My Notes....

National

National Health Policy approved

The government approved the National Health Policy **which proposes to provide "assured health services to all" in the country.**
Salient features of the Policy

1. The policy increases the gambit of sectors covered in the Primary Health Centre (PHC) level and envisages a comprehensive approach. For example, till now, PHCs were only for immunisation, anti-natal check ups and others. But what is a major policy shift is that now it will also include screening non-communicable diseases and a whole lot of other aspects.

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY, 2017 KEY PROPOSALS (2/3)

- Free drugs, free diagnostics and free emergency care services in all public hospitals
- Strategic purchase of secondary and tertiary care services as a short term measure
- Prioritizing role of the Government in shaping health systems in all its dimensions
- Engagement with private sector to fill critical gap to achieve national goals
- Raise public health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP in a time-bound manner

2. Under the new policy, there will also be a bigger focus on upgradation of district hospitals while for the first time; there will be an implementation framework in place. A final decision on the policy had been deferred earlier after it was included in the agenda of the Union Cabinet twice before.
3. The draft also addressed the issues of universal health coverage, reducing maternal and infant mortality rate, as well as making drugs and diagnostics available free at least in the public healthcare system of the country.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016 passed in the Parliament

The Lok Sabha has passed the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016. The Bill had already been passed by the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session. With this, the Bill stands passed in the Parliament.

The Bill seeks to provide

1. Maternity leave available to the working women to be increased from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children.
2. Maternity leave for children beyond the first two will continue to be 12 weeks.
3. Maternity leave of 12 weeks to be available to mothers adopting a child below the age **of three months as well as to the "commissioning mothers". The commissioning** mother has been defined as biological mother who uses her egg to create an embryo planted in any other woman.
4. Every establishment with more than 50 employees to provide for crèche facilities for working mothers and such mothers will be permitted to make four visits during working hours to look after and feed the child in the crèche.
5. The employer may permit a woman to work from home if it is possible to do so.
6. Every establishment will be required to make these benefits available to the women from the time of her appointment.

7. The amended law will be applicable to all establishments employing 10 or more people.
8. India will jump to the third position in terms of the number of weeks for maternity leave, after Canada (50) and Norway (44).
9. The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 protects the employment of women during the time of maternity and entitles them to fully paid absence from work to take care of the child.

AAD missile successfully test-fired

India successfully test-fired an indigenously developed supersonic interceptor missile capable of destroying any incoming enemy missile at low altitude, a feat which reflects the country's Ballistic Missile Defence prowess. The Defence Ministry said all the mission objectives were successfully met during the test-firing of the endo- atmospheric missile from Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha.

What
1. This is the second time that the missile has been test-fired in less than a month and is part of an effort to put in place a multi-layer missile defence system.
2. The endo-atmospheric missile, capable of intercepting incoming targets at an altitude of 15 to 25 km successfully destroyed the incoming missile. All the mission objectives were successfully met.
3. The interceptor was engaged against a target which was a Prithvi missile launched from launch complex 3 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur near Balasore, taking up the trajectory of a hostile ballistic missile.
4. The interceptor is a 7.5-m-long single stage solid rocket propelled guided missile equipped with a navigation system, a hi-tech computer and an electro-mechanical activator.
5. Earlier, a low altitude (endo-atmospheric) test of AAD missile was successfully test launched on May 15, 2016 from the same base.

Developed Products hand over to Indian Army

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) handed over three of its products for induction into the Indian Army. The products are namely (i) Weapon Locating Radar (WLR), SWATHI, (ii) NBC Recce vehicle and (iii) NBC Drugs. The Defence Minister Shri Manohar Parrikar who presided the function handed over the products to the Chief of the Army Staff General Bipin Rawat on behalf of DRDO.

What
1. DRDO has been developing a number of products for the Indian Army in support of their field operations and welfare of soldiers on ground. Many of these products have been inducted and are presently operational in field units.
2. In 2016, the Weapon Locating Radar, NBC Recce Vehicle and a set of NBC Drugs had been successfully tested after extensive evaluation by competent evaluation teams/bodies.

Weapon Locating Radar (WLR), SWATHI

1. **It developed by DRDO's** Electronics & Radar Development Establishment (LRDE), provides fast, automatic and accurate location of all enemy weapons like mortars, shells and rockets firing within in its effective zone of coverage and simultaneously handles multiples projectiles fired from different weapons at different locations.
2. The system is capable of adjusting the fire of our own artillery weapon also.
3. The weapon includes 81mm or higher calibre mortars, 105mm or higher calibre shells and 120mm or higher calibre free flying rockets.
4. Thus WLR has two roles to perform i.e. Weapon Location Mode for enemy Artillery and Direction of Own artillery Fire (DOOAF) Mode for our own Artillery.

The NBC Recce Vehicle Mk-I

1. It is developed by Vehicles Research & Development Establishment (VRDE) for carrying out post event recce of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Contaminated areas.

2. It is capable of collecting solid and liquid samples of biologically contaminated areas, mark the nuclear and chemical contamination zone and transfer the recce data speedily to support formations.
3. On successful development of NBC RV Mk-I in association with DL, Jodhpur, the equipment was approved for induction into the Services.

DRDO's INMAS

1. It is actively engaged in research in the field of radio protectors, de-corporating agents and antidotes for Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) emergencies, combat casualty care and other life saving drugs.
2. INMAS has carried out extensive research and laboratory trials in the past two decades to develop formulations for use as antidotes and de-corporating agents for CBRN emergencies.
3. Out of the several formulas developed by INMAS, 15 drugs have been identified for induction.

10th ICEGOV 2017

The Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, in collaboration with United Nations University and UNESCO was organized a three-day 10th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV) in Delhi from 7th March to 9th March, 2017. The theme of this year is Building Knowledge Societies: From Digital Government to Digital Empowerment, the ICEGOV **2017 was inaugurated by Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Hon'ble Unio**n Minister of Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice.

What

1. The key objective of ICEGOV2017 is to explore how Digital Government can lead to Digital Empowerment by local knowledge.
2. **It is recognition of India's emerging role as a massive cyber power, accelerated by the** Digital India push which has acquired international acknowledgment.
3. Digital Governance is the future of Good Governance, in sync with the Honourable **Prime Minister's v**ision to transform India into a transparent and digitally empowered country.
4. ICEGOV 2017 is the 10th edition of ICEGOV, which will focus on the use of technology to transform relationships between government and citizens, businesses, civil society. It will try to inculcate an outlook to create new forms, paradigms, foundations for technology-enabled governance, collaboration, development.
5. The 10th ICEGOV will bring together academia, governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector to share the insights and experiences in theory and practice of Digital Government.
6. In addition to research papers, experience papers, poster papers and doctoral research papers, the programme will also include keynote lecturers like Jane Fountain, Distinguished Professor from United States, Geoff Walsham, Professor from United Kingdom , Frank La Rue, Assistant Director General for Communication and information, UNESCO, plenary discussions and invited sessions by major institutional actors in the area.
7. The programme also includes Digital Exhibition and special events highlighting the Indian experience and achievements in digital governance.

India test-fires anti-ship missile

The navy successfully test- fired an anti-ship missile for the first time from an indigenously built Kalvari class submarine, describing the launch as a significant milestone in enhancing its "sub- surface" warfare prowess.

