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(MAY 2017)

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Anti-Romeo

Squads in Uttar Pradesh:
Lawful Policing or
Moral Policing?

HIV/AIDS
Bill 2016:



**A Giant
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PREFACE

The Current Affairs May-2017 eBook covers the current events that happened in the month of April. Current Affairs is a crucial component of any competitive exams including IAS|PCS, SSC, Banking and MBA.

The Current Affairs play the bigger role in many competitive and government exams. It holds the power of making or breaking your chance of success. Therefore, the candidates should cover the Current Affairs thoroughly and smartly. However, there are huge numbers of student who are often confused about how to prepare the current affairs section of the different competitive exams. To clear such doubts and confusion, Jagranjosh.com has come up with eBook concept. We at jagranjosh.com work tirelessly to create this magazine and bring it to you with a great sense of gratitude every month. We always strive for excellence and therefore, our research team continuously endeavours to give you the best material.

The Current Affairs May-2017 eBook is divided into different section keeping in mind the need of various exams. The sections covered namely are International, National, Economy, Ecology and Environment, Science & Technology, Corporate, Sports, States News Makers and few others.

Every news item in each section is arranged date wise with the oldest news being covered at the first and so on. Highlights of the issue are Anti-Romeo Squads in Uttar Pradesh, HIV/AIDS Bill 2016, The Concept of Bad Bank and Farm Loan Waiver among others.

Presentation of the given current affairs has been planned meticulously. It has been planned in such a way that it remains in the minds of readers for a longer duration.

Wherever necessary each news item is presented along with a background and analysis so as to help candidates contemplate all the important current events at the time of exam in an effective way.

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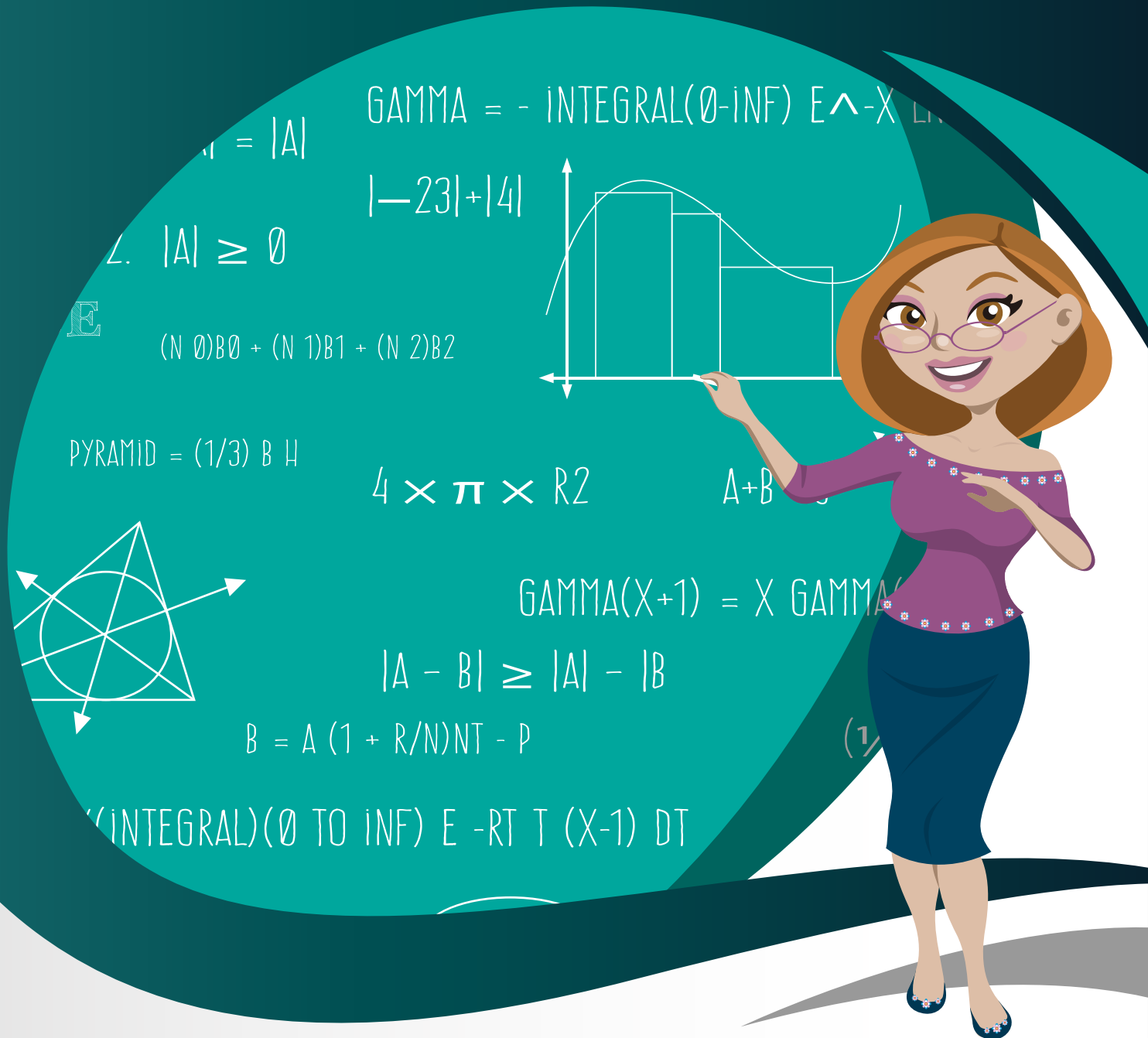
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COVER STORY

