My Notes....

NATIONAL

INDIA FALLS ON CORRUPTION INDEX

India's rank on the Corruption Perception Index fell two notches to 81 in 2017 from 79 in 2016, Transparency International (TI) said. The Berlin-based non-government body ranked 180 countries in 2017, against 176 in 2016. The index ranks countries and territories by perceived levels of public sector corruption, on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). **India's score remained intact at 40 points. It had 38 points in** 2015. This year, the index scored more than two-thirds of countries below 50, with an average score of 43. This meant India's score remained below average. No country came perfectly clean. New Zealand was the least corrupt and Somalia was the most.

What

1. TI said it found crackdowns on non-government organisations (NGOs) and media were associated with higher levels of corruption in the world.

2. The 2017 index revealed — despite attempts to combat corruption, most countries were moving too slowly with their effort.

3. In the past six years, many countries have made little to no progress. Further analysis indicated countries with the lowest protection for press and NGOs usually had the worst corruption.

4. India falls two slots on global corruption index TI said a journalist is killed every week in a highly corrupt country.

5. It found almost all journalists killed since 2012 died in such countries. No activist or reporter should have to fear for their lives when speaking out against corruption.

HOW INDIA FARES

Nations	Rank in 2016	Rank in 2017
India	79	81
Brazil	79	96
Russia	131	135
China	79	77
South Africa	64	71
Pakistan	116	117

TOP, BOTTOM ONES

Top nations	Bottom nations
New Zealand	Syria
Denmark	South Sudan
Finland	Somalia

Source: Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index

6. TI showed that in the past six years, more than 9 of 10 journalists were killed in countries that scored 45 or less on the Corruption Perceptions Index. One in five journalists killed were covering a story about corruption.

TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS BILL 2018 APPROVED

The Union Cabinet has approved the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 for introduction in the Parliament. Human Trafficking is third largest organized crime violating basic human rights. At present there is no specific law to deal with this crime. The bill addresses the issue of human trafficking from point of view of prevention, rescue and rehabilitation.

What

1. It takes into consideration aggravated forms of trafficking.

2. It includes trafficking for purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity etc

3. It prescribes punishment for promoting and facilitating trafficking of person.

4. It includes producing, printing, issuing or distributing unissued, tampered or fake certificates, registration or stickers as proof of compliance with Government

requirements, or commits fraud for procuring or facilitating acquisition of clearances and necessary documents from Government agencies.

5. It deals with confidentiality of victims and witnesses and complainants by not disclosing their identity.

6. It will be maintained by recording their statement through video conferencing (it will help trans-border and inter-State crimes).

7. It has provision for time bound trial and repatriation of the victims. It will be within a period of 1 year from taking into cognizance.

8. The victims will be entitled to interim relief immediately within 30 days to address their physical, mental trauma etc. and further appropriate relief within 60 days from the date of filing of charge sheet.

Flashpoint
1. The Bill addresses one of most pervasive yet invisible crimes affecting most vulnerable persons especially women and children.
2. It will make India leader among South Asian countries to combat trafficking, as UNODC and SAARC nations are looking forward to India to take lead by enacting this law.

9. It creates Rehabilitation Fund for the first time. It will be used for physical, psychological and social well-being of victim including education, skill development, health care and psychological support, legal aid, safe accommodation etc.

10. The punishment prescribed under it ranges from rigorous minimum 10 years to life and fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh.

11. In order to break the organized nexus, both at national and international level, it mandates for attachment & forfeiture of property and also proceeds for crime.

12. It comprehensively addresses transnational nature of the crime.

13. It entrusts National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB) to perform functions of international coordination with authorities in foreign countries and international organizations.

'NITI FORUM' FORMS FOR NORTHEAST

A special Niti forum has been created to accelerate the central government's efforts to spur inclusive growth in the northeastern region of the country, Union minister Jitendra Singh said. The Niti forum for the Northeast would have its secretariat office in the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER). The exclusive Niti Aayog forum will work to identify constraints that stand in the way of achieving accelerated, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in the eight states of the Northeast region.

What

1. It would recommend suitable interventions for addressing the identified constraints, he said. The forum would also be tasked to review the status of developmental works in the Northeast, according to the DoNER minister. The forum will be co-chaired by the vice chairman of the Niti Aayog and the DoNER minister.

2. Its members include secretaries in the ministries of road transport and highways, railways, power, water resources, river development and Ganga rejuvenation, new and renewable energy, health and family welfare, human resource development and environment, forest and climate change.

3. The chief secretaries of all the eight states of the region will also be its members.

4. Secretary, North East Council (NEC) will be Member Secretary, while Joint Secretary (North East) in MHA and several other experts from other fields will also be members.

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2018

The 2018 edition of World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS 2018) was held at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. It was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

WSDS is flagship forum of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). It seeks to bring together global leaders and thinkers in the fields of sustainable development, energy and environment sectors on common platform.

What

1. The theme of WSDS 2018 is **'Partnerships for a Resilient** Planet'.
2. It seeks to create action frameworks to resolve some of most urgent challenges facing developing economies in backdrop of climate change.
3. The thematic tracks at WSDS 2018 included discussions on issues related to sustainability, including carbon markets and pricing, sustainable transport, resilient cities, solar energy and refrigerant technologies.
4. It addressed wide variety of issues, including combating land degradation, effective waste management mechanisms to make cities free of landfills free.
5. It also addressed issues related to combating air pollution effectively, measures to increase resource and energy efficiency, facilitate transition to clean energy and create financial mechanisms to enable effective climate change mitigation.

Flashback
1. WSDS ha**s replaced TERI's earlier** called Delhi Sustainable Development Summit (DSDS).
2. The first DSDS was organised in 2005. It underscored need for businesses and private sector to take lead in poverty reduction and to ensure rapid and sustained adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
3. TERI is a non-profit research institution that conducts research work in the fields of energy, environment and sustainable development.
4. It aims to focus on formulating local and national level strategies for shaping global solutions to critical issues.
5. It was established in 1974 as Tata Energy Research Institute and was renamed The Energy and Resources Institute in 2003.

CAUVERY DISPUTE VERDICT

The Supreme Court on 16 February 2018 reduced Tamil Nadu's share of Cauvery water and increased Karnataka's, instructing the latter to provide 177.25 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) water to the former. Pronouncing its verdict on the decades-old Cauvery water dispute between the neighbouring states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, the apex court said given the global status of Karnataka's capital city of Bengaluru, it will get more Cauvery river water. Earlier, in accordance with the 2007 award of the Cauvery water dispute tribunal, Karnataka had a share of 270 tmcft of Cauvery water. This will now increase to 284.75 tmcft.

What

1. The judgement was pronounced by a bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices Amitava Roy and A M Khanwilkar. Reading out the operative portion of the verdict, the CJI said the 2007 tribunal award of 30 tmcft to Kerala and 7 tmcft water to Pondicherry will remain unchanged.
2. The apex court also allowed Tami Nadu to draw an additional 10 tmcft 'groundwater' from a total of 20 tmcft beneath the Cauvery basin. It said the increase in share of Cauvery water for Karnataka by 14.75 tmcft is because of the 10 tmcft groundwater and 4.75 tmcft drinking water requirement for Bengaluru residents.
3. Karnataka to provide 177.25 TMC feet water to Tamil Nadu instead of 192 TMC feet.

4. No state can claim ownership over a river Karnataka to get an additional 14.75 TMC feet

5. Earlier on September 20, 2017, the court had reserved its order on the matter. Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Puducherry had filed petitions seeking modification of Cauvery Tribunal's final order.

6. Originally awarded 192 TMC water to Tamil Nadu has been reduced with SC order. 14.75 TMC extra water has been given to Karnataka to provide drinking water to Bengaluru city.

7. It was in 1990 when the Centre created a tribunal to examine the conflict and address the water shortage. The CWDT had unanimously passed an order on how the water should be shared between the states after determining the total availability of water in the Cauvery basin.

Flashback
1. A tribunal, constituted by the Government of India under the direction of the Supreme Court, came out with its final verdict in February, 2007, under which Tamil Nadu was entitled to get around 419 billion cubic feet of water, Karnataka, 270 billion cubic feet, Kerala, 30 bllion cubic feet and Puducherry was to get seven billion cubic feet of water, according to earlier reports.
2. On October 18, 2016, the Supreme Court had asked Karnataka to release 2000 cusecs of Cauvery water per day to Tamil Nadu till further orders.
3. On January 9, 2017, the Tamil Nadu Government had sought a compensation of Rs 2,480 crore from Karnataka for not releasing water to the state despite getting the Supreme Court directive to do so.

8. Tamil Nadu has deployed hundreds of police personnel across Chennai city and towns bordering Karnataka. Top government sources said security has been tightened for all Karnataka establishments in the city.

9. Owing the geographic peculiarities of the State, Tamil Nadu has been dependent on water from the rivers in Karnataka and Kerala for a long time now. The dispute between Tamil Nadu and these two states also has a long history.

MAHANADI WATER DISPUTES TRIBUNAL APPROVED

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved setting up of tribunal for adjudication of long-pending dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over Mahanadi river waters. The tribunal was constituted under Inter-State River Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956 on request of Odisha and is in line with **Supreme Court's** order issued in January 2018. Odisha was

Flashback	
1.	Since mid-80s, Odisha and Chhattisgarh are locked in dispute over sharing of water of Mahanadi River.
2.	Odisha has claimed that Chhattisgarh government has been constructing dams in upper reaches of Mahanadi, depriving its farmers who are heavily dependent on river water.
3.	Chhattisgarh has been against the setting up of a tribunal, and argued that water sharing agreement was with erstwhile Madhya Pradesh government, before state bifurcated in 2000.
4.	Mahanadi is major river in East Central India.
5.	It drains an area of around 141,600 square kilometres and has total course of 858 kilometres.
6.	It flows through Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
7.	It originates from highlands of Chhattisgarh through collection of array of streams and reaches Bay of Bengal.
8.	It left bank tributaries are Shivnath, Mand, Ib, Hasdeo and right bank are Ong, parry river, Jonk, Telen.

repeatedly sought formation of tribunal stating that negotiations have failed to resolve the matter.