What

1. The weapon was fired from the submarine, the first of India's six Scorpene-class submarines which are being built under the Project 75, and it "successfully hit" a surface target during the trial in the Arabian Sea.
2. All the six diesel-electric attack submarines will be equipped with the anti-ship missile, which has a proven record in combat, the defence ministry said, noting these missiles will provide the vessels the ability to neutralise surface threats at extended ranges.

3. The missile successfully hit a surface target at an extended range during the trial firing.
4. This missile launch is a significant milestone, not only for the Kalvari, which is the first in a series of Scorpene class submarines being built in India, but also in enhancing the Indian Navy's sub-surface warfare capability.
5. The submarines, designed by French naval defence and energy company DCNS, are being built by Mazagon Dock Limited in Mumbai.

Maritime Admiralty Bill passed

A bill seeking to consolidate the existing laws on civil matters of admiralty jurisdiction of courts, proceedings on maritime claims and arrest of ships was passed by the Lok Sabha. The Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims), 2016 seeks to repeal laws such as the Admiralty Court Act, 1861, the Colonial Courts of Admiralty Act, 1890.

What
1. Moving the bill for consideration and passage, Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping Mansukh L Mandaviya said these legislations came into force during the colonial era when India had only three major ports — Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.
2. Now there are 12 major ports and 205 minor ports in India but under the existing legislation, matters related to admiralty could be decided only by the High Courts of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.
3. He said the bill intends to extend this to the High Courts of Karnataka, Gujarat, Orissa, Kerala, Hyderabad and any other High Court notified by the central government.
4. Even the Supreme Court has said that there should be a domestic law to deal with the cases related to Admiralty.

Parliament passes Enemy Property bill

Successors of those who migrated to Pakistan and China during partition will have no claim over the properties left behind in India, with Parliament passing a bill to amend a 49-year-old law. The Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2016, which amends the Enemy Property Act, 1968, was passed by voice vote in the Lok Sabha, incorporating the amendments made by the Rajya Sabha last week.

What
1. The Lok Sabha had passed the bill earlier but certain amendments were introduced to it in the Rajya Sabha, on the recommendations of a Select Committee. Those amendments had to be approved by the Lower House, which was done. N K Premachandran had moved a statutory amendment seeking to introduce clarity with **regard to those properties which had already been acquired by the heirs of the 'enemy'** property owners, a reference to nationals of Pakistan and China.
2. **"Enemy property"** refers to any property belonging to, held or managed on behalf of an enemy, an enemy subject or an enemy firm. The government has vested these properties in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India, an office instituted under the central government. After the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965, the Enemy Property Act was **enacted in 1968, which regulates such properties and lists the Custodian's powers.**
3. The purpose of bill is to clarify the 1968 Act. Inheritance law will not be applicable **on Enemy Property... This will put an end to the long pending issue which should** have ideally happened in 2010 when the Bill was introduced.
4. The government brought the amendment bill in the wake of a claim laid by the heirs of Raja Mohammad Amir Mohammad Khan, known as Raja of Mahmudabad, on his properties spread across Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The matter is before the Supreme Court.
5. Five ordinances were promulgated on the bill. Justifying the move to amend the Act, Singh rejected the contention of some MPs that it was against the principle of natural justice and amounted to human rights violations.
6. The law only applies on heirs of enemy property. The tenants of those property will be governed by the Tenancy Act.

INS Tillanchang commissioned

INS Tillanchang, a water jet fast attack craft (WJFAC) was commissioned into the Indian Navy by Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Naval Command vice admiral Girish Luthra at Karwar.

What

1. INS Tillanchang is the third ship of four follow-on WJFAC built by the Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) Kolkata.
2. The first two ships of the class, IN ships Tarmugli and Tihayu were commissioned in 2016 and are based at Vishakapatnam.
3. The ship has been indigenously designed and built and is an upgrade from the Chetlat class of Fast Attack Craft that the Indian Navy possesses.
4. These ships play a vital role in light of security environment in the country and are designed to take on both conventional and asymetric threats.
5. INS Tillanchang was able to achieve the fastest speeds among all WJ FACs during the speed trials.

Second stage of HCFCs

India launched the second stage of its plan to phase out Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), **greenhouse gases that damage the earth's ozone** layer. It is estimated that with this plan, there would be a net direct CO2-equivalent emission reductions of about 8.5 million metric tonnes annually from 2023. Environment minister Anil Madhav Dave released stage-II of the HCFC phase-out management plan (HPMP). India has already successfully implemented HPMP stage-I.

What

1. At present, HCFCs are used in various sectors like refrigeration and air conditioning (RAC) and foam manufacturing. These sectors are directly related to urban development, agriculture through cold chain, and industrial development.
2. Under HPMP-II, India has secured $44.1 million for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol for phasing out 8,190 metric tonnes or 769.49 ODP (Ozone Depleting Potential) tonne of HCFC consumption 2017 to 2023, in order to meet the compliance targets under Montreal Protocol for 2020.
3. The Montreal Protocol seeks to cut the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances **in order to protect the earth's fragile ozone layer. It also aims at** phase out HCFCs by 2030.
4. The phase out of HCFCs in the HPMP stage-II will be addressed through several technology conversions at a number of large, medium, small and micro enterprises in the polyurethane foam sector, a few large enterprises in the air conditioning manufacturing sector and activities in the refrigeration and air conditioning servicing sector.
5. India is committed to ensuring the smooth transition of these enterprises to new technologies and values the interest of SMEs most in foreword of the plan.
6. Under HPMP-II, more than 400 enterprises, including over 300 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the foam manufacturing sector and six large air-conditioning manufacturing enterprises will be supported for conversion from HCFCs to non-HCFC technologies.
7. The plan also provides for promotion of energy efficiency, development building codes integrating HCFC phase out issues, cold chain development with non-HCFC alternatives and development of standards for new non-ODS.

Brahmos missile successfully test-fires

India successfully test-fired the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, which is capable of carrying a warhead of 300 kg, from a test range along the Odisha coast. The cruise missile was test fired from a mobile launcher from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) officials said.

What

1. The missile is capable of carrying a warhead of 300 kg. The two-stage missile, one being solid and the second one ramjet liquid propellant, has already been inducted into the Army and Navy, while the Air Force version is in final stage of trial.

2. The army is already equipped with three regiments of Block III version of Brahmos missiles.
3. While induction of the first version of Brahmos missile system in the Indian Navy began in 2005 with INS Rajput, it is now fully operational with two regiments of the Army.
4. After two successful test trials of Brahmos missile from INS Kolkata in June 2014 and February 2015, test firing from INS Kochi on September 30, 2015 had validated the newly commissioned ship's systems.
5. The air launch version and the submarine launch version of the missile system are in progress.
6. The Army has so far placed orders for the BrahMos missile to be deployed by three regiments of the Army and two of them have already been inducted operationally.
7. BrahMos Aerospace, an Indo-Russian joint venture, is also in advance stage of test launching the air version of the sophisticated missile system and work on the project is in progress.

Madhukar Gupta Committee submits report

The Madhukar Gupta Committee on border protection has submitted its report to the Union Government to strengthen border protection and address vulnerabilities in fencing along the Indo-Pakistan border.

What

➢ The committee has given broad recommendations on the issues of Threats and Border Protection, assessment of force level, deployment on the border, infrastructure and technology issues for protection of border and administrative issues.
➢ The Union Government has decided to initiate action in light of the recommendations of the Committee in consultation with the stakeholders.
➢ The Committee was constituted under chairmanship of former Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta in April 2016.
➢ It was tasked give recommendations for strengthening border protection and addressing the issue of gaps and vulnerability in border fencing along India-Pakistan Border.
➢ It was constituted three months after the terror attack on Pathankot IAF base in January 2016 by Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terrorists from Pakistan.
➢ Four Indian states share 3,323-km-long border with Pakistan. Of this, 1,225 km falls in Jammu and Kashmir (including Line of Control), 1,037 km in Rajasthan, 553 km in Punjab and 508 km in Gujarat.