Anti-Romeo Squads in Uttar Pradesh: Lawful Policing or Moral Policing?



The Allahabad High Court on 30 March 2017 declared that Anti-Romeo Squads are legal and they are here to stay. The verdict was given by the Court while quashing a Public Interest Litigation that challenged the legality of Anti-Romeo Squads of the Uttar Pradesh Police Department.

What are Anti-Romeo Squads?

- By delivering on its poll promise, the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP Government issued an order on 23 March 2017 regarding the formation of Anti-Romeo Squads.
- Anti-Romeo Squads are special teams to make public places safe and secure for girls and women.
- These squads consist of police personnel, majorly women constables, and are deployed in chowks, market places, malls and parks in plain clothes.

Major Debate: Lawful Policing or Moral Policing?

Though the idea behind the formation of Anti-Romeo Squads is to improve the security of women by keeping an eye on stalkers, the practise has been branded as “Moral Policing” and attracted criticism from certain sections of the society.

Major issues related to the functioning of Anti-Romeo Squads are -

- **Lack of Operational Guidelines:** It has been argued that the concerned G.O. and the operational guidelines have not defined the term “Romeo”. Hence, the squads are prone to misuse their authority due to the opaqueness and, as a result, ‘may’ book innocents.

- **Issue of Spot Punishments:** Though the communication from the DGP of the State explicitly barred lower-level personnel from resorting to spot punishments like tonsure, blackening faces, sit ups and “murga pose”, occurrence of such incidents (as visible on social media platforms) led to the questioning of the legitimacy of Anti-Romeo Squads.

- **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** This is the major criticism against the Anti-Romeo Squads. Critics argue that the activities of these squads are against the right of freedom of movement and expression of lawful youth couples, which are guaranteed by the Constitution.

- **Why the word ‘Romeo’?:** Few critics contend that the usage of the word ‘Romeo’ is itself objectionable. The usage of this word confuses the efficacy of the squad as ‘Romeo’ denotes a romantic character in the William Shakespeare's tragedy Romeo and Juliet, while stalkers are psychopaths.

Key Statistics

Following statistics give a glimpse of the pathetic situation of women in the country.

