As per WIPO, Patents approved by India up by 50% in 2017

As per to World Intellectual Property Indicators 2018 report published by UN's World Intellectual Property Organisation-WIPO, number of patents approved by India shot-up by 50 percent in 2017. The patents approved by India raised from 8,248 in 2016 to 12,387 in 2017, thus keeping up trend of steep raises.

Important Points

Patents approved in 2017 in India were above double 6,022 patents approved in 2015. Of the patents approved in 2017, 1,712 went to entities and individuals based in India, and 10,675 to foreigners. The steep rise in number was driven by patents approved to foreigners, which accounted for 85 percent of total rise. The number of patents issued to domestic entities also has shown growing trend.

In 2016, 1,115 went to domestic individuals and 7,133 to foreigners and in 2015, 822 were approved to applicants in India and 5,200 to foreigners. Worldwide,

1.4 million patents were approved in 2017. China led world with 4,20,144 approved patents and was followed by United States with 3,18,829.

World Intellectual Property Organisation

It is the worldwide body for promotion and fortification of intellectual property rights. It is one of the 15 specialized agencies of United Nations. It was recognized in 1967 and is HQ in Geneva, Switzerland. Its mandate is to promote creative activity, to encourage the protection of intellectual property worldwide.

Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi to get GI tag

Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi (turmeric) will shortly get GI tag. It is a few steps away from getting this Geographical Indications tag. Its registration was initiated by Kandhamal Apex Spices Association for Marketing and was acknowledged under sub-section (1) of Section 13 of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999. Kandhamal Haldi is well-known for its healing properties. It is significant cash crop of tribal people in Kandhamal. Apart from domestic usage, it is also utilised for cosmetic and medicinal motives.

Geographical Indication

Geographical Indications tag is name utilised on certain products which correspond to specific geographical location. It is utilised for agricultural, natural and manufactured goods having unique quality and established reputation. The motive of Geographical Indications tag enables shareholders to authenticate their production while earning a premium and derive an improved income.

The goods and products having GI tag ensures that none can make use of their name, giving them exclusivity. The registration of Geographical Indications is legal for 10 years after which it requires to be renewed. Violation of Geographical Indications tags is punishable offence under law.

Geographical Indications is covered as element of intellectual property rights



under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property. At international level, Geographical Indications is administered by World Trade Organisation's Pact on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. In India, Geographical Indications tag Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 administers it.

Gautam Gambhir announces retirement from all forms of cricket

After more than 15 years of successful career in Indian cricket, Indian Opener Gautam Gambhir on December 4th, 2018 declared his retirement from all forms of cricket.

Gautam Gambhir was one of the most accomplish batsmen for opening game well in all 3 forms of cricket including Test matches, One Day Internationals and T20s. He displayed best in his innings between 2008 and the 2011 World Cup.

World T20

Gambhir played a crucial role in helping India securing the World T20 final in 2007 against Pakistan. Gambhir opened the innings with Yusuf Pathan and smashed 75 runs off 54 balls to benefit India after 157/5 from their 20 overs. On the other hand, Pakistan fell 5 runs short and India won the title in the inaugural edition of the World T20.

2011 World Cup

In the 2011 World Cup finals, Gautam Gambhir was elaborate in a crucial 109 runs with M.S.Dhoni against Sri Lanka. Gautam Gambhir was dismissed with 97 scores in his kitty that had made India secure the 2011 World Cup. India formed history in 2011 by becoming the 1st host country to secure the World Cup, that could not have been probable without Gambhir's innings.

Gambhir's cricket career

Gautam Gambhir completed 58 Test appearances for India, making 4154 scores at an average of 41.95. His 147 One Day Internationals raised his 5238 runs, while in 37 T20 International matches, he scored 932 scores. The left-handed batsman scored 10324 runs in

international

cricket.

He is also the only Indian batsman to score above 300 runs in 4 consecutive Test series. He was also a part of the India team that gained the No.1 position in Test cricket in 2009 under Captainship of M.S.Dhoni.

In 2009, he was ranked No.1 batsman in Test cricket in the International Cricket Council's rankings, 2 years after he was ranked No.1 as T20 internationals batsman.

In ODIs, Gambhir attained his career-best 8th position in ODIs. He formed one of India's most tough opening partnerships in world cricket with Virendra Sehwag, and the pair together scored 4412 runs for India in 87 openings from 2004-2012.

He headed Delhi to the Ranji Trophy title in 2007-08. He was bestowed with the Arjuna Award in 2008.

Gautam Gambhir made his international debut in 2003, in an One Day International against Bangladesh in Dhaka.

NASA's spacecraft OSIRIS-REx arrives at its targeted asteroid Benu after 2-year journey

NASA's 1st-ever OSIRIS-REx mission intended to visit asteroid and return-sample of its dust back to Earth successfully reached its destination, Benu, 2 years after its release. It will utilise its suite of 5 science instruments to observe asteroid for the next 18 months.

OSIRIS-Rex

OSIRIS-Rex means Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer. It was released in September 2016 for observing 101955 Benu, which is a carbonaceous asteroid. It will repeatedly study area around the asteroid to examine for dust plumes and natural satellites and observe its light and spectral properties. It will come back to Earth after gathering some of its gravels



by 2023. It will collect 60gms dirt and debris from asteroid surface using its robotic arm without landing and then to Earth for complete analysis of the collected samples.

Bennu

Bennu is near to Earth carbonaceous asteroid about the size of a small mountain in the Apollo group. It was found in September 1999 by the LINEAR Project. It orbits near to Earth's path around the Sun. It is carbon-rich asteroid and supposed to be the type of asteroids that may have chemical building blocks supporting life, along with abundance of water.

SpaceX successfully launches 64 small satellites using reusable Falcon 9 rocket

Elon Musk-led SpaceX has effectively released 64 small satellites into low Earth orbit onboard of its reusable and reflow Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. This has formed new record in US of launching satellites in single run. It was 3rd expedition of Falcon 9 rocket, marking another milestone in SpaceX's cost-cutting reusable rocket technology.

About Satellites

The 64 small satellites consisted 49 CubeSats and 15 micro-satellites relating to 34 different clients including public, private and university sources from 17 different nations worldwide including South Korea, France and Kazakhstan. The microsatellites weighed few dozen kgs and CubeSats weighed even smaller. Among these launched satellites, 1 was sculpture known as 'Orbital Reflector' by artist Trevor Paglen, sent by Nevada Museum of Art and it was non-scientific missions.

80th Session of Policy Commission Meeting of World Customs Organisation held in Mumbai

The 80th Session of Policy Commission of World Customs Organization- WCO was organised in Mumbai. It is being organized by World Customs Organization and hosted by Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, under Union Finance Minister.

Important Points

Secretary General, World Customs Organization, other top delegates and customs heads from above 30 nations took part in this conference for discussion on various matters related to customs. Important discussion was on issues concerned trade facilitation, controlling illicit financial flow, performance measurement, challenges of small island economies. Hosting of Policy Commission session will give global presence and leadership role to India in area of customs processes. It will also boost India's push in facilitating trade.

World Customs Organisation

World Customs Organization is independent inter-governmental body with a mission to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations. It was found in 1952 as Customs Co-operation Council. It has HQ in Brussels, Belgium. Above 180 nations are its members including India.

It is the only international group with competence in Customs matters and defines global standards and events for customs clearances at border and their implementation. It is considered as voice of international Customs community.

India is member of World Customs Organization since 1971 and has been taking part actively in its various activities. It is part of Asia Pacific region having 33 nations, one of 6 regions.

Functions

- It proposes range of Conventions and other international instruments, along with technical support and training services to its associates.
- It also actively supports its associates in their endeavours to modernize & build capacity within their national Customs administrations.
- It also plays crucial role in stimulating development of legitimate international trade and combats fraudulent activities.

Delhi Government launches Free Pilgrimage Plan for senior residents

Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal on December 5th, 2018 released the 'Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana' offering free travel packages



for senior residents from Delhi to 5 religious circuits. 1,100 senior residents from every constituency of Delhi will be able to avail this facility at one go.

The plan was sanctioned by the Delhi Government on July 9th, 2018. Earlier, the Delhi Cabinet had on January 8th, 2018 sanctioned the Revenue Department's proposal to start with the Mukhyamantri Tirth Yatra Yojana.

Keys facts and figures

- 1100 senior residents from each Assembly Constituency would now avail free pilgrimage every year and the expenditures for which will be borne by the government.

- On an average, the plan will incur a cost of Rupees 7000 per pilgrim. The pilgrimage time duration will be of two nights and three days.

- Any resident of Delhi above 60 years of age will be eligible for the plan. The aspirant can also take along an attendant above the age of 20 years, if the he/his spouse is above 70 years. The spending of the attendant will also be tolerated by the Delhi government.

- There is no income criterion but preference will be given to economically weaker sections on 1st-come-1st-serve basis. Employees of central, state and local government or autonomous bodies are not entitled for the plan.

- Those selected for pilgrimage will be covered with an insurance of Rupees One lakh each. The aspirant will have to give a self-certificate that all data being given by them is correct and they have not availed the plan in the past.

Various Routes under this Plan

A. Delhi-Mathura-Vrindavan-Agra-fatehpur Sikri-Delhi

B. Delhi-Haridwar-Rishikesh-Neelkanth-Delhi

C. Delhi-Ajmer-Pushkar-Delhi

D. Delhi-Amritsar-Bagha Anandpur Sahib-Delhi

E. Delhi-Vaishno Devi-Jammu-Delhi

SC approves Witness Protection Plan 2018; directs Centre, States to enforce the plan by 2019

The Supreme Court on December 5th, 2018 sanctioned the Witness Protection Plan 2018 and instructed the Central/State Governments to enforce the same in letter and spirit.

The bench comprising Justice A.K.Sikri and Justice S Abdul Nazeer found that the plan will become “law” under Article 141/142 of the Constitution till the acting of parliamentary and state legislations on the subject.

The Witness Protection Plan 2018 was designed by the Home Ministry on the inputs received from 18 States and UTs, 5 state legal services authorities and open sources including civil society, 3 high courts as well as from police personnel.

Aim

The plan intends to make sure that the investigation, prosecution and trial of criminal offences does not turn out to be prejudiced as witnesses are intimidated/frightened to put evidence without protection from violent or other criminal accusation.

Essential features

- Identifying categories of threat acuties and to make a “Threat Analysis Report” by the head of the police.

- Types of protection including ensuring that the witness and suspect do not come face-to-face during investigation, identity protection, modification of identity, relocation of witness.

- Where the threat encompasses to life of witness/his family members during investigation, trial/ afterward.

- Where the threat extends to safety, reputation/belongings of the witness/his family associates, during the investigation, trial/afterward.

- Where the threat is modest and ranges to harassment of the witness/his family associate's, reputation/belonging during the investigation, trial/ afterward.

- The witnesses, categorised under the plan, can lodge application for looking for



protection order before the competent authority of the related district where the offence is committed.

- This competent authority will be led by District and Sessions Judge, with head of the police in the district as member and head of the prosecution in the district as its member secretary.

- The authority, when receives an application, has to call for a 'Threat Analysis Report' from the ACP or DSP in charge of the related Police Sub-Division.

- The authority is also authorized to order protection measures grounded on the 'Threat Analysis Report' including identity protection, change of identity and relocation of witnesses.

24 poets and authors 2018 Sahitya Akademi Award

India's national academy of letters 'Sahitya Akademi' has declared names of 24 poets and authors who will be awarded the prestigious 2018 Sahitya Akademi Award in 24 various Indian languages. The award has considered premier works in 24 Indian languages that consists 7 books of poetry, 6 novels, 6 short stories, 3 of literary criticism and 2 of essays.

The awards will be given at a roadshow function to be organised on January 29 coming year at New Delhi during Festival of Letters to be held by Sahitya Akademi. The awardees were suggested by distinguished jury members from 24 languages and were sanctioned by Executive Board under chairmanship of President Sahitya Akademi Dr. Chandrashekhar Kambar.

Awardees

- **Poetry:** Sananta Tanti in Assamese, Paresh Narendra Kamat in Konkani, S Ramesan Nair in Malayalam, Dr.Rama Kant Shukla in Sanskrit, Dr. Mohanjit in Punjabi, Dr.Rajesh Kumar Vyas in Rajasthani and Khiman U Mulani in Sindhi languages respectively.

- **Short stories:** Sanjib Chattopadhyay in Bengali, Mushtaq Ahmed Mushtaq in Kashmiri, Prof.Bina Thakur in Maithili, Rituraj Basumatary in Bodo,

Prof.Budhichandra Heisnamba in Manipuri and Nath Upadhyay Chapagain in Nepali languages respectively.

- **Novel:** Inderjeet Kesar in Dogri, Anees Salim in Englis, Chitra Mudgal in Hindi, Shyam Besra in Santali, Ramkrishnan in Tamil and Rahman Abbas in Urdu languages respectively.

- **Literary Criticism:** KG Nagarajappa in Kannada, Ma.Su. Patil in Marathi and Prof.Dasarathi Das in Odia languages respectively.

- **Essays:** Prof.Sharifa Vijliwala in Gujarati and Dr. Kolakaluri Enoch in Telugu languages individually.

Bhasha Salman 2017 and 2018

Sahitya Akademi also declared its Bhasha Salman for year 2017 & 2018. Yogendra Nath Sharma was bestowed for North zone; Gagendra Nath Das for Eastern zone; G Venkatasubbiah for South zone; and Shailaja Bapat for Western zone respectively.

RBI to introduce Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions

RBI has declared to introduce 'Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions' to deliver cost-free process to redress grievances of customers related to digital transactions. The scheme will be informed by end of January 2019. It will have services provided by parties falling under Reserve Bank of India's regulatory jurisdiction.

The scheme is being applied taking into consideration increase in digital financial transactions which is gaining traction in the nation. There is emerging necessity for dedicated, cost-free and expeditious grievance redressal process for powering consumer confidence in this channel.

Framework for limiting customer liability

Reserve Bank of India has also decided to come out with outlay for limiting customer liability in concern of unauthorised electronic payment transactions involving pre-paid payment instruments. It already has released instructions on limiting customer liability in concern of unauthorised electronic



transactions involving banks & credit card delivering non-banking financial companies.

This outlay will bring all users up to same level with regard to electronic transactions done by them and extend advantages of limiting customer liability for unauthorised electronic transactions involving pre-paid payment instruments issued by other entities not covered by extant rules. The rules will be published by end of December 2018.

Cabinet approves Agriculture Export Policy 2018 to double farmer's income by 2022

The Union Cabinet, led by PM Narendra Modi, on December 6th, 2018 sanctioned the Agriculture Export Policy 2018, which goals to double-fold farmer's revenue by 2022.

The Cabinet has also sanctioned the proposal for formation of Monitoring Outline at Centre with Ministry of Commerce as the nodal Department with representation from numerous Ministries, agencies and representatives of related State Governments to oversee the execution of the Policy.

The Policy will double-fold the agricultural exports and integrate Indian farmers & agricultural produce with the global value chains. Exports of agricultural produce would play a key role in achieving the goal of doubling farmers' revenue by 2022.

Objectives

- To double-fold agricultural exports from current estimated USD 30+ billion to estimated USD 60+ billion by 2022 and reach USD 100 billion in the next few years thereafter.
- To diversify export basket, export destinations and boost high-value & value-added agricultural exports including emphasis on perishables
- To promote indigenous, organic, ethnic, traditional as well as non-traditional agricultural produce exports.
- To deliver an institutional process for pursuing market access, tackling barriers

and dealing with sanitary and phyto-sanitary matters.

- To double-fold India's share in world agriculture exports by mixing with global value chain at the earliest

- Enable farmers to get advantage of export opportunities in foreign market

Earlier Indian diplomat Preeti Saran designated to UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

An earlier senior Indian envoy, Preeti Saran was on December 6th, 2018 designated unopposed to an Asia Pacific seat on the UN's Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights- CESCR.

The United Nation's Economic and Social Council designated Saran to the 18 membered committee "Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" for a 4 years term beginning on January 1st, 2019.

Saran will start her term at Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights after another earlier Indian diplomat Chandrashekhar Dasgupta finishes his 3rd term on the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by the end of December 2018.

In November 2018, India nominated Saran for the Asia Pacific seat on the Council. Her nomination was circulated to United Nations members by Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on November 23rd, paving the way for election.

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was formed in 1985 by the Economic and Social Council of the UN.

- It was constituted with an aim to monitor on its behalf the execution of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which has been ratified by 169 nations.

- The nations that are parties to the covenant are obligatory to submit reports to the Committee on Economic, Social and



Cultural Rights every 5 years on how they safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights.

- The committee inspects each report and addresses its concerns and commendations to the State party in the form of concluding remarks.

- The Members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights serve in their personal capacities as specialists and do not represent their nations even though they may be nominated by their own nation.

- The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights meets in Geneva and plans 2 sessions every year, consisting of a 3-week plenary and a 1-week pre-session working group.

Cabinet approves National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems

The Union Cabinet led by PM Narendra Modi on December 6th, 2018 sanctioned the initiation of National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems.

The mission will be released by the Department of Science & Technology at an anticipated cost of Rupees 3660 crore for a period of 5 years.

Aim

The mission addresses the ever-raising technological needs of the society and takes into account the international trends and roadmaps of leading nations for the upcoming generation technologies.

Important Highlights

The National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems is a comprehensive mission that would address technology expansion, application expansion, human resource expansion and skill enhancement, entrepreneurship and start-up expansion in Cyber Physical Systems and related technologies.

The mission goals to start Fifteen Technology Innovation Hubs, Six Application Innovation Hubs and Four Technology Translation Research Parks.

The hubs and research parks will have 4

emphasised areas along which the mission execution would proceed, which include:

(1) Technology Expansion

(2) Human Resource Development and Skill Expansion

(3) Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Start-ups Ecosystem Expansion

(4) International Collaborations

Further, these hubs and research parks will join to academics, industry, central ministries and state government in developing solutions at reputed academic, research and expansion and other firms across the nation in a hub and spoke model.

For the same, a strategic approach involving a appropriate mix of academic, industry and government has been proposed to be accepted.

The strong steering and monitoring processes in the form of Mission Governing Board, Inter-Ministerial Co-ordination Committee, Scientific Advisory Committee and other Sub-Committees will guide and monitor the mission accomplishment.

UN launches new outline to combat international terrorism

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on December 6th, 2018 released a new outline called "United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Co-ordination Compact" to fight against international terrorism and direct efforts across the peace & security, humanitarian, human rights and sustainable expansion sectors.

The outline is a pact between the United Nations chief, 36 organisational entities, the International Criminal Police Organisation- INTERPOL and the World Customs Organisation to better assist the



needs of member states when it comes to handling the scourge of international terrorism.

UN Outline Important Highlights

The Co-ordination Committee of the UN will oversee the execution of the outline and monitor its execution. The committee is led by United Nations Under-Secretary-General for combat terrorism, Vladimir Voronkov.

During the 1st meeting of the outline's Co-ordination Committee, the committee also deliberated strategic priorities for the upcoming 2 years, based on the 6th review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, appropriate Security Council resolutions and United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate valuations as well as the appeals from member states for technical assistance.

The committee also observed the organisation of work and ideas to improve the delivery of an 'All-of- United Nations' capacity-building assistance to the member states.

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Co-ordination Compact Task Force will replace the Counter-Terrorism Execution Task Force, which was started in 2005 to fortify United Nations system-wide co-ordination and coherence of combat terrorism efforts.

India Water Impact Summit 2018 held in New Delhi

The India Water Impact Summit-2018 was organised in New Delhi. It was mutually organized by National Mission for Clean Ganga and Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies.

Important Points

India Water Impact Summit is yearly event where shareholders get together to deliberate, debate and develop model solutions for few of biggest water related problems in the nation. The discussions current year were on rejuvenation of

Ganga River Basin. There was also multi-nation dialogue on subject highlighting technological innovations, research, policy outlines and funding models from India and overseas.

Large number of Indian Central Government Ministries and all significant decision makers responsible for delivering rejuvenation of Ganga were also participated at Summit. About 200 domestic and international contestants from approximately 15 nations and above 50 Central, State and Municipal Government representatives were present in the summit.

There were also sessions on afforestation and biodiversity, urban river or water management tactics, making global ecosystem for financing Ganga Rejuvenation Program and tapping into global capital markets for long term project finance.

The summit focused on three key aspects:

- **Spotlight on 5 states:** Uttarakhand, UP, West Bengal, Delhi and Bihar. Its aim was to present efforts and works going on within the respective states.

- **Ganga Financing Forum:** It was introductory forum that brought number of institutions to common knowledge, information & partnership platform. It took together financial institutions as well as investors interested in Namami Gange programs.

- **Technology and Innovation:** It was pilot program intended at providing opportunity to technology & innovation organisations from worldwide to demonstrate their solutions for addressing problems prevalent in river basin.

World Bank assisted project SMART launched in Maharashtra

Maharashtra Government has released World Bank supported State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation- SMART Project to transform rural Maharashtra. This project goals to revamp agricultural value chains, with special emphasis on marginal farmers across 1,000 villages. This move is in line



with Union Government's step towards doubling-folding farmers' income by 2022. The launch of project which was followed by signing of 50 MoUs among big corporates and farmers producer groups.

State of Maharashtra's Agribusiness and Rural Transformation (SMART) Project

The aim of project is to generate and support value chains in post-harvest segments of agriculture, facilitate agribusiness investment, stimulate SMEs within the value chain. It will also back resilient agriculture production systems, enlarge access to new & organised markets for producers and enhance private sector participation in the agribusiness.

The project will be executed in 10,000 villages of total 40,913 villages in states with an aim to achieve sustainable farming within the next 3 years. It will cover almost 1/4 of Maharashtra. Its emphasis is on villages which are reeling under worst agriculture crisis compounded by deficiency of infrastructure and assured value chains to channelize farm products.

The project will be applied in 10,000 villages comprising 10,000 Gram panchayats which were nominated by state government based on multiple parameters of socio-economic backwardness in terms of development & growth.

Significance

The project is huge step towards revolution of rural economy and empowerment of farmers & also sustainable agriculture through public-private partnership model. It pursues to sure higher production of crops and make robust market mechanism to enable farmers to reap greater remunerations for the yield.

FAO Council approved which proposal of India - To observe 2023 as International Year of Millets

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) Council of United Nations has approved India's proposal to observe

2023 as the International Year of Millets. This approval was given during 160th session of the FAO. This session was held from 3rd December 2018 to 7th December 2018 in Rome.

Importance :

It has been noted that millet cultivation in India has declined due to change in dietary habits and unavailability of millets. Important to mention here that Millets consists of Jowar, Bajra, Ragi and minor millets, together termed as nutri-cereals.

Government notifies four commonly used medical devices as drugs, these are - Nebulisers, Blood pressure monitors, Digital thermometers and Glucometers

Four commonly used medical devices has been notified under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act by Government. DCGI (Drug Controller General of India) will be regulating import, manufacture and sale of these devices from January 2020.