What

1. The Tribunal shall determine water sharing among basin States on the basis of the overall availability of water in complete Mahanadi basin, contribution of each State, present utilization of water resources in each state and potential for future development.
2. As per provisions of ISRWD Act, 1956, the Tribunal will consist of Chairman and two other members nominated by Chief Justice of India (CJI) from amongst Judges of Supreme Court or High Court.
3. The Tribunal will have to submit its report and decision within period of 3 years as per ISRWD Act, 1956 which can be extended to further period not exceeding 2 years due to unavoidable reasons.

INDIA'S FIRST AVIATION MULTI SKILL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

India's first Aviation Multi Skill Development Centre (MSDC) was launched **at Chandigarh Airport's old** terminal. The Centre is a CSR initiative of Airports Authority of India (AAI) and will initially train 2,360 students free of cost in three years.

What

1. The Centre was established in collaboration with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).
2. It is supported by Aerospace and Aviation Sector Skill Council (AASSC) of India.

Flashback
1. Demand for aviation skilled personnel is rising commensurately in India with boom in civil aviation sector witnessed in last 3-4 years.
2. In the coming few years, more than 900 new aircraft are expected to be inducted by Indian scheduled airlines.
3. Air connectivity for both passenger transport and air freight is increasing with new air routes and operationalisation of unserved and underserved airports through UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS).
4. With this, aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) and ground-handling demands for skilled personnel are also rising in tandem.

3. It will impart training based on course curriculum and assessments designed by AASSC in accordance with National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF).
4. It will train about 2,400 youth and women in 8 aviation job roles over next 3 years.

RUSTOM-2 TEST SUCCESSFULLY

India's premier defence research institute DRDO on 25 February 2018 carried out **"successful" test flight of its Rustom 2 drone**, a medium-altitude long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)**, at Chalakere in Karnataka's Chitradurga district.** Rustom 2 is being developed on the lines of predator drones of the US to carry out surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) roles for the armed forces with an endurance of 24 hours.

What

1. DRDO successfully flew its Rustom 2 at its Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) at Chalakere at Chitradurga.
2. This flight assumes significance due to the fact that this is the first flight in user configuration with higher power engine.
3. The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said the test flight **was "successful" and all its parameters were "normal."**
4. Rustom 2 is capable of carrying different combinations of payloads like synthetic aperture radar, electronic intelligence systems and situational awareness payloads.

5. DRDO chairman S Christopher, its Director General of Aeronautical System CP Ramanarayanan, DG Electronics and Communication Systems J Manjula and other senior scientists witnessed the test flight.

6. The around 1,500-crore UAV project was initiated considering requirement of the the Army, Navy and Air Force.

7. The UAV has been designed and developed by Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) of the DRDO, and aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd and Bharat Electronics Ltd are its production partners.

INCLUSIVE INTERNET INDEX 2018

India was ranked 47th out of 86 countries in Inclusive Internet Index (III) 2018 report. India has slipped by 11 positions compared to 36th rank in 2017 III report due to low internet usage and poor quality. The report was commissioned by Facebook in 2017 and is conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). It provides rigorous benchmark of national-level Internet inclusion across four categories: Availability, Affordability, Relevance and Readiness. 2018 edition of report has covered 91% of the **world's population** and expanded data set of 86 countries, up from 75 countries in 2017.

What

1. India was ranked 62nd in Availability, 39th in Affordability, 37th in Relevance and 23rd in Readiness categories.

2. Singapore, Canada, Poland and Malaysia have topped in respective categories.

3. Internet connectivity: It has grown by 8.3% over past year and has shown 65.1% increase in low-income countries with largest year-on-year increases in Rwanda (490.8%), Nepal (138.1%) and Tanzania (87.8%).

4. Mobile Internet gap: It is shrinking between rich and poor. In low-income countries, average cost of 500 MB mobile broadband connection fell from 12.1% of monthly income in 2017 to 10.0% in 2018, a 17.3% cost reduction.

5. Gender gap in Internet inclusion: It is still far too pervasive. In 69 out of 86 countries, more men have access to internet than women. On average across indexed countries, men are 33.5% more likely to have Internet access than women. This gap is substantially more pronounced in lower-income countries.

6. Empowerment: Use of internet is empowering, especially to citizens in Asia, Middle East and Africa. Privacy and security concerns have limited the use of the Internet especially in Europe.

DRAFT RULES OF COMPENSATORY AFFORESTATION ACT

The Environment Ministry has notified the draft rules of the Compensatory Afforestation Act. The act seeks to ensure expeditious utilisation of amounts realised in lieu of forest land diverted for non-forest purpose. Elaborating on the manner of the utilisation of the net present value (NPV) and penal net present value deposited in **the state fund, the draft rules said,** "80 per cent of the monies received towards NPV and penal net present value in the state fund in a fiscal will be used for 12 activities for forest **and wildlife management".**

What

1. The activities include assisted natural regeneration, artificial regeneration (by plantations), silvicultural operations in forests, protection of plantations and forests, pest and disease control in forest and forest fire prevention and control operations, the draft rules read.

2. They also include soil and moisture conservation in the forest, improvement of wildlife habitat, relocation of villages from protected areas, planting and rejuvenation of forest cover on non-forest land falling in wildlife corridors, establishment, operation and maintenance of animal rescue centre and veterinary treatment facilities for wild animals, among others.

3. The remaining 20 per cent of the NPV will be utilised for strengthening the forest and wildlife-related infrastructure, capacity building of the personnel of

state forest departments and other associated agencies and organisations, according to the draft rules.

THE INTERNATIONAL THEATRE OLYMPICS

The Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu inaugurated the 8th international Theatre Olympics 2018 at the majestic Red Fort in New Delhi.

What

1. The 51-day-long event will be theatrical extravaganza is being hosted in India by the National School of Drama under the aegis of Ministry of Culture.

2. The theme of the 8th Theatre **Olympics is "Flag of Friendship"** that aims to bridge borders and bring people of different cultures, beliefs and ideologies together through the medium of theatrical art.

3. The Vice President said that art and cultural ties have united humanity from time immemorial and ancient civilizations like the Greek, Roman, Babylonian, Egyptian and Indus Valley civilizations have enriched the cultural capital of the world.

4. Art is a mirror of the society and is reflection of the lives of people. It is a creative transformation of the stories of ordinary lives into an extraordinary art form.

5. The 8th edition of theatre Olympics which will showcase finest productions from across the world will present a unique and rare opportunity to all the theatre enthusiasts in the country to appreciate the richness of the world theatre movement.

Flashback
1. The Theatre Olympics was established in 1993 at Delphi, Greece. Being an international theatre festival, the Theatre Olympics presents some of the greatest theatre practitioners from around the world.
2. It is a platform for theatrical exchange, a gathering place for students and masters, where a dialogue despite ideological, culture and language differences is encouraged.
3. Since 1993, the Theatre Olympics has been held seven times in the following countries: Japan (1999), Russia (2001), Turkey (2006), South Korea (2010), China (2014), Poland (2016).
4. The theme of the latest edition of Theatre Olympics being held in India is **"Flag of Friendship". This most** awaited event of world theatre in India attempts to bring all the creative minds from across the globe **to this** 'NatyaMahakumbh'.

6. The National School of Drama is the torchbearer of theatre in India and has trained some of the most respected actors and theatre stalwarts of all time. Established in 1959, it has a proud legacy spanning over six decades of theatrical perfection. Hosting the 8th Theatre Olympics adds another feather to the cap of this history institution.

INDIA'S FIRST GEMS, JEWELLERY PARK

India's first gems and jewellery park is coming up at Navi Mumbai. In a matter of few years, the operations of Zaveri Bazaar in south Mumbai would be shifted to the gems and Jewellery Park. It would be called India Jewellery Park Mumbai and would come up at Thane-Belapur Road. The Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council (GJEPC) signed an MoU with the Maharashtra Government develop a 25-acre gem and jewellery park at cost of Rs 13,800 crore.

What

1. Earlier it came to Maharashtra, but due to various administrative hurdles, it was diverted to Gujarat and South India. But it is encouraging to see Maharashtra changing to attract the business once again.

2. This will definitely help the industry to grow. Maharashtra will soon set up a jewellery park, which will be first in the country. We have the vision to achieve $60 billion export in gems and jewellery industry by 2022.

3. The ceremony was graced by Union Minister of Commerce & Industry Suresh Prabhu and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at the ongoing Magnetic Maharashtra Convergence 2018 Global Investors Summit.

4. Foreign trade includes import and export of both services and goods. The role of states is crucial in national growth and Maharashtra is playing a bigger role in foreign trade as well as creating connectivity infrastructure.

5. May it be via land, sea or air; Maharashtra has the potential to become growth engine of the country, as it has huge job opportunities in terms of facility building.

6. The traditional manufacturing industry located in the Zaveri Bazaar area and other parts of Mumbai to be relocated to this park as karigars (workers) in these areas are working under sub-human conditions.

7. The park will also feature a Common Facility Centre, Custom and Banking services, Refining Centre and a host of other facilities for the manufacturers. Also, community services like schools and hospital will be developed to provide a sustainable environment for the workers and their families.

GLOBAL DIGITAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT

"Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has great potential towards improvement of delivery of healthcare services. India is committed to reforms in health service delivery using ICTunder Digital India Program of Government of India." This was stated by Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare during his address at Global Digital Health Partnership Summit, at Canberra, Australia. The Union Health Minister spoke on the topic: Making Digital Health Services a Priority in Healthcare Reform.

What

1. The Union Health Minister stated that adoption of Digital Technology for improvement of governance has always been central to polity of the Indian government.

2. He further informed that there are four major areas where India has implemented Digital Technology in healthcare.

3. Towards improving health service delivery, towards improving compliance of people towards health & care, engaging citizens in partnering with government for planning and management of health services delivery and improving governance.