- In India, one woman gets raped every 22 minutes and one child gets raped in every 76 minutes. And, only one in every four accused in the crime gets convicted.
- In Delhi alone, one rape case is reported per every four hours, which ‘compels’ us to call the city as the rape capital of the country.
- As per the data provided by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, as many as 2.24 million crimes against women were reported over the past decade.
- In Uttar Pradesh alone, crime against women went up by 61% in the last 5 years. The State also witnessed 1,012 rape cases in the last 5 years. And, in 2014 alone, 1085 acid attacks were registered.

Anti-Romeo Squads: The need of the Hour

There is no disagreement on the fact that every eve teaser is a potential rapist. Hence, to have a deterrent effect, stalking should be curtailed and the culprits should be awarded stringent punishment.

In the last few years, the harassment of girls and women in public places has gone up resulting in an increase in dropouts from schools and colleges.

For instance, sexual harassment of a 10-year old girl in the Meerganj Tehsil of the Bareilly District forced 60 girls to drop out of school. Similarly, sexual harassment of women at workplaces led to decrease in their labor participation rate.

Anti-Romeo Squads: Apprehensions

Though shadow surveillance or open surveillance of stalkers by the police personnel is considered as a legitimate act, the following issues related to the working of these squads have led to some apprehensions like -

- **Growing presence of Fringe Groups:** It has also been alleged that fringe groups are accompanying these squads and are resorting to “pro-active measures” by taking the law into their hands.

- **Shrinking space for the Youth:** The financial empowerment at a younger age, coupled with the spread of liberal values, enabling the modern youth to choose the partner of one’s choice through non-traditional methods and in unconventional ways. These developments are sometimes reflected in instances of public display of affection (PDA), which may sometimes be construed as “stalking” by these squads.

- **Becoming of a Police State:** Some critics argue that the functions entrusted to Anti-Romeo Squads are purely moral in nature. And, by the formation of these squads, the distinction between morality and law was not maintained. However, in a vibrant democracy like India, this proposition of ‘becoming of a police state’ is an outcome of a farfetched hypothesis and is not substantiated.

Legal Provisions related to Protection of Women

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 19 (1) (a): All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression
- Article 19 (1) (b): All citizens shall have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms
- Article 51A (e) of DPSP: It vouches for renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women

Indian Penal Code

- Section 294: It prescribes up to three months of punishment for indulging in obscene acts in public places.
- Section 354 A-D: These sections provide for punishment for indulging in assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe, sexual harassment and stalking. More importantly, all the offenses under these sections are cognizable.
- Section 509: This section provides punishment for indulging in ‘word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman.’

Besides, the Section 149 of the Criminal Procedure Code and the Sections 12, 23 and 34 of the Police Act, 1861 are also aimed at protecting women from harassment.

Similar practises in other States

- Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act, 1998 was enacted by the Tamil Nadu Government to provide for stringent punishments to stalkers.
- In 2013, the Goa Legislative Assembly enacted the Rights of Citizens to Time-Bound Delivery of Public Services Act to prevent any kind of harassment and eve-teasing.
- In October 2014, the Government of Telangana started SHE teams to curb eve-teasing and harassment of women in public places.
- Just like the Anti-Romeo Squads, all the members of SHE teams will be in civilian dress and carry the unidentifiable cameras with them to record what they will be produced for future evidence.

What is the way forward?

Initiatives like Anti-Romoeo Squad are not new in Uttar Pradesh. Way back in 2005, “Operation Majnu” was launched by the State Government to check eve-teasing. However, the experiment failed and was abandoned in view of the alleged ‘excesses’ of some of the lower-level police personnel.

In view of this, **following precautionary measures should be taken** for the effective functioning of Anti-Romeo Squads.

- The law and rules should clearly define the term ‘Romeo’
- Police personnel should be given adequate training in issues related to eve-teasing and stalking
- Technology should be used to improve the transparency in the functioning of teams
- A high-level committee should be formed in the Chief Minister’s Office to oversee the functioning of squads. This measure is expected to build the confidence of citizens in the functioning of squads.