These four medical devices are :

- Nebulisers,
- Blood pressure monitors,
- Digital thermometers and
- Glucometers

23 medical devices were being monitored already, now in total 27 devices will be monitored.

Tourism Ministry formulates Guidelines for approval of Online Travel Aggregators

The Union Ministry of Tourism has designed the rules for approval as well as re-approval of Online Travel Aggregators to ensure adequate safeguards against deficiency of service, substitute arrangements and punitive deterrence.

Aim

The plan is expected to set ideals towards accreditation and add value to the dependability and reliability to the aggregators in the online space operating in the planned tourism sector.

Guidelines

The Tourism Ministry will approve recognition as an approved Online Travel Aggregators for 5 years, based on the inspection report and approvals of a committee comprising the concerned Regional Director, a representative of



FHRAI and IATO each and the endorsement of competent authority such as the Chairman of The Hotel & Restaurant Approval & Classification Committee.

The re-approval, thereafter, shall be approved for 5 years after inspection conducted by a Committee of the same constitution, based upon an application made by Online Travel Aggregators, full and free from all deficiencies along with the requisite fee and papers on the online platform.

The re-approval application would have to be given minimum clear Six months prior to the expiry of the earlier approval.

In case the application completed in all respect and free from all deficiencies is not received minimum clear six months prior to the expiry of the earlier approval, it will be treated as a fresh approval.

The documents received from the applicants after inspection in all respects would be approved online.

The inspection for the 1st approval/re-approval shall be conducted by the inspection team within a period of 40 working days from the receipt of complete and deficiency-free application and payment confirmation of fees by the Pay and Accounts Office, Ministry of Tourism.

It shall be mandatory for an permitted Online Travel Aggregators to prominently display the certificate of sanction given by the Ministry in the office premises by displaying it in a photo frame so that it is visible to a potential tourist and also under a prominent link on the webpage of its main website and online portal.

ESIC to allow non-insured persons to avail medical services from its underutilised hospitals

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation during its 176th meeting organised, took few very crucial decisions towards improvements in its service delivery mechanism.

During the meeting organised under the Chairmanship of Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister of State for Labour & Employment (I/C), it was finalised to permit

Non-Insured Persons to avail medical services from underutilised Employees' State Insurance Corporation Hospitals.

Important Highlights

The non-insured persons would now be able to avail medical services from Employees' State Insurance Corporation's underutilised hospitals after levying subscriber charges at a subsidised cost of Rupees 10 for OPD Consultation, at 25% of Employees' State Insurance Corporation package rates for admitted patients and to provide medicines on actual rate initially for 1 year on pilot basis.

The decision will vastly help common people get the quality medical care at very little cost.

It will also make sure full utilisation of resources of hospital for residents' cause.

The recruitment to the 5200 positions in various categories like social security officer, Insurance Medical Officer grade-II, JEs, teaching faculty, Paramedical and Nursing cadre, UDC and Steno in Employees' State Insurance Corporation is under process.

Urjit Patel resigns as RBI Governor

Urjit Patel on December 10th, 2018 resigned as the Governor of the RBI with immediate effect, quoting personal reasons.

With his resignation, Urjit Patel became the 1st Reserve Bank of India governor since 1990 to resign before the completion of the term period. Patel's 3-year term was to finish in September 2019.

Urjit Patel accomplished 2 years as the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India in September 2018. During these 2 years, Patel dealt with the aftermath of demonetisation, supervised a turn in the monetary policy cycle and supervised various major initiatives to enhance the Indian economy.

When Patel took in charge as Reserve Bank of India Governor in September 2016, the Indian rupee was approximately the 67-mark against the US dollar and started to strengthen, touching a high of 63.38 on January 5th, 2018.



However, the Indian rupee started to fall from March 2018 onwards in the wake of increase in crude prices, crossing 71-mark value on August 31st, 2018. Latest on December 10th, 2018 morning, rupee was traded at amount 71.41 against a US dollar.

About Urjit Patel

- Urjit R Patel was nominated as the 24th Governor of RBI on August 20th, 2016 and took charge on September 4th, 2016 for tenure of 3 years. He succeeded Raghuram Rajan.
- He was beforehand working as the Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India. He mainly looked after monetary policy, economic policy research, statistics & information management, deposit insurance, communication and RTI.
- He started serving initially with the Reserve Bank of India as an advisor, after which he was designated as a consultant in the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.
- He led a panel that suggested landmark deviations to monetary policy in India, which included a switch to inflation-targeting and the creation of a panel to form interest rates.
- He has formerly been a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution since 2009.
- He worked at IMF India desk during the 1991–94 time period. He was posted to IMF country mission in India between 1992-95.
- Urjit Patel finished his Bachelor's in Economics from the London School of Economics and received his doctorate in Economics from Yale University in 1990.

UK court orders extradition of Vijay Mallya

The United Kingdom court on December 10th, 2018 instructed the deportation of Indian business tycoon and liquor baron Vijay Mallya from Britain to India to face offence of fraud filed against him. The decision follows a 9-months long trial on an arrest warrant, which started with Mallya's arrest in April 2017 and ended in September.

India has been pursuing the businessman's arrest on charges of fraud & money laundering amounting to almost Rupees 9,000 crore. He has been on bail since his arrest.

Important Highlights

- The trial, which started at the Magistrates' Court on December 4th, 2017, has gone through a series of hearings beyond the initial 7 days earmarked for it.
 - Chief Magistrate Emma Arbuthnot finalised there was a prima facie case against Mallya, who shifted to Britain in March 2016 and his human rights would not be infringed if he was deported.
 - Judge Emma Arbuthnot governed that Mallya can be extradited to India to stand trial on the offences brought by the Central Bureau of Investigation and ED, as there is nothing to indicate that the Mallya case was pursued because of his political sentiments.
 - The Judge instructed the extradition of Mallya to India, calling him "bejewelled" bodyguarded billionaire playboy. The case has now been stated to the Secretary of State who must also approve it.
 - The CBI has welcomed the decision of the Chief Magistrate. United Kingdom Home Secretary Sajid Javid will now pass an order based on the verdict.
- Vijay Mallya now has 14-day to appeal in a higher court. The individual to be repatriated is entitled to make an application for permission to appeal to the High Court within 14-day of the date of the Magistrate's ruling.

The interior minister's verdict can also be appealed to the High Court and eventually the Supreme Court.

Union Cabinet approves implementation of Shahpurkandi Dam on river Ravi in Punjab

Union Cabinet has sanctioned execution of Shahpurkandi Dam Project on river Ravi in Punjab. It also has sanctioned central funding of Rupees 485.38 crore for



irrigation component, over 5 years period from 2019-2023. The project will be executed by Punjab Government with central assistance. It will be accomplished by June 2022.

Funding

The total cost of this project is Rupees 1973.53 crore (where Irrigation component is 564.63 cr and Power component is 1408.90 cr. Out of this, Rupees 485.38 crores would be issued as Central Assistance. Funding for central assistance will be accomplished through National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development under current system for funding of 99 Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana- Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Program projects under Long Term Irrigation Fund.

Importance

This project will benefit minimising some of water of River Ravi which currently is going waste through Madhopur Headworks downstream to Pakistan. It will produce irrigation potential of 5,000 hectares in Punjab and 32,173 hectares in J&K on completion. Besides, Punjab will be able to generate 206 megawatts of hydro-power.

Kerala becomes first state to have 4 international airports with inauguration of Airport at Kannur

Kerala has become 1st state in the nation to have 6 international airports with the inauguration of Kannur airport. The 1st commercial flight from this airport Air India Express flight IX 715 with 180 travellers on board to Abu Dhabi was flagged off recently. The other 3 international airports are Trivandrum International Airport, Cochin International Airport and Calicut International Airport.

Kannur International Airport

It is constructed on a public-private partnership model. It is spread over 2,000 acres of area It will support non-resident Keralites, especially in the Gulf region, besides improving tourism and exports, which will result in several job opportunities. Its appointing is expected to pave way for state's overall development,

especially northern region. It will progress tourism in the region like Wayanad, Kannur and Kasargode. It may also upsurge inter-trade in sectors such as spices and handloom.

INDRA NAVY maritime exercise between India and Russia initiated Visakhapatnam Coast

The 10th edition of INDRA NAVY maritime exercise between India and Russia will be initiated off Visakhapatnam coast, Andhra Pradesh from December 9th-16th, 2018. The goal of this exercise is to upsurge interoperability amongst the 2 navies, develop common understanding and procedures for maritime security operations.

INDRA NAVY 2018

It will be organised in 2 phases including Harbour Phase and Sea Phase. Harbour Phase will be organised at Visakhapatnam and encompass planning conferences, expert interactions, cultural visits, sports fixtures and official calls between Flag Officers and senior officers of the participating navies. Sea Phase will be accomplished in the Bay of Bengal. Its thrust will be on Anti-Submarine Warfare, air defence drills, surface firings, Visit Board Search and Seizure operations and tactical processes.

For this edition of exercise, Indian Navy will be represented by Guided missile destroyer INS Ranvir, indigenous frigate INS Satpura, indigenous anti-submarine warfare corvette INS Kadmat, indigenous missile corvettes INS Kuthar and Khanjar and fleet tanker INS Jyoti. In addition to this, 1 Sindhughosh-class submarine, Dornier maritime patrol aircraft, Hawk fighter aircraft and other integral rotary wing helicopters will be also included in the exercise. Russian Navy will be represented by ships off from its submarine forces, pacific fleet based at Vladivostok. These ships are Varyag, Admiral Panteleyev and Boris Butoma.

Exercise AVIAINDRA between Indian and Russian air forces organised at Jodhpur



The 2nd edition of service specific exercise AVIAINDRA between Indian Air Force and Russian Federation Aerospace Force was organised at Air Force Station Jodhpur, Rajasthan. The opening IAF-RFSAF Ex AVIAINDRA was planned in 2014 and since then it is conducted twice a year in both nations.

AVIAINDRA 2018

The aim of this exercise is intensive towards anti-terrorist operations in bi-lateral scenario. It also pursues to further enhance cooperation and understanding among Air forces of both nations in each other's Concept of Operations. This edition of exercise is organised in 2 phases.

The exercise is unique wherein foreign participant does not bring its Air assets. In Russia, IAF pilots flew alongside their Russian opponents in Russian Federation Aerospace Force aircraft at Lipetsk in September 2018. Similarly, in India Russian Federation Aerospace Force pilots will flying alongside their Indian opponents in the Indian Air Force aircraft, which are common to both Air Forces.

India successfully test-fires Agni-5 ballistic missile

India on December 10th, 2018 effectively test-fired nuclear proficient ballistic missile "Agni-5" from Dr. Abdul Kalam Island, off the Odisha coast.

The ballistic missile was released with the assistance of a mobile launcher from launch pad-4 of the Integrated Test Range at Dr Abdul Kalam Island, Bay of Bengal. It was a user related trial and was directed by the Strategic Force Command with Defence Research and Development Organisation scientists.

This was the 7th trial of the indigenously-developed surface-to-surface missile.

About Agni 5

Agni-5 is an inter-continental ballistic missile produced by the Defence Research and Development Organisation of India.

India has an armoury the Agni series missiles including Agni-1 with 700 kms range, Agni-2 with a 2,000 kms range, Agni-3 & Agni-4 with 2,500 kms to above 3,500 kms range and Agni-5 with a strike range of 5,000 kms.

This missile is a part of the Agni series of missiles, which is one of the missile systems under the original Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.

Agni-5 is a 3-stage missile, 17m tall, 2m wide and capable of carrying 1.5 tonne of nuclear weapons.

Unlike other Agni missiles, Agni-5 is the much-advanced in terms of navigation and guidance, warhead and engine.

The Agni-5 missile has been produced to hit the selected target point precisely, guided by the on-board computer with the help of a Ring Laser Gyro-based Inertial Navigation System, the Micro Inertial Navigation System, completely-digital control system and advanced compact avionics.

As per World Bank, India to receive total remittance of \$80 billion in 2018

As per to World Bank's Migration and Development Brief, India will hold its post as world's top recipient of payments in 2018, receiving a sum remittance of \$80 billion from its diaspora. India is trailed by China with \$67 billion, Mexico & Philippines with \$34 billion individually and Egypt with \$26 billion remittances.

Remittance is transfer of money by overseas worker to individual/family in their home nation. It competes with International aid as one of the major financial inflows to developing nations. It has direct influence on alleviating poverty for many families especially in developing and low & middle-income nations.

Important Points Migration and Development Brief

Global remittances including flows to great-income nations, are projected to increase by 10.3 percent to \$689 billion. However, it is predictable to moderate.



They are believed to increase 3.7 percent to \$715 billion in 2019.

Remittances to developing nations will grow by 10.8 percent to reach \$528 billion in 2018, against a 7.8 percent increase in 2017.

Future remittances to Low and middle-income nations are believed to increase moderately by 4 percent to \$549 billion in 2019.

Over the past 3 years, India registered a noteworthy flow of remittances, from \$62.7 billion in 2016 to \$65.3 billion in 2017. In 2017, remittances established 2.7 percent of India's Gross Domestic Production.

Remittances in South Asia are predictable to grow by 13.5 percent to \$132 billion in 2018, a stronger pace than 5.7 percent increase noted in 2017. The growth is driven by stronger economic conditions in advanced economies, particularly United States and upsurge in oil prices having positive impact on outflows from some Gulf Cooperation Council nations including United Arab Emirates, which reported a 13 percent increase in outflows for 1st half of 2018.

Government's contribution to National Pension System hiked to 14 percent

The Union Cabinet sanctioned the proposal to streamline the National Pension System, which was implemented in May 2009 to provide a pension choice to 360 million private sector workers and provide them with old-age income safety. National Pension System is being implemented and controlled by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.

Changes approved in the National Pension System

Mandatory contribution by the Central Government improved by 4% from the present 10% to 14% for employees covered under National Pension System Tier-I

Central government workers will be provided with freedom of choice for choosing Pension Funds and pattern of

investment.

Payment of compensation for non-deposit/delayed deposit of National Pension System contributions during 2004-2012.

Contribution by Government staffs under Tier-II of National Pension System will now be enclosed under Section 80 C for deduction about Rupees 1.50 lakh for the motive of income tax at par with schemes including General Provident Fund, Contributory Provident Fund, Employees Provident Fund and Public Provident Fund, with lock-in period of Three years.

The whole withdrawal will now be excused from income tax as the tax exemption limit for overall withdrawal on exit has been increased to 60%.

Ukrainian to end two-decade-old friendship treaty with Russia

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on December 10th, 2018 inked a bill stating the end of the 2-decade-old agreement on friendship, co-operation and partnership among Ukraine and Russia.

The agreement will be finished on April 1st, 2019 amid increasing tensions between the both nations.

Key

Highlights

The Ukrainian leader informed that the non-extension of the deal is a portion of the Ukrainian strategy of re-orientation towards Europe.

The legislation was sanctioned by the Ukrainian parliament on December 6th, 2018 with the help of 277 votes, which is far better than the needed majority of 226.

The Ukrainian President had inked a decree in September to impose a decision of the National Security and Defence Council to dismiss the friendship treaty with Russia.



The friendship agreement between Ukraine and Russia was inked in 1997 and was effected started from April 1st, 1999.

Under the treaty, both the countries had pledged to respect their respective borders and peacefully settle arguments.

The treaty consists of a clause, which explains that it would automatically get extended for another 10 years each time if neither of the parties decides to take the required actions to end it.

Comptroller and Audit General Rajiv Mehrishi appointed as Vice-Chair of UN Panel of Auditors

Comptroller and Auditor General Rajiv Mehrishi was designated as Vice-Chair of UN Panel of Auditors at its yearly meeting organised in New York. In this meeting Comptroller and Auditor General of United Kingdom was also selected as Chair of Panel for another term 2019. The meeting deliberated various matters concerning audit of UN and the agencies under the UN System. The subsequent meeting will be organised in Bonn, Germany in November-December 2019.

United Nations Panel of Auditors

It was recognized by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1438 (XIV) in 1959. Its main purposes are to further coordination of audits for which its associated members are accountable and to exchange information on audit methods and verdicts.

It is raised by members of UN Board of Auditors and external auditors of Specialized Agencies of United Nations and of International Atomic Energy Agency. Presently, it is led by Comptroller and Auditor General of United Kingdom and consists of 11 nations including India, Germany, Chile, Canada, France, Italy, Philippines, Ghana, Indonesia, Switzerland and UK.

It may submit to policymaking heads of groups audited any observations in concern to accounts and financial procedures of concerned firm. The

executive heads of anticipating organisations may also, finished their auditors submit requests to it for its opinion/recommendation on any issue within its competence.

SC bars media, police from revealing identities of victims of rape, sexual assault

The Supreme Court on December 11th, 2018 instructed the print & electronic media not to disclose the individuality of victims of rape & sexual assault even in a remote manner.

The Apex Court bench comprising Justices Madan B Lokur and Deepak Gupta directed that it was not essential to disclose the individuality of victims of rape & sexual assault to 'arouse public opinion and sentiment' as these issues want to be dealt with sensitively.

The	Judgement	Details
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In its judgement, the Supreme Court bench informed that the name & individuality of victims of rape & sexual assault, including those who died, cannot be revealed "even in a remote manner".		
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The court said that it was unfortunate that such victims were being treated as 'untouchable' by the society.		
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The bench gave the directions while refusing to decide with an argument that in certain issues, the victim's name should be permitted to be disclosed as her name & face could become a "rallying point" to avoid other such sexual offences.		
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It was claimed before the court that when the victim's name is disclosed, the victim becomes a sign of protest or is treated as an iconic figure. The bench informed that it is a serious matter dealing with victims of heinous sexual offences & it requires to be dealt with sensitivity.		
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The bench while mentioning to the infamous December 16th, 2012 gangrape & murder case in Delhi, informed that All of		
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society is fully aware that without disclosing her true individuality 'Nirbhaya' became the most active sign of protest the nation has ever known.

Hence, bench explained that if a campaign has to be initiated to safeguard the rights of the victim & mobilise public opinion, it can be done so without revealing the victim's true individuality.

The court also informed that the police should make sure that the correspondence exchanged/given, where the name of the victim is disclosed, are reserved in a sealed envelope & are not disclosed to the public.

International Human Rights Day observed on December 10

The International Human Rights Day is celebrated every year on December 10th to honour adaptation of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On this day in 1948, UN General Assembly, then HQ in Paris, sanctioned Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Of the 58-member states, 48 nominated in favour of the resolution, while 8 abstained and 2 failed to nominate. Celebrations of the day pursues to encourage, support and strengthen measures to be taken by everyone to protect human rights. The theme for present year is "Stand Up for Human Rights".

Background

On this day in 1948, UN General Assembly had accepted and proclaimed Universal Declaration of Human Rights at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris. It was accepted as shared standard yardstick to safeguard human rights worldwide. It recognizes intrinsic dignity and the equal & inalienable rights of residents as the foundation of justice, freedom and peace around the world. The Human Rights Day was officially established at the 317th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on 4th December 1950.

Hindustan Aeronautical Limited developed Light Utility Helicopter achieves

significant milestone of flying at 6 km altitude

Indigenously established Light Utility Helicopter by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited- HAL has attained significant milestone of flying at 6 kms altitude in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The trail was critical need towards certification of Light Utility Helicopter. Its 1st flight was carried in September 2016 and 2nd Prototype was flown in May 2017.

The current flight trial was done under envelope expansion tests and helicopter displayed satisfactory performance and handling qualities. With the achievement of this milestone, Light Utility Helicopter can now undertake high altitude cold weather tests prearranged in January 2019.

Light Utility Helicopter

It is three-ton class new generation helicopter outlined and developed by indigenously Rotary Wing Research and Design Centre of Hindustan Aeronautical Limited. It will replace ageing fleet of Cheetah and Chetak helicopters utilised by Indian Armed Forces.

It is capable of flying at 220 km/h, with service ceiling of 6.5 kms and range of 350 kms with 400 kgs payload. It is loaded with Glass Cockpit and power-driven by TM/HAL Ardiden 1U/Shakti 1U single turbo shaft engine with adequate power margins to supply to demanding high altitude missions.

It will complete needs of both military as well as civil operators. It can be deployed for investigation, surveillance roles and as light transport helicopter. Hindustan Aeronautical Limited has in principal order for 187 Light Utility Helicopter that consists 126 for Indian Army and 61 for Indian Air Force.

Hindustan Aeronautical Limited

Hindustan Aeronautical Limited is state-owned aerospace & defence organisation based in Bengaluru. It is administrated under the administration of the Union Defence Ministry. It seeks high-end research & development to form the nation's future aircraft and aeroengine technologies. Hindustan Aeronautical



Limited has already developed 4 highly popular models of helicopters under it. Its product range consists, Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter, multi-role 7-seater Chetak Helicopter, Light combat helicopter Cheetah and Lancer, anti-insurgency, close air support chopper.

Shaktikanta Das to be appointed as 25th Governor of RBI

India's previous economic affairs secretary and present member of the Finance Commission Shaktikanta Das is to be designated as next Reserve Bank of India Governor. He will be the 25th Governor of the top bank of the nation.

About Shaktikanta Das

Shaktikanta Das is a 1980 batch Indian Administrative Services officer of Tamil Nadu Cadre and a very projecting bureaucrat who worked under both NDA and UPA governments.

He worked as economic affairs secretary from 2015-2017; and was also a significant official in both big economic moves of the government including demonetisation and implementation of Goods and Services Tax.

Appointment committee of cabinet sanctioned Shaktikanta Das appointment as Reserve Bank of India governor. He will work as governor for the term of 3 years.

Background

After the resignation of Ujjit Patel, Shaktikanta Das has been designated as 25th governor of Reserve Bank of India. Ujjit Patel resigned due to his personal motives. His tenure as Reserve Bank of India governor was about to complete in September 2019. Patel has become 4th Reserve Bank of India Governor to step down prior to end of term. Previously, Sir Osborne Smith, Benegal Rama Rau and S Jagannathan had also resigned prior to completion of their respective tenures.

Home Ministry launches Twitter account, @CyberDost, to spread awareness about cybercrimes

Union Ministry of Home Affairs has released Twitter account @CyberDost to widespread awareness about cyber-crimes

and general precautions to be taken regarding this. It is intended at enhancing people's elementary knowledge about cybercrimes and precautions to be taken for the prevention.

@CyberDost

This twitter account will educate people about numerous channels via which complaints about cybercrimes can be lodged and makes people aware of their responsibilities regarding misuse of cyber space by few people in the nation. It will also benefit to mitigate possibilities of distraction in normal business activities or debts due to cybercrimes by forming ecosystem to avoid and control cybercrimes. The data shared on this twitter handle will improve basic knowledge of followers about cybercrimes and precautionary actions to be taken to avoid such crime.