Surya Kiran-XI

The elev**enth edition of joint military exercise 'Surya Kiran 2017'**between India and Nepal was held in Pithoragarh area of Uttarakhand. It was two-week long battalion level joint exercise between armies of both countries. It will focus on skills required for natural disaster management, counter-insurgency and jungle warfare.

What

➢ Its aims at training of both the troops in the area of various counter insurgency operations over a prolonged period.
➢ It will focus on other important aspects such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations and environmental conservation.

Background

➢ The Surya Kiran series of military exercises are being conducted bi-annually, alternatively in India and Nepal.
➢ **It is largest exercise in terms of troop's** participation in series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries.
➢ It aims at promoting military relations while increasing interoperability in conducting joint counter insurgency operations in mountainous terrain.
➢ The 10 edition of the exercise was held at Army Battle School, Saljhandi in Nepal in November 2016

➢ In this exercise, Indian Army is represented by the officers and troops of Ekta Shakti Battalion of the Punjab Regiment. Nepali Army is being represented by Durga Baksh Battalion.

➢ Both the armies will mutually benefit from the varied experiences gained during the exercise and strengthen the friendly relation between Nepal and India.

MoU between India and UN-Women

Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and the United Nations Entity of Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). Under this MoU, Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) and UN-Women will work in collaboration with each other to promote participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

What

➢ The MoU seeks to provide technical support to MoPR in strengthening capacities of governance institutions including PRIs to better leverage opportunities created for gender equality.

➢ MoPR and UN-Women will now work together towards participatory design of governance processes and effective implementation of laws, policies and programmes to promote gender responsive governance.

➢ It will focus on building capacities of Elected Women Representatives to empower them and enhance their effectiveness.

➢ It will facilitate the achievement of time-bound results in the implementation of specific activities identified jointly by MoPR and UN Women within the broader framework for cooperation under the UNDAF.

➢ Activities under this MoU will be implemented at the district and sub-district level in six States i.e. Odisha, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

➢ It will engendering the initiatives of MoPR, including capacity development efforts, **which further their shared mission of good governance, gender equality and women's** empowerment.

INS Viraat retires

The navy decommissioned Indian Navy Ship (INS) Viraat, the **world's oldest** aircraft carrier, 58 years after she entered operational service with the Royal Navy in 1959. During this period, she has sailed over a million kilometres, enough to circumnavigate the world 27 times.

What

1. As per centuries-old naval practice, the decommissioning was formally completed when two flags --- **the Viraat's commissioning pennant, and the naval ensign** --- were lowered at sunset in Mumbai.

2. The 28,000-tonne aircraft carrier was first commissioned into the United **Kingdom's Royal Navy as HMS (Her Majesty's Ship) Hermes in 1959**. The highlight of her 26 years in British service was the Falklands War, when she served as the flagship of the Royal Navy task force in the Southern Atlantic.

3. Three years after the Falklands War, she was decommissioned in 1985. After two years of refit in Devon Shipyard, she was commissioned as INS Viraat into the Indian Navy, eventually serving another 30 years.

4. **INS Viraat was the navy's last British**-built warship. The Royal Navy established and trained the modern Indian Navy, which British admirals commanded till April 21, **1958. Up to the 1970s, the UK supplied India's first modern warships, including its** first aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, and six Leander class frigates.

5. In the 1980s, India bought dozens of cheap Russian missile corvettes and its first destroyers, the Rajput class. As Indian designers began building the first indigenous warships, including the Godavari class frigates, Russian influence was evident in their design. Meanwhile, the navy continued buying Russian warships, such as the six Talwar-**class frigates and the navy's current flagship** --- INS Vikramaditya (formerly Admiral Gorshkov).

6. Currently, India is building its next carrier, also named INS Vikrant at Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL), Kochi. This 40,000 tonne vessel, which has been delayed by almost a decade, is likely to be commissioned in 2023.

First ever across-the-river survey for aquatic life

The Union Government has launched the first ever across-the-river survey in River Ganga to determine the population of aquatic life, including that of the endangered

Gangetic doplhin. The survey will create a baseline scientific data for the government to **take suitable measures to improve quality of the Ganga's water.**
What
- ➢ The first of its kind survey is being conducted by National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) through Wildlife Institute of India (WII) under Namami Gange programme.
- ➢ The first leg of the census was launched on March 1, 2017 from Narora in Uttar Pradesh to Bijnor (covering nearly 165 km distance) to establish the number of the Gangetic dolphin, national aquatic animal.
- ➢ In next phase it will be launched in the Allahabad to Varanasi stretch (close to 250 km in length) in Uttar Pradesh.
- ➢ It will find out stretches where dolphin is habitating, what are the conditions there and the level of threat the long-snouted species is facing in a particular belt.

The study to figure out fish species composition in the in the 2525 km-long stretch of River Ganga also been started from Harshil in Uttarakhand.

International

Pakistan elected as SAARC Secretary General

Pakistan succeeded in getting its official elected to the post of Secretary General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Pakistan was backed by all members, including India, which made the selection consensus- based.
What
1. The new chief of SAARC, Amjad Hussein B Sial, is a veteran diplomat, who was **expected to take charge a year ago. However, India's tough stance on cross**-border terrorism posed a problem for the candidate, who has been in waiting since March 2016.
2. The election of Mr. Sial was possible as India and Pakistan had indicated a greater willingness to allow SAARC to function.
3. Earlier, India opposed the holding of the 19th SAARC summit in Islamabad in November 2016 after the terror strike in Uri.
4. The Ministry of External Affairs has not yet commented on the issue.

Temporarily give up veto power in UNSC

India and other members of the G4 have offered to initially forgo veto powers as permanent members in a reformed Security Council as a bargaining chip to get the reform process moving. The issue of veto is important, but we should not allow it to have a veto **over the process of Council reform itself," said India's Permanent Representative Syed** Akbaruddin, who was speaking on behalf of the G4 at the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) on Council reforms.
What
1. India, Brazil, Germany and Japan constitute the G4, which lobbies for Council **reforms and they mutually support each other's candidatures for permanent** seats on an expanded body.
2. The G4 group rejected suggestions to create a category of longer-term elected members of the Council as a ploy to block adding new permanent members.
3. Expanding only the non-**permanent categories would only worsen "the imbalance of influence" in the Council and "tilt the scales"** in favour of an outdated set-up.
4. The proposal on behalf of Uniting for Consensus (UfC), a 13-member group that includes Pakistan. The group has been waging a decades-long battle against expanding permanent membership and blocking the reform process.
5. Approaching reforms from a narrow national perspective of ensuring that certain countries do not get permanent membership – **for example, Pakistan's opposition to** India – through the reform process, the UfC suggested adding 11 seats to the Council, with nine of them having longer terms.
6. The G4 also pointed out that the number and allocation of non-permanent seats have outlived their relevance since the UN was formed and the reform in 1965 when the number of non-permanent members was increased from six to 10.
7. 53 members of the Asia-Pacific group of nations have only two elected seats on the council, while the 26-member Western Europe group also get two.