Conclusion

Decades ago, the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi said - “The day a woman can walk freely on the roads at night, that day we can say that India has achieved independence.” Unfortunately, even after nearly seven decades of independence, we as a

society failed to provide a safe and secure environment for women in public, private and digital space.

Hence, in order to remedy this desperate situation, it is high time the government should initiate more such pro-active measures to make our streets safe and secure for girls and women.

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HIV/AIDS Bill 2016: A Giant Step

The Union Cabinet passed the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2016. This comes after the government revived the bill to look into its flaws in July 2016. The Bill was first introduced in Parliament by the UPA government in its last days in 2014 and aimed to make anti-retroviral treatment a legal right of HIV/AIDS patients.



What are the Provisions in the Bill

The bill is considered to be an important step to address problems related HIV/ AIDS in India. Here are some important provisions in the bill:

1. Anti- Retroviral Therapy

The bill states that central and state governments are obliged to provide for anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and management of opportunistic infections. The opportunistic infections are infections that take advantage of weakness in the immune system and occur frequently.

2. Discrimination and confidentiality

The bill forbids specific acts of discrimination by the state, or any other person, against HIV-positive people, or those living with such people.

The protection from any kind of discrimination mandated in the Bill extends to the fields of healthcare services, employment, educational services, public facilities, holding public office, property rights, and insurance.

The bill also provides for confidentiality of HIV-related information and makes it mandatory to get informed consent for undertaking medical treatment, HIV tests, and research.

3. Ombudsman

The HIV/AIDS Bill, 2016 includes the role of an ombudsman. The provision related to the ombudsman says an ombudsman shall be appointed by each state government to

scrutinize the complaints pertaining to the violation of the Act and the provision of health care services.

The ombudsman is required to submit a report to the state government in every six months. In the report s/he will be stating the number and nature of complaints received, the actions were taken and orders passed.

In case, when violations are found, punitive actions of discriminators would be taken against the violators which include jail terms of up to 2 years and possibly even significant fines.

4. Guardianship Provision

In this bill, the provisions related to guardianship are specified. A person between the age of 12 to 18 years who has sufficient maturity in managing and understanding the issues of his HIV or AIDS-affected family shall be competent to act as a guardian of another sibling below 18 years of age.

The guardianship will be applied in matters pertaining to admission to operating bank accounts, educational establishments, care and treatment, managing property, and amongst others.

5. Secrecy of Patient Record in legal cases

The bill states that patient records are now required to adopt stringent data protection methods. In legal cases relating to HIV-positive persons shall be dealt in the court on a priority basis.

In any legal proceeding, if an HIV affected or infected person is a party, the court may pass orders that the proceedings be conducted (a) by not revealing the identity of the person, in camera and to prohibit any person from publishing information that leaks the identity of the applicant.

Data on HIV in India

The National AIDS Control Program in India is trying to prohibit cases of new infections as part of its target of ending the epidemic by 2030. The current data shows that about 2,170,000 people are living with HIV in India. It is estimated that around 6.54 percent of them are children under the age of 15.

In India, testing is still not at 100 percent. Testing with high-risk groups is still having significant room for improved testing rates. The testing rate for female sex workers, it is at 72 percent, for gay males at about 70 percent and for drug users, it is at 71 percent.

Issues with the bill

An earlier version of the Bill stated the need to strengthen injection safety program as Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) can significantly lower their risk of getting and transmitting HIV, viral hepatitis and other blood bore infections by using a sterile needle for every injection. But, Clause 22 of the new Bill simply states the words 'injection safety requirements' without specifying the rules.

If a volunteer gives sterile needles and takes back used needles from a patient, he could be picked up for aiding and abetting unlawful use of drugs. Provision of sterile needles is seen as a crime and this Bill was expected to clarify the needles safety guidelines. What we have now instead clarified is completely open to interpretation.