Background

The information & communication technology is being utilised in all walks of public life including banking, transport, airlines, railways, electricity and other sectors. With enhanced usage of technology for day-to-day activities, possibility of cybercrimes is also growing. Capacity building & public awareness are critical mechanisms for avoiding impact of cybercrimes and forming suitable climate for trust-based businesses. Government is dedicated to create ecosystem to avoid and control cybercrimes to lessen the possibility of disruption in normal business actions or debts due to cybercrimes.

Economist Surjit Bhalla resigns from Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council

Eminent economist as well as columnist Surjit Bhalla has resigned as part-time associate of Economic Advisory Council to the PM. His resignation comes day afterward RBI governor Ujjit Patel, quit rudely after months-long struggle over policy with government.

Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council

Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council is non-constitutional, non-



statutory, non-permanent and independent organisation, formed with the prime and sole purpose to analyse all critical issues, economic, otherwise, referred to it by the PM and guiding him thereon. It is mandate to give suggestion to PM on economic matters including inflation, GDP alterations, export & import changes, creating supporting environment for improved trade & commerce.

Functions

Submit episodic reports to Prime Minister about macroeconomic expansions and issues which will have suggestions of the economic policy. Analyse any topics, matters allocated by the Prime Minister and giving advice to them. Analyse macroeconomic concerns having high significance and present the views to Prime Minister and any other task which is assigned by PM.

Current Composition of PMEAC

Presently, it is led by Niti Aayog member Bibek Debroy. Economists Rathin Roy, Ashima Goyal and Shamika Ravi are other part-time associates.

EU opens India's first Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in New Delhi

European Union has recognized India's 1st Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence at Department of European Studies at Manipal Academy of Higher Education, New Delhi. It comes with funding of €1,00,000 to seek India-EU interdisciplinary studies in culture, literature, education and society.

Important Points

This is for 5th time Manipal Academy of Higher Education has been presented grants under Erasmus & Jean Monnet initiative. Earlier grants have been utilised for chair, modules and project. Under the present grant, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence in India-European Union Interdisciplinary Studies goals to strengthen and improve the educational link between India and European Union. It will host open-to-public workshops on European literature, winter schools for students worldwide and India-European Union Higher Education Meet.

Jean Monnet

He was French political economist and ambassador. He was influential follower of European unity and is considered as one of founding fathers of EU. He also has been known as 'The Father of Europe' by those who see his ground-breaking and pioneering efforts in the 1950s as vital to establishing the European Coal and Steel Community, the predecessor of present European Union. He was never elected to public office.

NASA's OSIRIS-REx spacecraft find evidence of water on asteroid Bennu

National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification, Security-Regolith Explorer- OSIRIS-Rex, spacecraft has discovered water locked inside asteroid Bennu. Bennu is too small to have ever hosted liquid form of water, but this research does indicate that liquid water was there at some time on Bennu's parent body, a much larger asteroid.

Important Points

Information obtained from spacecraft's 2 spectrometers OSIRIS-REx Thermal Emission Spectrometer and OSIRIS-REx Visible and Infrared Spectrometer has discovered presence of hydroxyl molecules, containing oxygen and hydrogen atoms joined together. These hydroxyl groups exist worldwide across asteroid in water-bearing clay minerals, demonstrating that at some point Bennu's rocky material interacted with water.

OSIRIS-REx

Launched in September 2016 is National Aeronautics and Space Administration's 1st asteroid sampling mission that will survey surface, collect sample and deliver it safely back to Earth. It had reached its destination Bennu asteroid in December 2018 after travelling through space for above 2 years and travelling more than 2 billion kms. Samples returned by the mission to Earth in 2023 will enable researchers to find new data about the history and evolution of our solar system.



Government inks \$31 million loan agreement with ADB to develop tourism and boost jobs in Tamil Nadu

Union Government has signed \$31 million loan contract with Asian Development Bank for Tamil Nadu Government's Infrastructure Development Investment Program for Tourism. It is 4th loan tranche for this programme intended at building-up tourism industry and increase visitor arrivals in Tamil Nadu.

Infrastructure Development Investment Program for Tourism

It is \$250 million project sanctioned in September 2010. It goals to develop opportunities for local communities and improve local economy by enhancing tourism in 3 other states including Punjab, HP and Uttarakhand, besides Tamil Nadu. This will be accomplished via developing & preserving sites of natural as well as cultural heritage, and building better connectivity, capacity, and infrastructure around State tourist locations.

It will be backing conservation and restoration of 8 heritage monuments, 1 museum, 3 temples and pond. It will develop various facilities at the sites, including tourist information centres, rest houses and toilet blocks with amenities served by solar-powered lighting & energy efficient lighting. The projected completion date is June 2020.

The project is supposed to improve tourism infrastructure in Tamil Nadu and also benefit state in preserving natural as well as cultural heritage. The activities under the project will also improve economic opportunities for the local population. It will also produce added jobs in Tamil Nadu, especially via skills training and community-based activities precisely for poor and women.

First ever Agriculture Export Policy 2018 launched by Commerce Ministry in its Year End report

On December 11th, 2018, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry published the Year End review of the policies to foresee the creation of a "Vision of New India" which would propel the India to become

a USD 5 trillion economy by the end of year 2025.

Important Points

- Out of the USD Five trillion, the intensive plans will be on boosting
- Services sector contribution to USD Three trillion,
- Manufacturing to USD One trillion and
- Agriculture to USD One trillion.

About India's first ever Agriculture Export Policy

As on December 6th, 2018, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi sanctioned the creation of 1st Agriculture Export Policy.

The Department of Commerce in its objective to enable India to become a USD 5 trillion economy, published India's first Agriculture Export Policy 2018.

Highlights of the Agricultural Export Policy 2018

According to the policy, a corpus of USD One billion has been formed to enhance 12 champion sectors in services.

It would enhance India's agricultural exports to USD 60 billion by 2022 and to attain Agriculture Ministries' objective of USD 100 billion.

The 12 identified Champion Services Sectors

A. Information Technology & Information Technology enabled Services

B. Tourism and Hospitality Services

C. Medical Value Travel

D. Transport and Logistics Services

E. Accounting and Finance Services

F. Audio Visual Services

G. Legal Services

H. Communication Services

I. Construction and Related Engineering Services

J. Environmental Services

K. Financial Services

L. Education Services.

Assam NRC: Supreme Court extends NRC claims submission deadline to December 31

The Supreme Court on December 12th, 2018 prolonged the target for the submission of claims & objections by



entities excluded from the 1st draft of the Assam National Register of Citizens to December 31st, 2018. Earlier, the previous date for submission was December 15th.

Subsequently, the procedure of inauguration of verification has been shifted to February 15th, 2019 from February 1st.

Copies of draft NRC to be made available for inspection

A bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Rohinton Nariman instructed that the copies of the draft National Register of Citizens shall be made accessible for inspection to District Magistrate, Deputy Commissioner, Sub-Divisional Offices, Circle Offices & Gram Panchayats to enable filing of oppositions against wrongful enclosures.

The National Register of Citizens Authority was well-ordered to receive List-B documents that are initiate to be lawfully valid, regardless of the date of issuance of the same.

November 2018 ruling

The Supreme Court on November 1st, 2018 fixed December 15th as the time limit for filing of claims and objections by people excluded from the National Register of Citizens Draft.

The bench permitted claimants for Assam National Register of Citizens to rely on 5 documents, which were earlier protested to by National Register of Citizens coordinator, to prove their nationality.

Required five documents are:

- 1) Names in National Register of Citizens, 1951
- 2) Names in Electoral Roll up to March 24th, 1971
- 3) Nationality Certificate and Refugee Registration Certificate
- 4) Certified copies of pre-1971 Electoral Roll, mainly, those allotted by Tripura
- 5) Valid Ration Card

Partners Forum 2018

4th edition of Partners' Forum will be initiated by PM Narendra Modi on

December 12th in New Delhi. The 2 days international conference will be presented by Indian Government in connotation with Partnership for Maternal, New-born and Child Health- PMNCH. Over-all 1500 partakers from around 8 nations will be taking part to talk about the development in the health and wellbeing of females, children and adolescents.

Important Points

The program will be designed on the aim of Survive, Thrive, Transform. The forum is focused to explore the conclusions of 12 success features case studies which demonstrate how the nations are working towards the improvement of both women and children's health. The forum will represent learnings from 6 regions on 6 thematic areas:

- Early childhood Development—Germany & Chile
- Adolescent Health & Well-being—USA & Indonesia
- Quality, Equity & Dignity in services—India & Cambodia
- Sexual & Reproductive Health – Malawi & Malaysia
- Empowerment of females, Girls and communities – South Africa & Guatemala
- Humanitarian & fragile settings—Sierra Leone & Afghanistan

PMNCH's mission

The mission supports the global health community to effort towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals. Goal three of Sustainable Development Goal is to attain good health and wellbeing for people.

Indian Navy inducts first Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel

Indian Navy inducted its 1st Submarine Rescue System with Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel along with related equipment at western naval dockyard in Mumbai, (west coast of India). It is 1st of the 2 non-tethered Deep Submergence Rescue Vessels ordered by Indian Navy. With this, India joined selected list of International navies including United States, Russia, Japan, South Korea,



China, Singapore, United Kingdom, Sweden and Australia. Its introduction will enhance Indian Navy's operational competences for search, locate and deliver assistance to downed/disaster-struck/distressed submarines at high sea.

Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel

The Deep Submergence Rescue vehicles are produced by Scotland-based JFD, a part of James Fisher and Sons Plc in March, 2016. JFD had secured the contract of 193 million pounds for supply of 2 sets of non-tethered Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel and 25 years of taking-care.

These Deep Submergence Rescue Vessels are 3rd-generation system, considered to be most advanced system presently in operation internationally. It is proficient of undertaking rescue from a disabled submarine up to the 650m depth. It is functioned by a crew of 3 people, and can rescue 14 peoples at a time.

Deep Submergence Rescue Vessels complete with related kit in fly away configuration, can be vital in quickly locating submarines via vast expanse of sea and can be mobilised by air & water for quick rescue. It can be deployed at short interval of time for providing assistance to distressed submarines.

2 Indian Navy Deep Submergence Rescue Vessels will be based on West and East Coast of India individually. The 1st Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel will be operated and deployed by Indian Navy's crew newly formed Submarine Rescue Unit (West) from its base in Mumbai. The 2nd Deep Submergence Rescue Vessel is in transit & is anticipated to reach Visakhapatnam soon. It will be functioning by April 2019.

Dam Safety Bill 2018 introduced in Lok Sabha

Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Arjun Ram Meghwal, initiated Dam Safety Bill 2018 in Lok Sabha. The bill delivers a uniform process for the safety of dams in nation. The bill makes sure surveillance, inspection, working and maintenance of dams as well as

prevention of dam failure from calamity. As per to bill, dam owner is accountable for dam safety and has penal provisions for not obeying the certain acts of bill.

Key Features of Bill

- The bill delivers legal and institutional safety to ensure the safe operations of dams.
- The bill addresses all the matters related to dam safety, comprehensive dam safety review, Emergency Action plan & maintenance of funds for various dam repairs.
- Owner of dam have to make Emergency action plan within Five year and for new dams it has to form prior to filling.
- Owner of the dam is needed to begin hydro-meteorological network and Emergency Flood Warning System.
- There is a facility for comprehensive safety evaluation by independent panel of experts and every state will create a State Dam Safety Organization for the safety of Dam.

Uttar Pradesh's Startup HelpUsGreen honoured by UN

UP based start-up HelpUsGreen has been honoured by United Nations for its efforts to clean River Ganga by recycling tonnes of flower waste. United Nations bestowed the award to the 14 other nations along with India at the Nations Climate Action award ceremony during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Katowice.

Working

The start-up gathers the floral waste daily from the temples and these flowers are then reused to generate charcoal free incense, organic vermicompost and recyclable packaging material via Flowercycling technology.

As per to United Nations the start-up recycled 11060 metric tonnes of temple flower waste by the females working with the start-up. As per to information, above 800 MMT of flowers are utilised in temple and these flowers are further disposed into the river Ganga. This ultimately leads to water pollution and water borne diseases.



HelpUsGreen

HelpUsGreen initiated as world's 1st lucrative solution to the waste problem formed by flowers in monumental temple. About 8.4 tons of flower waste is gathered by the start-up every day from the temples in UP. The start-up assisted 1260 females who have been backing the start-up and with this support, 19 children whose mothers work at manual scavengers, began going to school.

• Employers must be considerate, sympathetic towards pregnant employees: Delhi HC

The Delhi High Court on December 12th, 2018 instructed that females should be honoured & treated with self-respect at offices and detected that employers must be considerate as well as sympathetic towards a pregnant worker.

The High Court directed that the employer must realise the physical complications that a female would face in accomplishing her duties at the offices while pregnancy/looking after the new born child.

The High Court's comments came while guiding the Delhi government to have a female in the panel for guest teachers and make use of her services as and when needed by the school, subjected to her medical fitness.

Judgement's important Points

The High court stated that females constitute almost half of the section of the society, must be given due weightage, honour and treated with dignity at work places. The bench guided that to become a mother is the most natural miracles in the life of a female.

The court instructed the office of Deputy Directorate of Education, Delhi government to publish essential order to this effect within 2 weeks.

India, Saudi Arabia sign bilateral yearly Haj 2019 MoU

India and Saudi Arabia on December 13th, 2018 inked the bilateral yearly Haj 2019 MoU at Jeddah. The MoU was inked by the Union Minister for Minority Affairs,

Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi & Haj and Umrah Minister of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Mohammad Saleh bin Taher Benten.

The MoU is a part of reinforced bilateral ties of the both nations. Both India and Saudi Arabia share strong cultural, historical, economic & political ties. Speaking on the same, the Saudi Minister informed that Saudi Arabia has always played an active as well as effective role to make sure safety & better facilities to the Indian Haj pilgrims.

Important Highlights

○ A huge number of Muslim females are likely to travel to Haj 2019 without 'Mehram'. Above 2100 females have already applied.

○ The Indian Government had removed the restriction on females going to Haj without a male companion for the 1st time in 2017.

○ As a result of the restriction, approximately 1300 Indian Muslim females had gone to Haj in 2018 without any male companion. They had been excused from the lottery system.

○ To support these females Haj pilgrims, for the 1st time, above 100 females Haj Coordinators & Haj Assistants had been positioned in 2018.

○ Presently, the Haj Committee of India has received above 2 lakh 47 thousand applications for Haj 2019, among which 47% are from females.

○ For the 1st time after Independence, a record number of Muslims about 1,75,025 in numbers, from India completed Haj 2018 and that too without any aid and among them 48% were females.

○ The Indian Government has demanded the Saudi Arabian Government to increase India's yearly Haj quota for Haj 2019.

Brijendra Pal Singh nominated as President of FTII

The Union Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on December 13th, 2018 designated "CID" Director-producer Brijendra Pal Singh as the new President of Film and Television Institute of India-



FTII and as the Chairman of Film and Television Institute of India Governing Council.

The suggestion was made by the Ministry under Rule 3 & Rule 22 of the Rules of the Film and Television Institute of India. BP Singh is currently the Vice Chairman of the Film and Television Institute of India Governing Council.

BP Singh is a Film and Television Institute of India alumnus of 1970-73 batch who is specialised in film cinematography.

He is the Producer as well as Director of popular television serial 'CID' which lately completed a record 21 years of efficacious run on SONY TV.

In 2004, he made his ticket to the Limca Book of Records for having a single continuous shot of 111 minutes to mark the completion of 6 years of serial CID.

He was the Chairperson of Film and Television Institute of India Academic Council during 2014 to 2017.

It was his vision to release Film and Television Institute of India's countrywide film education outreach initiative Skilling India in Film and Television- SKIFT in May 2017 which had nearly 120 short courses directed in more than 24 cities & towns across India, reaching approximately 5000 learners so far.

Film and Television Institute of India

FTII recognized in 1960, and is considered as a premier institute for training in Cinema & Television.

It is an independent institute under the Union Ministry of Information & Broadcasting and is supported by the Central Government. It is located in the premises of the erstwhile Prabhat Film Company, Pune.

Film and Television Institute of India is a member of the International Liaison Centre of Schools of Cinema & Television, a group of the world's leading schools of film & television. It has been conferred the status of Institute of National Importance by the Union Government.

Supreme Court gives Clean Chit to NDA Government over Rafale Deal

Supreme Court of India has issued clean chit to NDA government for purchase of 36 Rafale fighter Jets. The 3 Judge bench led by Ranjan Gogoi, find nothing wrong during the purchase of 36 fighter jet instead of 126 from France.

Important Points

The bench consists of Ranjan Gogoi as chairman and other 2 members S.K.Kaul & K.M.Joseph, issued clean chit for procurement of Rafale jets from France. The hearing had questioned the deal on the ground of pricing process, commercial favouritism & procurement of a smaller number of fighter jets. The petition was 1st filed by Advocate M.L.Sharma. The petitioners requested CBI to record a FIR for the such irregularities in deal. The Supreme court rule has 2 main points including 1) It finds nil marks of commercial favouritism and 2) It is not the job of court to handle comparative pricing process.

Rafale Deal

Dassault Rafale earnt the MMRCA competition in January 2012 to stock 126 Jet aircraft with extra 63 aircraft to IAF. 1st 18 aircrafts were to be provided by Dassault & residual were to be produced by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. Dassault declined to ensure the quality of aircraft produced by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. In 2014 the amount of deal raised to \$30 billion. This formed the price question on the deal and deal couldn't be inked. Then after NDA government, the deal was completed with the 36 multirole fighter aircraft of Rs. 58000 crores from Dassault Aviation, France. The deal has been in debate since its inception.

SIPRI Report published Four Indian PSUs feature in world's top 100 arms producers

The recently released rankings by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute- "SIPRI" have positioned 4 Indian Public Sector Undertakings among world's



topmost 100 arms producers. These PSUs are as-

H. Indian Ordnance Factories at 37 Ranking

I. Hindustan Aeronautics at 38 Ranking

J. Bharat Electronics at 64 Ranking

K. Bharat Dynamics 94 Ranking

Important Points

This was for the 1st time that 4 Indian PSUs have placed in top 100 arms producer organisations of world. These 4 PSUs have sold arms worth amount USD 7.52 Billion in year 2017.

India's present share in total global arms sales stands at below 2 percent which indicates that India has been a weak producer in international markets.

Successive government have tried to change India into a global defence producing hub and take multiple policy actions to involve private sector in defence production. However, utmost of such measures has been on the papers only till now.

About SIPRI

SIPRI was recognized in 1966, which is a Swedish think tank dedicated to research into battle, armaments, arms control & disarmament. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute provides information, analysis & approvals, based on open sources, to policymakers, scientists, media and the interested public.

World's top arms producers

The universal arms market is dominated by United States firms which have an enormous 57 percent of the market share, trailed by Russia with 9.5 percent, UK with 9 percent and France with 5.3 percent. As of 2017, Lockheed Martin is world's largest arms with sales of \$ 44.9 billion. Boeing is the 2nd largest arms producer firm in the world.

Ashok Gehlot to be sworn-in as Rajasthan Chief Minister; Sachin Pilot as Deputy Chief Minister

Ashok Gehlot is expected to be taking oath as Rajasthan CM for the 3rd time. While, Sachin Pilot will sworn-in as the Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan. The

result was declared on December 14th, 2018 after Congress President Rahul Gandhi saw both Gehlot & Sachin Pilot in Delhi on December 13th, 2018.

2-time CM Ashok Gehlot & Rajasthan Congress Chief Sachin Pilot were challenging against each other in the race for the post of Rajasthan CM.

About Ashok Gehlot

Gehlot has worked 2 terms as the CM Rajasthan, once from 1998-2003 and then from 2008-2013.

After his 1st appropriate job as NSUI's Rajasthan president from 1974-1979, he carried on to become the Jodhpur district Congress Committee President from 1979-1982.

Gehlot was 1st-elected to Parliament in 1980 and carried on to secure Lok Sabha elections 4 more times.

Since 1999, he has characterized the Sardarpura assembly constituency, winning 5 consecutive terms in the House.

Gehlot has worked as various ministries including Union Ministry of Tourism; Civil Aviation; Sports & Textiles in different stints between 1982 and 1993.

Rajasthan Elections Results 2018

The Indian National Congress came out as the single largest party in Rajasthan, winning 99 seats on its own and 1 more with RLD in the 2018 Rajasthan Assembly Elections.

Communication satellite GSAT-7A to be launched by - ISRO

ISRO will be launching its latest communication satellite GSAT-7A on 19th December 2018. It will be launched by using Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F11) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. GSLV-F11 will inject GSAT-7A into a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).

Highlights

- Weight of GSAT-7A is approx 2250 kg. This is 35th communication satellite of ISRO.



- This satellite will be giving services for eight years with capability to provide communication to the users of Ku-band in Indian region.

- As per ISRO, GSAT-7A will take few days to reach its orbital slot after separation.

Background :

On 5th December, 2018, India's next generation high throughput communication satellite, GSAT-11 was successfully launched from the Kourou launch base in French Guiana by Ariane-5 VA-246. This was heaviest satellite built by ISRO whose weight was approx 5854 kg. This mission will play a vital role in providing broadband services across the country and will help demonstrating new generation applications.

Name of writer who has been honoured with Jnanpith Award 2018 - Amitav Ghosh

On 14th December 2018, Noted writer Amitav Ghosh was honoured with Jnanpith Award. This award honours to author for outstanding contribution towards literature.

Ghosh has inked many popular novels like Shadow Lines, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide, and the Ibis Trilogy -- Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke and Flood of Fire that chronicle the trade between India and China run by the then East India Company.

About Amitav Ghosh

Indian-American author Amitav Ghosh is an best known for his work in English fiction.

In 1986, he wrote his debut novel titled The Circle of Reason, his other famous works in fiction are The Shadow Lines, The Calcutta Chromosome, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide, Sea of Poppies, among others.

He was also honoured by Government of India with Padma Shri in 2007.

About Jnanpith Award

Jnanpith Award was established in 1961. Its highest literary award of India. Its bestowed only on Indian writers. Bharatiya Jnanpith Trust present it annually. Important to mention here that it is not conferred posthumously.

Government to set up National Medical Devices Promotion Council declared on - 14th December 2018

The government will form a National Medical Devices Promotion Council-NMDPC under the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to encourage the medical devices sector. This declaration has been done by Union Minister of Commerce Industry & Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu on December 14th, 2018.

Proposed Structure

NMDPC will have representations from related departments of the Government of India & also healthcare industry & quality control institutions of the nation. It will be led by Secretary of Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion. It will receive technical support from Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone, Visakhapatnam.

More about Objectives & Activities

- To serve as a facilitating & developmental organisation for Indian Medical Devices Industry.

- To organise seminars, workshop & other promotional & networking activities to encourage the sector.

- To locate redundant processes & provide technical assistance to simplify the sanction processes involved in medical devices industry.

- To effort towards making an export driven market in the area.