4. Hospital Information Systemis being implemented in hospitals for automation of hospital processes to achieve better efficiency and service delivery in public health facilities up to Community Health Centre level.

5. e-Hospital- developed by National Informatics Centre which is implemented in more than 173 Hospitals and e-Sushrut– developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing Noida which is implemented in more than 80 hospitals.

6. Online Registration System (ORS) is used for scheduling online appointments in public sector tertiary care hospitals.

7. Around 139 hospitals are currently using ORS application. Patient engagement in improving service delivery throughMyHospitalsystem which is usedfor collection of patient feedback on health services being rendered by public hospitals.

BAL AADHAAR LAUNCHED

Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), the nodal authority for issuing Aadhaar cards has rollout **'Bal Aadhaar',** meant for kids under 5 years of age. Bal Aadhaar literally means Kid's Aadhaar. It will have blue colour to differentiate it with regular Aadhaar. It will be linked with **one of parent's Aadhaar card.** No biometric details will be captured. Biometrics are not developed for children before 5 years of age. Hence, during Aadhar enrolment **child's** Aadhaar data does not include biometric info like fingerprints and Iris scan.

Flashback
1. Aadhaar is 12-digit number which acts as proof of identity and address anywhere in the country.
2. **It is considered as world's** largest national identification project.
3. It's collects biometric and demographic data of residents and stores them in a centralised database.
4. It is issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

What

1. Bal Aadhaar will have no biometric identification, like Iris scan or fingerprint scans, as their parents will be accompanying their ward when such identification is required. However, once the kid crosses 5 years of age, then regular Aadhaar will be issued, which will have the biometric details.

2. Bal Aadhaar will not abe necessity per se, but it may be required when kid grows up, and applies for Government scholarships or grants for higher education.

3. Aadhaar rules mandate compulsory conversion of all Bal Aadhaar cards into proper Aadhaar card with biometric details once the kid turns 5 years.

SARAS TEST FLOWN SUCCESSFULLY

India's indigenously designed and developed light transport aircraft SARAS test flown successfully for the second time within a month in Bengaluru on 21 February 2018. Once the design of this prototype version is frozen, it will prepare the country to go for production of a much-awaited 19-seater passenger plane in 2-3 years. The design and development of the aircraft is being done by the CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL). The production model design is expected to be ready by June-July. The test flight on 21 February 2018 was the second of the 20 test flights planned for SARAS PT1N, before freezing the production version. The first successful test was carried out on January 24.

What

1. **It's a prototype version**. We have been simultaneously working on the SARAS Mk 2 version whose production will be possible in 2 to 3 years of time.

2. The CSIR-NAL proposes to get the SARAS Mk 2 certified initially for military and subsequently for civil version. The Indian Air Force has already committed to induct 15 aircraft initially.

3. The SARAS will be 20-25% cheaper than any imported aircraft in the same category. The improved version will be a 19-seater aircraft instead of 14-seater. The unit cost of the aircraft, with more than 70% indigenous content, will be around Rs 40-45 crores as against Rs 60-70 crores for imported ones.

4. The SARAS Mk 2 will be ideal for commuter connectivity under the gover**nment of India's UDAAN scheme** for a variety of applications like air taxi, aerial search/survey, executive transport, disaster management, border patrol, coast guard, ambulance and other community services. Its successful development will be one of the game changers in the history of civil aviation in India.

5. The Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has been identified as the production agency for the military version of SARAS, while the production of civil version will be given to identified private industries. It is estimated that India needs 120-160 aircraft in this genre – both civil and military versions – in the next 10 years.

6. The aircraft currently available in the international market are of 1970s technology. They have higher fuel consumption, lower speeds, unpressurised cabin, high operating cost and unsuitable for operations from hot and high-altitude airfields.

7. The upgraded SARAS Mk2 version has considerable drag/weight reduction with unique features like high cruise speed, lower fuel consumption, short landing and take-off distance, low cabin noise, operable from high and hot airfield, with pressurised cabin, operable from semi-prepared airfield and low acquisition and maintenance cost.

MAHARASHTRA INKS DEAL WITH VIRGIN GROUP

The Virgin Group led by Richard Branson has signed an intent agreement with Maharashtra Government to build **world's first hyperloop transportation** system between Mumbai and Pune. The foundation stone for the project was laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on first day of Magnetic Maharashtra investor summit held in Mumbai.

Hyperloop Technology
1. Hyperloop Technology is dubbed as fifth mode of transportation.
2. It is system of magnetically levitating capsules (pods) that are sent at high speeds through low-pressure tubes.
3. It envisages tube modular transport system that runs free of friction.
4. It uses linear Induction motors in it to control speed of pods.
5. It is still in trial stages in different countries and not been implemented for practical use anywhere in world yet.

What

1. The proposed hyperlook transportation system will link central Pune with megapolis as well as Navi Mumbai international airport.

2. It aims to reduce travel time between two mega cities to 20 minutes from three hours at present.

3. The proposed loop will be a fully electric system and will have the capability travel up to 1,000 km per hour.

4. It will be able to ferry 150 million passengers every year.

5. It will transform transportation system and make Maharashtra global pioneer in this space. The project will create thousands of jobs and has numerous socioeconomic benefits.

BRO BUILDS STRATEGIC ROAD

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has achieved another major feat in Arunachal **Pradesh by building an** 'operationally critical' **road and another bridge in the** remote Upper Subansiri district of the state, along the India–China border. The construction work was undertaken by the BRO under its Project Arunank—an initiative to connect the inhospitable terrains of the state with the thoroughfares.

What

1. The strategic road, connecting Tama Chung Chung (TCC) with Bidak area in Upper Subansiri, was thrown open to public on January 30.

2. The inhospitable terrain, where rains lasted for eight to nine months, made the road construction work a challenge.

3. The project had received a major boost in 2017 when a single span 200-feet bailey bridge over the turbulent Subansiri River was constructed.

4. The work on the critical road that began way back in 2009 was completed only recently. It is only because of persistent efforts of the engineers and the personnel of 23 Border Road Task Force (BRTF) that the project turned out to be a success.

AGNI-II MISSILE TEST FIRED

India on 20 February 2018 test-fired its medium range nuclear capable Agni-II missile with a strike ranges of 2,000 km from Abdul Kalam Island off Odisha coast. The trial of the surface-to-surface missile was conducted from a mobile launcher at the Launch Complex-4 of the Integrated Test Range (ITR). The Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) has already been inducted into the services and today's test was carried out by the Army's Strategic Forces Command (SFC) with logistic support provided by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

What

1. The 20-mt-long Agni-II ballistic missile has a launch weight of 17 tonne and can carry a payload of 1,000 kg over a distance of 2,000 kms.
2. The state-of-the-art missile, already a part of the country's arsenal for strategic deterrence, was launched as a training exercise by the armed forces.
3. Agni-II, a two-stage missile, equipped with advanced high accuracy navigation system and guided by a unique command and control system was propelled by solid rocket propellant system.
4. The entire trajectory of the trial was tracked by a battery of sophisticated radars, telemetry observation stations, electro-optic instruments and two naval ships located near the impact point in the down range area of the Bay of Bengal.
5. Agni-II was developed by the Advanced Systems Laboratory along with other DRDO laboratories and integrated by the Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad, sources said.
6. The missile is part of the Agni series of missiles which includes the Agni-I with a 700 km range, Agni-III with a 3,000 km range, Agni-IV and Agni-V both having long range capabilities.
7. The first proto type of the Agni-II missile was carried out on April 11, 1999 and last launch was a user's trial on May 4, 2017.

SUCCESSFUL TEST OF NAG

India on 28 February 2018 was successfully test-fired Anti Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) Nag in desert conditions. The Nag ATGM has been developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and flight tests have once again proved their capability.

What

1. The technologies pertaining to ATGM to engage targets in different conditions have been established with the successful tests.
2. Anti Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) NAG were successfully flight-tested in desert conditions against two tank targets at different ranges and timings.
3. With this, the developmental trials of the missile have been completed and it is now ready for induction.

CABINET UPS GUARANTEE TO NAFED,

The Centre on 28 February 2018 approved the doubling of government guarantee given to lender banks for providing credit limited to the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED). The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its nod to increase the guarantee to 19,000 crore from existing 9,500 crore, and cleared the continuation of the **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme** (PMEGP) for three years till FY20, with a total outlay of 5,500 crore. The hike in guarantee, would help NAFED increase its procurement so that farmers are prevented from resorting to distress sales as prices of almost all pulses and oilseeds are currently below the minimum support price (MSP) notified by the government.

What

1. The Cabinet also regularised and extended guarantee given on credit given to **the Small Farmers' Agri**-Business Forum for 45 crore.

2. The PMEGP, for which the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is the nodal implementation agency at the national level, is estimated to create additional employment opportunities for 15 lakh people.

3. Under the scheme, each district in the country will award a minimum of 75 projects that will help traditional artists and and unemployed youth in rural as well as urban areas to set up micro-enterprises.

4. First launched under the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises in 2008-09, the PMEGP scheme has helped create 4.55 lakh micro-enterprises providing employment to an estimated 38 lakh people with a margin money subsidy of 9,564 crore.

5. The Cabinet also gave the green signal to a proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focussed attention to 12 identified service sectors, including accounting and financing, communications, construction, educational, environmental, information technology, tourism, hospitality, educational, logistics and transport.

6. **The initiative is contemplated to increase India's share in global services exports** to 4.2 per cent by 2022 from 3.3 per cent in 2015, Union Telecom and IT Minister Ravi Shankar

'DHANUSH' MISSILE SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRED

India 23 February 2018 successfully test-fired the nuclear-**capable 'Dhanush'** ballistic missiles with a strike range of 350 kms from a naval ship off Odisha coast. The surface-to-surface missile, a naval variant of the indigenously-**developed 'Prithvi'** missile, was test-fired from the ship positioned near Paradip in the Bay of Bengal.