The Clause 14(1) of the Bill relating to prevention of the spread of the virus includes a phrase 'as far as possible.' The loophole makes the right to access life-saving anti-retroviral therapy weak and subject to interpretation.

The critics have argued that the clause is seeking to limit the right to treatment of the patients

The HIV community in India objected to the long awaited HIV/AIDS Bill in its present form and demanded a removal of the phrase "as far as possible" from the proposed legislation.

Conclusion

The commitment to authentically respond and communicate to the demands of HIV/AIDS affected people is a testimony to the unique effort in the history of law-making in India.

In India, it is a fact that the vast majority of people affected by HIV come from relatively poor and marginalized communities. This exacerbates their disparities.

In the final analysis, this bill is a victory of these sections that reflects and reassures us that vibrant democratic processes are possible in India. The current version of the bill that has been put in public domain shows that the Bill has been amended to state that governments are required to focus on prevention that too, as far as possible.

Above all, the bill is a giant step in eradicating rampant discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS in India. The hope is that the bill will set the foundation for weeding out the prevalence of these conditions entirely from Indian soil.

Apart from it, it should be hoped that implications of this bill will open the doors for the LGBTQI community so that they can also be properly analyzed and set free from any stigma and discrimination once this bill is in place.

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The Concept Of Bad Bank

What is a bad bank?

The idea of bad bank has been there since the problem of bad loans started growing rampantly. The concept of 'bad bank' would be a centralized agency that would take over the largest and most difficult stressed loans from public sector banks in order to help clean their balance sheets, and would take



politically tough decisions to reduce debt, providing an impetus to further lending to spur economic activity.

The concept of bad bank is simple. It is about dividing a bank's assets into two categories, good and bad. After the separating them into two categories, a bank can avoid the contamination of good assets by the bad. It also reduces the concerns of investors and helps the bank focus on future lending by improving transparency and health.

History of the Bad Bank concept

As above, we have understood that the concept of a "bad bank" involves the takeover of assets from public sector lenders, thereby making them to focus on their normal commercial activities. First time, the concept of bad bank was pioneered at the Pittsburgh-headquartered Mellon Bank in 1988 in response to problems in the bank's commercial real-estate portfolio. According to McKinsey & Co, the concept of a "bad bank" has been applied in previous banking crises in France, Sweden, and Germany.

In India, over the years the RBI has introduced multiple schemes to solve the problem of bad loans. Most important schemes of them are Flexible Refinancing of Infrastructure (5/25 scheme), Strategic Debt Restructuring (SDR), Asset Reconstruction (ARC), Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A) and Asset Quality Review (AQR).

The Stressed loan problem in India

The main reason behind the bad loan problem is the lending boom that India's banks embarked on in the period 2004-08. In this period, India saw economic growth reach the 9-10% range.

It is not the case that by itself did not create a problem of the current magnitude. It is the government's fiasco to resolve the bad loan problem over the past several years that has worsen the problem.

Apart from it, the "twin balance sheet problem" continues to exist in India. On the banking side, stressed assets stand at over 12% of the total loans in the banking system. Public sector banks, which own almost 70% of banking assets in India, have a stressed-loan ratio of almost 16%.

At public sector banks (PSBs), bad loans were 12% of all advances. Another 3% of loans in the aggregate (and 4% at PSBs) have been restructured.

The Economic Survey (2016-17) states that market analysts are saying that 4-5% of loans are bad loans that have not been recognized as such. Thus, total stressed assets or NPAs, or restructured loans and unrecognized bad loans would amount to a staggering 16% of all loans and nearly 20% of loans at PSBs.

Setting up a bad bank

Establishing a bad bank is a very complex process. It should not be considered a silver bullet which will solve all the problems in the Indian banking sector. More significantly, a

one-size-fits-all approach to designing a bad bank can be less effective and very expensive. As The Economic Survey (2016-17) suggested PARA for solving NPA problem.