India-Oman joint military exercise

Armies of India and Oman was conducted their second joint exercise **"Al Nagah**-II 2017" at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh. This was the second joint military exercise between the two countries which have a history of extensive cooperation in the defence arena, the first one was held in Oman in January 2015.

What

1. The aim of the exercise is to build and promote bilateral Army-to-Army relations and enhance interoperability while exchanging skills and experiences between the two armies.
2. The troops for this exercise have been drawn from one Infantry Battalion each from the Indian Army and the Royal Army of Oman.
3. Approximately 60 troops from both the countries was participated in the exercise, **which help in enhancing knowledge of each other's military procedures and increasing** the scope for interoperability and better responsiveness to a common threat.
4. The 14-day exercise with the Royal Army of Oman was conducted in multiple modules in order to achieve complete integration between the two contingents at every stage.
5. The vast experience and expertise gained by the Indian troops in counter insurgency operations holds special importance to the Oman Army.
6. The previous edition of the Exercise was held at Muscat, Oman in 2015.

Copernicus observation program

European Space Agency (ESA) successfully launched Sentinel-2B satellite, fifth of its Sentinel Earth observation satellites part of its multi-billion-euro Copernicus observation program. The optical imaging satellite was launched on board of a Vega rocket from **ESA's spaceport in French Guiana**. It marks overall ninth successful launch of the Vega launcher since its debut in 2012.

What

➢ The Sentinel-2B satellite is part of satellites system that monitors Earth.
➢ It will join its twin Sentinel-2A, which has been in orbit since 2015.
➢ The two satellites will orbit 786 km above Earth, on opposite sides of planet.
➢ They will take high-resolution, colour and infrared images for a wide array of environmental initiatives, including crop forecasting and monitoring natural disasters. Together, they will cover

> **About Copernicus observation program**
> ➢ It is the **world's largest single earth** observation programme.
> ➢ It is directed by the European Commission in partnership with ESA.
> ➢ It consists of constellation of seven Sentinel Earth observation satellites.
> ➢ The first satellite of the series was launched in April 2014.
> ➢ It aims at achieving a global, continuous, autonomous, high quality, wide range Earth observation capacity by providing accurate, timely and easily accessible information.
> ➢ It also aims at improving the management of the environment, understand and mitigate the effects of climate change, and ensure civil security.
> ➢ Copernicus observation program is successor of previous European Envisat program which operated from 2002 to 2012.

all of Earth's land surfaces, large islands, inland and coastal waterways every five days, providing more up-to-date images and at higher resolution than have been available.
➢ It will help track pollution of lakes and coastal waters, monitor land changes and produce disaster maps by providing information on floods, landslide and volcanic eruptions.

Pakistan passes landmark Hindu marriage bill

Pakistan's Parliament has finally passed the much-awaited landmark bill to regulate marriages of minority Hindus in the country. Paki**stan's Hindus were set to get** an exclusive personal law to regulate marriages after the National Assembly unanimously adopted the Hindu Marriage Bill, 2017.

What

1. The law was passed after a lengthy process of enactment. It was the second time that the National Assembly passed the bill. It passed the bill in September last year but had to pass it again as its version of bill was changed by the Senate when it adopted the bill in February.
2. As per rules, the same text should be passed by the two Houses of the Parliament before it is sent to the President for his signatures and promulgation for implementation.
3. The final text approved by both houses includes the Shadi Parath—a document **similar to 'Nikahnama' in Muslims**.
4. The Shadi Parath will be required to be signed by a pundit and will be registered with the relevant government department.
5. The simple document has eight columns starting with the date of marriage and followed by the name of the union council, tehsil, town and district. The document has columns for the particulars of the bridegroom—**his name and father's name date** of birth, date and place where the marriage is solemnised, temporary address, etc.
6. It also contains the matrimonial status—single, married, divorced, widower and the number of dependents. Similar details are required for the bride, except for one change. **Her mother's must also to be written in the document.**
7. Both the bride and the groom have to sign the document along with one witness and the registrar. The Hindu marriage bill will help Hindu women to get documentary proof of their marriage.

Economy

Trade Mark Rules 2017

The Trade Mark Rules, 2017 have been notified and have come into effect from 06th March, 2017. These Rules, which replace the erstwhile Trade Mark Rules 2002, will streamline and simplify the processing of Trade Mark applications.

Some salient features

1. Number of Trade Mark (TM) Forms have been reduced from 74 to 8.
2. To promote e-filing of TM applications, the fee for online filing has been kept at 10% lower than that for physical filing.
3. **Based on stakeholder's feedback, the fees for Individuals, Start**-ups and Small Enterprises have been reduced from that proposed in the draft Rules – i.e. only Rs 4,500 as against Rs 8,000 for e-filing of TM applications proposed at the draft stage.
4. Modalities for determination of well-known trademarks have been laid out for the first time.
5. The provisions relating to expedited processing of an application for registration of a trade mark have been extended right upto registration stage (hitherto, it was only upto examination stage).
6. Over all fees have been rationalized by reducing the number of entries in Schedule I from 88 to just 23.
7. Modalities for service of documents from applicants to the Registry and vice-versa through electronic means have been introduced to expedite the process; e-mail has been made an essential part of address for service to be provided by the applicant or any party to the proceedings so that the office communication may be sent through email.
8. Hearing through video conferencing has been introduced.
9. Number of adjournments in opposition proceedings has been restricted to a maximum of two by each party, which will help dispose off matters in time.
10. Procedures relating to registration as Registered User of trademarks have also been simplified.
11. It may be recalled that the examination time for a TM application has already been brought down from 13 months to just 1 month in January 2017; this is despite a stupendous 35% jump in TM filings in 2015-16 vis a vis the previous year. The new Rules should give a boost to the Intellectual Property Regime in India.

TIES launched

Commerce and Industry Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman launched the Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES). The Scheme is focussed on addressing the needs of the exporters. The focus is not just to create infrastructure but to make sure it is professionally run and sustained.

What

1. There will be an Empowered Committee to periodically review the progress of the approved projects in the Scheme and will take necessary steps to ensure achievement of the objectives of the Scheme.
2. The proposals of the implementing agencies for funding will be considered by an inter ministerial Empowered Committee specially constituted for this Scheme to be chaired by the Commerce Secretary.
3. The scheme would provide assistance for setting up and up-gradation of infrastructure projects with overwhelming export linkages like the Border Haats, Land customs stations, quality testing and certification labs, cold chains, trade promotion centres, dry ports, export warehousing and packaging, SEZs and ports/airports cargo terminuses. She said last and first mile connectivity projects related to export logistics will also be considered.

> **About TIES**
> 1. After delinking of the ASIDE Scheme in 2015, the State Governments have been consistently requesting the support of the Centre in creation of export infrastructure.
> 2. This support is imperative to act as an inducement to the States to channelize funds from their increased devolution towards creation of export infrastructure.
> 3. The objective of the proposed scheme is to enhance export competitiveness by bridging gaps in export infrastructure, creating focused export infrastructure, first mile and last mile connectivity for export-oriented projects and addressing quality and certification measures.
> 4. The Central and State Agencies, including Export Promotion Councils, Commodities Boards, SEZ Authorities and Apex Trade Bodies recognised under the EXIM policy of Government of India; are eligible for financial support under this scheme.

CGST and IGST laws cleared

Moving a step closer towards implementing the goods and services tax (GST) from 1 July, the GST council approved two crucial supporting legislations for this ambitious tax reform. The GST council, in its eleventh meeting in New Delhi, approved the drafts of the central GST law (CGST) and the integrated GST (IGST) law. It will again meet on 16 March to clear the state GST law (SGST) and the union territory GST law (UTGST).