What

1. **'Dhanush' missile is capable of carrying a payload of 500 kg** and hitting both land and sea-based targets, the sources said, adding that its trial was carried out by the Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the defence forces.

2. The missile launch was part of training exercise by the SFC of Indian Navy.

3. **Describing the test launch as"a complete success", the offi**cials said all mission objectives were met during the trial.

4. The missile launch and its flight performance were monitored from DRDO telemetry and radar facilities in the Odisha coast.

5. The single-stage, liquid-**propelled 'Dhanush', has already been inducted** into the defence services. It is one of the five missiles developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

6. The last trial was successfully tested on April 9, 2015.

MARKS OF PRELIMS EXAM CAN'T BE MADE PUBLIC: SC

The Supreme Court has held that raw and scaled marks awarded to candidates in Civil Services (Prelims) examination can not be revealed under Right to Information Act and set aside Delhi High Court order asking UPSC to disclose the marks. A bench of A K Goel and U U Lalit allowed the plea of UPSC which contended that disclosure of marks could lead to compromising the integrity of the examination system and people would come to know about the scaling system used by it. The commission contended that the corrections made in the answer book would likely arouse doubt and perhaps even suspicion in the candidate's mind and this would not only breed grievances, but would likely lead to litigation and pleaded the apex court to set aside HC order which had allowed the plea of candidates to make answer sheet public under the transparency law.

What

1. Weighing the need for transparency and accountability on the one hand and requirement of optimum use of fiscal resources and confidentiality of sensitive information on the other, we are of the view that information sought with regard to marks in Civil Services Exam cannot be directed to be furnished mechanically.

Situation of exams of other academic bodies may stand on different footing. Furnishing raw marks will cause problems as pleaded by the UPSC which will not be in public interest, the bench said.

2. The HC had passed the order on a plea on a group of unsuccessful candidates who had appeared in 2010 civil services examination. They had sought information in the form of cut-off marks for every subject, scaling methodology, model answers and complete result of all candidates.

NIGHT TRIAL OF PRITHVI-II MISSILE

India on 21 February 2017 successfully conducted a night trial of its indigenously developed nuclear capable *Prithvi-II* missile with a strike range of 350 km, from a test range in Odisha. The surface-to-surface missile was test-fired from a mobile launcher from launch complex-3 of the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur near around 8.30pm, as part of a user trial by the Army. The perfect test launch came after successful trial of the Agni-5 missile on January 18, Agni-1 on February 6 and Agni II yesterday from the Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast. *Prithvi II* missile was also successfully test fired earlier on February 7 from the ITR at Chandipur. The state-of-the-art *Prithvi-II* missile is capable of carrying 500 to 1,000 kg of warheads and is thrusted by liquid propulsion twin engines.

What

1. The sophisticated missile, which has a strike range of 350 km, uses advanced inertial guidance system with manoeuvring trajectory to hit its target.
2. The missile was randomly chosen from the production stock and the entire launch activities were carried out by the specially formed Strategic Force Command (SFC) of the Army, and monitored by the scientists of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) as part of training exercise.
3. The missile trajectory was tracked by radars, electro-optical tracking systems and telemetry stations by the DRDO along the coast of Odisha.
4. The downrange teams onboard the ship deployed near the designated impact point in the Bay of Bengal monitored the terminal events and splashdown.
5. In salvo mode, on November 21, 2016, two missiles were successfully test fired in quick succession from the same base and the last trial was successful on June 2, 2017 from the same base.
6. Inducted into the Armed forces of the country in 2003, the nine-metre-tall, single-stage liquid-fuelled Prithvi-II is the first missile to have been developed by the DRDOunder the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

INDIA TO HOST FIRST ISA

India is going to host first International Solar Alliance (ISA) summit in March 2018 in New Delhi. It will be hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and attended by leaders from over 50 member countries. It will include French President Emmanuel Macron, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid. During the summit, two new programmes — on scaling solar e-mobility and storage, and on rooftop solar will be inaugurated.

What

1. The ISA was one of key takeaways at Paris Climate summit, 2015 (2015 UN Climate Change Conference, COP 21 or CMP 11).
2. It is aimed at tapping solar energy in the countries that lie partially or fully between Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.
3. ISA is first treaty-based intergovernmental organisation (entered into force in December 2017) to be headquartered at Gurugram, India.
4. Its major objectives include global deployment of over 1,000GW of solar generation capacity and mobilisation of investment of over US $1000 billion into solar energy by 2030.

5. It also aims to bring together countries with rich solar potential to aggregate global demand, thereby reducing prices through bulk purchase, facilitating deployment of existing solar technologies at scale and promoting collaborative solar R&D and capacity building.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERSEX ASIA NETWORK LAUNCHED

The issues, challenges and discrimination faced by intersex people are often not understood, even by medical professionals. But now, a newly formed network will help promote the rights of the community in Asia. Intersex Asia was launched at the First Asian Intersex Forum, which took place in Bangkok, Thailand, between February 8 and 11. It brought together 14 intersex people from Hong Kong (China), India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.

What

1. Intersex Asia aims at working for the promotion and protection of human rights of intersex people in Asia, to be a representative voice for Asian intersex people and communities, and to ensure that the rights to life, bodily integrity, physical autonomy and self-determination of intersex people are promoted and **protected everywhere," says Madurai**-based intersex activist Gopi Shankar Madurai. He has been elected to the Intersex Asia Network and will represent the Indian Intersex community.

2. An autonomous network, Intersex Asia aims to work towards the promotion and protection of human rights of intersex people in Asia, to be a representative voice for Asian intersex people and communities, and to ensure that the rights to life, bodily integrity, physical autonomy and self-determination of intersex people are promoted and protected everywhere.

3. Throughout Asia, lack of awareness about intersex issues from medical professionals leads to unnecessary and inhumane medical procedures, which **include 'normalising' surgeries and treatments on intersex infants, adolescents** and adults.

4. Intersex children and adults are often stigmatised as they are born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads, hormones and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies.

5. As intersex people in Asia, we live in a society that perpetuates discrimination, violence and killings of intersex people by a number of cultural, religious, traditional and medical beliefs and practices.

WORLD'S FIRST STATE-BACKED DIGITAL CURRENCY

Venezuela has formally launched its new oil-backed cryptocurrency in an unconventional bid to haul itself out of a deepening economic crisis. The leftist Caracas government **put 38.4 million units of the world's first state**-backed digital currency, the Petro, on private pre-sale from the early hours. During the first 20 hours of the pre-sale**, which runs through March 19, Venezuela received "intent to buy" offers to the tune of** USD 735 million, according to President Nicolas Maduro.

What

1. The Petro reinforces our independence and economic sovereignty and will allow us to fight the greed of foreign powers that try to suffocate Venezuelan families to seize our oil.

2. A total of 100 million Petros will go on sale, with an initial value set at USD 60, based on the price of a barrel of Venezuelan crude in mid-January—but subject to change.

3. Economist and cryptocurrency expert Jean-Paul Leidenz told AFP prices during the pre-**sale "will be agreed privately," and will then fluctuate according to the** market when the initial coin offering of 44 million Petros is made on March 20. Meanwhile, the government will reserve the remaining 17.6 million Petros.

4. **Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves** but is facing a crippling economic and political crisis. Vice-President Tareck El Aissami said the Petro will **"generate confidence and security in the national and international market.**

5. Theoretically, with cryptocurrencies you could bypass the US financial system…but everything depends on generating confidence.

6. Venezuela is mired in a deep economic crisis triggered in large part by a fall in crude oil prices and a drop in oil production, which accounts for about 96 per **cent of the country's exports. It is struggling to restructure its external debt,** estimated at around USD 150 billion by some experts.

INDIA NOTIFIES REVISED PACT WITH KENYA

The Finance Ministry has notified a revised double tax avoidance agreement (DTAA) between India and Kenya with a lower withholding tax of 10 per cent on dividends, interest and royalty. The two countries had signed and notified a DTAA in 1985, which was then revised on July 11, 2016. The revised DTAA will improve transparency in tax matters, help curb tax evasion and tax avoidance, remove double taxation and will stimulate the flow of investment, technology and services between India and Kenya.

What

1. Under the revised pact, the withholding tax on dividends and interest income has been cut to 10 per cent from the earlier 15 per cent, on royalties to 10 per cent from 20 per cent and on fees for management, professional and technical services to 10 per cent from the previous 17.5 per cent.

2. It also provides for a new Article on Limitation of Benefits to allow treaty benefits to bonafide residents of both countries, to combat treaty abuse by third country residents and to allow application of domestic law to prevent tax avoidance or evasion.

3. The Article on Exchange of Information has also been updated to provide for exchange of information, including banking information for tax purposes, to the widest possible extent.

4. The revised treaty also includes a new Article on Assistance in Collection of Taxes to help in cases of tax revenue claims between both the countries.

INDIA, IRAN SIGN PACT

India and Iran on 17 February 2018 signed agreements including Tehran leasing to New Delhi operational control of part of the Iranian east coast port of Chabahar for 18 months. The $85 million project, just 90 km from the China-sponsored Gwadar port in Pakistan, creates a transit route between India, Iran and Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan. India is trying to develop Chabahar as a way to gain access to the markets of central Asia as well as Afghanistan.

What

1. A leasing agreement giving operational control to India of Shahid Beheshti port - phase one of the Chabahar port - was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani.

2. Other agreements included a double taxation avoidance treaty, extradition, and cooperation in the farm sector.

RUSSIA VETOES UN RESOLUTION

Russia vetoed a British-drafted UN resolution on 26 February 2018 that took aim at Iran over a report by UN experts that said the country violated an arms embargo by failing to prevent missiles and drones from being supplied to Shiite rebels in Yemen. The vote in the Security Council was 11 in favor, Russia and Bolivia opposed, and China and Kazakhstan abstaining. Britain sought to focus attention on a report in January by the UN panel of experts monitoring sanctions against Iran that examined missile remnants fired into Saudi Arabia by Houthi re**bels last year and said many "are consistent with those** of the Iranian designed and manufactured Qiam-1 missile**."**

What

1. **It concluded that Iran was in "non**-compliance" with the 2015 UN arms embargo on Yemen because it failed "to take the necessary measures" to prevent the direct or indirect supply of missiles and drones to the Houthis.