But just setting up one PARA will not be enough to get the banking sector back on track.

The most efficient approach would be to design solutions tailor-made for different parts of India's bad loan problem.

It is important for banks to decide whether or not to keep the bad assets on the bank's balance sheet. Moving assets off the balance sheet is better for investors and counterparties.

It provides more transparency into the bank's core operations. But it is more complex and expensive.

It is also important to decide whether the bad-bank assets will be housed and managed in a banking entity or a special purpose vehicle (SPV). There are four basic bad-bank models: on-balance-sheet guarantee, internal restructuring unit, special-purpose entity and bad-bank spin-off.

1. On-balance-sheet guarantee

In the on-balance-sheet guarantee structure, the bank gets a loss-guarantee from the government for a part of its portfolio. This model is less expensive, simple and can be implemented quickly. The transfer of risk is limited and bad assets continue to remain on the bank's balance sheet, contaminating its core performance.

This approach is useful for assisting a bank in trouble. For example we can consider the case of the Indian Overseas Bank (IOB). Till December 2016, the bank reported gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of 22.42%, net NPAs of 14.32% and a net loss of Rs554 crore. Since May 2016, the stock price of IOB has dropped more than 20%. In this case, an on-balance-sheet guarantee by the government can restore confidence in the bank.

2. Internal restructuring unit

An internal restructuring unit is similar to setting up an internal bad bank. The bank specifies bad assets in a separate internal unit, assigns a separate management team and provides them clear incentives. This works as a signaling mechanism to the market.

It also increases the bank's transparency, if the results are reported separately. It is explicit that this model depends on the existing management team to restructure assets.

3. Special-purpose entity

In this kind of structure, bad assets are offloaded into a SPV, securitized and sold to a diverse set of investors. The model is best for a small, homogeneous set of assets.

The bad loan problem in India is concentrated in a few sectors like infrastructure and basic metals. An effective solution would be to transfer bad loans from these distressed sectors into sector-specific SPVs, securitize them and sell them in an auction. If the pricing is determined by the market, PSU bankers will receive less blame for losses to the exchequer.

4. Bad-bank spin-off

A bad-bank spin-off is the most familiar, effective and thorough bad-bank model. In a spin-off design, the bank shifts bad assets into a separate banking entity, which ensures maximum risk transfer. This model is expensive and complex because it requires setting up a separate organization, equipped with IT systems, a skilled management team, and a regulatory compliance set-up.

The problem pertaining to asset valuation and pricing will be the most severe in this model. The Public Sector Asset Rehabilitation Agency (PARA) proposed by the Economic Survey 2016-17 falls in this category.

Challenges in Implementation

Now we know that the concept of a bad bank is simple, but the implementation can be very complicated. Economic and Banking experts have unanimously agreed that the structure and design of the bank would be most significant factor in the success of bad bank. Several financial and organizational choices are available while designing a bad bank.

The concept of 'bad bank' has its own critics, they think that such an approach would simply shift the soured debt from banks to another firm. They have argued that the focus needed to be on how to restructure the bad loans.

There is another factor of reputation which makes the problem of bad bank funding very difficult. Due to the fear of vigilance inquiries, bankers will not be willing to sell stressed assets to the bad bank at a substantial hair cut.

In such cases, the bad bank will have to pay more to acquire the assets and thus increase the funding burden on the government. Apart from it, political and macroeconomic viability will play a key role while considering the implementation of the bad bank.

Conclusion

By considering the whole bad bank and bad loan scenario, it can be said that solutions to the NPA problem will have to be designed keeping in mind the political economy of India.

Regular communication about running efforts to bring fraudulent defaulters to justice can help in boosting confidence in the bad bank initiative.

For making bad bank a viable solution, the government and the RBI will have to ascertain that it does not get labeled as a "bailout" of crony capitalists and corrupt bankers at the cost of taxpayers.