What

1. There are some minor changes that have been proposed in the drafts of the CGST and the IGST bills. The legal committee will make these changes and subsequently the drafts will be again circulated to the states in the next few days. The bills may then again come back to the council for its final nod.
2. The IGST law, the CGST law, the UTGST law and the bill to compensate states for revenue losses arising from a transition to GST will require the approval of Parliament while the SGST law will require the nod of the state legislative assemblies.

Government notifies Specified Bank Notes (Cessation of Liabilities) Act, 2017

The Union Government has notified the Specified Bank Notes (Cessation of Liabilities) Act, 2017 to prohibit the holding, transferring or receiving of scrapped old Rs.500 and Rs. 1000 currency notes from 31 December, 2016. This law makes possession of more than a certain number of the old Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes a criminal offence.

What

➢ It ends the liability of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the government on the demonetised Rs.500 and Rs. 1000 currency notes.

➢ It prohibits the holding, transferring or receiving of demonitised notes from 31 December, 2016 and confers power on the court of a first class magistrate to impose the penalty.

➢ Possessing more than 10 pieces of old notes by individuals and more than 25 pieces for study, research or numismatics purposes will attract a fine of Rs. 10,000 or five times the value of cash held, whichever is higher.

➢ Fine of a minimum of Rs, 50,000 will be imposed for a false declaration by persons for being abroad during the demonetisation period (9 November-30 December, 2016).

Rules on e-wallet payments

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) has issued draft Information Technology (Security of Prepaid Payment Instruments) Rules 2017 for Prepaid Payment Instruments (PPI) company or e wallet firms. The draft rules seek to ensure integrity, security and confidentiality of electronic payments made through PPIs. It covers an entire spectrum for protecting consumer information, especially financial data.

What

1. Person operating a payment system issuing prepaid payment instruments to individuals or organisations under the aegis of Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
2. Information security policy: Mandatory for e-PPI issuers to develop an information security policy that ensures that the systems operated by them are secure.
3. Privacy policy and terms: Mandatory for e-PPIs to publish on their websites and mobile applications both their 'privacy policy' and terms for use of their payment systems.
4. Risk assessment: Mandatory for e-PPI to carry out risk assessment to spot security risks and also ensure adequate due diligence is done before issuing PPIs.
5. Chief grievance officer: e-PPIs should appoint a chief grievance officer with his contact details prominently displayed on website.
6. **The officer must act upon any complaint within 36 hours and close it in a month's** time. End-to-end encryption e-PPIs shall ensure that end-to-end encryption is applied to safeguard the data exchanged.
7. It shall retain data relating to electronic payments only till necessary.
8. CERT-**In's responsibility:** CERT-In (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) shall notify the categories of incidents and breaches that are required to be reported to it mandatorily.

World's most ethical companies' list

Two Indian companies, Tata Steel and Wipro, have been named in the list of world's most ethical companies by American think tank Ethisphere Institute. Ethisphere honours those companies who recognise their role in society to influence and drive positive change in the business community and societies around the world. In 2017, there were 124 honorees spanning five continents, 19 countries and 52 industry sectors.

What

1. These companies also consider the impact of their actions on their employees, investors, customers and other key stakeholders and leverage values and a culture of integrity as the underpinnings to the decisions they make each day.
2. Wipro is one of the two information technology companies named in the list, the other being Xerox Corporation.
3. Tata Steel is also one of the two companies named in the metals, minerals & mining space. US-based Schnitzer Steel Industries Inc is the other company in this segment.
4. Companies we've honored as World's Most Ethical take a novel response to the shift in societal expectations, constant redefinition of laws and regulations, and the geo-political climate.
5. The list was dominated by US-based companies as around 98 of the 124 companies were from that country.
6. There are 13 eleven-time honorees and eight first-time honorees in the list.
7. Ford Motor Company has been named one of the World's Most Ethical Companies for the eighth straight year.

Science and Technology

India's first AI-based banking chatbot

HDFC Bank announced the launch of an electronic virtual assistant (EVA), an artificial intelligence-driven chatbot, for customer services. Eva is India's first AI-based banking chatbot and can answer millions of customer queries across multiple channels instantly.

What

1. Eva can assimilate knowledge from thousands of sources and provide answers in simple language in less than 0.4 seconds.
2. Within the first few days of its launch, Eva has answered over 1 lakh queries from thousands of customers from 17 countries across the globe.
3. With the launch of Eva, it said, bank's customers can get information on its products and services instantaneously and it also becomes smarter as it learns through its customer interactions.
4. Eva would be able to handle real banking transactions as well, which would enable HDFC Bank to offer the true power of conversational banking to its customers.

Chandrayaan 1 still orbiting Moon

India's first lunar probe - the Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft - which was considered lost, is still orbiting the Moon, Nasa scientists have found by using a new ground-based radar technique. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) lost communication with Chandrayaan-1 on August 29, 2009, almost a year after it was launched on October 22, 2008.

What

1. **Scientists at NASA's** Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in California have successfully located the spacecraft still circling some 200 kilometres above the lunar surface.
2. The Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft is very small, a cube about 1.5 meters on each side - about half the size of a smart car.
3. Although the interplanetary radar has been used to observe small asteroids several million miles from Earth, researchers were not certain that an object of this smaller size as far away as the Moon could be detected, even with the world's most powerful radars.
4. Chandrayaan-1 proved the perfect target for demonstrating the capability of this technique.
5. JPL's orbital calculations indicated that Chandrayaan-1 is still circling some 200 kilometres above the lunar surface, but it was generally considered "lost."
6. However, with Chandrayaan-1, the radar team utilised the fact that this spacecraft is in polar orbit around the Moon, so it would always cross above the lunar poles on each orbit.
7. On July 2 last year, the team pointed Goldstone and Green Bank at a location about 160 kilometres above the Moon's North Pole and waited to see if the lost spacecraft crossed the radar beam.
8. Chandrayaan-1 was predicted to complete one orbit around the Moon every two hours and eight minutes.
9. Chandrayaan operated for 312 days as opposed to the intended two years but the mission achieved 95 per cent of its planned objectives.

EHRs for patients approved

A scheme to create Electronic Health Records of patients has been approved by the government. A scheme to set up an Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) to create the Electronic Health Records (EHRs) of patients in a centralised manner and to be made available nationwide online for medical history with the help of Health Information Exchange has been approved and is being implemented.

What

1. The objective of the IHIP is to keep the medical records of patients in digital form which could be accessed by the patient as well as providers as and when required.
2. IHIP will help exchange of clinical data among providers irrespective of the hospital site visited by the patients.

3. IHIP will be implemented in a phased manner. In phase one, IHIP will be implemented on a pilot basis in two states, two central government hospitals, AIIMS New Delhi and one private hospital by 2017.
4. On successful implementation of the pilot phase, IHIP will be rolled out pan India.

India to gets its own mobile congress

India will organise its first mobile congress in September with a special focus on reaching out to the South East Asian markets. There is Mobile World Congress in Barcelona and an edition in Shanghai. There is nothing in between for South East Asia. India is emerging as one of the global leaders in telecom which we will also showcase in the Indian Mobile Congress.