- To support dissemination & documentation of Global norms & standards for medical devices' encourage global best performs.

- To drive a vigorous & dynamic Preferential Market Access policy, by locating the strengths of the Indian producers & discouraging unfair trade practices in imports; while making sure pro-active monitoring of public procurement notices across India to make sure compliance with Preferential Market Access norms of Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion & DoP.



- Benefit validation of Limited Liability Partnerships & other such entities within Medical Devices Industry sector.

4th edition of Kochi-Muziris biennale inaugurated by - Kerala CM

4th edition of Kochi-Muziris biennale was initiated by Kerala CM at Parade Ground in Fort Kochi, Kerala. The Biennale was curated by Anita Dube & become the 1st Biennale worldwide in which participation of female's accounts for half of the contributing artists. The 108 days long programme will display 94 artists in 10 venues of the city. The subject of the Biennale is 'Possibilities for a Non-Alienated Life'.

Kochi Muziris Biennale

It is the mega contemporary art exhibition of India organised in Kochi, Kerala. The programme is the joint effort of Kochi Biennale Foundation & government of India. The aim of the initiative is to bring artist globally & encourage contemporary art. Contemporary artists Bose Krisnamachari & Riyaz Komu anticipated the state government the idea of Biennale on the lines of Venice Biennale. 1st Kochi-Muziris Biennale started in December 2012.

Kochi Biennale Foundation

It is a non-profit charitable trust initiated in 2010 for promoting art & cultural educational activities in India. It is the chief organization to host Kochi-Muziris Biennale. It also serves towards the conservation of heritage assets & raising tradition art.

India, ADB sign USD 60 Million loan agreement to reduce floods in - Assam

Government of India & Asian Development Bank have inked a loan contract of \$60 million for financing project for renovation, protection & community-based flood risk management actions along the Brahmaputra river in Assam. The aim of the programme is to enhance the reliability & effectiveness of flood & river bank erosion risk management systems in Assam. Duration

of the agreement is 20 years with the elegance period of 5 years. Interest rates are finalised by Asian Development Bank based on London Interbank Offered Rate & commitment charge of 0.15 percent/year.

Important Points

- In 2010, Asian Development Bank had sanctioned the Trench 2 Loan of \$120 million for Assam Integrated Flood & River Bank Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme.

- The Project 2 of the programme will assist to fund the structural & non-structural measures in 3 sub Project areas including Palasbari Gumi, Kaziranga & Dibrugarh along the Brahmaputra river which covers 20 kilometres of riverbank protection work & flood embankments up to 13 kilometres.

- The implementing & implementing agencies for this plan are Flood & River Erosion Management Agency of Assam & Assam State Disaster Management Authority.

- The plan will form & fortify disaster management system & knowledge base for flood forecasting.

Bharat Bhushan Vyas Appointed as New Member of Union Public Service Commission on - 13th December 2018

On 13th December 2018, Bharat Bhushan Vyas has appointed as a member of the Union Public Service Commission. Union Public Service Commission Chairman Arvind Saxena directed him the sworn-in as office & secrecy. Bharat Bhushan Vyas has become the 1st IAS officer from Jammu & Kashmir cadre to join any constitutional body. His tenure will be for 3 years.

More about Bharat Bhushan Vyas

- He is an IAS officer of the 1986 batch, working at J&K for past 32 years.

- He retired from his post as Chief Secretary of J&K.

- He worked on prominent positions including Principal Secretary Finance, Srinagar Deputy Commissioner, Divisional commissioner.

More about UPSC



- Union Public Service Commission is a central recruiting body in India which determined its mandate from Article 315 to 323 in Part XIV of Indian Constitution.

- Union Public Service Commission consists of a Chairman & 4 other members selected by President of India.

- The term of the Chairman & members of Union Public Service Commission is of 6 years/until they attain the age of 65 years.

- As per to Constitution, Union Public Service Commission is “watch–dog” of merit system in India.

47th Anniversary of Vijay Diwas celebrated on - 16th December 2018

India observed Vijay Diwas on 16 December 2018 marking the 47th anniversary of its victory over Pakistan in the 1971 conflict. On this eve, the Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman along with the leaders of the 3-armed forces paid honours to the martyrs at Amar Jawan Jyoti at the India Gate in New Delhi.

More about Vijay Diwas

- Vijay Diwas is also known as Victory Day which is observed on every 16 December in India.

- At the conclusion of the 1971 war, the Pakistani Army separately and unconditionally surrendered resulting in the independence of East Pakistan, which was known as Bangladesh.

- On this day in 1971, the leader of the Pakistani forces along with 93,000 soldiers, surrendered to the allied forces of Indian Army & Mukti Bahini in Dhaka after they got beaten in the war.

- On the anniversary of Vijay Divas, esteem & tributes are paid to the martyrs who laid down their lives for their nation.

- Every year on Vijay Diwas, the Indian Defence Minister along with leaders of Indian armed forces pay their tributes to the martyrs at Amar Jawan Jyoti, India Gate, New Delhi & also at the National Military Memorial, Bangalore.

Kamal Nath takes oath as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh on - 17th December 2018

Senior Congress front-leader Kamal Nath took oath as the 18 CM of Madhya Pradesh on December 17th, 2018. The oath ceremony completed at the Lal Parade Ground in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

Madhya Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel directed the sworn-in of office to Kamal Nath in the presence of various senior Congress leaders including Digvijaya Singh, Mallikarjun Kharge, party president Rahul Gandhi, leaders from other parties including National Conference President Farooq Abdullah, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, NCP leader Sharad Pawar, outgoing Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan and recently oath bearer Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot along with Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot.

Important Highlights

- The Congress termed veteran leader Kamal Nath as Madhya Pradesh’s upcoming CM after hours of hectic debate organised by party Chief Rahul Gandhi with other senior leaders among a discussion on the old versus the new guard.

- The other potential CM candidate was from the younger leader, Jyotiraditya Scindia.

Scindia had, projected Nath’s name as the Congress Legislative Party leader and it was sanctioned consistently by the MLAs.

- Kamal Nath informed that as the new CM he would make sure all aptitudes accomplished by the Congress party are satisfied and that Madhya Pradesh’s future was secure.

- Kamal Nath also recalled his elongated association with the Gandhi family, initial with the late Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi as well as Sanjay Gandhi.

PV Sindhu claims maiden BWF World Tour Finals Title on - 16th December 2018



Olympic silver medallist PV Sindhu wrote history on December 16th, 2018 by becoming the 1st Indian to secure the BWF World Tour Finals. PV Sindhu claimed the desired Gold medal with a victory over 2017 world champion Nozomi Okuhara in straight pairs of 21-19, 21-17. In both games, Sindhu made a quick start but Okuhara handled to stay within touching distance. Sindhu, though victory points at crucial junctures to maintain her dominance in the match. The 23 years old Sindhu had beaten Thailand's Ratchanok Intanon 21-16, 25-23 in the semi-final game, organised on December 15th.

Crucial Highlights

- With the victory, Sindhu claimed her 14th title general and the 1st for this year, which had followed-up with a series of dissatisfactions after she was unable to victory even a single tournament.
- Sindhu had lost her the Gold medal and settled for silver in many games in 2018 including the World Championships, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, Thailand Open and India Open.
- This is Sindhu's 3rd consecutive season-ending finale. She had lost to Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in the 2017 edition and had to settle for silver.
- Sindhu became the 1st Indian to secure the acclaimed title in a match that lasted an hour and 2 minutes.
- Saina Nehwal had touched the finals of 2011 World Super Series Finals, while Jwala Gutta and V Diju ended as runners-up's in the 2009 edition.

Miss Philippines Catriona Gray crowned Miss Universe 2018 on - 17th December 2018

Miss Philippines Catriona Gray won Miss Universe title after she secured the final round of the Miss Universe 2018 pageant, organised in Bangkok, Thailand on December 17th, 2018. Outgoing Miss Universe Demi Leigh Nel Peters from South Africa crowned her successor. Miss Philippines reached to the Top Five along with Miss Puerto Rico, Vietnam,

Philippines, South Africa and Venezuela. The Top 5 were then asked questions that were created by fellow contestants which had to be answered in 30 seconds or less by the top 5 contestants. This finalised the Top Three. The final 3 contestants comprised Miss Philippines, South Africa & Venezuela.

Important Highlights

- Catriona Gray secured the 2018 Miss Universe pageant, beating 93 other females representing their nations.
- With her victory, Gray became the 4th contender from the Philippines to secure Miss Universe in about 50 years.
- She joins Pia Wurtzbach in 2015, Margarita Moran in 1973 and Gloria Diaz in 1969 in the feat. Pia Wurtzbach had last secured the Miss Universe crown for the Philippines in 2015 and the following edition was hosted in Manila.
- Tamaryn Green of South Africa was 1st runner-up trailed by Miss Venezuela Sthefany Gutiérrez, who was the 2nd runner-up of Miss Universe 2018.
- This year's pageant was commended for its inclusivity and diverse competition. Miss Spain Angela Ponce made history as the pageant's 1st openly transgender contender and Rosa Montezuma became Panama's 1st indigenous Miss Universe contender.

• Belgium wins Hockey World Cup 2018 Title on - 16th December 2018

Belgium Hockey team secured their 1st ever World cup title on 16 December 2018 after they beaten The Netherlands in sudden death. Belgium, which also secured a Silver medal in Rio Olympics 2016, finished with a history by defeating the opponents by 3-2 in the penalty shoot-out after finals ended without any goal. Belgium hockey team registered its 2nd biggest international title after securing a Silver medal in Rio Olympics silver in 2016 and ending up 2nd



in the 2017 Euro Hockey Championships.

More about Hockey World Cup 2018

○ The Hockey World Cup 2018 was organised at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, Odisha from 28th November-16th December 2018.

○ It was the 14th edition of the Hockey World cup. Belgium completed 1st, while the Netherlands and Australia ended 2nd and 3rd individually.

○ Australia beaten England by 8-1 to secure 3rd place. Belgium came 5th in the last edition of the Hockey World Cup which was played at The Hague, Netherlands.

○ India came at 6th position in the Hockey World Cup 2018. The Belgian Hockey player, Arthur Van Doren, was bestowed as the Best Player of the Hockey World Cup 2018 tournament.

○ Australia's Blake Govers and Belgium's Alexander Hendrickx recorded the greatest number of 7 goals in the tournament. Primin Blaak was the goalkeeper of the tournament and team of Spain was presented Fair Play award.

Ranil Wickremesinghe took oath as Prime Minister of - Sri Lanka

On 16th December 2018, Ranil Wickremesinghe has once again developed as the PM of Sri Lanka after the end of the weeks-long political crisis in the island country.

On 26 October 2018, Mr Ranil Wickremesing was exiled as PM, Sri Lanka. He was substituted by Mahinda Rajapaksa as the PM. Mr. Rajapaksa resigned on 15 October 2018 after he failed to demonstrate majority in the Sri Lankan Parliament. Ranil Wickremesinghe has been taken oath as the PM for 5th time which is a record in Sri Lanka.

About Ranil Wickremesinghe

○ Ranil Wickremesinghe is a Sri Lankan politician and the obligatory PM Sri Lanka. He belongs to United National Party and has worked as its leader since 1994.

○ He got elected as Member of Parliament for the 1st time in 1977 from Colombo District.

○ Ranil Wickremesinghe was designated as the Deputy Minister Foreign Affairs in the J. R. Jayewardene's administration.

○ He also became the youngest cabinet minister of Sri Lanka after he was promoted to the post of Minister of Youth Affairs & Employment.

○ Ranil Wickremesinghe has also been the PM of Sri Lanka from 1993-1994 and 2001-2004.

○ After the murder of Gamini Dissanayake, during the 1994 presidential election

campaign, Wickremesinghe was selected the party leader of the United National Party in November 1994.

○ Maithripala Sirisena beaten Mahinda Rajapaksa in the 2015 President elections of Sri Lanka. Subsequent, on 8th January 2015, Wickremesinghe was selected as PM by Sirisena.

NITI Aayog organised Women Transforming - India Awards 2018

15 women business tycoons were bestowed awards at the recently concluded Women Transforming India Awards 2018 in New Delhi. The Women Transforming India Awards are planned by NITI Aayog. It was the third edition of these awards. Vice-President of India M. Venkaiah Naidu, were the chief guest on this event. He also released the upgraded version of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform web portal at the programme. M Venkaiah Naidu praised the effort of the NITI Aayog for creating Women Entrepreneurship Platform 2.0 and placing gender equality at the centre of its policy choices.

About Women Business Entrepreneurship Platform

○ The primary aim of Women Entrepreneurship Platform is to encourage and support both established and aspiring Indian women business tycoons.

○ Women Business Entrepreneurship Platform is the 1st of its kind platform that permits the partner firms to provide various



support services to Indian women business tycoons.

- It goals to transform the business ecosystem for women business tycoons in the nation. It pursues to become a single-stop resource centre for Indian women business tycoons.

- It also delivers for meeting and working in association of various shareholders in the business space on a One-platform Many firms including Google, UN India Business Forum, CRISIL, SIDBI, NIC, NASSCOM, WEE Foundation, SEWA bank, MannDeshi Foundation and many more are the partners in the Women Business Entrepreneurship Platform.

Joshna Chinappa wins - National Squash Women's Singles Title

Joshna Chinappa secured the National Squash Women's Singles title after she beaten Urwashi Joshi in the final match by 9-11, 11-1, 11-6, 11-5 points. It was her 16th National championship and with this victory, she has equalled the record of Bhuvaneshwari Kumari of winning 16 titles.

Squash is a ball game played by 2/4 players in a 4-walled court with hollow rubber ball. In India, the game is not very popular but gearing-up gradually. The Squash Rackets Federation of India is India's squash governing organisation. Presently, most popular squash players in India are Joshna Chinappa and Dipika Pallikal.

Dipika was the 1st Indian female to break into the leading 10 in the Women's Squash Association rankings.

About Joshna Chinappa

- Joshna Chinappa is the 1st Indian squash player to secure the British Squash Championship in 2003.

- She secured this title in the under-19 category. She is also the youngest Indian women's National Squash winner.

- Joshna Chinappa and Dipika Pallikal Karthik secured the squash women's doubles Gold medal in 2014 at the Commonwealth Games. It was India's 1st

ever award in squash at the Commonwealth Games.

- Mahesh Mangaonkar beaten Vikram Malhotra in the final game by 11-4, 13-15, 11-2, 5-11, 15-13 to secure Men's Singles title.

- It was the 75th edition of the tournament. This is the first title for Mahesh Mangaonkar. The entire championship was organised in Noida.

Member countries finalise 'Katowice package' rules at COP24 to implement - 2015 Paris Climate Agreement

The 2018 UN Climate Change Conference that occurred between 2nd to 15th December 2018 in Katowice, Poland, was the 24th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change as COP24. It is also referred to as the Katowice Climate Change Conference/Katowice Climate Talks. The most significant outcome of COP24 was that the nations have decided on rules for the execution of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Main Outcomes of COP 24

- The participating countries agreed on the guidelines to execute the Paris Agreement that will come into effect in 2020.

- The guidelines are related to how the member countries will check the carbon-emissions and report on their emissions-cutting efforts. This guidebook can be known as the detailed 'Operating Manual' of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

- The members of the conference did not decide to 'welcome' the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on 1.5°C. The United States, Saudi Arabia, Russia & Kuwait declined to "welcome" the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report.

- The parties to the conference decided to record the pledges in a public registry, according to the present interim portal.



○ The public registry will continue to have a search function, although many attempts have been made to get it erased.

○ It was also decided among the members that future pledges should conceal a 'common timeframe' from 2031. The number of years for the timeframe will be decided later.

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 approved by - Lok Sabha

The Lok Sabha has approved the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, which pursues to empower the transgender community in the nation by delivering them a separate identity. The bill was produced in the parliament 2 years ago has been approved with 27 modifications. The key aim of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, is to describe transgenders and exclude discrimination against the transgender community.

Highlights of the Bill

○ The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 outlines a transgender as one who is partly female or male; or a mixture of female & male; or neither female nor male.

○ Moreover, the bill explains that the person's gender must not match the allocated gender at the time of birth.

○ Every transgender individual in the nation must obtain an ID certificate which will be utilised as the proof of recognition as a transgender person and to reward all the rights under the Bill.

○ The ID certificate would be sanctioned by the District Magistrate on the endorsement of a Screening Committee.

○ The screening committee for endorsing the certificate would consist of a medical officer, a psychologist/psychiatrist, a district welfare officer, a government delegate, and a transgender individual.

○ The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 bans discriminating with transgenders in

education, employment, healthcare and other related areas.

○ The Bill guides the central and state governments for assigning welfare schemes to the Transgender community in concerned areas.

Bhupesh Baghel sworn in as Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh on - 17th December 2018

Chhattisgarh Congress president Bhupesh Baghel took oath as the CM of Chhattisgarh on December 17th, 2018. Chhattisgarh Governor Anandiben Patel directed the sworn-in of office and secrecy to Baghel at oath ceremony organised in Raipur. By taking oath, Bhupesh Baghel became the 3rd CM of Chhattisgarh since its inception in the year 2000.

More about Bhupesh Baghel

• Bhupesh Baghel is a knowledgeable administrator who is well known for his organisational services. Born on August 23rd, 1961, Baghel belongs to the Kurmi community is a powerful leader of the OBC group which makes about 52% of Chhattisgarh's whole 2.55 crore population.

• Baghel began his political career with the Congress in the 1980s. He was 1st selected as a Member of Legislative Assembly from Patan constituency in 1993 & then in 1998 & 2003 from the same constituency.

• In the 2008 Assembly polls, he was defeated by the BJP candidate Vijay Baghel, succeeding which he was issued ticket from Raipur for the 2009 Lok Sabha election, where he also got defeated.

• He came back again by securing victory from the Patan Assembly seat in 2013. In December 1998, he was designated as the minister of state for public grievance in the Digvijaya Singh cabinet of United MP.

• Following the development of Chhattisgarh in 2000, he worked as a Revenue Minister in the Ajit Jogi Government until 2003, when the Bhartiya Janta Party came in to power.



- When the Congress lost the 2003 elections, Baghel was designated as deputy leader of the opposition in the assembly. He got defeated the next elections from Patan in 2008 also.

Who has been named PETA India's Person of the Year for 2018? - Sonam Kapoor

Sonam Kapoor, a vegetarian, has been termed PETA India's Person of the Year for 2018. PETA- People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, is the major animal rights group in the world, with above 6.5 million associates and supporters. The group works on a variety of other topics as well including the cruel killing of rodents, birds, and other animals who are often measured 'pests' as well as cruelty to farm animals. PETA India's Associate Director Sachin Bangera in a statement informed that "Whether Sonam enjoying vibrant vegetarian food and rallying her fans to do their part to stopover animal suffering without any hesitation to aid animals any way she can."

Important Highlights

- Sonam Kapoor has been recognized to be an advocate for animal rights. She is a vegetarian herself and keeps animal skin out of her fashion brand Rheson, separately from taking other acts for the welfare of animals.

- In 2016, Sonam Kapoor was termed PETA India's Hottest Vegan Celebrity and she received a Compassionate Business Award from the group a year later for her brutality-free handbag range.

- Her previous animal advocacy hard work including advising the Minister of Environment, Forests & Climate Change not to withdraw the prohibition on classroom dissection for university life science & zoology students.

- She had also been at the lead to call for a Maharashtra-wide prohibition on the glass-coated manja, which troubles and slaughters birds as they get entangled in it.

- She had also contributed 'kind kites' to kids to benefit preventing injuries from manja.

UN members adopt Global Compact on Refugees on - 17th December 2018

The United Nations member states on December 17th, 2018 nominated in favour of the Global Compact on Refugees, upholding International solidarity and co-operation for refugee protection & host community development.

The Global Compact on refugees got 181 votes in favour in the 193 members assembly, days after a United Nations conference in Morocco accepted a same compact on migration. The US and Hungary were the only 2 countries that nominated against the contract, while 181 nations voted in favour & the Dominican Republic, Eritrea & Libya withdrawn.

4 significant objectives of the Global Compact

- 1) Comfort pressures on nations that host huge numbers of refugees;
- 2) Develop self-reliance of refugees.
- 3) Develop access to 3rd-country/refugees via resettlement & other pathways of admission.

- 4) Backing conditions that permit refugees to return to their nations of origin.

Global Compact for Migration
The international compact on refugees launches the planning for a tougher, extra predictable and extra equitable international response to great refugee situations.

The agreement goals to directs the International community in supporting refugees & nations and communities introducing large numbers via the mobilisation of political will, broadening of the base of support and the initiation of arrangements for extra reasonable and predictable burden & responsibility sharing.

Famous classical singer Pandit Arun Bhaduri passed away on - 17th December 2018

Renowned classical singer Pandit Arun Bhaduri deceased on 17th December 2018 at the age of 75, following a long illness. He is survived by his wife and son. Pandit Bhaduri had been suffering for relatively some time from chronic



obstructive pulmonary disease-COPD & other illnesses.

CM of West Bengal Mamata Banerjee articulated grief over the abrupt death of Pandit Bhaduri.

She expressed her sympathies to the family members, friends and supporters of Pandit Arun Bhaduri.

More about Pandit Arun Bhaduri

- Pandit Arun Bhaduri was born on October 7, 1943 in Murshidabad, West Bengal.

- He was a Hindustani Classical Music & Semi-Classical Music Vocalist, primarily instructed by Mohammed A. Daud Khan.

- Pandit Arun Bhaduri was a proponent on Kirana and Rampur Gharana.

- He was well-known for fusing all these styles attractively to create his own unique style. He also sang Bengali songs as well as Bhajans.

- In 2014, he was rewarded as Banga Bibhushan Samman. He also secured many other prizes. He had worked as a guru teacher at the ITC Sangeet Research Academy.

Kaiga Atomic Power Station creates world record for continuous operation for - 941 days

The Kaiga Atomic Power Station of Karnataka has formed a new world record, with one of its units working continuously without any disruption for above 940 days. The earlier world record was secured by Unit-2 of Heysham of the UK. It functioned without any disruption for 940 days. The similar unit of Kiaga Power plant had formed a world record in October 2018 when it worked non-stop for 894 days. The record formed by Kaiga power plant is a record for all kinds of plants worldwide which produce nuclear power, as well as advanced gas-based reactors.

More about Kaiga Atomic Power Station

- Kaiga Atomic Power plant is a nuclear power producing station positioned at Kaiga in Karnataka, India.

- It is functioned by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India. The power unit has been working since March 2000.

- The Kaiga power unit has 4 further units of 220 megawatts each. The total power generating capacity of Kaiga power unit is 880 megawatts.

- It is the 3rd largest nuclear power unit in India. Tarapur, with 1400 megawatts of Maharashtra, is the largest Rawatbhata with 1180 megawatts of Rajasthan is the 2nd largest power unit in India.