For this purpose, we need a larger and multiple oversight committee to speedily vet loan write-offs. It is advisable to constitute a Loan Resolution Authority by an Act of Parliament.

The government would be required to provide adequate capital to the banks to cover write-offs and also facilitate fresh loan growth. If all these measures would be met then it can be possible that India could get rid of the bad loan problem.

Farm Loan Waiver: Good or Bad?

Recently there has been news of Farm Loan Waiver in India. The Madras High Court gave the verdict that all farmer loans from cooperative banks should be waived off. The newly formed BJP government in UP announced a Rs 30,729 crore scheme waiving crop loans up to Rs 1 lakh for small and medium farmers. Apart from this, Rs 5,630 crore was allocated for



writing off bad loans of around seven lakh farmers, which had eventually become NPAs for banks. Along with these two incidences, Maharashtra government is also pondering over the demand of farmer loan waiver.

Why was it needed to Waive off the Farmer's Loans?

There have been chronic debt problems with the farmers in India. It is argued that farmers were not able to invest because of debt overhang. The agriculture sector actually needs government support.

The data suggest the farmers are undergoing through very stressful situations as 9,000 farmers have taken their lives in Maharashtra alone in the three years since 2014. Similar scenarios are said to have happened in other states.

Some surveys and agricultural censuses show that there is excessive pressure on land, with unabated fragmentation leading to decreasing sizes of average landholdings.

Costs of inputs have been increasing, along with the reduction in the prices of agricultural produce in real terms. Apart from it, climate change is causing to frequent crop failures and farming is becoming a loss-incurring business.

The National Sample Survey Offices's 59th survey showed that 40% of farmers said they disliked farming and would quit if given a chance.

All the factors made it necessary that farmers in India urgently need some immediate assistance from the government.

Loan Waivers in Past

The government led by V. P. Singh offered an agricultural debt relief program of up to Rs10,000 for each borrower in 1990.

In February 2008, the UPA government formulated a proposal on waiving farm loans. It incorporated the proposal in that year's Budget. The proposal had been discussed at the highest level politically. Finally, in the 2008-09 Budget, then Finance Minister P

Chidambaram announced a full waiver of dues up to March 31, 2007, for 3 Crore small and marginal farmers.

It was a one-time settlement scheme for all others, with a 25% rebate thrown in. The value of the loan waiver was pegged at Rs 50,000 crore; that of the settlement scheme at Rs 10,000 crore.

In Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, two separate regional parties came to power in 2014 on the promise of a loan waiver.

Who Needs Loan Waiver?

In India, still, not all farmers are keen for a debt bailout. High levels of household debts have been identified as a significant cause of farmers' distress in India. Approximately 52% of India's 90 million agricultural households are indebted.

The debt relief program has been failed to provide required help to landless farm workers who don't have access to bank loans and some small farmers that depend on money lenders.

In 2013, the chief auditor in its report on the 2008 loan waiver program found cases in which deserving small farmers were neglected while ineligible farmers were favored.

Some agricultural experts think that loan waivers should be used only when farmers have no other way of getting credit for their next crop as farm debt waiver is not a permanent solution to farmers' problems.

Criticism

The critics of Farmer's loan waiver argue that expenditure on loan waivers will eventually reduce the fiscal space for public expenditure in agriculture.

India is in need of massive investment in areas such as water conservation, irrigation, better storage facilities, agricultural research and market connectivity.

The agricultural problems in Indian are structural in nature. These problems demand long-term solutions. In this way, loan waivers will only end up complicating the problem.

And, the idea of loan waiver smacks of political populism. And in the past too, the Indian economy has suffered a lot due to competitive populism. It's time that the governments should address the real issues.

Apart from above reasons, farm waivers will increase the budget deficits of federal and state governments and escalate inflation. In 2014, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan said such programs ultimately constrained credit flow to farmers. The waivers also disrupt credit discipline among borrowers.