What

1. The Department of Telecom and the Ministry of Electronics and IT have laid their emphasis on Indian Mobile Congress and Cellular Operators Association of India will drive it.
2. The GSM Association, which organises annual global event of Mobile World Congress (MWC), has agreed to associate with the three-day event that will be held at Pragati Maidan starting September 27.
3. Along with Indian government delegation had held discussion with British and Swedish Trade Ministers for their engagement in IMC.
4. All Indian mobile operators, Facebook, Huawei, Ericsson, Cisco etc are likely to participate in the mobile congress.
5. The event will focus on knowledge sharing, exhibition, start ups, skill development and all pillars of Digital India including Make in India.

India opens to widest cyber security pact

The government to open for international collaboration on cyber security, and favours handling issue of cyber terrorism in cooperation with other countries, Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said. India is willing to have the widest **cooperation world over in the quest of cyber security," Prasad said at an international** conference on e-**governance."**

What

1. The ministry of electronics and information technology has organised the three-day 10th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV) 2017, in collaboration with United Nations University and UNESCO.
2. If (the) internet has to remain powerful, it must be safe and secure. (A) Few people are using digital technology for terrorism, for hatred, for extremism, and we need to work together, Prasad said.
3. India would be the voice of moderation, reason and assimilation as far as the internet discourse was concerned.
4. The government has conveyed its concerns to the US administration on the move to **curb processing of H1B visas. "Concerns have been conveyed to USA. Indian IT companies have been servicing 75 per cent of Forbes companies".**
5. **To ensure the country's digital march an**d a more cyber secure world, the Government of India is going to host the next meeting of CERTs from Asia-Pacific in India later this year.
6. Special emphasis to promote electronics manufacturing in the country and has received investments of nearly $25 billion in the last two years.

Internet Saathi programme

Most of us can probably remember the excitement of discovering the internet for the first time and exploring the unending facets of the web. What we can remember less well is when this internet usage graduated from being PC-dominated to the ease and convenience of tablets and mobile phones. This digital literacy, which summons all kinds of information to command, is something we usually take for granted — but there is a gender dimension to it. Only 30% of internet users in India are women — a steep gender gap by world standards.**Google's Internet Saathi programme, launched in association** with Tata Trusts, has been helping close this digital literacy gap since it came into operation in July 2015.

What

1. The p**rogram has been training "Saathis" or partners among women to use** tablets and smartphones to explore the benefits of internet in their day to day life, who in turn train scores of other women in their villages and nearby areas.

2. Every Saathi, trained by trainers from Google, is provided with a tablet, smartphone, bicycle, as well as the data they need while going out for their work. While Google provides the gadgets and training, Tata Trusts uses its network of local NGOs to identify the potential Saathis and monitor progress.

AI beats professionals

For the first time, an artificial intelligence system has beaten human professionals at a game of Texas hold 'em poker, scientists say. It is a historic result in artificial intelligence (AI) that has implications far beyond the poker table, from helping make more robust medical treatment recommendations to developing better strategic defence planning.

What

1. DeepStack, created by researchers at the University of Alberta in Canada, bridges the gap between approaches used for games of perfect information - such as chess and Go where players can see everything on the board - with those used for imperfect information games by reasoning while it plays, using "intuition" honed through deep learning to reassess its strategy with each decision.

2. Poker has been a long-standing challenge problem in artificial intelligence," said Michael Bowling, professor at the University of Alberta.

3. It is the quintessential game of imperfect information in the sense that the players don't have the same information or share the same perspective while they're playing.

4. AI researchers have long used parlour games to test their theories because the games are mathematical models that describe how decision-makers interact.

5. DeepStack extends the ability to think about each situation during play to imperfect information games using a technique called continual re-solving.

6. This allows DeepStack to determine the correct strategy for a particular poker situation by using its "intuition" to evaluate how the game might play out in the near future without thinking about the entire game.

Miscellaneous

World Wildlife Day

The World Wildlife Day is observed on 3rd March every year to celebrate and raise awareness about the **world's wild fauna and** flora. It is celebrated to mark the signing of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) on this day in 1973.

What

➢ It aims to create awareness and encourages people across the globe to protect endangered species.

➢ It also calls for taking up urgent steps to fight wildlife crime which has wide-ranging environmental, economic and social impacts.

➢ The theme of this year is "Listen to the Young Voices". It aims to empower and engage the youth in conservation issues.

Background

➢ The World Wildlife Day was designated by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at its 68th session on 20 December 2013.

➢ On this day in 1973, CITES was adopted. Wildlife has an intrinsic value and contributes to the ecological, social, economic, genetic, scientific, educational,

cultural, aesthetic and recreational aspects of sustainable development and human well-being.

India top source of illegal medicines

India accounts for nearly half of the overall illegal medicines entering Switzerland, Swiss government data showed. Potency preparations accounted for the maximum of the illegally imported substances that were confiscated in 2016 by Swiss customs officials, the latest annual data showed. This comes amid a continuing global clampdown on illicit wealth allegedly stashed in Swiss banks, including by Indians. Swissmedic, the Swiss government agency for therapeutic products, said that India was the source for as much as 48 per cent of illegally imported medicinal products confiscated by Switzerland's customs department in 2016.

What

1. This is the second year in a row that India remained the top source of such illegal imports into Switzerland. However, the figure was lower at 42 per cent in 2015.
2. Among the confiscated shipments, 55 per cent were erectile stimulants while sleeping tablets and tranquilisers accounted for 13.5 per cent.
3. As many as 13 per cent of such shipments were "medically important, prescription only medicines". Slimming preparations and hair growth preparations made up for five per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively.
4. The unauthorised import and use of prescription-only medicines such as sleeping tablets or antibiotics represents a risky practice from the perspective of health.
5. Particularly worrying is the number of confiscated medicines for the treatment of acne, which, though still small, rose in 2016.
6. After India, the next top source of such illegal imports was Western Europe (The UK, Germany and Portugal), which accounted for 21 per cent of such shipments.
7. Around 13 per cent of illegal imports were from Asia, excluding India, while 9 per cent were from Eastern Europe.

> **About CITES**
> - CITES is international agreement to regulate worldwide commercial trade in wild animal and plant species.
> - Its aim is to ensure that international trade does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild.
> - It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
> - It entered into force in July 1975. It is administered through United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
> - CITES is legally binding on state parties to the convention, which are obliged to adopt their own domestic legislation to implement its goals.

States come together for elephant census

For the first time in India, four states Odisha, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have decided to conduct a synchronised elephant census in May 2017. These four together have the maximum number of human-elephant conflict-prone regions in India. This decision was taken by senior Forest Department officials of the four States during a regional workshop.

What

➤ These states will conduct the census based on an identical set of rules using the direct and indirect counting methods.

➤ The direct counting method is based on sighting of elephants while the indirect **method uses the elephant** 'dung decay' **formula, in which the analysis of dung is used** to estimate the population.

➤ The indirect method has already been used by Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

➤ Direct method can be used alone because it is not possible to cover entire area during the census.

➢ As per the 2015 census, Odisha has 1,954 elephants while Jharkhand has 700, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal had approximately 275 and 130 elephants, respectively.

New CM in Goa

Manohar Parrikar, who quit as Defence Minister, was sworn in as chief minister of Goa to head a coalition government of local allies and Independents, after the BJP ended up second behind the Congress in a fractured mandate. The Congress suffered a setback in the Supreme Court which refused to stay 61-year-old Parrikar's swearing-in ceremony as sought by the party.