2. Britain's deputy UN ambassador Jonathan Allen urged council member not to "shy away from calling out those whose actions undermine international peace and security.

3. This council needs to stand firm in the face of state non-compliance and send a clear message that it will not be tolerated.

4. To try to get Russian support, Britain first dropped a condemnation of Iran in the text. And during last-minute negotiations it dropped a promise of "additional measures" against violators of the arms embargo, and it also softened language from "expressing concern" to "taking note with particular concern" of the experts' findings.

5. This will inevitably escalate regional tensions and lead to conflicts among key regional players," he told the council, warning of the "grave danger in toying with geopolitical maps" and antagonizing relations in the Middle East between Sunnis and Shiites.

6. In March 2015, a Saudi-led, US-backed coalition began what has turned into a devastating war that has killed more than 10,000 people, displaced 2 million, and created the world's worst humanitarian disaster. Saudi Arabia views the Houthis as an Iranian proxy.

7. Today, Russia accused the majority of this council of attempting to **destabilize the region by supporting the UK's text**. This is perverse when, in fact, Russia's veto today serves only to protect Iran's efforts to destabilize the region and spread its malign influence.

8. **Iran accused the US and UK of being "the major** military supporters of the war of aggression against Yemen.

ECONOMY

OMBUDSMAN SCHEME FOR NBFCS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued an ombudsman scheme for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), offering a grievance redressal mechanism for their customers. The scheme will come into effect immediately, the regulator said. In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 45L of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, the RBI being satisfied that for the purpose of enabling it to promote conducive credit culture among the NBFCs and to regulate the credit system of the country to its advantage, it is necessary to provide for a system of ombudsman for redressal of complaints against deficiency in services concerning deposits, loans and advances and other specified matters, hereby directs that the NBFCs.

What

1. An officer at the RBI not below the rank of general manager will be appointed by the regulator as the ombudsman with territorial jurisdiction being specified by the central bank. The tenure of each ombudsman cannot exceed three years and can be reduced by the regulator if needed.

2. Any customer or person can file a compliant with the ombudsman on various grounds like non-payment or inordinate delay in payment of interest, non-repayment of deposits, lack of transparency in loan agreement, non-compliance with RBI directives on fair practices code for NBFCs, levying of charges without sufficient notice to the customers and failure or delay in returning the securities documents despite repayment of dues among others.

3. If a complaint is not settled by agreement within a specified period as the ombudsman may allow the parties, he may, after affording the parties a "reasonable opportunity to present their case, either in writing or in a meeting, pass an award either allowing or rejecting the complaint.

4. Only written complaints or those in electronic format will be accepted. The ombudsman may also award compensation not exceeding one hundred thousand rupees to the complainant, taking into account the loss of time, expenses incurred, harassment and mental anguish suffered by the complainant.

5. The NBFC shall, unless it has preferred an appeal, within one month from the date of receipt by it of the acceptance in writing of the award by the complainant under sub-clause (8), comply with the award and intimate compliance to the complainant and the ombudsman.

6. The ombudsman will be required to send a report to the RBI governor annually on 30 June containing general review of the activities of his office during the preceding financial year and other information required by the central bank.

7. The scheme also allows a person to appeal in case of dissatisfaction with any award by the ombudsman.

8. Any person aggrieved by an award under Clause 12 allowing the complaint or rejecting the complaint for the reasons referred to in sub clauses (c) to (f) of clause 13, may within 30 days of the date of receipt of communication of award or rejection of complaint, prefer an appeal before the appellate authority, the scheme stated.

CABINET NOD TO AMEND CHIT FUNDS ACT

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given approval to introduce the banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 in Parliament. The bill is aimed at tackling the menace of illicit deposit taking activities in the country. Companies/ institutions running such schemes exploit existing regulatory gaps and lack of strict administrative measures to dupe poor and gullible people of their hard-earned savings. The Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill, 2018 will provide a comprehensive legislation to deal with the menace of illicit deposit schemes in the country through, Complete prohibition of unregulated deposit taking activity;

1. Deterrent punishment for promoting or operating an unregulated deposit taking scheme;

2. Stringent punishment for fraudulent default in repayment to depositors;

3. Designation of a Competent Authority by the State Government to ensure repayment of deposits in the event of default by a deposit taking establishment;

4. Powers and functions of the competent authority including the power to attach assets of a defaulting establishment;

5. Designation of Courts to oversee repayment of depositors and to try offences under the Act; and

6. Listing of Regulated Deposit Schemes in the Bill, with a clause enabling the Central Government to expand or prune the list.

Salient Features

1. The Bill contains a substantive banning clause which bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any Unregulated Deposit Scheme.

2. The principle is that the Bill would ban unregulated deposit taking activities altogether, by making them an offence ex-ante, rather than the existing legislative-cum-regulatory framework which only comes into effect ex-post with considerable time lags.

3. The Bill creates three different types of offences, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.

4. The Bill provides for severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines to act as deterrent.

5. The Bill has adequate provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.

6. The Bill provides for attachment of properties/ assets by the Competent Authority, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors.

7. Clear-cut time lines have been provided for attachment of property and restitution to depositors.

8. The Bill enables creation of an online central database, for collection and sharing of information on deposit taking activities in the country.

9. The Bill defines "Deposit Taker" and "Deposit" comprehensively.

10. "Deposit Takers" include all possible entities (including individuals) receiving or soliciting deposits, except specific entities such as those incorporated by legislation.

Background
1. The Finance Minister in the Budget Speech 2016-17 had announced that a comprehensive central legislation wouldbe brought in to deal with the menace of illicit deposit taking schemes, as in the recent past, there have been rising instances of people in various parts of the country being defrauded by illicit deposit taking schemes.
2. The worst victims of these schemes are the poor and the financially illiterate, and the operations of such schemes are often spread over many States.
3. Subsequently, Finance Minister in the Budget Speech 2017-18 had announced that the draft bill to curtail the menace of illicit deposit schemes had been placed in the public domain and would be introduced shortly after its finalization.

11. "Deposit" is defined in such a manner that deposit takers are restricted from camouflaging public deposits as receipts, and at the same time not to curb or hinder acceptance of money by an establishment in the ordinary course of its business.

12. Being a comprehensive Union law, the Bill adopts best practices from State laws, while entrusting the primary responsibility of implementing the provisions of the legislation to the State Governments.

THE CHIT FUNDS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval to introduce the Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018 in Parliament. In order to facilitate orderly growth of the Chit Funds sector and remove bottlenecks being faced by the Chit Funds industry, thereby enabling greater financial access of people to other financial products, the following amendments to the Chit Funds Act, 1982 have been proposed:

1. Use of the words "Fraternity Fund" for chit business under Sections 2(b) and 11(1) of the Chit Funds Act, 1982, to signify its inherent nature, and distinguish its working from "Prize Chits" which are banned under a separate legislation;

2. While retaining the requirement of a minimum of two subscribers for the conduct of the draw of the Chit and for the preparation of the minutes of the proceedings, the Chit Funds (Amendment) Bill, 2018 proposes to allow the two minimum required subscribers to join through video conferencing duly recorded by the foreman, as physical presence of the subscribers towards the final stages of a Chit may not be forthcoming easily.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

HOME MINISTRY SETS DEADLINE FOR CYBER LABS

The government has set March 31 as the deadline for states to set up cyber forensic training labs for which Rs 82.8 crore has already been released. The setting up of these forensic training labs comes as part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) plans to control cyber crimes in the country. It has already asked states to gear up institutional

mechanism to tackle cyber crimes, which pose "technical, administrative as well as legal challenges" in investigations.

What

1. The MHA has also unveiled an extensive training programme in which 37,500 policemen and judicial officers will be trained in the next two years about the facets of cyber crime. As per the scheme, states that got Rs 3.94 crore as grant should set up a lab with at least 25 work stations.
2. Those who got Rs 2.30 crore each should have labs with 25 workstations and 15 for those who got Rs 1.48 crore each.
3. These funds have to be utilised only for the purchase of cyber forensic tools and lab resources and it cannot be used for civil work or construction of lab.
4. According to a concept note circulated by the MHA on cyber crimes, most of the crimes now have an element of misuse of computers, smartphones and communication networks and these technologies are being used by criminals in committing conventional crimes.
5. Increasing use of internet and social media has resulted in a plethora of varied crimes being committed in the cyber domain.
6. It has become imperative for the law enforcement agencies to have an in-depth understanding of the working of the cyber domain and the modus operandi of crimes being committed therein.

'ULTRAMASSIVE' BLACK HOLES DISCOVERED

Astronomers have detected what are likely to be the most massive black holes ever discovered in the universe. **The discovery was made using data collected by NASA's** Chandra X-ray telescope on galaxies up to 3.5 billion light years away from Earth, researchers said. The results showed that these ultramassive black holes are growing faster than the stars in their respective galaxies. A black hole is an invisible celestial object whose gravitational pull is so strong that neither matter nor light can escape it.

What

1. Researchers at University of Montreal in Canada, and Institute of Space **Sciences in Spain, studied 72 galaxies located at the centre of the universe's** brightest and most massive galaxy clusters. Astronomers calculated the masses of black holes detected in these galaxy clusters by analysing their radio wave and X-ray emissions.
2. The results showed that the masses of ultramassive black holes are roughly 10 times greater than those originally projected.
3. **Almost half of the sample's black holes are est**imated to be at least 10 billion times more massive than the Sun. This puts them in a class of extreme **heavyweights that certain astronomers call** 'ultramassive black holes.'
4. A black hole is most often created when a massive star dies and collapses on itself. **According to Einstein's theory of relativity,** time flows more slowly in strong gravitational fields, like those of these gargantuan celestial objects.