- It gives electricity to Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu & Puducherry.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) extended to all - Poor households

The central Government has finalised to outspread the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana- PMUY to all poor families in the country.

PMUY is the government's flagship programme to delivers free LPG connections. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme marks to reach out to provide free Liquefied Petroleum Gas connections to 80 million families by year 2020. With the expansion of the PMUY scheme, all the poor families can gain the benefit from PMUY and it will not be compulsory to be part of the Socio-Economic Caste Census list or the 7 identified categories under the program to be eligible for the scheme.

PMUY Details

- PMUY scheme was released in May 2016. The preliminary target set for the scheme was to deliver 50 million Liquefied Petroleum Gas connections to Below Poverty Line families by 2019, by giving financial help of Rupees 1600/family.

- Till now, Under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana schemes 58.5 million connections have been issued across 715 districts.

- According to the government data, about 80% of the beneficiaries come back for a 2nd refill and about 45% take 3 or more refills yearly.

- The government has also recently launched Liquefied Petroleum Gas Panchayats to promote the Pradhan



Mantri Ujjwala Yojana scheme.

The vision behind the scheme

- The successful implementation of the scheme will make sure universal coverage of LPG in India, which will benefit in women empowerment and also will safeguard their health.
- The time spent on cooking and drudgery will decrease.
- Additionally, it will also produce employment for youth in the rural areas in the supply chain of Liquefied Petroleum Gas.

International Migrants Day 2018 observed on -18th December

The International Migrants Day 2018 celebrated on December 18th, 2018 worldwide. In harmony with the Resolution 55/93 of the UN General Assembly, the International Migrants Day is celebrated every year on 18th December. The Resolution 55/93 was accepted by United Nations on December 4th, 2000. Also, Resolution 45/158 which is a resolution on the "International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers & their Families members" was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 18th December 1990. On this day many intergovernmental as well as NGOs in different nations disseminate information on human rights & fundamental political freedoms of immigrants among the people. The design of actions for the protection of immigrants and experiences of immigrants are also communal with the public.

Theme

The theme of International Migrants Day 2018 is 'Migration with Dignity'. The reason for selecting this theme is that about 3400 immigrants and refugees passed away around the world in 2018. The UN have given a call for immigration that is secure, regular & honourable for everyone. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on this day informed that immigration is a powerful driver of economic development, that permits people to pursue new prospects.

Immigration profits both the communities at the origin as well as destination.

Who is the new Additional Solicitor General?- Madhavi Divan

The Union government has designated advocate Madhavi Goradia Divan as the Additional Solicitor General in the government of India. She will lead office of Additional Solicitor General till 30th June, 2020 and will come to the Supreme Court on behalf of the Government of India. She is the 3rd female to grasp the position of Additional Solicitor General. Senior advocate Indira Jaising was the 1st female in India to become Additional Solicitor General. Pinky Anand was the 2nd female and she still embraces the position. The ASG of India, also known as the Additional Solicitor General, is the 3rd-ranked law-officer in the Indian government.

The position of Additional Solicitor General is not constitutional because the constitution does not have any necessities regarding this.

More about Madhavi Divan

- Madhavi Divan started her legal profession from the Bombay High Court.
- She has signified the states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat in judicial accounts.
- She is married to Senior Advocate Shyam Divan, who freshly appeared in the Right to Privacy case as a lawyer for the requesters.
- She played a vital role in receiving Triple Talaq accomplishment criminalised by the Supreme Court of India.
- Also, she supported against giving the death penalty by the courts for the rape of minor sufferers.

Indra Navy-18 Joint Exercise concluded between India and Russia on -16th December 2018

A bilateral naval exercise, Indra Navy-18, between India & Russia settled on December 16th, 2018. It was a four-day naval exercise that occurred in the Bay of Bengal. This India–Russia Navy Exercise is being directed since 2003. The 1st edition of this exercise was directed in May



2003 in India. India & Russia are chief defence partners & India is also a main importer of Russian defence equipment. Both the nations plan regular exercises with each other. The previous edition of Indra Navy occurred in 2016 in the Bay of Bengal with the main objective behind directing such bilateral military exercises is the establishment of friendly ties among India & Russia armed forces.

Indra Navy 2018

- 10 warships from both nations took part in the Indra Navy-2018 exercise, which also encompassed an Indian Navy submarine.

- The exercise consisted search & seize drills, underway replacement at sea drills & anti-submarine warfare drills along with other mechanisms.

- The naval forces of India & Russia also planned live-firings against aerial goals in the exercise.

- The Russian Navy's Pacific Fleet flagship Varyag took part in Indra Navy 2018. An anti-submarine warfare ship Admiral Panteleyev and a sea tanker Boris Butoma, were also included by Russia in the exercise.

- INS Ranvir, Satpura, Kadmatt, Kuthar and Khanjar & INS Jyoti also took part from Indian counterpart.

- The principal aim of Indra Navy exercise is to upsurge inter-operability amongst the naval forces of

- India & Russia and inter change best practices.

Tamil Nadu fishermen get NavIC-powered - ISRO Gadgets

The Tamil Nadu Government has dispersed 200 NavIC-powered satellite capable communication gadgets produced by Indian Space Research Organisation to 80 fishing boat groups in Tamil Nadu. These gadgets will assist the Tamil Nadu fishermen to receive cyclone & weather updates on a real-time basis. Past year various fishermen were missing in the cyclone Ockhi. Therefore, Tamil Nadu government had to face numerous

criticisms for not delivering timely weather alerts to fishermen. Thus, the Tamil Nadu government had announced giving these gadgets free to fishermen in this year's state budget. Tamil Nadu government rolled-out these gadgets after CM K Palaniswami dispersed the gadgets to 7 fishermen engaged in deep sea fishing in Chennai.

More about NavIC Gadgets

- These gadgets, are of the size of a soap box, which are fundamentally 'receivers' for producing a beep sound when alerts are received by the gadget.

- These gadgets are Bluetooth enabled and the alerts received can be read on the NavIC App which can be easily downloaded on an android phone.

- The alerts will be in the Tamil language so that the fisherman find it simple to recognize it. NavIC- Navigation with Indian Constellation, can be acknowledged as the Indian version of the American GPS system.

NavIC provides exact real-time position, navigation & timing services over India and region ranging 1,500 kilometres around Indian borders.

National Cancer Institute opened in Jhajjar, Haryana on - 18th December 2018

India's largest Cancer Institute, National Cancer Institute- NCI, has inaugurated on December 18th, 2018 in Jhajjar, Haryana for public. The National Cancer Institute will be officially inaugurated in January 2019.

The NCI has been founded under a project of Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences. Dr.G.K. Rath, head of Institute Rotary Cancer hospital at AIIMS in Delhi, will be the head of the National Cancer Institute.

National Cancer Institute

- The National Cancer Institute is constructed at a cost of Rupees 2,035 crore. Currently, National Cancer Institute has a total 710 beds out of which 200 beds have been devoted for the treatment of



cancer patients based on research procedures.

- The National Cancer Institute will work as the nodal institution for all cancer-related events in India.

- It will be connected to regional cancer centres and other cancer institutes of India.

- The National Cancer Institute will be the chief institute for cancer treatment & investigations. It is intended to conduct basic & applied research in areas including molecular biology, genomics, proteomics, cancer epidemiology, radiation biology, cancer injections and many more.

- It will effort towards evolving new cancer control approaches, which include new models of prevention, early diagnosis & therapy, for the developing countries.

- Development of HR in various divisions of cancer management is another area where National Cancer Institute will put efforts.

- National Cancer Institute will also have the amenities for training & capacity building in cancer treatment.

- The National Cancer Institute will have apparatus with advanced & latest technology to learn more about cancer and it will contribute other regional cancer centres in research activities.

India ranked 108th in - WEF's Gender Gap Index

India has come at 108th place in the freshly released Gender Gap Index 2018 by World Economic Forum. India was positioned at the similar position in 2017 rankings as well. The Global Gender Gap Report is issued yearly by the World Economic Forum since 2006. The Global Gender Gap Index is an index that calculates gender equality across 4 key pillars including economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health & survival.

Iceland has been positioned as number One in the World Economic

Forum's Gender Gap Index for the 10th successive year. It has been gifted to close about 85.8% of its overall gender gap. Similarly,

Norway with 83.5% came at the 2nd position, Sweden with 82.2% at the 3rd, & Finland with 82.1% clinched the 4th position in the rankings.

Other nations in Top 10 are Nicaragua-5th, Rwanda-6th, New Zealand-7th, the Philippines-8th, Ireland-9th and Namibia with 10 th positions.

India in the Gender Gap Index 2018

- India has enhanced in wage equality for same work sub-index of the Gender Gap Index 2018. It has been talented to completely close the tertiary education gender gap for the very 1st time.

- India has been positioned 142 in the economic opportunity and participation sub-index out of total 149 nations.

- As per World Economic Forum report, India requires to get extra females into senior as well as professional roles to make extra improvement in the rankings.

- India extended the gap in health & survival sub-index. It continues to position 3rd-lowest in this sub-index in the world. It has made the minimum improvement in this parameter in the last ten years.

- India has closed 66% of its Gender Gap and is a little ahead of the South-Asian area. South Asian region was ranked 2nd-lowest in the index having closed only 65% of its gender gap.

Asma Jahangir posthumously awarded with - 2018 UN Human Rights Prize

Late human rights activist, Asma Jahangir was awarded with the United Nations Human Rights Prize 2018, posthumously, on December 18th, 2018.

Her daughter Munizae Jahangir collected the award on her behalf at the award function organised at the United Nations HQ in New York, as part of activities to celebrate Human Rights Day. Asma Jahangir deceased on February 11th, 2018 due to cardiac arrest. She was known for her frank nature and unrelenting



pursuit for human rights.

More about Asma Jahangir

- Asma Jahangir will be recalled for her services towards forming a democratic and more inclusive Pakistan.

- She was the 1st female to serve as the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association in Pakistan.

- She was the originator of a home-grown human rights initiative in Pakistan, and co-founded & worked as Chairperson of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

- During her occupancy at the United Nations Human Rights office, Jahangir worked various roles including as an professional in the Investigation on Sri Lanka; an associate of International Fact-Finding Mission on Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and a trustee of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund.

- She was also a long-lasting prominent associate of the United Nations Human Rights Council, where she worked as Special Rapporteur on arbitrary executions & Special Rapporteur on the freedom of religion.

- Jahangir had also secure various international prizes in recognition of her work including the Martin Ennals Award in 1995, and the UNESCO or Bilbao Award for the Promotion of Culture of Human rights.

Other

Winners

Earlier in October 2018, Asma Jahangir was declared as 1 of the 4 winners of this prestigious award. Other winners were females' rights activist of Tanzania Rebeca Gyumi; activist for the rights of native Brazilian communities Joenia Wapichana & Ireland's human rights organisation 'Front Line Defenders'.

Shiksha Setu' Mobile App launched by - Haryana Government

Government of Haryana has started a mobile application known as "Shiksha Setu" with an objective to assist the students of the state. The "Shiksha Setu" mobile application will assist in bringing transparency in the Education Department & in the college's administration in the

state. Also, it will enhance the connectivity among students, parents, teachers & administration via this mobile application.

About Shikha Setu Mobile Application

- This mobile application will have all the data concerned attendance, fee, online admission & scholarships in all the Haryana government colleges.

- The specifications of lecturers of government colleges & officers of the Directorate can be retrieved via the mobile application.

- The application will deliver the students with instant data about assignments & updates of significant notices, circulars & other programs.

- There will be a provision of online fee-payment via the mobile application. The college administration will be able to check details about overall fee collected & pending fee payments.

- The students can check the status of seats/course in every college in the state along with the details of scholarship, eligibility conditions & details of applying for the same can be checked.

Capital First merges with IDFC Bank to create - IDFC First Bank

The IDFC Bank has amalgamated completely with the Non-Banking Financial Company Capital First on December 18th, 2018 into a new entity to be known as 'IDFC First Bank'. The union between IDFC Bank & Capital First was declared on 13 January 2018. The new IDFC First bank will have a loan asset book of Rupees 1.03 lakh crore. The founder & chairman of Capital First Ltd, V Vaidyanathan, has been designated as the MD & CEO of the newly shaped IDFC First bank.

More about Non-Banking Financial Company

- A Non-Banking Financial Company is a financial institution that does not have a banking license but provides banking facilities.

- Operations of Non-Banking Financial Companies are controlled under a nation's banking regulations but it is established under the Companies Act, 1956.



- The RBI controls the Non-Banking Financial Companies under Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

- Non-Banking Financial Companies can provide loans & credit amenities, offer savings & investments products & can offer money transfer services to the users.

- However, Non-Banking Financial Companies, unlike Banks, cannot accept demand deposits from users.

- Non-Banking Financial Companies also are not a part of the nation's payment & settlement system.

- Therefore, they cannot offer cheque facility to their subscribers.

Setting up of Eklavya Model Residential Schools approved by - CCEA

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs- CCEA, has issued its sanction for the revamped Eklavya Model Residential Schools scheme. Under this, Eklavya Model Residential Schools will be formed in every block where STs population is above 50 percent & has minimum 20,000 tribal population. A budget of Rupees 2242 crore during 2018-19 & 2019-20 has been sanctioned by the CCEA for rolling out this scheme. The Eklavya Model Residential Schools will be operated by an Autonomous Society, on the basis of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti. This society will be under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. 462 fresh Eklavya Model Residential Schools will be formed as 102 Eklavya Model Residential Schools are already running in the nation. The fresh scheme intends to advance the construction quality & provide better amenities for the students. For this, the construction cost support of Eklavya Model Residential Schools has been increased from the current Rupees 12 crore to Rupees 20 crore.

More about Eklavya Model Residential Schools

- Eklavya Model Residential School is a central government plan for

forming model residential schools for Scheduled Tribes all over India.

- The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs runs the Eklavya Model Residential Schools plan in the nation.

- Postage Stamp on Rajkumar Shukla, associated with the Champaran Satyagraha, released The Department of Post has released a Commemorative Postage Stamp on Rajkumar Shukla in New

Delhi on December 18th, 2018.

- The stamp was issued as a honour to the contribution made by Rajkumar Shukla in the launch of Champaran Satyagraha in the year 1917.

More about Rajkumar Shukla

- Raj Kumar Shukla was born on August 23rd, 1875 in Satwaria village of Champaran, Bihar.

- He a well-known Indigo cultivator of Champaran & as he was a money lender also.

- He rose to recognition for his close association with Gandhiji during the Champaran Satyagraha movement.

- Raj Kumar Shukla influenced Mahatma Gandhi to visit Champaran, which was a turning point in India's struggle for independence.

- Earlier too, the Department of Posts had issued a postage stamp in the year 2000 to celebrate the 125th birthday of Pandit Raj Kumar Shukla.

- The total number of such stamps issued this year has reached 43 with the release of this postage stamp.

Minorities Rights Day celebrated on - 18th December 2018

India celebrated Minorities Rights Day on 18 December 2018. Every year on 18th December, this day is celebrated to encourage the rights of Minority communities in India. Also, the awareness creation about the Minority Rights is the aim of celebrating this day as Minorities Rights Day.

Every state in India, on this day, emphasises on the matters concerning



minorities and their safety in the state. Various seminars, campaigns & programmes are conducted on Minorities Rights Day.

The UN, on 18 December 1992, propagated the "Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National/Ethnic, Religious & Linguistic Minorities" to dishearten the nations to discriminate amongst people around the world on the basis of religion, language, nationality/ethnicity.

Minorities in India

- The minorities in India consist Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Parsis & Jains which constitute about 19 percent of the total population in India.

- Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland & Lakshadweep are the only states where any reported minority is in majority.

- The Ministry of Minority Affairs, which was recognised in 2006, is the top body in the Union government to carry out various welfare, regulatory & developmental seminars for the minority population.

- A National Commission for Minorities has also been formed under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.

Transport Ministry asks states to accept vehicle documents, driving licence in electronic format on - 18th December 2018

The Union Road Transport & Highways Ministry on December 18th, 2018 enquired states to ease acceptance of driving licence & other documents including vehicle registration certificates in electronic set-up by enforcement agencies. The Ministry informed that the vehicle owners can also present their documents including DLs, Registration Certificates & insurance certificates via mobile apps like Digilocker and mParivahan app.

Important Highlights

- The vehicle owners have been approved to show their important documents including the certificate of registration, insurance, fitness & permit,

DL, the certificate for pollution under check & any other relevant documents in electronic format.

- With this, the vehicle owners may now, not be needed to carry the above stated papers in hard formats.

- People can produce the documents/data either via the Digilocker app or the mParivahan app.

- They can download and show particulars relating to the DL or the Registration Certificate via the mParivahan app on mobile via internet connectivity.

- The decision would enable the enforcement agencies including traffic & transport departments to instantaneously access the details from the eChallan app, which has information for online verification of vehicle & its licence status.

- The offline confirmation of mParivahan QR Code is also available on the app. The enforcement agencies can utilise regular android mobile apps for this.

- The enforcement agencies can also carry out fully challenging operation like tagging of the DL or the RC for impounding/suspension.

Military Communication Satellite GSAT-7A successfully launched by - ISRO

ISRO magnificently released the communication satellite GSAT-7A on December 19th, 2018 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. GSAT-7A evaluating 2250 kilograms was released with the help of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle- GSLV-F11.

About GSAT-7A Satellite

- Indian Space Research Organisation's GSAT-7A satellite is the heaviest satellite about 2250 kilograms, with an Indian established cryogenic stage that has been released by Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle.

- GSAT-7A is a high-tech communication satellite containing new technologies together with a Gregorian Antenna.



- It is the 39th communication satellite of Indian Space Research Organisation and will mainly be utilised for military applications. IAF's current communication capabilities of satellites will be amplified with GSAT-7A satellite.

- GSAT-7A will propose services to the manipulators in Ku-band over the Indian region.

- The release of GSAT-7A was the thirteenth flight of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle-MkII and the 7th flight with an indigenously produced cryogenic engine.

- GSAT-7A was carried by Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle which is Indian Space Research Organisation's 4th generation launch vehicle with following 3 stages-
i. The 1st stage consists of 4 liquid strap-on and a solid rocket motor.
ii. The 2nd stage of Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle has a high thrust engine with the help of liquid fuel.
iii. The 3rd and final stage of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle is the cryogenic upper stage.

USA pulls out of the Intermediate-Range - Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

Russia has cleared that the USA has finalised to abandon the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces- INF Treaty inked between Russian and the United States of America in 1987. The United States of America had already declared the removal decision from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty in October 2018.

INF Treaty

- The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty was inked in 1987 between United States President Ronald Reagan and USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev.

- The agreement intended to end arms race between United States of America and USSR during cold war and to make sure some strategic stability in Europe.

- The Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty barred the development, testing & possession of short and medium

ranged ground-launched nuclear missiles having ranged between 500 to 5000 kilometres.

- Also, all the nuclear & conventional missiles, and their launchers, with short ranges of 500 to 1000 kilometres and 1000 to 5500 kilometres of intermediate-range were restricted under this treaty.

- The Treaty proved to be a powerful deterrent against any full-sized nuclear war in Europe. Nearly 3000 present weapons were dismantled & destroyed after the inking of this treaty.

- Russia has cautioned to take retaliatory actions and to counter any aggression if its security gets vulnerable after the United States pulling out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.

State of Goa celebrates 57th Liberation Day on - 19th December 2018

Goa celebrated the 57th Liberation Day on December 19th, 2018 to remember getting independence from the 450 years of Portuguese regulation. Every year 19th December is celebrated by India as on this day Operation Vijay was accomplished by the Indian Forces liberating Territories of Goa, Daman & Diu and the Anjadiv Island & from the Portuguese rule.

About Operation Vijay

- PM Jawaharlal Nehru directed a military intervention for the liberation of Goa after all the diplomatic discussions failed with the Portuguese, thereby initiating the Operation Vijay on December 17th, 1961.

- Portuguese army was not much prepared to tackle the attack of Indian forces. The operation persisted for 2 days with negligible bloodshed.

- The Portuguese Governor General Vassalo da Silva was forced to hand over control of Goa, by which Goa finally became independent and become a part of India.

- Major-General K.P.Candeth was designated as the military governor of Goa kept directly under the



running of the President of India.

Statehood of Goa

- The territory of Goa was officially integrated into the India after the parliament passed 12th Amendment Act to the Constitution of India in 1963, issuing the status of a UT to Goa, Daman and Diu.

- There was a referendum organised in 1967 in Goa to let individuals of Goa select between continuing as a Union Territory or to join with Maharashtra.

- This referendum is superbly known as Goa Opinion Poll where individuals of Goa selected to continue as a Union Territory.

- On 30 May 1987, Goa was detached from Daman & Diu and became Indian Union's 25th state. Daman & Diu was reserved as a UT only in the Indian Union.

Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016 approved by - Lok Sabha

Lok Sabha has permitted Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2016 on December 19th, 2018 to safeguard surrogacy in the nation. The bill has barred commercial surrogacy & allows only altruistic surrogacy. The bill safeguards the rights of the surrogate mother and her child born from surrogacy & promotes decent surrogacy. Surrogacy is well-defined as an agreement between a couple who cannot conceive and a surrogate mother to bear their child.

Provisions of Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2016

- The bill is valid to all the states of India except J&K. The bill delivers the constitution of National Surrogacy board and State Surrogacy board for regulation of surrogacy procedure.

- The bill is delivering surrogacy to only Indian residents. Thus, Foreigners, NRI and PIOs are not permitted.

- Homosexuals & Single parents are also not permissible for surrogacy and bars the couple who already have children.

- The couple looking for surrogacy should keep a certificate of essentiality supplied by suitable authority.

- The bill mandates that females can only surrogate once in their lifetime and her age should be in between 25-35 years.

- The couple who propose for surrogacy should be aged between 23-50 years and married for minimum Five years.

- The bill also delivers provision for the custody of the child to be born, which will be permitted by a court of the Magistrate of the 1st class or overhead.

- The bill also has the provision of penalty & imprisonment if the individual violated the law.

National Surrogacy Board The board consists of:

- Chairperson is Minister in-charge of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

- Vice Chairperson is Secretary to the Government of India in-charge of Department tackling with surrogacy cases.

- Members are 3 female members of Parliament, 3 members of Ministries of Central Government from Women and Child Development, Legislative Department in Ministry of Law & Justice and Ministry of Home Affairs, not underneath the position of Joint Secretary, DG Health Services of Central Government and 10 professionals' members.

Maruti Suzuki India, Ministry of Rural Development sign MoU for training rural youth under - DDU-GKY

The Union Ministry of Rural Development on December 19th, 2018 inked a MoU with Maruti Suzuki India Ltd for training rural youth for skill development under the banner Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana-DDU-GKY.

The Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana is the banner placement connected to skilled training scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development.