What

1. According to the directions of the apex court, Parrikar, who claimed to have support of 21 MLAs including 13 of the BJP, will have to prove majority on the floor of the assembly on March 16.
2. Parrikar returned to Goa as the chief minister for the fourth time, though he could not complete full terms in his earlier stints.
3. BJP president Amit Shah along with Union ministers Venkaiah Naidu and Nitin Gadkari were present at the ceremony.

IISc ranked top 10 in globally

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has made it to the top 10 of Times Higher Education's (THE) Best Small Universities in the World ranking for 2017. IISc is the only Indian university to have made it to the list. Small universities are defined by having fewer than 5,000 students and teach and research across more than four disciplines.

What

1. The latest ranking by THE is in its second year where the list is topped by California Institute of Technology (Caltech), followed by France's École Normale Supérieure.
2. Apart from Caltech, French and Italian universities took three places respectively in the top 10, none of which have more than 3,000 students.
3. The other two French universities in the top 10 include École Polytechnique at fourth position and École Normale Supérieure de Lyon at seventh in the ranking. **Italy's three** in the top 10 are Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa in fifth place, Scuola **Superiore Sant'Anna in sixth and Free University of Bozen**-Bolzano, tenth.
4. The ranking found that students from small universities preferred a more close-knit learning environment.
5. **South Korea's Pohang University of Science and Technology in third place,** the Indian Institute of Science, eighth, and the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, ninth, complete the top 10.

India tops bribing chart in Asia Pacific

India has got the dubious distinction of having the highest bribery rate in the Asia Pacific, with a survey revealed that more than two-thirds of Indians had to pay 'tea money' or fork out other forms of bribe to get public services. The survey, conducted by international anti-graft rights group Transparency International, found 69 per cent in India as saying they had to pay a bribe, followed by 65 per cent in Vietnam. China was much lower at 26 per cent while the same for Pakistan was 40 per cent.

What

1. Japan had the lowest incidence of bribery -- at 0.2 per cent. South Korea also fared well at a mere 3 per cent.
2. It is China which seems to have seen the highest increase, with 73 per cent in the survey saying the bribery has gone up in their country over the past year while India comes in at seventh place (41 per cent) -- higher than countries like Pakistan, Australia, Japan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand.
3. The police topped the list of public services most often demanding a bribe while 38 per cent of the poorest surveyed said they paid a bribe, which is the highest proportion of any income group.

New chairman of Sebi

Ajay Tyagi assumed charge as the ninth chairman of Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The former additional secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs made a confident entry in the Sebi's and is likely to hit the ground running.

What

1. He is 1984-batch IAS officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre, has handled capital markets division in the Finance Ministry.
2. He has diverse experience at the Centre. He was Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change before joining Finance Ministry in November 2014 as Additional Secretary.
3. He has also worked in ministries of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Steel and Rural Development. A native of Uttar Pradesh, he had done post graduation in Economics.
4. He did Master's in Public Administration from Harvard and holds Master's degree in Technology (Computer Science), as per his official resume.
5. He will succeed Sinha who was the second-longest serving Sebi chief after D R Mehta's seven-year term from 1995 to 2002.

Commonwealth initiative to stamp out domestic violence

The Commonwealth is launching an initiative to help member states tackle domestic violence, **which it said remained a "stubborn stain" on communities, disproportionately impacting women. The "**Peace in the home**" programme will include** toolkits to help governments across the Commonwealth involve multiple agencies — such as schools, doctors and hospitals, as well as government — and law enforcement agencies to work together effectively, and will help countries highlight and share details of initiatives that had been particularly successful at dealing with domestic violence.

What

1. There will also be a mentoring programme for women, and an initiative to address the issue of violence around elections and politics.
2. The programme, which is being **launched on Women's Day, will continue through** till 2018, when there is expected to be an accord on ending domestic violence in the Commonwealth.
3. The Commonwealth initiative will build a coalition of governments, businesses, human rights institutions, civil society and individual citizens to choral our efforts to address domestic violence.
4. The secretariat would also launch an initiative to map the economic cost of domestic violence in Commonwealth countries, as well as focus on strengthening laws protecting women and girls across the group.
5. The legal resource book on domestic violence — setting out what constitutes violence against women and the intersection of national and international human rights laws — piloted by the Secretariat in East Africa last year, and said that there were plans to roll it out across the rest of the Commonwealth.

'Visitor's Award' for best university

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which has been at the centre of controversies for over a year, has bagged the annual 'Visitor's Award' for the best varsity in the country. JNU has been hogging limelight for all the wrong reasons since last February when three of its students were arrested on sedition charges in connection with an event on campus during which anti-national slogans were allegedly raised.

What

1. The varsity administration and students have been at loggerheads since then over various issues including curbs on protests, amendments in admission policy and massive seat cut in MPhil and PhD courses.
2. The winners of Visitor's Award for 'Innovation' and 'Research' will receive a citation and cash award of Rs one lakh. The awards will be presented during a function as part of the 'Festival of Innovations'.

NCRB celebrates its 32nd Inception Day

Director General, Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) Smt. Archana Ramasundaram was the Chief Guest at the 32nd Inception Day of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which was celebrated on 11 March 2017. On the occasion, Smt. Archana Ramasundaram acknowledged the progress made in CCTNS and expected NCRB to provide the platform for

better Police services through CCTNS and upcoming Interoperable Criminal Justice System (ICJS).

What

1. The NCRB has won Digital India Award **2016 for digitizing and uploading** 'Crime in India' **on Open source Govt. Portal since 1967.**
2. NCRB has been training Indian and Foreign Police Officers from more than 20 countries since 1990 and till date more than 40,000 Police Officers have been trained.
3. NCRB is mandated to empower the Indian Police with Information Technology and is responsible for collecting, maintaining and analysing the crime data of the country. It facilitates Investigating Officers with updated IT tools and information in Investigation of Crimes.
4. An exhibition showcasing of various applications developed by NCRB under Crime & **Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS), Finger Prints Science,** 'Vahan Samanvay', 'TALASH', Mobile Apps Citizen Complaint, View FIR, Locater, Automated License Plate Reader and NCRB Publications of 'Crime in India', 'Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India' and 'Prison Statistics India', was organised.

Konkani novel bags the Saraswati Samman

Mahabaleshwar Sail's Hawthan, a novel in Konkani on the life of a shrinking community of potters from Cancona taluk of south Goa, has bagged the Saraswati Samman instituted by the K.K. Birla Foundation. Mr. Sail said his writings reflect the struggle of daily life. Hawthan, which came out in 2009, is a work of fiction based on research into the lives of the Kumbars in Goa. The author is successful in painting a picture of the uncertain and bleak future of these traditional potters.

What

1. **The writer kneads the sacred symbol of the** 'hawthan'**, the baking pit oven of the** potter, into his narrative motifs of belief and superstition, rites and rituals, customs and folklore and practices and improvisations in the tiny community of craftsmen and women.
2. The Saraswati Samman, instituted in 1991, is given every year to an outstanding literary work written in any Indian language mentioned in Schedule VIII to the Constitution of India by an Indian citizen and published during the last 10 years. It carries a prize of ₹15 lakh, a citation and a plaque.
3. **A committee called the** "Chayan Parishad"**, presided over by Justice A.S. Anand,** former Chief Justice of India, decides on the winner.
4. Mr. Sail writes in Konkani and Marathi and is an ex-service man of the Indian Army. He has published four dramas in Marathi, five short story collections in Konkani, seven novels in Konkani and a novel in Marathi.
5. His writings, which have been translated into English, Marathi, Hindi, Malayalam and Kannada, also find a place in university textbooks.
6. He won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1993 for his short story collection Taranga.