SRIJAN IDEA COMPETITION

Ministry of Railways has launched SRIJAN (Station Rejuvenation through Joint ActioN), an idea competition for development of 635 railway stations. It was launched on MyGov portal by Indian Railway Stations Development Corporation Limited

MyGov Portal
1. It is a citizen engagement platform launched by Central Government in 2014 to promote active **participation of citizens in country's governance** and development.
2. Its objective is to create common platform for Indian citizens to crowd source governance ideas from citizens.
3. It allows users (citizens) to discuss and contribute on various government projects and plans.
4. It is hosted and managed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

(IRSDC).

What

1. IRSDC has taken up massive redevelopment of around 600 major Railway stations across the country.
2. In this mega exercise, it will take assistance and involve all stakeholders i.e. railway passengers, urban planners, architects, engineers.
3. For this, it has extended pen invitation for developing concept and master plans for redevelopment of stations firms & professionals interested for Station Development.
4. The winners in the SRIJAN competition will get certificates and worthy ideas will be incorporated in the designs.

SPACEX LAUNCHES IMAGING SATELLITE

Elon Musk's Space Exploration Technologies Corp launched a Falcon 9 rocket carrying a customer payload plus its own broadband demonstration satellites in the company's first mission since millions tuned in earlier this month for its Falcon Heavy debut. The launch from **Vandenberg Air Force Base on California's central Coast** carried a radar-imaging satellite for Spain's Hisdesat Servicios Estrategicos SA. The PAZ satellite will orbit the planet 15 times a day and collect information — including ship tracking and weather data — for government and commercial customers.

What

1. The rocket also carried a **pair of SpaceX's own broadband satellites** as a secondary payload.
2. Microsat-2a and -2b are the first prototypes for the company's planned constellation of satellites — dubbed Starlink — intended to offer broadband internet around the world. If successful, Starlink constellation will serve least served.
3. **SpaceX's fourth launch** in what is expected to be a record year took off from the California pad.
4. SpaceX is targeting roughly 30 total launches this year, including flying its new Falcon Heavy rocket again in June. The PAZ satellite appeared to deploy successfully during SpaceX's webcast.
5. **The company didn't attempt to recover the rocket's first stage, which flew** previously in an August mission. SpaceX did try to catch the fairing, or nosecone, using netting o**n a ship, but it "missed by a few hundred meters.**

13-DIGIT FOR M2M SERVICES

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked telecom service providers to start issuing 13-digit digit numbers for SIM based machine-to-machine (M2M) services, which will co-exist with 10-digit numbers. The DoT had approved the scheme and a letter on it was sent to various departments on February 9, 2018.

What

1. M2M services are those where internet-enabled devices like point-of-sale machines or even latest refrigerators that communicate through a SIM card. This decision will not have any effect on mobile phone SIMs.
2. During the meeting, it was decided that 13-digit M2M numbering plan will be implemented from July 1, 2018. From this date onwards, all new M2M mobile connections will be allocated l3-digit numbers only.
3. The DoT said all service providers must ensure that their network elements including IT and other relevant systems are aligned with 13-digit numbering for M2M SIMs before July 1, 2018.
4. Migration of existing 10-digit M2M numbers to 13 digits will start latest by October 1, 2018 and shall be completed by December 31, 2018.

MISCELLANEOUS

GLOBAL TOP EMPLOYER

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT services company, is recognised as one of world's best employers by the Top Employer Institute for the third year running. The Top Employer Institute, Amsterdam-based global certification company in employee conditions, selected TCS for its exceptional employee offerings from a pool of more than 1,300 companies in 113 countries.

What

1. TCS picked up the latest Top Employer endorsement for 27 of its individual country teams across Europe, Asia Pacific, North America, Latin America and the Middle East.
2. TCS Human Resources Executive Vice President and Global Head Ajoy Mukherjee said as global business evolves into the 'post-digital' era - with the likes of AI, cloud and robotics changing the way companies operate and are structured the nature of work is also changing.
3. TCS digital technology and business agility programmes, teams develop exciting and innovative experience that they can combine with their contextual knowledge of our customers to deliver better value and ultimately help solve their business challenges.
4. TCS forms a crucial part of this select group of employers, and is rightfully receiving the global Top Employers certification for yet another year as a result of this consistent dedication to remain one of the world's best employers.

PILS IN SC FOR POPULATION CONTROL

Three separate petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a direction to the Centre to ensure strict population control measures by adopting a two-child policy and reward or punish those who adhere or fail to follow it. The petitions, filed by advocates Anuj Saxena, Prathvi Raj Chauhan and Priya Sharma, claimed that statistics relating to population growth indicate that by 2022, the population of India is likely to pass the 1.5 billion mark.

What

1. The PILs, which are likely to come up for hearing, also said that unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, poor health, pollution and global warming are a few effects of the population explosion that is being experienced in the country.
2. Direct the respondents (Centre) to formulate policies with a vision to encourage and/or reward the family who is adhering to two child policies, and punish appropriately, who are in non-compliance of the same.
3. The PILs also claimed that since India has the youngest workforce in the world and due to this extreme population explosion, the youth are driving towards unemployment. The population of India was around 361 million during the census of 1951. It reached over 1.21 billion during the census of 2011.
4. Earlier, on February 12, activist Anupam Bajpai had also moved the apex court alleging that the increase in population was imposing an increasing burden on the limited natural resources of the country and causing continuous degradation.

LANGUAGES HEADING FOR EXTINCTION

More than 40 languages or dialects in India are considered to be endangered and is believed to be heading towards extinction as only a few thousand people speak them. According to a report of the census directorate, there are 22 scheduled languages and 100 non-scheduled languages in the country which are spoken by a large number of people - one lakh or more. However, there are around 42 languages which are spoken by less than 10,000 people. These are considered endangered and may be heading towards extinction, a home ministry official said.

What

1. A list prepared by UNESCO has also mentioned about the 42 languages or dialects in India which are endangered and they may be heading towards extinction.
2. The languages or dialects which were considered endangered, include 11 from Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Great Andamanese, Jarawa, Lamongse, Luro, Muot, Onge, Pu, Sanenyo, Sentilese, Shompen and Takahanyilang), seven from Manipur (Aimol, Aka, Koiren, Lamgang, Langrong, Purum and Tarao) and four from Himachal Pradesh (Baghati, Handuri, Pangvali and Sirmaudi).
3. The other languages in the endangered category are Manda, Parji and Pengo (Odisha), Koraga and Kuruba (Karnataka), Gadaba and Naiki (Andhra Pradesh), Kota and Toda (Tamil Nadu), Mra and Na (Arunachal Pradesh), Tai Nora and Tai Rong (Assam), Bangani (Uttarakhand), Birhor (Jharkhand), Nihali (Maharashtra), Ruga (Meghalaya) and Toto (West Bengal).
4. The Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore, has been working for the protection and preservation of endangered languages of the country, under a central scheme, another official said.
5. Under the programme, grammatical descriptions, monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, language primers, anthologies of folklore, encyclopedias of all languages or dialects especially those spoken by less than 10,000 people are being prepared.
6. Apart from the 22 scheduled languages, there are 31 other languages in the country which were given the status of official language by various state governments and Union territories.
7. According to the census data, there are 1,635 rationalised mother tongues, 234 identifiable mother tongues and 22 major languages in the country.

INDIA TO HOST WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

India will host United Nation's World Environment Day celebration this year with a theme 'Beat Plastic Pollution'. The Union Ministry of Environment and Forest and the United Nation on 19 February 2018 signed an agreement on the hosting of the June 5 event during which governments, communities and individuals from around the world would be encouraged to find out an alternative to plastic.

What

1. Every year the world uses 500 billion plastic bags and each year at least 8 million tonnes of plastic are dumped into the oceans.
2. This is equivalent to a full garbage truck carrying plastic being thrown into the sea in every minute.
3. India demonstrated tremendous global leadership on climate change and the need to shift to a low carbon economy, and India will now help galvanize greater action on plastics pollution.
4. The agreement was signed in the presence of Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan.
5. World Environment Day is a UN Environment-led global event.

PACT FOR SMART CITY COOPERATION

Our Bureau India on 23 February 2018 signed a MoU with Germany to develop modules for providing urban basic services and housing for smart cities. Sustainable solutions The MoU signed between Union Ministry for Housing and Urban Affairs and the German development agency GIZ would develop and apply concepts for sustainable urban development providing urban basic services and housing in select cities as well as smart cities in India.

What

1. GIZ would contribute up t**o €8 million for the project** which would run for a period of three years.

2. Technical cooperation measure will support approaches for sustainable urban development in the area of integrated planning, provision of affordable housing and basic services with particular focus on water, waste water and solid waste management and mobility.

What is a Smart City?

1. Smart Cities focus on their most pressing needs and on the greatest opportunities to improve lives.

2. They tap a range of approaches - digital and information technologies, urban planning best practices, public-private partnerships, and policy change - to make a difference. They always put people first.

3. In the approach to the Smart Cities Mission, the objective is to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of 'Smart' Solutions.

4. The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development and the idea is to look at compact areas, create a replicable model which will act like a light house to other aspiring cities.

5. The Smart Cities Mission is meant to set examples that can be replicated both within and outside the Smart City, catalysing the creation of similar Smart Cities in various regions and parts of the country.

5G TRIAL IN INDIA SUCCESSFULLY

Airtel and Huawei have conducted India's first 5G network trial, which took place at **Airtel's Network Experience Centre in Manesar, Gurugram**. The setup for this 5G trial involved a 5G RAN that operated on a 3.5GHz network band, along with 5G Core and a 50GE network slicing router. In the duration of the tests, a user throughput speed of 3Gbps was achieved, which the companies claim is the highest for the 3.5GHz band. The tests were conducted within a 100MHz bandwidth, and resulted in a 1-millisecond end-to-end network latency.