Significance

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana will fulfill this gap by supporting training projects with an importance on placement, retention, career progression and overseas placement of rural youth. Maruti Suzuki will give training to at least 5000 applicants in 2 years with guaranteed



placement to the rural youth of our nation.
DDU-GKY's 'Champion Employers' policy

- The mission of the DDU-GKY is to make sure rural poor youth are skilled in market related trades and job-relevant competencies.

- One of the ways in which Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana goals to attain this is via the 'Champion Employers' policy.

- The Champion Employers are the industry leaders who have the capability to deliver training & captive employment to the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana aspirants.

- The policy pursues a strategic alignment of aims of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya-Grameen Kaushalya Yojana with the HR strategy of companies, which have greater potential to utilise trained manpower.

Former Indian Kabaddi Captain, Anup Kumar announces retirement on - 19th December 2018

Legendary Indian Kabaddi player & former World Cup-winning captain, Anup Kumar, declared his retirement from the kabaddi sport with immediate effect on December 19th, 2018, taking an end to his 15 years long career. Kumar, well-known to be one of the most effective players, has headed his team to victory on various occasions and contributed to the overall growth of the kabaddi in the country.

About Anup Kumar

- The kabaddi star started his international career in 2006 at the South Asian Games in Sri Lanka.

- He was a part of the Indian National Kabaddi team that secured Gold Medals in 2010 as well as 2014 Asian Games & in the 2016 South Asian Games.

- He was honoured with the Arjuna Award in 2012 for his excellent contribution to Kabaddi in India.

- He was designated as the captain of the Indian National team in 2014 and during his tenure the Indian Kabaddi team

secured Two Gold Medals at Asian Games in 2014 & the Kabaddi World Cup in 2016.

- He has played all the 6 seasons of the Pro Kabaddi League so far, representing the U Mumba franchise in the 1st 5 seasons and is presently a part of the Jaipur Pink Panthers.

- He headed the U Mumba franchise for the 1st 5 years taking the side to 3 consecutive finals, a record that has not been attained by any other captain in the league.

- Kumar was the highest points scorer in the opening season of the Pro Kabaddi League with a tally of 169 scores.

- At this year's Pro Kabaddi League Auction, he was chosen by Jaipur Pink Panthers and was handed the role of the captain.

Lok Sabha passes Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 on - 20th December 2018

The Lok Sabha on December 20th, 2018 sanctioned the Consumer Protection Bill 2018. The bill calls for stringent punishment, including jail terms and hefty fines for misleading ads and food adulteration.

The bill will now go to the Rajya Sabha for debate. The bill pursues to replace the 2015 Consumer Protection Bill that was announced to repeal the 30 years old Consumer Protection Act, 1986. It was formerly introduced in the Lok Sabha in January 2018.

Provisions of the new Bill

- The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 goals to safeguard consumers' interests via a redressal process that would make sure timely & effective settlement of disputes.

- It pursues to enlarge the scope of the present law and make it extra effective and purposeful.

- It pursues to develop a Central Consumer Protection Authority to safeguard customer rights & look into the matters concerned to false/misleading advertisements.

- It has necessities for post-litigation stage mediation as an alternate dispute



resolution process. It also delivers for product liability action.

Penalties

- The bill provides for fine & prohibition on celebrities for recommending misleading ads: In case of the 1st offence, the fine would include a penalty of up to Rupees 10 lakh and a 1 year restriction on any endorsement.
- For the 2nd offence, the fine would include a penalty of up to Rupees 50 lakh and a 3-year prohibition on contract.
- For producers and organisations, the fine would be up to Rupees 10 lakh and up to 2 years of jail term for the 1st offence.
- For any succeeding offence, the producers and organisations would have to pay a fine of Rupees 50 lakh and serve a jail term of Five years.
- The bill also offers for fine up to life term jail sentence in case of adulteration.

Charles Michel resigns as the Prime Minister of Belgium on - 19th December 2018

Charles Michel has resigned from the position of the PM of Belgium on 19th December 2018. The resignation occurred as his government was under extreme pressure from the opposition over his government's support for the United Nations global compact on immigration. Charles Michel's, who became the PM of Belgium in 2014, was the nation's youngest PM since 1841. He belongs to the francophone liberal party Mouvement Réformateur. His party had previous lost the support of their alliance partner nationalist New Flemish Alliance over his support for a United Nations-backed migration deal. There were various angry protests that took place in Brussels against this migration agreement.

More about UN Global Compact on Migration

- The negotiations for Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration

initiated in 2016 after the influx of above 1 million migrants into Europe.

- In July 2018, all of the 193 associates agreed to the United Nations agreement on migration except the USA.
- But, only 164 nations formally inked the United Nations migration deal in Marrakech on 10th December 2018.
- The pact commits the signatories to progress co-operation on international migration.
- The pact is not legally binding on the nations inking the pact and permits them to be in charge of their own immigration policies.
- The pact stresses that all migrants should be given widespread human rights. It pursues to do away with all forms of discrimination against immigrants and their families.

President's rule comes into effect in - Jammu & Kashmir

The state of J&K has come under President's rule from 20 December 2018 as Governor's rule in the state finished its 6 months. It suggests that now all the policy decisions related to J&K will be taken by the Union Cabinet. The state tackled a political crisis when 25 membered BJP removed its support from Mehbooba Mufti-led alliance government, reducing it to a minority government in the state. Thereafter, the Governor's rule was forced in the state. In the case of J&K, which has a separate Constitution, 6 months of Governor's rule is mandatory before President's rule under Article 92 of its Constitution. All the governmental powers are exercised by the Governor in case of Governor's rule. Now, after the announcement for the President's rule has been made, the jurisdictional powers of the state shall be exercised under the consultant of Parliament. The PM and the Council of Ministers will aid and advise the president regarding the conclusions concerned to the state.

More about President's Rule



- Under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution, the Union government can take over the businesses of the state government when state government is unable to work as per to the constitutional provisions.

- This is known as President's rule in the state.

- President's Rule in a state can continue for six months. It can be prolonged, with the consent of both the houses done every six months, for a maximum of three years.

- For President's rule to continue over a year every six months below conditions should be met:

1. There should already be a National emergency across the nation, or in the whole or any part of the state.

2. The Election Commission of India should confirm that the conduct of elections is not conceivable in the concerned state.

US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis resigns, cites differences with Trump on - 20th December 2018

The US Defence Secretary, Jim Mattis, snappishly declared his resignation on December 20th, 2018, mentioning policy differences with President Donald Trump as the main reason behind the resignation. The resignation comes a day afterward President Donald Trump declared that all United States troops would be withdrawn from Syria. Defending his announcement, Trump had tweeted that the United States does not want to be the policeman of West Asia.

Crucial Highlights

- In his resignation, Mattis informed Trump he had the right to have a Secretary of Defence whose ideas are better aligned with that of his.

- As per to reports, Mattis had tried to convince President Trump to maintain United States troops in Syria.

- However, as per analysts, the withdrawal of United States troops from

Syria will clear the way for Syria's Bashar al-Assad regime, Russia & Iran.

- Mattis had warned that withdrawing ground forces from the Middle Eastern nation would be a strategic blunder.

- Presently, there are around 2,000 US troops in Syria.

- A career Marine, Mattis gained a reputation for intellectualism & ultimately advanced to the rank of general and he has worked in the Persian Gulf War, Afghanistan & Iraq.

- He commanded the US Joint Forces Command from 2007-2010 and parallely worked as the NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.

- He was also the Commander of US Central Command from 2010-2013, which focused military operations as well as oversaw the wars in Iraq & Afghanistan.

- After retiring from the military, he worked in several private sector roles, including as a board member of Theranos and was also designated as Secretary of Défense by President-elect Trump & assured by the Senate on January 20th, 2017.

WV Raman appointed new head coach of Indian national women's cricket team on - 20th December 2018

Former India opener Woorikeri Venkat Raman was on December 20th, 2018 chosen as the new Head coach of the Indian women's National Cricket team. The declaration was done by the BCCI. The 53 years old WV Raman will take over the role from Ramesh Powar, whose bond was not renewed after the controversies and fall-out with senior women's cricket team player Mithali Raj. WV Raman's 1st assignment in his new position would be the tour of New Zealand, which starts on January 24th, 2019. He has been brought on with a 2 years contract.

Important Highlights

- WV Raman was among one of the 3 candidates shortlisted for the post by an ad-hoc panel to select the coach.

- The panel included veteran cricketers Kapil Dev, Anshuman Gaekwad and Shanta Rangaswamy.



Besides Raman, the list had the names of former India coach Gary Kirsten and Venkatesh Prasad.

- The committee had presented their order of preference as Kirsten, WV Raman & Venkatesh Prasad and the shortlisted names were then forwarded to the Committee of Administrators and the Board of Control for Cricket in India.

- Venkat Raman is a former Indian cricketer. His 1st-class career spanned from 1982-1999, where he represented Tamil Nadu, mainly as a left-handed batsman and a part-time left-arm spinner.

- Raman made his Test entry in his hometown Chennai against West Indies in 1987–88, top scoring in the 2nd innings with 83 and taking a wicket in his 1st over itself.

- In total, Raman played 11 Tests & 27 One-Day Internationals. However, he was relatively unsuccessful in One-Day Internationals on the international stage. His only international century with 113 scores, was against South Africa in 1992–93.

- Though he started his 1st-class career as a left-arm spinner, he eventually transformed into a batsman.

- He was an effective batsman in domestic cricket scoring 3 double centuries, including 313 against Goa, in the 1988–89 season of the Ranji Trophy.

Government launches Asiatic Lion Conservation Project to conserve their population on - 20th December 2018

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change on December 20th, 2018 released the “Asiatic Lion Conservation Project” to guard and conserve the population of Asiatic Lion & its associated ecosystem. The project actions are planned in such a manner that will result into habitat improvement, scientific intrusions, disease control & veterinary care, accompanied with satisfactory eco development works for the fringe population in order to make sure a stable & viable Lion population in the nation.

Objective

The Asiatic Lion Conservation Project is intended at conservation & recovery of Asiatic Lion with the aid of up to date techniques, tools, regular scientific research, disease management, modern surveillance & patrolling techniques.

Asiatic Lions

- Asiatic lion are cousins of the African lion and it is supposed that both got separated 100000 years ago.

- Asiatic lions are somewhat smaller and have a distinctive fold of skin sideways their bellies.

- Asiatic lion once occupied complete southwest Asia, but, in last few years, it got limited to the 1400 sq.km Gir Sanctuary in Gujarat, resulting in to its listing as critically endangered in the year 2000.

- Asiatic lions that once extended from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India, were almost pushed to extinction due to hunting and loss of habitat.

- A single population of at least 50 lions persevered in the Gir forests of Gujarat by late 1890's. However, Asiatic lions have amplified to the present population of more than 500 due to stringent protection offered by the Government.

- The past census of the year 2015 highlighted the population of 523 Asiatic Lions in Gir Protected Area Network of 1648.79 sq.km. including Gir National Park, Gir Sanctuary, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary touching reserved forests, Protected Forests, and Unclassed Forests.

Who has been awarded the Skoch CM of the Year Award ? - Mamata Banerjee

The CM of West Bengal has been presented with the ‘Skoch Chief Minister of the Year Award’ for the year 2017. The reward was given to Mamta Banerjee for highlighting her contribution in the general development of West Bengal because West Bengal developed as the best-performing state in the field of Governance.

Skoch Award

- West Bengal has secured 31 Skoch Awards this year for its performance in



various fields and for executing unique projects.

- As per to Skoch Group, Mamta Banerjee was nominated for the prestigious prize keeping in mind the West Bengal's performance in governance, culture, finance, urban and rural development.

- West Bengal's Kanyashree has already gained much critical praise. The scheme also secured the highest public service award from the UN.

- Kanyashree scheme is a unique creativity of the West Bengal government to progress the status as well as wellbeing of teenagers belonging to socially & economically backward families.

- It supports such families by conditional cash transfers to avoid the families from arranging the marriage of girl child before the age of 18 years due of some economic reasons.

- West Bengal has also secured the leading Skoch Award for making the maximum number of man-days and for the maximum amount paid in paying people for their labour under the 100-days work scheme.

- The state of West Bengal has also secured the IPPAI Award for rural electrification in the state. The state has also been bestowed with 5 consecutive Krishi Karman awards in the field of Agriculture.

More about Skoch Group

- The Skoch Group is a think tank since 1997 that tackles socio-economic issues in the nation while concentrating on inclusive growth.

- Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was also presented by the Skoch Group with "SKOCH Sprinter of the Year" Award.

- Commerce & and Industry and civil aviation minister Suresh Prabhu secured the "Steady Reformer" Award.

40 workers conferred Prime Minister Shram Awards 2017 declared by - The Union Government

The Union Government has declared to confer the Prime Minister's Shram Awards 2017 to 40 workers across the nation. These awardees have been chosen among the workers of Departmental Undertakings and Central & State Government PSUs and Private Sector organisations having 500 or above workers.

The Prime Minister Shram Awards pursues to recognise the distinguished performances & innovative abilities presented by the workers. Also, these awards regard their outstanding contribution in the field of productivity and exhibition of exceptional courage & presence of mind.

More about Prime Minister Shram Awards 2017

- This year, no one was bestowed the prestigious Shram Ratna Award.

- 3 awardees were selected for the Shram Bhushan Award which carries a cash prize of Rupees 100000/- and a 'Sanad'. Smt. Myneni Sharada from BEL, Shri B.B.V.Prasada Rao from Naval Dockyard and Sh.Sudip Pachhal from Tata Steels have been nominated under this category.

- 12 awardees were selected for the Shram Vir/Shram Veerangana which carries a cash prize of Rupees 60000/- and a 'Sanad'.

- 16 awardees have selected for the Shram Shree/Shram Devi Awards which carries a cash prize of Rupees 40000/- and a 'Sanad'.

- 23 nominations are from the public sector and 17 awardees from the private sector.

'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' field-level awareness campaign launched by - Union Government

A three-state field-level campaign onBBBP will be organised by the Union Government from the first week of January 2019.

As a part of the campaign, more than 900 cultural programs across various districts of Maharashtra, 100 programs in



Goa and 30 programs in UT of Dadra & Nagar Haveli would going to be held. The sensitisation and awareness drive is being organised by the Pune office of Regional Outreach Bureau and the Union Ministry of Information & Broadcasting in coordination with Women and Child Development Departments of the respective states.

Important Highlights

- Gauri Gadgil, a Divyang child and an international swimmer, launched this campaign by placing her fingers on traditional instrument “Dholak”, symbolising the creation of reverberance about the scheme across the three states.
- During the occasion, she stated that girls are making their mark across the globe, giving name and fame to their families.
- As an introduction to the campaign, an orientation-cum-workshop on the flagship scheme was organised for the PRTs (Private Registered Cultural Troupes) in Pune on 20th December 2018.
- Inaugurating the workshop, former ADG, Ministry of I&B, Prabhavati Aakashi mentioned that the cultural troupes of ROB have been doing a wonderful job by creating awareness and sensitising people on the importance of the same initiative.

India, Japan sign Exchange of Notes and Loan Agreements on Japan's assistance Loan to India - on 21st December 2018

India & Japan on December 21st, 2018 inked Exchange of Notes and Loan Agreements on Japan's Official Development Assistance Loan to India.

The Notes were inter-changed between Dr.C.S.Mohapatra, Additional Secretary in Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance & Kenji Hiramatsu, Ambassador of Japan to India on Japanese formal development assistance loan for 3 projects. 3 projects are

- 1) Chennai Metro Project- Phase 2 (I) for

Japanese Yen 75.519 billion, which goals to meet increasing traffic demand by constructing Mass Rapid Transit System. It will ease worsening road traffic & traffic pollution. Ultimately, it will result into balanced regional progress & enhancement of metropolitan environmental condition in Chennai Metropolitan Area.

2) Programme for Japan-India Co-operative Actions towards Sustainable Development Aims in India for Japanese Yen 15.000 billion, which goals to contribute to promotion of Sustainable Development Goals in India especially in social development by backing the efforts by the Union Government to fortify policy framework & implementation process to ease India achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

3) Project for Dairy Development for Japanese Yen 14.978 billion, which intends to upsurge sales of milk & dairy products by raising farmers's access to organised market. It also aims to upgrade dairy processing facilities and marketing infrastructure and enhance the capacity of producers owned institutions, thereby contributing to increase in returns to milk producers in the project area.

Loan Agreements

• For these 3 projects, Japan has promised Japan-India Co-operative Actions Official Development Assistance of around Rupees 6668.46 crore conjointly.

• The agreements were inked between Dr. C.S.Mohapatra, Additional Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs, Union Ministry of Finance and Katsuo Matsumoto, Chief Representative of Japan-India Co-operative Actions, New Delhi.

National Mathematics Day celebrated on - 22nd December 2018

India observed 22nd December 2018 as the National Mathematics Day commemorating the 131 birthday of famous Indian Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan. Since 2011, December 22nd,



is observed as National Mathematics Day every year. The Indian government had also announced 2012 as the National Mathematics year. The National Mathematics Day is observed to honour his involvement to the field of Mathematics & also to keep his legacy alive to encourage the future mathematicians.

More about Srinivasa Ramanujan

- Ramanujan was born in the year 1887 and subsisted during the British rule in India. His life was entirely devoted to Mathematics. At a young age of 11, Ramanujan initiated showing signs of a genius.

- He had reached expertise in trigonometry and established many theorems by himself. He got his papers issued in the Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society in the year 1911.

- Ramanujan accumulated nearly 3900 results, mostly identities & equations, on his own without any support.

- Many of the results were entirely original & novel including the Ramanujan prime, the Ramanujan theta function, partition formulae & mock-theta functions.

- These results as well as characteristics have unlocked entirely new fields of work and stimulated further research.

- He came out with his individual theory of divergent series. Also, he calculated out the Riemann series, the elliptic integrals, hypergeometric series & the functional equations of the Zeta function.

- The number 1729 is superbly known as the Hardy-Ramanujan number.

Belgium ends the year as No. 1 in - FIFA global rankings

Belgium Football team clinched at number One place in the end of the year FIFA Global rankings. Belgium succeeded to remain at the top with One point above than the current World Champions France. Belgium has 1727 scores in the place whereas France which came at 2nd rank has 1726 scores. France had beaten Belgium in the semi-finals of the FIFA World Cup 2018 to reach

the finals. Brazil came at 3rd position with 1676 scores. Croatia has been placed at the 4th place and England claimed the 5th position. Portugal saved at 6th and Uruguay at 7th position in the rankings.

Switzerland, Spain and Denmark complete the Top-10 teams by claiming 8th, 9th and 10th positions respectively.

The teams of Argentina, Germany and Italy took the 11th, 16th & 18th position and finishes the year outside the Top-10. France has been announced as the 2018's Best Mover team by FIFA. The football team of Kosovo, which is placed at 131st in the list, are the year's biggest climbers as Kosovo moved up 46 places in the positions in 2018.

More about FIFA

- FIFA arranges football's major international tournaments including FIFA the World Cup. FIFA was started in 1904 and has its HQ in Zurich.

- It is to be highlighted that the rules of football are formed by the International Football Association Board and not FIFA.

Government authorises 10 central organisations to monitor any computer on - 20th December 2018

The Union Government has permitted 10 central intelligence, security and tax organisations to intercept, monitor & decrypt all the information contained in any computer system. The order was released on December 20th, 2018 by the "Cyber and Information Security" division of the Ministry of Home Affairs under the authority of Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba. The initiative has resulted into a political storm with the opposition condemning the government of trying to create a 'surveillance state'. The Union Government has elucidated that the rules for intercepting & monitoring computer information were outlined in 2009 when the Congress-led UPA was in power and its new order only notified the elected authority, which can carry out such action.

New Order



- As per to the order, the ten central probe & snoop organisations are now empowered under the Information Technology Act for computer interception & analysis.

- The organisations, as per to the order, have been sanctioned for the interception, monitoring and decryption of any information produced, transmitted, received/stored in any computer resource under the said Act (section 69 of the IT Act, 2000).

- The ten organisations notified under the fresh order are the Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (for Income Tax Department), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI, National Investigation Agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Signal Intelligence, in service areas of J-K, North East and Assam, and Delhi Police commissioner.

- However, the fresh order does not discuss any new powers to any security/law enforcement agency. Each case of computer interception, monitoring and decryption will have to be permitted by the competent authority, which is the Union home secretary or the state government.

Benefits

The order is aimed at among other things ensuring that any interception, monitoring or decryption of any information through any computer resource is done in accordance with due process of law.

Defence Minister inaugurates Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre on - 22nd December 2018

Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on December 22nd, 2018 released the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region- IFC-IOR, at Information Management and Analysis Centre, Gurugram.

The inaugural programme witnessed the participation from delegates belonging to different ministries ambassadors and resident defence connected of partner

nations.

IFC-IOR Objective

The Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region goals to engage with partner countries and multi-national maritime concepts to develop comprehensive maritime domain consciousness and share data on vessels of interest.

The important intention of this cooperative endeavour will be to protect the global commons for a peaceful, stable & prosperous region towards the well-being of all.

Important Highlights

- The Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region shall be a collective construct that will effort with partners, nations and international agencies to improve maritime security & safety.

- The centre would assist towards capability development in the region, co-ordination of incident response disaster relief, with share submarine safety data.

- It will benefit countries interface and integrate, wherein, they would help from each other's best practices and expertise.

- It would also benefit foster bonds of trust, camaraderie & partnership, ingredients that are vivacious for relationships between countries to transcend from being merely transactional to ones that are transformational.

- The data exchange at the Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region would be primarily undertaken by virtual means, using telephone calls, faxes, emails & video conferencing.

- Later, to enable better interaction, faster analysis of data and provide time bounded inputs, the Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region would host Liaison Officers from partner nations. Additionally, towards enhancing capability building, the Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region would undertake arrangement of exercises & training capsules in maritime data collation and sharing.



'Hand-in-Hand' counter-terrorism military exercises concluded on - 22nd December 2018

India & China settled the 'Hand-in-Hand' military exercise on 22nd December 2018 in China's Chengdu city. This military exercise was the seventh edition of the "Hand-in-Hand" military exercise. The "Hand-in-Hand" military exercise did not occur last year due to dominant tensions between both sides after 73 days military standoff at Doklam. This year's exercise, which started on 11th December, engrossed on urban terrorism in which Indian - Chinese armies planned the drills while living & dining together to build up a sense of camaraderie. The exercise consisted live firing and demonstration of driving skills for saving hostages detained by terrorists in an urban environment. The earlier edition of "Hand-in-Hand" that was organised in 2016 in Pune had intended on counter-terrorism drills in non-urban areas.

The exercises and the concluding service were live-streamed by China's state-operated TV channel CGTN highlighting their significance. The exercise pursues to improve the ties between the both countries drills keeping in spirit of this year's Wuhan summit.

Wuhan Summit

PM Narendra Modi and President of China Xi Jinping had detained their 1st Informal Summit in Wuhan on April 27-28th, 2018. The motive of the meeting was to exchange ideas on overarching issues of bilateral and global importance and to intricate their respective visions & significances for national development in the context of present and future international condition.