'Genocide Day' in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's unanimously adopted a resolution declaring March 25 as Genocide Day, in remembrance of the atrocities carried out by the Pakistani Army in the night of March 25, 1971.

What

1. Condemning the denial of history by Pakistan, the Bangladeshi legislators passed the motion unanimously after a marathon seven-hour discussion.
2. **The resolution read:** "It is Parliament's opinion that Mar 25 be declared Genocide Day to commemorate the genocide conducted by the atrocious Pakistani forces on the black night of Mar 25, 1971, and necessary steps are taken to have the Day **recognised internationally.**"
3. The Pakistan Army swooped on unarmed civilians on the night of March 25, 1971, to crush the Bengali rebellion following refusal by the military leadership to accept the **election results of 1970 in which the Awami League got thumping majority. 'Operation Searchlight' began in the first hours** of March 25 in Dhaka.
4. MPs also suggested that the government take initiative so that December 9, marked by the UN as international day of commemoration of genocide, sees the the March 25 victims being commemorate as well.

India's largest Floating Solar PV Plant

State-run NTPC (National Thermal Power Corporation Limited) **has installed India's** largest floating solar photovoltaic (PV) plant at Rajiv Gandhi Combined Cycle Power Plant (RGCCPP) at Kayamkulam in Kerala. The 100 kWp (kilowatt peak) floating solar PV plant **has been indigenously developed as a part of Union Government flagship 'Make In India'** initiative.

What

➢ It has been indigenously developed by NETRA (NTPC Energy Technology Research Alliance), R&D arm of NTPC, in collaboration with Central Institute of Plastic Engineering & Technology (CIPET), Chennai.

➢ The system was installed by Chennai based Swelect Energy Systems Ltd with support from NETRA and NTPC Kayamkulam station in a short span of 22 days.

➢ Floating solar PV systems are fast emerging as an alternative to conventional ground mounted PV systems which are land intensive.

➢ It can also be installed on saline water environment.

> **About NTPC**
>
> ➢ NTPC limited is a Central Public Sector Undertaking (CPSU), operational under the Ministry of Power.
>
> ➢ **It is India's largest power generator** and accounts for 25% of total electricity generated in the country.
>
> ➢ It was established in 1975 by Union Government.

Punjab wins 2017 Santosh Trophy

Punjab has won the 71st Santosh Trophy football tournament by defeating Railways by 2-**1 goals. It was Punjab's overall ninth Santosh Trophy after it had earlier won** it in 1970, 1974, 1980, 1984, 1985, 1987, 2006 and 2007. For Punjab, both goals were scored by Rajbir Singh (16th and 61st minutes). For Railways, goal was scored by Rajesh Soosanayakam (59th minute).

About Santosh Trophy

➢ Santosh Trophy is an annual Indian football tournament played in India.

➢ It was founded 1941. The trophy is named after the late Maharaja Sir Manmatha Nath Roy Chowdhary of Santosh (now it is in Bangladesh).

➢ It is knock-out competition contested by the regional state associations and government institutions under the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

Bitcoin-based pyramid schemes

Some small-time traders are taking advantage of the absence of rules governing crypto-currencies in India by creating multi-level marketing (MLM) or pyramid-like schemes with bitcoin as the base product. The issue of multi-level marketing schemes is a global problem; however, these are now gaining traction in India owing to a lack of governing guidelines and the rapid rise in value of the crypto-currency, according to Digital Assets and Blockchain Foundation of India (DABFI), a self regulatory organization for bitcoin and blockchain companies.

What

1. Typically, a small group of people come together to develop a code that will automatically transfer a certain percentage to users if someone in their network purchases bitcoin and brings in new members.

2. Once the code is established, it becomes difficult to find out the source of this whole operation as each user plays the victim when it collapses.

3. Since December 2016, the value of bitcoin has risen from around Rs57,000 to over Rs89,000 now, touching a high of Rs98,602 on 4 March, according to data available on the Zebpay website.

4. According to data available with Tracxn, a website that provides financial information on start-ups, there are about 20 bitcoin firms in India now from just four in 2013.

5. A crypto-currency is a digital currency created through encryption techniques. Bitcoin is the most famous. Some others are: litecoin, peercoin, namecoin, ether and primecoin. In India, most companies are associated with bitcoin.

6. No monetary authority in the world backs crypto-currency and most are trying to find ways to regulate the market. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released a white paper on crypto-currencies and blockchain to understand them better.

7. The government does not have any formal guidelines governing the crypto-currency trade happening in India. RBI does not recognize bitcoin or any crypto-currency as a legitimate form of currency.

8. In February, the central bank put out a cautionary note warning the public of the same and said anyone indulging in purchase or trade of crypto-currencies shall be doing so at their own risk.

Institutes of National Importance

The Union Cabinet has approved Indian Institutes of Information Technology (Public- Private Partnership) Bill, 2017. The Bill will declare the existing IIITs in PPPS as **'Institutions of National Importance with powers to award degrees. This coveted status will** entitle them to use the nomenclature of Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech) or Master of Technology (M.Tech) or Ph.D degree as issued by Institution or University of National Importance. By granting formal degree, IIITs will enhance the prospects of graduating students in job market and will also enable them to attract enough students to develop a strong research base in the country in the field of IT. Besides, it will also cater the emerging needs of the industry and the economy as a whole for skilled technical manpower from the talent pool of trained personnel of the institutes.

The 15 IIITs are

Assam (Guwahati), Andhra Pradesh (Chittoor), Haryana (Sonipat), Gujarat (Vadodara),Himachal Pradesh (Una), Kerala (Kottayam), Jharkhand (Ranchi), Karnataka (Dharwad), Maharashtra (Nagpur & Pune), Rajasthan (Kota), Manipur (Senapati), Tamilnadu (Tiruchirappalli), Uttar Pradesh (Lucknow), Kalyani (West Bengal).

Background
➤ In 2010, the Union Cabinet had approved scheme of setting up of 20 new IIITs in Public Private Partnership (IIIT PPP).
➤ But it was not having provision empowering these institutes to grant degrees to its students.

New CM of Manipur

The Northeastern state of Manipur got the first Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government when Nongthombam Biren Singh took oath of office as the new chief minister of the state. With Manipur coming into BJP's kitty, the tally of BJP-ruled state in the region has now gone up to three.

What
1. In the 60-member house, BJP emerged as the second largest party winning 21 seats. The Congress won 28 seats.
2. With the support of **National People's Party (NPP)**, Naga **People's Front (NPF)**, Lok Janshakti Party (LJP), All India Trinamool Congress (AITC) and a defected Congress legislator, the BJP soon staked claim to form government in the state.

World Consumer Rights Day

The World Consumer Rights Day (WCRD) is celebrated every year on March 15 to pay solidarity with the international consumer movement and give more attention to promote basic rights of consumers.

What
➤ The theme of this year is 'Building a Digital World Consumers can Trust'.
➤ The WCRD commemorate the historic address given by the then US President John F Kennedy to the US congress on this day in 1962.
➤ In his historic address he had outlined the definition of consumer rights for the first time. He

In India
➤ 24th December is observed as National Consumer Day.
➤ On this day in 1986, Consumer Protection Act, 1986 had received the assent of the President.

was the **first world leader to formally define 'consumer rights'**.

➢ The first WCRD was observed on 15 March 1983 and has since become an important occasion for mobilizing citizen action.

➢ In 2016, WCRD was observed with the theme "Antibiotics off the menu".