What

1. 5G services, based on a third-generation partnership project (3GPP), are expected to offer enhanced mobile broadband (eMBB) through R15 repeaters, that can cater to coverage requirements.

2. In December 2017, 3GPP completed the first set of 5G New Radio standards. Under 5G technology, users are expected to be able to experience premium video quality across modes including, 360-degree, 4K, ultra-HD, along with virtual reality and augmented reality.

3. Telecom operators and smartphone companies believe that 5G also holds the key to growth of artificial intelligence (AI) systems, and can enhance Internet of Things (IoT). The promise of 5G is endless, it will be a game changer and, it will change the way we live, work and engage.

FIRST EVER GOVT TO RANK MEDICAL COLLEGES

In a first, the Centre is planning to rank medical and dental colleges. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) of the human development resource ministry is working towards adding medical education category to the rankings this year. The rankings assume significance as performance of institutions has **been linked with "**Institutions of Eminence**" scheme. The number of institutions** participating in the rankings has risen by over 1,000 this year. The rankings are to be announced on April 2. NIRF, in its first rankings in 2016, had four categories — universities, engineering, management and pharmacy.

What

1. In 2017, overall and college categories were added. An HRD official said the final call will be taken by the National Board of Accreditation.

2. NBA sources said that close to 100 medical and dental college have applied. In all, over 4,000 institutions have applied. Last year 3,000 institutions participated in the India Rankings 2017.
3. NBA sources said that apart from the government institutions, a large number of private higher education institutions have joined the rankings this year who were not part of the process earlier.
4. NIRF outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country. The methodology draws from the overall recommendations broad understanding arrived at by a core committee set up by MHRD, to identify the broad parameters for ranking various universities and institutions.
5. **The parameters broadly cover "teaching, learning and resources," "research and professional practices," "graduation outcomes," "outreach and inclusivity," and "perception".**

INDIA TO HOST MILAN

India will host navies from at least 16 countries for an eight-day mega naval exercise from March 6 with an aim to expand regional cooperation and combat unlawful activities in critical sea lanes. The biennial exercise 'Milan' is being organised at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the backdrop of China's growing military posturing in the Indo-Pacific regionand officials said the issue is likely to figure during deliberations among navy chiefs of the participating countries at the event.

What

1. The interactions during Milan encompass sharing of views and ideas on maritime good order and enhancing regional cooperation for combating unlawful activities at sea.
2. Participating in the exercise include Australia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, New Zealand, Oman, Vietnam, Thailand, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kenya and Cambodia.
3. India, the US and several other nations have been pressing for freedom of navigation in the disputed South China Sea.
4. China's military manoeuvres in the South China Sea may figure during discussions among navy chiefs of the participating countries at the event.
5. In November, India, the US, Australia and Japan gave shape to the long-pending quadrilateral coalition to develop a new strategy to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free of Chinese influence.
6. From an event of sub-regional context, Milan has now grown into a prestigious international event and encompasses participation by maritime forces from not just the Bay of Bengal and South East Asia but the larger Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
7. 'Milan' was first held in 1995 with the participation of just five navies. The aim of the initiative was to have an effective forum to discuss common concerns in the Indian Ocean Region and forge deeper cooperation among friendly navies.
8. The exercise is being hosted by the Indian Navy under the aegis of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

SC ORDER SPELLS RELIEF FOR JUTE INDUSTRY

The Supreme Court has spared the jute industry of an Rs 10 billion central excise demand raised on jute bags supplied to government agencies between 2011 and 2013. In a recent judgment, the apex court said the demand was non-factual and unconnected by nature. A two-judge bench of R F Nariman and Navin Sinha ruled that the demand raised by the excise department was far from the facts. The department had imposed the demand on the industry for jute bags supplied between March 1, 2011, and February 2013. The demand notice was upheld by the Customs, Excise and Service Tax Appellate Tribunal in 2015.

What

1. Jute bags were originally exempted from excise duty since 2004. However, the UPA-2 government had re-imposed an ad valorem levy of 10 per cent in March 2011.
2. Based on the excise department notification of March 1, the Kolkata-IV office of the superintendent of central excise ruled on March 7 that jute bags supplied through Food Corporation of India and other state agencies for use in the Public **Distribution System were 'branded' and therefore came under the ambit of** chapter 63 of the Excise Act.
3. SC order spells Rs 10 bn relief for jute industry
4. Subsequently, many jute mills were slapped with demand notices that ranged between Rs 15 and Rs 300 million. There are around 60 mills in Bengal.
5. Although aware that the government would soon withdraw the ad valorem levy, the officers under Kolkata-IV kept arm-twisting jute millers with threats of notices. From the record, notices were sent out in lots of 10 mills each.
6. The Union textiles ministry **and the jute commissioner's office vehemently** opposed the move and sought urgent withdrawal of the notices, pointing out that the six items printed on top of jute bags were in line with the specifications marked by the government and were not to be treated as branded bags in the context of levies of duties.

VIRAL LOAD TEST FOR PLHIV LAUNCHED

Shri J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare launched **the "Viral Load testing for all People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV)," in Delhi.** The initiative will provide free of cost viral load testing for 12 lakh PLHIV on treatment in the country **at least once a year. Shri Nadda further announced that after** 'Treat All', **Viral Load test isa big step forward in treating and monitoring people living with HIV. This Viral Load test is of immense importance to monitor the effectiveness of treatment of patients taking lifelong Antiretroviral Therapy.**

What

1. Viral Load testing will empower medical officers at ART to detect failure on first line treatment early and therefore save PLHIV from developing resistance to drugs.
2. It will also help in strengthening **'Mission Sampark' in tracking LFU** (Loss to Follow Up) PLHIV.
3. In 2017, India revised the Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) treatment protocols to initiate all PLHIV on ART "Treat All".
4. **This 'Treat all' initiative** was started to ensure that treatment is started early and the virus transmission is curtailed both at the individual and the community level. Now about 12 lakh PLHIV are availing the benefit of free treatment from more than 530 ART centres.
5. Very few countries globally have such a law to protect rights of people infected with HIV. The Health Minister further informed that the key provisions of HIV/AIDS Bill are prohibition of discrimination, informed consent, non-disclosure of HIV status, anti-retroviral therapy & opportunistic infection management, protection of property of affected children, safe working environment and appointment of ombudsman in every State.

SUSTAINABLE BIOFUELS 2018

The two day international conference on Sustainable Biofuels is jointly being organized by Department of Biotechnology, Govt. of India and Biofuture platform. The event is bringing experts and delegates from 19 countries together in Sustainable Biofuels sector to take stock of current knowledge, share information and best practices, and build consensus on the actions most needed to move forward.

What

1. All delegates outlined the aim and objectives of the Mission Innovation and specifically the Sustainable Biofuel Innovation challenge.

2. Government of India to host this International Conference on behalf of Mission Innovation and Biofuture Platform. Collectively all member countries have pledged to work together to meet the objective of producing at scale affordable advanced Biofuels.

3. This is the largest Multilateral Platform to promote Research, development and Demonstration in Clean Energy.

4. Use of fossil fuels for transportation contributes significantly to global greenhouse gases (GHG) emission. The sustainable biofuels have ability to reduce the GHG emission load and this consideration led to establishment of Sustainable Biofuel Innovation Challenge (SBIC) under Mission Innovation (MI).

5. Advanced or second-generation biofuels produced from non-food biomass materials and specially grown high yielding plants or algae, if managed sustainably can contribute to significantly reduce emissions.

6. The sustainable biofuel innovation challenge aims to accelerate research, development and deployment of low cost, high GHG impacting advanced biofuels.

7. The sustainable biofuel innovation challenge will build on existing knowledge of individual participating countries and international institutes like IEA, IRENA and in collaboration of Biofuture Platform coordinated by Brazil as program Secretariat. A major aim of this cooperation is to avoid duplication of efforts and define clear areas of collaboration for speeding up of innovations in this area.

8. This event aims to provide a common platform to Government policy makers, industry, investors and research community to exchange experiences and challenges related to development and scaling of advance biofuels. Besides this the conference is focusing on concerns of the private sectors to speed up large scale production of sustainable biofuels.

9. Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science & Technology as a nodal agency coordinating and steering the activities of Mission Innovation in India by Government of India.

10. Mission Innovation India unit has been set-up last year by DBT at ICGEB, New Delhi. DBT has in past taken lead in ushering R&D in advanced biofuels and has set up four large Bioenergy Research Centres.

CLUES TO ALIEN LIFE ON MARS

For the first time, researchers have observed **specialised bacteria in the world's** driest desert that can rebound after lying dormant for decades, a finding that points towards the possibility of alien life lurking in the soils of Mars. Scientists from Washington State University (WSU) in the US studied the driest corner of South America's Atacama Desert, where decades pass without any rain. Scientists have long wondered whether microbes in the soil of this hyperarid environment, the most similar place on Earth to the Martian surface, are permanent residents or merely dying vestiges of life, blown in by the weather.

What

1. The researchers found that specialised bacteria are able to live in the soil, going dormant for decades, without water and then reactivating and reproducing when it rains.

2. It has always fascinated me to go to the places where people don't think anything could possibly survive and discover that life has somehow found a way to make it work.

3. Researchers went to the Atacama for the first time in 2015 to study how organisms survive in the soil of Earth's driest environment. After an extremely rare shower, the researchers detected an explosion of biological activity in the Atacama soil.

4. They used sterilised spoons and other delicate instrumentation to scoop soil samples from various depths and then performed genomic analyses to identify the different microbial communities that were reproducing in the samples.

5. The researchers returned to the Atacama in 2016 and 2017 to follow up on their initial sampling and found that the same microbial communities in the soil were gradually reverting to a dormant state as the moisture went away.

21ST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON E-GOVERNANCE

The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh presented the National e-governance Awards during the valedictory session of the two-day 21st National Conference on e-Governance in Hyderabad. He presented 19 awards in 8 categories for their commending efforts in use of technology. In each category, the gold carried Rs.2 Lakh cash prize & citation and silver carried Rs. one Lakh award. The theme of the Conference **this year was,** 'Technology for accelerating Development'.