GST Council slashes rates on 23 Goods and Services on - 22nd December 2018

The tax rates on 23 Goods & Services has been slashed by the Goods and Services Tax Council on 22nd December 2018. These goods comprise movie tickets, TV & monitor screens, power banks and others. After this reduction, only

28 goods are remaining in the highest tax slab of 28% includes cement, sin goods (tobacco, alcohol), automobile parts and luxury goods including ACs and dishwasher. The new Goods and Services Tax prices will be applicable from 1st January 2019.

Important Highlights

- The renewable energy devices and their spare parts will be taxed at 5 percent. The Goods and Services Tax on the accessories for carriages for specially-abled persons have been decreased to 5%.

- No tax will be applied to the services provided by the banks to Jan-Dhan account bearers. Also, Frozen & preserved vegetables will not be taxed at all.

- The tax has been decreased to 12 percent from the earlier rate of 18 percent for the cinema tickets costing up to 100 rupees and to 18 percent from 28 percent for tickets priced more than Rupees 100.

- The rate of tax for Digital cameras, Power banks, 32 inches monitors and TV up to 32 and video game consoles has also been decreased to 18 percent.

- Constitution of a 7 Member Group of Ministers has been planned by the Goods and Services Tax Council to study the revenue trend & to analyse the reasons for structural patterns influencing the revenue collection in some states.

- The Goods and Services Tax council is the chief decision-making body regarding the Goods and Services Tax that takes all the crucial decisions like setting the tax rate, tax exemption, tax laws, and tax deadlines etc.

Veteran CPI (M) leader Nirupam Sen passes away on - 24th December 2018

Veteran CPI (M) leader, Nirupam Sen, deceased on December 24th, 2018 in Kolkata after a cardiac arrest. He was 72. The former Commerce & Industry Minister of West Bengal had been on life supporting device since the early weeks of



December. He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter. His body will be placed in a mortuary during the day & the final rites will be completed on December 26th in Bardhaman, his hometown.

More about Nirupam Sen

- Born October 8th, 1946, Sen's political career started when he became a member of the CPI(M) during his student years.

- Though he initiated his career as a teacher, he became a permanent member of the party in 1968.

- He was designated as the district secretary of Bardhaman district from 1989-95.

- He was designated as an MLA from Bardhaman town in 1987 and he became a central committee associate of the party in 1998 & Polit Bureau member in 2008. Generally, Sen was nominated as an MLA 3 times from the Bardhaman Dakshin constituency.

- When the Left Front was designated to power in 2001, Sen was given the charge of commerce & industries.

- It was under the management of Bhattacharya and Sen that the Left Front begun selling the dream of industrialisation in the state & transferred focus to private investments.

- This transfer in the policy reaped them heavy dividends resulting in the Left Front's unambiguous victory in the 2006 assembly election.

- However, by the end of 2006, land acquisition movement at Singur over the Tata Nano car plant had ongoing taking a toll on the regime.

- The objection against the forcible land acquisition ultimately headed the Tata Motors to shift the car plant from Singur to Gujarat in 2008.

- The anti-land acquisition objections in Singur and Nandigram headed by the then opposition Trinamool Congress was one of the reasons overdue the fall of the 34 years old Left Front government in the state in 2011.

- Faced with strong criticism both within and outside the party, Sen, then a CPI(M)

politburo member, had withdrawn himself from active politics.

National observed across Decemeber 2018	Consumer India	Day on -	2018 24th
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The National Consumer Day was celebrated across India on December 24th, 2018 with the theme "Timely Disposal of Consumer Complaints".

On this day, the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 had got the acceptance of the president. The enactment of the Act is measured as a historic milestone in the consumer movement in the nation. The day also delivers an occasion to highlight the reputation of the consumer movement and the necessity to make every consumer extra aware of their rights & responsibilities.

National Consumer Day

- The National Consumer day is observed yearly on 24th December to highlight the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

- Celebrations of this day delivers an occasion for people to highlight the significance of the consumer movement as well as promote the basic rights & responsibilities of all consumers along with a reminder for the producers & distributors about goods & services as their accountability towards the protection of consumer rights.

- The Consumer Protection Act delivers effective safeguards to the consumer, against numerous types of exploitations & unfair dealings, relying chiefly on compensatory rather than a disciplinary/preventive approach.

- The act smears to all goods & services unless precisely exempted, which covers the private, public & co-operative sectors. It also delivers speedy & inexpensive judgement.

- The Act predicts the promotion & protection of consumer rights including Right to Safety, Right to be well-versed, Right to Choose & Right to be heard.



India's Vedangi Kulkarni becomes fastest Asian to cycle the globe on - 23rd December 2018

India's Vedangi Kulkarni has become the reckless Asian to cycle the globe. The 20 years old Kulkarni finished the 29000 kms distance needed to qualify as bicycling globally on December 23rd, 2018.

Overall, Kulkarni spent 159-day peddling about 300 kilometres a day in 14 nations. Starting off from Perth in July, she will now be flying back to the Australian for completing the record by cycling a 15 kilometres distance to reach the same destination from where she started.

Important Highlights

- Kulkarni is a student of the University of Bournemouth in the UK pursuing a degree in sports management.

- She informed that the 159 days consumed peddling about 300 kilometres a day in 14 nations has demonstrated her the 'best & worst' of both herself and also the world.

- The measures for the ride started about 2 years ago with long cycle rises, arranging the equipment including a specially crafted cycle & planning the route as well as time window.

- Kulkarni did not have no one accompanying her for more than 80% of the route & lugged the cycle with the heavy luggage that consists of cycle equipment, camping tools and clothing in desolate stretches all alone.

- She had to handle obstruction from several elements on the way, from both human & natural which consisted being chased by a Grizzly bear in Canada/camping alone for several nights in the snow in Russia/being robbed at a knife-point in Spain.

- She also tackled troubles on securing the necessary visas, which cost her time which resulted into a delayed departure & accordingly facing weather hostilities in Europe where winter had started setting in.

- Her ride was mainly funded by her parents.

- Internationally, 38 years old British adventurer Jenny Graham is the reckless woman to have cycled the globe in 124 days in 2018, which is 3 weeks faster than the previous record.

- Kulkarni's Route Map Starting from Perth, Kulkarni cycled across Australia, through the outback, to reach Brisbane from where she flew over to Wellington, New Zealand, for completing the entire nation north to south.

- She took a short flight across the international dateline to Western Canada's Vancouver, from where she continuous her eastward journey till Halifax, a port city.

- Europe signalled next where she selected chilly Iceland to start it all up and later cycled via Portugal, Spain France, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Finland to arrive in Russia. From Russia, she flew to India to do the last 4000 kilometres.

Experts call to revisit restrict on Plastic in TamilNadu from - 1st January 2018

The government of Tamil Nadu on World Environment day 2018, 5th June had declared that it would restrict the use of plastic items, consisting non-biodegradable bags, from January 1st, 2019, with few exceptions. Plastic was permitted only for milk, oil, medicine and other items of basic necessities.

The restriction was declared by the CM under Rule 110 of the state Assembly which permits the CM to make announcements without a debate in the House.

Reason to revisit the decision of restrict on Plastics

- Elimination of single uses plastic by 2020 is absolutely fine, but a total restriction on plastic will cause harm for both industry as well as the common man.

- The proposed restriction in Tamil Nadu would hit more than 5,000 plastic industries across the State and investment close to Rupees 3000 crore turning idle.



- Tamil Nadu would suffer with an annual loss of about Rupees 18000 crore.

- Specialists say that it is not the plastics which have emerged as a problem, but it is the way in which humans deal with disposable plastics, is the actual cause for concern.

Further Suggestions

- Specialists suggested way ahead via the change in attitude which is possible via knowledge and information indulgence.

- They proposed productive usage of budget allocation towards ads to stop plastic by forming centres for the collection of plastic bags.

Sadaiv Atal dedicated to the Nation in - New Delhi

Sadaiv Atal, the Samadhi of Atal Bihari Vajpayee was devoted to the Nation on the birthday of the former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

To put pressure on the unity in diversity, stones from various parts of the nation have been utilised in the building of Samadhi near Rajghat, New Delhi. The Samadhi has a central platform containing 9 square blocks, covered with a Diya in the centre. The number 9 represents the Navarasas, Navaratras and Navagrahas. The placement of the 9 square blocks is in a circular lotus shaped arrangement.

More about Atal Bihari Vajpayee

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee worked as the PM of India for a term of Thirteen days in 1996, then for a period of Thirteen months from 1998-1999, and finally, for a full-term from 1999-2004.

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee was born to Krishna Devi & Krishna Bihari Vajpayee on 25th December 1924 in Gwalior.

- He deceased on 16th August 2018 due to age-related illness. His birth anniversary is observed as Good Governance Day.

Govt extends restrict on import of milk products from China untill - 23rd April 2019

India, which is the largest generator & consumer of milk, has stretched the restriction on import of milk produces from

China for Four months. The restriction would continue till 23rd April 2019 according to the notification released by the Ministry of Commerce. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade, an arm of the commerce ministry, in a statement explained that the Prohibition on import of milk, milk products consisting chocolates, chocolate produces, candies, confectionary, food preparations with milk/milk solids as an ingredient, from China is stretched for a further period of 4 months, that means till April 23rd, 2019, or until further orders. Reason behind the Restrict

The restriction was primarily executed due to the concerns about the occurrence of melamine in few of the milk consignments from China. Melamine is a toxic non-edible chemical utilised for making plastics & fertilisers. Even though India does not import milk items from China, the restriction is imposed as a preventive measure.

Prime Minister Modi inaugurates Bogibeel Bridge on - 25th December 2018

Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the Bogibeel Bridge on the birthday of the late Atal Bihari Vajpayee, December 25th which is celebrated as Good Governance Day. This 4.9 kilometers long bridge is the country's only fully-welded bridge and for the 1st time European codes and welding standards were stick to and it has a life of approximately 120 years. The Bogibeel Bridge joins the southern restrict of the Brahmaputra River in Assam's Dibrugarh district with Silapathar in Dhemaji district, Arunachal Pradesh. This Double-Track and 3-lane Road Bridge will be the lifeline of the North-Eastern part of India. The foundation stone for the Bogibeel Bridge was placed by former PM H.D.Deve Gowda on January 22nd, 1997. The work had started on 21 April 2002, under the Atal Bihari Vajpayee headed government.



It is now inaugurated on the birthday of the former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The bridge is part of infrastructure projects intended to improve logistics along the border in Arunachal Pradesh which consists the building of a trans-Arunachal highway on the Brahmaputra's North restrict, and new road and rail links above the river and its major tributaries.

Benefits of the Bridge

- The bridge is mentioned as 'Lifeline of Assam', which is an asset for the whole North-Eastern region.
- It minimises the travel time from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh to 4 hours and will remove a detour of over 170 kilometers via Tinsukia.
- It also slashes the train travel time between Delhi and Dibrugarh by about 3 hours.
- The bridge will also play an imperative role in defence of the nation by simplifying ease of mobility to the India-China border in Arunachal Pradesh.

Indian Firm Takes Over Operations of Strategic Iranian Port Chabahar at Chabahar

India Ports Global Limited Company has started its office and took over operations at the Shaheed Behesti port at Chabahar. It occurred during the event of the 1st meeting of the follow-up committee for execution of the trilateral Chabahar contract among India, Afghanistan and Iran.

Outcomes of the Trilateral Meet

- There was agreement on the routes for the trade & transit corridors between the 3 nations.
- It was decided to complete the protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs & consular matters at the earliest.
- It was decided to permit cargo movement at Chabahar using Transports Internationaux Routiers Convention provisions.
- Holding a programme to promote & popularise the potential of Chabahar on February 26th, 2019.
- Establishing a study to determine actions

to make the route attractive, lessening logistic costs and pave the way for smooth operationalisation of the Chabahar Contract.

Who replaced James Mattis as US Defence Secretary ? - Patrick Shanahan

President Donald Trump has declared that Defence Secretary James Mattis will leave the Pentagon by January 1st. James Mattis's Deputy, Patrick Shanahan is designated as the Acting Defence Secretary. James Mattis had resigned from the position of Defence Secretary citing policy differences with President Trump. The chief reason for the fallout between President Trump and Mattis was, President Trump's sudden declaration about the troop drawdowns in both Syria & Afghanistan. Mattis was said to be against the declaration. The resignation letter of Mattis gave a harsh assessment of President Trump's policy purposes. This triggered series of negative headlines in the United States media and it was said to be the reason to replace Mattis earlier than expected.

More about Patrick Shanahan

- A native of Aberdeen, Washington, Patrick Shanahan attended the University of Washington where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering.
- He then did a Master of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and an MBA from the MIT Sloan School of Management.
- Shanahan is a former Boeing executive. He became the Deputy Secretary of Defence in 2017. Shanahan is an inherent of Washington State like Mattis and he will be answerable for managing the Pentagon's colossal \$700 billion defence budget.
- In March 2017, President Trump declared his determined to nominate Shanahan as the 33rd Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Pentagon's 2nd-highest civilian post.



- He got confirmation from the Senate in June 2017.

PIL in Supreme Court against govt's order to snoop on - Computers

A PIL has been reported in the Supreme Court by advocate Manohar Lal Sharma challenging the government's declaration authorising Ten central agencies to intercept, monitor & decrypt any computer system.

According the declaration of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, ten central probe & snoop firms are empowered under the Information Technology Act to carry out interception & investigation of information stored in any computer. The ten firms empowered were IB, NCB, ED, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (for Income Tax Department), Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI, National Investigation Agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Signal Intelligence (in service areas of J-K, North East and Assam) and Delhi Police commissioner.

Reason behind challenge

- The notification was unlawful, unconstitutional and ultra vires to the law.
- The notification was being released to ban the political opponent, thinker & speaker to control the whole nation under dictatorship to win forthcoming general election under an undisclosed emergency and slavery which cannot be allowed within the Constitution of India.
- The notification issues for blanket surveillance which must be verified against the fundamental right to privacy.
- The notification allows the state to access every message, computer and mobile and to utilise it to safeguard the political interest & object of the current executive political party.
- The notification tries to form a surveillance state. The government has defended the decision quoting national security and claiming that the order was a mere repetition of the rules passed during the UPA regime in 2009.

MSME Ministry proposes to establish governing council to - Boost shipments

The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has planned to establish a governing council to make sure well-organized delivery of all export-related interventions, as a part of its action plan to increase shipments from MSMEs.

Important Highlights

- Under Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises' action plan, the National Resource Centre for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Exporters will engage with numerous international firms including United Nations organisations to encourage procurement from Indian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and further enhance their capabilities.
- The ministry has suggested a detailed analysis of various trade agreements, including FTAs and bilateral and multilateral trade contracts, to identify areas of concern for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the strategic action plan named 'Unlocking the Potential of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Exports'.
- It informed a study will be directed of special economic zones & export promotion zones in the nation to reassess their role & aims as these are vital component of Foreign Trade Policy, besides, it is significant to harness their potential.
- Further, a tech-enabled online portal shall be established featuring nation-wise list of global products & services in demand and data on how to enter specific foreign markets.
- It will also have details on loans & credit offered by various financial institutions.
- A formal platform may also be formed by the ministry to ensure that it is tangled in all bilateral & multilateral trade negotiations which have an influence on the enterprises.
- A guide/handbook shall also be produced to help the export community to understand the procedures involved in the



export business & access the potential markets.

- The guide will consist practical information which will be beneficial for exporters.

Japan announces taking-off from IWC to resume commercial whaling on - 26th January 2018

Japan on December 26th, 2018 declared its decision to take-out its name from the International Whaling Commission and further informed that it will continue commercial whaling from July 2019. The removal will come into effect by June 30th, 2019. The declaration comes after Japan failed in a bid past this year to convince the International Whaling Commission to permit it to resume commercial whaling.

Important Highlights

- The taking-off from the IWC means that the Japanese whalers will be able to continue hunting of minke and other whales, which are presently protected by the International Whaling Commission, in the Japanese coastal waters.

- Japan elucidated that commercial whaling will be partial to Japan's territorial waters & exclusive economic zones and not in the Antarctic waters/the southern hemisphere.

- The taking-off, however, means that Japan will not be enabled to resume the scientific research hunts in the Antarctic that it has been remarkably permitted as an International Whaling Commission member under the Antarctic Treaty.

- The taking-off also means that Japan will link Iceland & Norway in willingly defying the International Whaling Commission's restriction on commercial whale hunting.

- Japan would formally inform the International Whaling Commission of its decision by the end of 2018, thus, the taking-off will come into effect by June 30.

UIDAI asserted Aadhaar not mandatory for - Admission in schools

UIDAI has declared that schools cannot make Aadhaar, the 12 digits biometric

identifier as a pre-condition for student's admission. Unique Identification Authority of India warned that doing so will be against the recent order of the Supreme Court.

The detail was given by Unique Identification Authority of India CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey in New Delhi on December 25th, 2018. The clarification comes at a time when admissions to the nursery and kindergarten classes have started in more than 1500 private schools in Delhi.

Important Highlights

- Unique Identification Authority of India cleared that demanding for Aadhaar cards for admissions is not according to the provisions of law and doing same will be against the recent order of the Supreme Court.

- However, there have been information of certain schools claiming on Aadhaar as one of the documents needed for student admission.

- The Aadhaar allotting body informed that it is aware of such reports and has questioned all the schools to ensure that no child is denied admission for not having the Aadhaar card.

- Unique Identification Authority of India CEO Ajay Bhushan Pandey informed that in fact, schools should take children without Aadhaar and make sure that children are given Aadhaar once they are in schools by planning special camps for them.

- Unique Identification Authority of India cleared that despite this, should certain schools remain to insist on Aadhaar card then, it would clearly be treated as a case of contempt of court.

Review petition in SC against the Aadhaar verdict by - Imtiyaz Ali Palsaniya

Imtiyaz Ali Palsaniya has filed a review appeal in Supreme Court against the Aadhaar verdict in which the Supreme Court had sustained the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar.

SC Verdict on Aadhaar

The significant features of the Aadhaar verdict are:



- Supreme Court informed that sufficient security actions are taken to safeguard information and it is difficult to initiate surveillance on residents on the basis of Aadhaar.

- Then Chief Justice of India Deepak Mishra had questioned the government to give more security measures as well as slash the period of storage of information.

- Centre government was asked to have a robust law for information protection as soon as possible.

- The Supreme Court had informed that Aadhaar cannot be compulsory for openings of a bank account and to get mobile connections.

- The Supreme Court had sustained the compulsory linking of PAN with Aadhaar & Aadhaar card was made compulsory for filing income tax returns.

- The government was informed to make sure that illegal immigrants are not delivered Aadhaar to get benefits of social welfare schemes.

- Private organisations can't ask for Aadhaar. The Supreme Court had crash down the provision in Aadhaar law permitting sharing of data on the ground of national security.

- The Supreme Court had also sustained the passage of the Aadhaar Bill as a Money Bill by the Parliament.

- The petitioner claims that he had filed 2 impalement applications on the problem and the Court had failed to consider the grounds mentioned in the same.

Mohammed Rafi Awards conferred by - NGO Spandan Arts

Mohammed Rafi Award introduced by the NGO Spandan Arts was conferred upon late music composer Laxmikant Shantaram Kudalkar and playback singer Usha Timothy. The Mohammed Rafi Lifetime Achievement Award containing Rupees One lakh and a trophy was bestowed to Laxmikant Shantaram Kudalkar. The Mohammed Rafi Award including Rupees 51000 and a trophy was bestowed to Usha Timothy.

Laxmikant Shantaram Kudalkar

Laxmikant Shantaram Kudalkar had a positive & long partnership with Pyarelal Ramprasad Sharma. As music composer duo they gave hit tracks like "Bindiya Chamkegi", "Main Shayar Toh Nahin" "Hansta Hua Noorani Chehra" among others. The duo-composed music for around 635 Hindi films from 1963-1998. He deceased on 25th May 1998 at the of age 60.

Usha Timothy

Usha Timothy is a Bollywood playback singer, who has sung above 1000 songs in multiple Indian languages including Hindi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Bhojpuri & Marathi. She was often denoted to as 'Singer with a difference'.

Hindustan Unilever Ltd found guilty of Profiteering - Rs 383 crore

National Anti-profiteering Authority assessment has exposed consumer goods maker Hindustan Unilever Ltd apparently racketeering to the extent of Rupees 383 crore after the large-scale Goods and Services Tax rate slashes last November. The National Anti-profiteering Authority has asked Hindustan Unilever Ltd to deposit Rupees 223 crore in Central and State consumer welfare funds since the corporation itself had proactively deposited Rs 160 crore with the central Consumer Welfare Fund.

National Anti-profiteering Authority

- National Anti-profiteering Authority was established by the Central Government to deliver an institutional process under the Goods and Services Tax law for inspecting the unfair profit-making activities by the trading community.

- National Anti-profiteering Authority is led by a senior officer of the level of Secretary to the Government of India.

- There will be 4 Technical Members from the Centre/States.

GST consumer welfare funds

- The Goods and Services Tax law also delivers for the creation of a Consumer Welfare Fund wherein undue advantages made by businesses under the Goods and Services Tax law have to be deposited,



in case it cannot be passed on to the acknowledged recipient.

- The profits from the Goods and Services Tax Consumer Welfare Fund can be issued as grant to the Centre & State governments and regulatory authorities.

Reason profiteering is rampant in India

- According to the Anti-profiteering laws in India, businesses have to authorize on the advantages of tax cuts and tax refunds to consumers. But the industries often upsurge prices to proportionate with the slashed taxes due to the free nature of the market.

Prepaid and smart metering for electricity by - Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy

Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy R.K.Singh has informed that in the next 3 years electricity meters will be smart & pre-paid. He has also inquired the producers to scale-up production of smart pre-paid meters & to work towards decreasing their prices.

Reason for Smart meters

- Smart and prepaid metering will benefit in making state services more efficient & decreasing their losses in the past.

- It will be acting as incentive in energy conservation along with maintaining the healthier financial health of DISCOMs.

- It will enhance the comfort of bill payments as well as reducing AT& C losses.

- The minister has guaranteed the smart meter producers of steady demand as the government is arrangement to make smart metering compulsory after a particular date.

- On a pilot basis, the pre-paid meters are being installed in UP as part of the Saubhagya scheme which goals to electrify more than 4 crore households till December this year.

CA Kuttappa takes over as India's new chief boxing coach on - 10th December 2018

Dhronacharya awardee, CA Kuttappa has taken over as India's new chief boxing coach during the starting of the ongoing national camp, on 10th December, 2018. He is replaced after veteran boxing coach SR Singh, is retired.

He was working as an assistant coach earlier, and is also credited with shaping some of the country's most successful boxers such as Vijender Singh, Shiva Thapa and M Suranjay Singh. The Army man also stated that his elevation was High-Performance Director Santiago Nieva's idea.