What

1. The main aim of e-**governance should be 'ease of governance' leading to 'ease of living' of people**. This is essential for the emergence of a 'New India' that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi envisages.
2. The Government had taken over with the commitment to give "maximum governance, minimum government" and at the same time, switch-over to e-Governance.
3. Dr Jitendra Singh said that the regional conferences organised by the DARPG indicate that the Ministry of Personnel has taken the conferences out of National Capital Delhi and moved to different places of country.
4. In our successful bid to hold Regional Conferences on Governance, the Ministry in the last three years has covered venues such as Guwahati, Jammu, Nagpur, Chandigarh, Visakhapatnam, Jaipur and Hyderabad.

During the function, the awards were presented in various categories including:

1. Excellence in Government Process Re-engineering
2. Outstanding performance in citizen centric service delivery
3. Innovations in existing projects of Government Departments other than PSUs
4. Use of Spatial Technology and GIS in e-Governance
5. Innovative Use of ICT by Central Government PSUs/State Government PSUs
6. Outstanding initiative in e-Governance by Academic/Research Institutions and NGOs, including Cooperatives/ Federations/Society, Replication/Adaptation of the best e-Governance projects/ practices awarded during 01.04.2014 to 31.03.2017
7. Best District level initiative through ICT in (i) North East States; (ii) Hill States + UTs; (iii) Other States.

LAMITYE 2018

The eighth edition Lamitye 2018, bilateral military exercise between Indian Army **and Seychelles People's Defence Force** was held at Mahe Island in Seychelles archipelago. The Seychelles archipelago falls on one of most significant and busiest sea transport routes of the world in Indian Ocean.

What

1. The Lamitye exercise is conducted biennially between Indian and Seychelles with aim of enhancing military cooperation and interoperability between the two countries. **"Lamitye" means friendship in Cr**eole (local dialect of Seychelles).
2. The aim Lamitye 2018 was fighting insurgency, terrorism and piracy threats.
3. Indian Army was represented by team comprising of 45 personnel, including four officers, five Junior Commissioned Officers (JCO) and 36 Other Ranks.

INDIA'S AADHAAR AND UMANG APP WIN AWARDS

India's Aadhaar and Umang App have won awards at recently concluded 6th World Government Summit 2018 in Dubai. Umang App won in Best m-Government Service Award for Accessible Government Category and Aadhaar won in the Best Government Emerging Technologies Award. The awards were presented by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of UAE Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

What

1. Aadhaar: **The award for it recognized India's efforts of invention and innovat**ion in field of technology and making the country completely digitalized.

2. **It was recognised as the world's** largest biometric enabled identification programme, which provides access to service, bank accounts, social services benefits, income tax, passport services by providing 1.2 billion citizens unique identification card with fingerprint, eye-print and other vital data.

3. The initiative is managed by Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

4. Umang App: The award **acknowledged India's efforts to provide convenient services** to its citizens.

5. Umang stands for Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance.

6. It provides users unified platform that combines government departments and services, facilitating transactions for citizens

Flashback
1. World Government Summit acknowledged technology pioneers for providing global solutions to global challenges.
2. **India was 'Guest of Honour'** country 2018 summit in which more than 140 countries participated.
3. It was attended by several global delegates and speakers including heads of governments and representatives of 16 international organizations.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

The International Mother Language Day (IMLD) was observed across the world on 21 February to promote awareness of linguistic, multilingualism and cultural diversity. This year it is the 18th anniversary of IMLD. The observance of this day signifies importance of mother language as the greatest weapon **to express one's** feeling.

What

1. Mother Language of one country

Flashback
1. The International Mother Language Day was instituted by United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by passing resolution in 2007.
2. **The resolution had called upon member states "to** promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world.
3. Since 2007, it is observed annually by member states to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
4. The day was first proclaimed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 1999 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
5. The day, February 21 in 1952 assumes special significance in Bangladesh where scores of people (activists), mostly students and teachers of the Dhaka University, were mercilessly shot down by the Pakistani army when Bangladesh was East Pakistan.
6. The activists had protested against imposition of Urdu as the national language side-stepping Bengali – their mother tongue and the protest came to be known as Language Movement.

is the sign of independence of that country.

2. It is most powerful instruments of preserving and developing tangible and intangible heritage.

3. **The theme of 2018 International Mother Language Day is '**Linguistic diversity and multilingualism count for sustainable development**'.**

4. It requires mastery over mother tongue to foster sustainable development.

5. It seeks to highlight importance local languages that transmit cultures, values and traditional knowledge for promoting sustainable futures.

6. Observance of this day also supports target 6 of Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which states that ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

CONFERENCE ON 'WORLD RARE DISEASE DAY'

Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Shri J.P. Nadda, in the presence of Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Dr Jitendra Singh, inaugurated the one-day Conference to mark "World Rare Disease Day" in Delhi. A newsletter published by the "Indian Organization of Rare diseases" was also released on the occasion. The conference began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp for which, the two Union Ministers were also joined by Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Ms Preeti Sudan and President of "Indian Organization for Rare Diseases" (IORD), Dr Ramaiah Muthyala.

What

1. Shri J.P. Nadda disclosed that government has formulated a national policy for "rare diseases". He also stated that the process of preparing a Registry of rare diseases has already been initiated by the Health Ministry.

2. Shri Nadda assured of full support from the government to provide cost-effective management and investigation facilities for the patients suffering from rare diseases in India.

3. He said, even though the prevalence of such diseases was very low, but the government has constituted a body to focus on this area of healthcare, both directly by the Health Ministry as well as by other agencies affiliated with the Ministry.

4. Some of those diseases which were rare in India till about three decades ago, have suddenly become widely prevalent throughout the country.

5. In Conference, Presented a detailed account of the various steps taken since 2017 to formulate a comprehensive policy, focusing on "rare diseases" related to genetic disorders, chromosomal disorders or disorders occurring in childhood with lifelong lasting effect.

NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY

The National Science Day is observed every year on 28th February with an objective to spread message of importance of science and its application among the people. The theme for National Science Day **2018 is "**Science and Technology for a sustainable future**."**

What

1. The day is

Raman effects	
1.	It is the inelastic scattering of a photon by molecules which are excited to higher vibrational or rotational energy levels.
2.	In this phenomenon, some part of light beam after passing through transparent medium gets scattered.
3.	This phenomenon of scattering of light is termed as Raman Scattering and the cause of scattering is called the Raman Effect.
4.	The wavelength of these scattered rays is different from that of the incident rays of light.

observed to mark the discovery of Raman effect by Physicist CV Raman on 28th February, 1928.

2. For his discovery, CV Raman was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.
3. The National Science Day was instituted by Central Government in 1986 based on the demand of National Council for Science and Technology Communication.
4. The first National Science Day was celebrated on 28 February 1987.
5. It is celebrated to spread message about importance of science used in daily life of people and popularise science and technology.
6. It also gives an opportunity to scientific-minded citizens in country to showcase their work in organized shows.

ASSAM MARK RHINO DAY

The Assam government was observed September 22 as Rhino Day to generate public awareness on protection of one-horned rhinoceros (pachyderm) — the pride of the state. It was announced at the 10th meeting of State Board for Wildlife chaired by Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal. The day will be dedicated to approximately 2,500 rhino population in state. State government is also launch State Rhino Project in line with National Rhino Project for protecting them from threats of poaching.

What

1. One-horned rhinoceros is the largest of the Asian Rhinos.
2. Its preferred habitat is alluvial flood plains and areas containing tall grasslands along the foothills of the Himalayas.
3. Formerly, they were extensively distributed in the Gangetic plains, but now they are restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and North Bengal, and Assam.
4. They are found in Kaziranga, Orang, Pobitara, Jaldapara (in Assam), Dudhwa (UP) National Park.
5. Kaziranga National Park hosts two-**thirds of the world's Great One**-horned rhinoceros (68% of worldwide population).
6. It has been listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

FIRST WOMAN FIGHTER PILOT TO FLY FIGHTER JET

Flying officer Avani Chaturvedi (24) created history by becoming first Indian woman pilot of Indian Air Force (IAF) to complete a solo flight in a MiG-21 Bison fighter aircraft. She had achieved this feat by completing half-an-hour long solo flight in Russian-origin jet in the skies over Jamnagar Air Base, Gujarat. The first solo flight is just initial step in exhaustive operational syllabus that transforms rookie pilots into full-fledged fighter pilots capable of handling high-voltage combat flying.

What

1. She is from Rewa district, Madhya Pradesh and was born on 27 October 1993.
2. She is posted to No. 23 Squadron (Panthers) based in Suratgarh in Rajasthan.
3. She is from first batch of three women officers who were commissioned as fighter pilots in IAF. She has completed her training at Hyderabad Air Force Academy.

FIRST PS BANK WITH GOOGLE TEZ

Google (Alphabet Inc.) said it has integrated Google Tez with State Bank of India (SBI)**, allowing customers of India's largest lender to transact directly from their bank** accounts through the mobile payments app. SBI is the first public sector bank to have partnered with Google Tez. SBI customers can now create a unique UPI ID (for example, name@oksbi or mobilenumber@oksbi etc) to carry out the transactions.

What

1. Other state-run banks are also listed on the app and money can be sent to these **bank accounts but the bank's UPI ID cannot be generated on the app.**

2. As of now, Google has partnered with four banks to allow users of Tez app to **create their bank's UPI** handle and transact directly from their bank accounts on the app.

3. Other than SBI, the three other banks are HDFC Bank, Axis Bank and ICICI Bank.

4. In September, Google launched customized-for-India-app called Tez—which **means "fast' in English, suggesting that speed with which you can make** payments will be the key.

5. Till now, Tez app has processed over 250 million transactions and has over 13.5 million monthly active users across India, claims Google.

6. The government has been pushing the UPI platform to boost digital payments in India, to reduce use of cash.