Key Highlights

- Star pugilist Vikas Krishan (75kg), a Commonwealth Games gold-medalist and Asian Games bronze-winner, was left out of the national camp following his decision to sign up with American promoter Bob Arum.

- Kuttappa is just one of the two coaches from the reigning national champions, the SSCB (Services Sports Control Board), in the camp.

- The line-up of coaches at the camp was mostly dominated by coaches from the Railways Sports Promotion Board. RSPB's representation in the coaches' list was five including the long-serving Jaydev Bisht, Jitender Kumar, Jai Singh Patil, Lalit Prasad and Jagdip Hooda.

- Another CWG-medallist, Manoj Kumar, who is currently undergoing rehabilitation for a few long-standing niggles, was also absent from the same camp.

- The current set of boxers in the camp also barring the national champions, will also be giving trials in the January second week, which will be leading to pruning and form the basis of selection for the India Open and the prestigious Strandja Memorial in Bulgaria as well.

Palestine to apply for complete UN membership in January 2019 on - 26th December 2018

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki announced on December 26th, 2018 that Palestine would start an application to



gain complete state membership at the UN in January 2019. The application to change Palestine's status from an observer state to a complete-member state will be filed to the United Nations Security Council during the state Foreign Minister's visit to New York coming month. The conclusion has been taken upon Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas instructions. To safeguard complete state membership, the Palestinians would need the support from minimum 9 out of the United Nations Security Council's 15 members states. Also, the Palestinian Minister informed that he would demand the United Nations Security Council implementation of Resolution 2334 and ask the International Criminal Court to open a formal inquiry into Israeli settlement construction.

Procedure to become a complete member of the UN

- The membership in the UN is open to all peace loving states which receive the obligations contained in the current Charter and, in the judgement of the group, are able and willing to carry-out these obligations.

- The entrance of any state to membership in the UN is affected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the sanction of the United Nations Security Council.

- A sanction for admission from the Security Council needs affirmative votes from minimum 9 of the council's 15 members, with none of the 5 permanent members using their veto power.

- The Security Council's sanction must then be agreed in the General Assembly by a 2/3 majority vote.

PM Modi to rename three islands in Andaman and Nicobar after Netaji Subash Chandra Bose on - 30th December 2018

PM Narendra Modi will rename 3 islands of Andaman & Nicobar following Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on December 30th, 2018. These 3 islands

are- Ross Island, Neil Island and Havelock Island.

These islands will be retitled during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Port Blair to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of hoisting of the National Flag at Port Blair by freedom fighter Subhash Chandra Bose. Renaming of islands

1. Ross Island will be renamed as Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island
2. Neil Island will be renamed as Shaheed Dweep
3. Havelock Island will be renamed as Swaraj Dweep

Bose had hoisted the flag at Port Blair on December 30th, 1943, as he alleged that Port Blair was the 1st territory to be freed from British regulation. This was done following the Japanese captured that area during the time of the 2nd World War.

EC prohibits tobacco use in polling booths during - 2019 Lok Sabha elections

The Election Commission of India, for the 1st time, has restricted all kinds of tobacco in polling booths during the general elections 2019. The initiative is focused at effectively implementing tobacco control laws nationwide. The Commission has asked all states and Union Territories to release instructions to all the district electoral officers-cum-district magistrates to make sure ban of not just smoking but also the usage of chewable tobacco in all polling booths in the nation.

Key Highlights

- As per to the norms issued by the Election Commission of India, all polling booths in the nation are to be announced tobacco-free and not just smoke-free.

- Hence, the usage of bidi, cigarette, gutkha, chewable tobacco will be banned. Each polling booth will be needed to have a banner, stating the same.

- The presiding officer of each polling booth will be declared as the nodal officer for making sure tobacco-free status at their booths.

- All district tobacco control cells will oversee and monitor this campaign to sensitise people on ill effects of tobacco.



'Made in India' e-dumper put into trial by - Coal India

Coal India for the 1st time, has initiated using an indigenously-made, 205-tonne electric dumper which is a critical piece of tool in mining. This indigenously developed dumper has been produced by state-owned BEML. Coal India has put this electric dumper on an experiment in Northern Coalfields' Amlohri coal mine. This indigenously developed dumper is the biggest of all placed by Northern Coalfields limited.

This indigenously developed dumper is expected to raise competition among suppliers, bringing down costs and progress the availability of spares.

More about successful trail

- The effective trial will enable BEML to take part in tenders for higher capacity dumpers drifted by Coal India.
- Northern Coalfields limited has already drifted one such tender & the Eastern Coalfield limited is in the process of moving tender for ten dumpers.
- The dumper market in India is led by Russia's Belaz, Tata Hitachi & Caterpillar. But these dumpers have at prices upwards of Rupees 15 crore.
- If the BEML increases an opportunity to enter the e-dumper market, it will work as a disruptor in the market and give violent competition to the big market players.
- It can initiate a plethora of chances for BEML and give a boost to Make in India together with slashing the costs for Coal India.

Who has conferred Tansen Samman, 2018 ? - Eminent Sitar Player Manju Mehta

The MP Government has deliberated the annual Tansen Samman upon renowned Sitar Player Manju Mehta for her contribution in the area of Hindustani Classical Music. The award was given by Union Minister Narendra Singh Tomar on opening function of Tansen Music Festival at Gwalior.

Tansen

Tansen, earlier terms as Ramtanu Pande or Mohammad Ata Ali Khan, was the legendary court musician of Akbar. His initial music training was completed in music school of Gwalior's Raja Mansingh Tomar. He was a follower of Swami Haridas.

Tansen Samaroh (Tansen Music Festival)

- The department of culture, MP government arranges yearly 4 days Tansen Samaroh, also know as Tansen Music Festival, near the tomb of Tansen in Gwalior every year in December. The vocal & instrumental artists from around Indian continent come and give their performances.

Tansen Award

- Tansen Award was introduced by MP government to honour the individual artists with momentous contribution to Hindustani Classical Music.
- This award encompasses a cash prize of Rupees 2 Lakh along with a memento. The 1st Tansen Samman was conferred upon Sitar maestro Ustad Abdul Haleem Jafar Khan in 2000.

Manju Mehta

- Veteran Sitar master Manju Mehta belongs to Bhatt family of Jaipur, which other renowned musicians Shashimohan Bhatt and Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt belongs to.
- She has been a top artist at All Indian Radio and has cofounded the Saptak School of Music in Gujarat.

Bahuda Rookery: Another Olive Ridley Nesting Site in - Odisha

Gahirmatha marine sanctuary and Rushikulya rookery coast in Ganjam district are chief Olive Ridley Nesting sites in Odisha. Of these sites, Gahirmatha marine sanctuary is biggest mass nesting site of Olive Ridley turtles. Odisha is home to 50 percent of the total world's population of Olive Ridley's and about 90 percent of Indian population of sea turtles. Freshly, Odisha forest department added another Olive Ridley



mass nesting site Bahuda Rookery at beach on Bahuda river mouth, Ganjam district. It is situated about 20 kilometres to south of Rushikulya rookery coast.

More about Olive Ridley

- Olive Ridley turtle is smallest & most abundant of all sea turtle present in world. It gets its name from its olive-colour carapace, which is of heart & rounded shape.

- It is best known for their exclusive mass nesting known as Arribada, where thousands of female turtles come together on the same beach every year to lay their eggs.

- It is originated in warm waters of Pacific & Indian oceans.

- They are located along both, Eastern & Western coasts of India. It devotes entire lives in ocean & moves thousands of kms between feeding & mating grounds in course of a year.

Breeding season

- Olive Ridley turtles starts their journey from Indian Ocean towards Bay of Bengal during their mating period in October & November every year.

- A single female can lay about 100-150 eggs in a pit dug on beaches. 6 weeks later these eggs hatches & newly hatched turtles initiate journey to their Indian Ocean locale.

- However, accidental killing of adult turtles via entanglement in trawl nets & gill nets due to abandoned fishing during their mating season near nesting beaches. Poaching for meat, shell as well as leather, & their eggs.

India to build new vertical bridge to replace - Pamban Bridge

Indian Railways is constructing the nation's 1st vertical-lift bridge to join Rameswaram in the Arabian Sea to mainland India. The bridge will permit ships and steamers to pass through without any interruption. The new bridge would replace the present 104 years old Pamban bridge. It would be ready in the next 4 years.

More about the New Vertical Bridge

The New Bridge will have a 63m stretch which will lift-up while remaining parallel to the deck to permit access to the ships. The lifting would be done with the help of a sensors at each end. The new bridge will have electro-mechanical controlled systems which will be linked with train control systems in place of present manual operation & control.

Pamban Bridge

Pamban Bridge joins the town of Rameswaram on Pamban Island to Indian continent. Pamban Bridge was the 1st and the longest sea bridge in India until the Bandra-Worli Sea Link was unlocked in 2010.

Pamban Bridge is situated in a very challenging location. It is situated in the world's 2nd most corrosive environment after Florida and is susceptible to to high-velocity cyclones. This makes preservation very challenging.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar released by - Central Government

The central government has released Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar yearly awards to highlight the excellent work done by individuals & institutions in the nation in the field of disaster management. The prize has been instituted with an objective to recognise the hard work of individuals & groups who have been working attentively to alleviate the human suffering caused by disasters.

About the Prize

- According the statement released by the National Disaster Management Authority 3 eligible institutions & people will be given the "Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar" every year with cash rewards ranging from Rupees Five lakh to Rupees 51 lakh.

- Only Indian Nationals and Indian institutions are entitled for this prize.



- If the awardee is an individual, the person shall get a certificate and a cash prize of Rupees Five lakh and in case the awardee is a firm, it will be given a certificate and a cash prize of Rupees 51 lakh & the prize money will be used for disaster management concerned activities only.

- For the year 2019, the prize would be declared on January 23rd, 2019, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.

China's navigation satellite system BeiDou offering - Global service

China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System has initiated offering Global service. It is advertised as a rival to America's Global Positioning System. Pakistan has become the 1st foreign country to utilise the BeiDou system ending its reliance on Global Positioning System. China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System was the 4th Global Navigation System after United States' Global Positioning System, Russia's GLONASS and the EU's Galileo.

BeiDou Navigation Satellite System

- China has called its navigation satellite system after the Chinese term which means "Big Dipper". BeiDou-1 contained 3 satellites and was contributing navigation services mainly in China & neighbouring districts. It was withdrawn in 2012.

- The 2nd generation of the navigation system, BeiDou-2 became working in China in December 2011 with a partial constellation of ten satellites in orbit and initiated delivering services in the Asia-Pacific region from December 2012.

- The 3rd generation of the navigation system, BeiDou-3 started to deliver global services from 27 December 2018.

- China plans to have a sum of 33 satellites working in orbit for BeiDou by the end of 2018 which consists of 15 BeiDou-2 satellites and 18 BeiDou-3 satellites.

- China further devices to release another eleven BeiDou-3 satellites and 1 BeiDou-2 satellite in the coming 2 years to

form a complete global network for enhancing the global service performance.

Bhutanese PM on a 3-day visit to India from - 27th Decemeber 2018

PM of Bhutan Lotay Tshering reached in India on 27th December for a 3-day visit. The Visit is noteworthy because it is occurring during the Golden Jubilee year of the founding of formal diplomatic ties between the both nations. The Bhutanese Prime Minister was given ceremonial reception at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. He would pay homage to Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi and hold talks with PM Narendra Modi.

India-Bhutan Diplomatic Ties

- The diplomatic ties between India & Bhutan were founded in 1968.

- India started a special office of India in Thimphu in 1968. Earlier to this, Indian diplomatic ties with Bhutan were looked after by Indian Political Officer in Sikkim.

- The India-Bhutan bilateral ties are ruled by the Treaty of Friendship & Cooperation inked in 1949 between the both nations. The treaty was revised in February 2007.

- The India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty together with reflecting the modern nature of our relationship lays the foundation for their future development in the 21st century.

- The Golden Jubilee of the establishment of formal diplomatic ties between India & Bhutan is being celebrated in the year 2018.

Lotay Tshering

Doctor by profession, Lotay Tshering is a Bhutanese politician who is the present PM of Bhutan. He is also the president of the political party, Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa since 14 May 2018. Lotay Tshering is the 3rd democratically elected Prime Minister of Bhutan.

UAE reopens its embassy in Syria, after 6 years of suspension on - 27th Decemeber 2018



The UAE on December 27th, 2018 restarted its diplomatic services at its embassy in Damascus, Syria after 6 years of suspension. The initiative indicates a thaw in the ties between the both nations, as also with the Arab world. The Charge d'Affaires of the United Arab Emirates Embassy started discharging his duty on December 27th, 2018. The decision follows a vigilant reading of the latest developments and a belief that the next phase needs Arab involvement to protect Syria's sovereignty & territorial integrity.

Following suit is Bahrain, as the nation announced on December 28th, 2018 that it will restart workings at its embassy in Syria, reflecting new exertions by Gulf Arab states to recover ties with President Bashar Assad as the civil war cools down.

Significance

- The United Arab Emirates Ministry in a statement informed that the initiative underscores the United Arab Emirates government's keenness to restore ties between the both brotherly nations to their normal course.

- The recommencement of ties will enhance and implement the Arab role in backing the independence, sovereignty & territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

- It will also avoid the dangers of regional interference in Syrian affairs.

Cabinet approves amendment in POSCO Act, 2012 to protect children from sexual abuse on - 28th December 2018

The Union Cabinet led by PM Narendra Modi on December 28th, 2018 sanctioned the proposal for Amendment in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences- POCSO Act, 2012 to make punishment stricter for committing sexual crimes against children.

Suggested Amendments

- The cabinet has sanctioned the amendment in Section 4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 15 and Section-42 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 to address the aspects of child sexual abuse in a suitable manner.

- The modification has been suggested to address the necessity for stringent measures needed to deter the rising trend of child sex abuse in the nation.

- The Section-4, 5 & 6 of the Act are planned to be amended to provide the option of strict punishment, including the death penalty, for committing aggravated penetrative sexual assault crime on a child to safeguard the children from sexual abuse.

- The amendment is projected in section-9 to safeguard children from sexual offences in times of natural calamities & disasters and in cases where children are directed, in any way, any hormone/chemical substance, to get early sexual maturity for the purpose of penetrative sexual assault.

- The Section-14 & Section-15 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 have been suggested to be amended to address the menace of the child pornography.

- It is planned to levy fine for not destroying/ deleting/reporting the pornographic material involving a child.

- The person can be more penalised with jail period/fine/both for transmitting, spreading & administrating such material in any manner except for the motive of reporting as may be prescribed and for utilise as evidence in court.

- The penal requirements have been done stricter for storing/possessing any pornographic material in any form concerning a child for a commercial determination.

Railways to grant fare concession to transgender senior residents on - 27th Decemeber 2018

The Indian Railways declared on December 27th, 2018 that it has finalised to approve 40% concession in passenger fares to transgender senior residents. The concession will be appropriate to those of the 3rd gender, who are aged 60 years/above. It will be available from January 1st, 2019.

Important Highlights



- The Indian Railways proposes concessions on ticket prices to 53 various categories, ranging from 10-100%.

- The Indian railways approves 40% concession in fares to males aged 60 years/above and 50% concession in fares to females aged 58 years/above.

- The students traveling to their hometown/educational tours can avail a concession of 50% in fares for the 2nd and sleeper class, while students belonging to the ST community can avail a concession of 75 %.

- Similarly, students of government school in rural areas are qualified to get a concession of 75% in 2nd class for a study tour/entrance examination once a year.

- Those appearing for UPSC and Central Staff Selection Commission can also enjoy a concession of 50% on the fares.

- Industrial labours & farmers, who wish to visit agricultural exhibitions, can also avail a 25% concession on 2nd class and sleeper class tickets.

- In addition, foreign students studying in India are also entitled for a 50% concession in the 2nd & sleeper class.

- Apart from these, senior residents, who book their railway tickets online, now have the choice to choose between 100% concession, 50% concession and no concession.

UAE reopens its embassy in Syria on - 27th December 2018

The United Arab Emirates resumed its diplomatic services at its embassy in Damascus in Syria after six years of suspension on 27th December 2018. The move signals a thaw in the relations between both the countries, as also with the Arab world.

The Charge d'Affaires of the UAE Embassy started discharging his duty on 27th December 2018. The decision was taken following a careful reading of the latest developments and a conviction that the next phase would be requiring Arab's

involvement to protect Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Following suit is Bahrain, as the nation announced on 28th December 2018 that it will be resuming operations at its embassy in Syria, reflecting new efforts by Gulf Arab states to improve relations with President Bashar Assad as the civil war cools down.

Important Highlights

- The UAE Ministry stated that the move underscores the UAE government's keenness to restore relations between both the brotherly countries to their normal course.

- The resumption of relations will be enhancing and implement the Arab role to support the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Syrian Arab Republic.

- It will also be preventing the dangers of regional interference in Syrian affairs.

Did you know?

The UAE was among the several countries choosing to recall their ambassadors and close their embassies in Damascus, as the crisis worsened and security was deteriorated in Syria in the early years.

Submission of India's Second Biennial Update Report to UNFCCC approved by - Cabinet

The submission of India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) is approved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi led Cabinet to the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) towards the fulfilment of the reporting obligation under the Convention.

Important Features

- The second biennial update report is also targeting to give an update to India's first biennial report to the UN's body on climate change.

- The report is containing five major components which include national circumstances, national greenhouse gas inventory, finance, technology, mitigation actions and capacity building needs and



support received, domestic monitoring, verification and reporting arrangements.

- The report has been prepared based on a range of studies that are conducted at the national level. It has been taken to a multitier review process, through peer review, Technical Advisory Committee of Experts review chaired by Additional Secretary (Climate Change) and by National Steering Committee chaired by Secretary.

- They finalise biennial report after addressing all the relevant modifications and comments with respect to the multi-tier review process.

Report Findings

- A total of 26, 07,488 Gigagram (Gg) CC-2 equivalent of Green House Gases (GHG) were emitted from all activities (excluding LULUCF) in India in 2014.

- The net national GHG emissions after including LULUCF were 23, 06,295 Gg CO₂e equivalent.

- Out of the total emissions, energy sector accounted for 73 percent, IPPU 8 per cent, agriculture 16 per cent and waste sector 3 percent.

- About 12 percent of the emissions were offset by carbon sink action of cropland, forestland and settlements.

- The submission of India's second BUR will be fulfilling the obligation of India to furnish information regarding Convention implementation, being a Party.

PM Modi's visit to Uttar Pradesh for One District, One Product Regional Summit organised for 6th International Rice Research Institute inauguration on - 29th December 2018

PM Narendra Modi on December 29th, 2018 visited Varanasi & Ghazipur, UP and laid the foundation stone of medical College in Ghazipur in the presence of CM Yogi Adityanath. He analysed the preparations for the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

6th International Rice Research Institute

- The PM dedicated the 6th International Rice Research Institute- IRRI, South Asia Regional Centre to the country.

- The Institute is constructed at the campus of National Seed Research & Training Centre in Varanasi.

- It will work as a hub for rice research & training in South Asia including SAARC region. This 1st

- International Centre in the Eastern India is supposed to harness & sustain rice production in the region.

One District, One Product Regional Summit

- The One District, One Product Regional Summit was organised at Deendayal Hastakala Sankul, Varanasi.

- "One District One Product" plan is focused at enhancing the skills of local people & up-surging the reach of the indigenous trades, crafts & products from small towns & small districts in the state.

- These crafts & products are handicrafts, food processing, engineering goods, carpets, readymade clothes & leather goods etc which not only earn foreign exchange but also deliver employment to the people.

Proposals for implementation of Mahila Police Volunteer Scheme sanctioned

The suggestion from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka & MP for the implementation of Mahila Police Volunteer Scheme has been sanctioned by the union government.

Haryana was the 1st state to adopt the initiative of Mahila Police Volunteer at Karnal & Mahendergarh areas on a pilot basis under the Nirbhaya Fund during FY 2016-2017.

Mahila Police Volunteer Scheme

- A Mahila Police Volunteer could be any female who is socially & voluntarily committed towards empowerment of females & girls, willing to raise her voice against gender-based violence & backing the police in forming a gender just society free from violence.



- A Mahila Police Volunteer should be at least 21 years of age & possess minimum 12th pass certificate.
- A Mahila Police Volunteer must be from the similar geographical area & conversant with the local dialects.
- No criminal records must have been instituted against her & she must not have been convicted/imprisoned for the violation of any criminal law.
- A Mahila Police Volunteer should not be an associate of any political party.
- The Mahila Police Volunteers in the States or Union Territories will act as a relation between police & community & help females in distress.
- There will be 1 Mahila Police Volunteer per Gram Panchayat and Mahila Police volunteers will directly report to the Circle Inspector in the Police Station.
- The Mahila Police volunteers are needed to mobilize the community to form Mahila & Shishu Rakshak Dals to work as community watch groups.
- The broad order of the Mahila Police Volunteer is to report occurrences of violence against females such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment & violence faced by females in public spaces.

The National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine Bill, 2018 approved - Union Cabinet

The Union Cabinet has sanctioned the National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine- NCIM Bill, 2018. The bill pursues to replace the present regulator, the Central Council for Indian Medicine.

Highlights of the Bill

- The bill issues for the formation of a National Commission with four autonomous boards.
- The Board of Ayurveda would be answerable for supervision the overall education of Ayurveda.
- The Board of Unani, Siddha & Sowaigpa will be accountable for supervising the overall education of Unani, Siddha & Sowaigpa.

- The bill provides for 2 common boards, Board of Assessment & Rating and Board of Ethics & Registration.
- The Board of Assessment & Rating would be accountable to assess & grant approval to educational institutions of Indian systems of Medicine.
- The Board of Ethics & Registration of practitioners of Indian systems of medicine would uphold National Register & deal with ethical problems relating to practice under the NCIM.
- The bill also suggests a common entrance exam & an exit exam which all graduates will have to pass to get practicing licenses.
- The bill proposes a teacher's suitability test to assess the standard of teachers prior to appointment & promotions.

National Commission for Homeopathy Bill, 2018 gets - Cabinet sanction

The Union Cabinet has sanctioned the National Commission for Homeopathy bill, 2018. The National Commission for Homeopathy looks forward to replace the present regulator Central Council of Homoeopathy.

Features of the Bill

- Constitution of a national commission with 3 autonomous boards.
- The Homoeopathy Education Board to be vested with the accountability of supervising the Homeopathy education in the nation.
- The board of assessment & rating to assess and grant recognition to educational institutions of Homoeopathy.
- Board of ethics & registration of practitioners of Homoeopathy to maintain National Register and deal with ethical matters concerning practice.
- The bill also proposes a common entrance exam & an exit exam which all graduates will have to pass to get practicing licenses.
- The bill proposes a teacher's eligibility test to evaluate the standard of teacher's beforehand appointment & promotions.