Conclusion

The farm loan waiver would only alleviate the debt problems of the farmers. It cannot be considered a permanent solution for the agricultural problems in India. The pioneer of the green revolution in India M S Swaminathan summed up the Indian agriculture crisis

when he said that a Punjab farmer, which was the heartland of the green revolution, with an average of 3.79 hectares, gets less than the starting salary of a class-four employee. This explains what kind of problems and stresses are being faced by medium and small farmers in India. So both center and states governments must come out with a deep-rooted structural policies for farmers instead of just waving of their debts.

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The Mental Health Care Bill : Provisions and Analysis

The parliament passed the Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016, which aims to provide for mental health care and services for persons with mental illness. This bill also ensures that these persons have the right to live a life with dignity by not being harassed or discriminated against. This bill decriminalizes suicide.



This bill was cleared by Rajya Sabha in August last year. In March, the Mental Healthcare Bill was passed by Lok Sabha too.

The Population of the mentally ill people in India

Currently, there are no official data about the population of the mentally ill people in India.

In India, it was estimated that 6-7% of the population suffered from mental disorders in 2005, and approximately 1-2% suffered from severe mental disorders such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Nearly 5% of the population suffered from common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety. However, real numbers could be higher, as mental illness often goes underreported due to the associated stigma. The World Health Organization has recently estimated that 1 in 4 persons will be affected by some form of mental illness once in their lifetime.

Provisions in the Bill

1. Definition of Mental Illness

The Bill defines “mental illness” as a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs ability to meet the ordinary demands of life, judgment, behavior, capacity to recognize reality, or mental conditions associated with the abuse of alcohol and drugs, but does not include mental retardation

which is a condition of incomplete or arrested development of mind of a person, specially characterized by sub-normality of intelligence.

There should be national and international medical standards for identifying the Mental illness. Earlier, Mental illness was defined as any mental disorder and sometimes as mental retardation.

2. Rights of persons with mental illness

The Bill makes sure that every person shall have a right to access mental health care and treatment from mental health services run by the government. The Bill also has the provision which assures free treatment for mentally ill persons if they are homeless or belong to Below Poverty Line, even if they do not possess a BPL card.



The bill states that every person with mental illness shall have a right to live with dignity. The bill strongly advocates that there shall be no discrimination against mentally ill people on any basis including gender, sex, religion, culture, sexual orientation, caste, social, class, disability and political beliefs. This right also includes good quality, affordable and easy access to services such as minimum mental health services in every district.

The bill provides rights of confidentiality in respect of mental health, treatment, mental health care, and physical health care to mentally ill people.

The Bill prohibits the release of the photograph or any other information related to a mentally ill person in the media without the consent of the person.

The Bill ensures the right to specify how a mentally ill person would like to be treated for mental illness in the event of a mental health situation.

The bill also gives right of choosing the person responsible for taking decisions with regard to the treatment, his admission into a hospital, etc. Persons with mental illness also have the right to protection from inhuman and degrading treatment.

3. Advance Directive

The Mental Health Care bill advocates that a person with mental illness shall have the right to make an advance directive that states how he/she wants to be treated for the illness and who his/her nominated representative shall be.

The advance directive is required to be certified by a medical practitioner or registered with the Mental Health Board.

The bill gives right to review/alter/cancel the advance directive if a mental health professional/ /care-giver/ relative does not wish to follow the directive while treating the person. In such case,

4. Mental Health Authority

The Bill gives power to the government to set-up Central Mental Health Authority at national-level and State Mental Health Authority in every State. Every mental health practitioners and mental health institute including mental health nurses, clinical psychologists, and psychiatric social workers will be required to be registered with this Authority.

These Authority bodies will have following responsibilities:

- These bodies will supervise, register, and maintain a register of all mental health establishments.
- These bodies will develop service and quality provision norms for such establishments.
- These bodies will maintain a register of mental health professionals
- These bodies will train law enforcement officials and mental health professionals on the provisions of the Act
- These bodies will get complaints and information about deficiencies in the provision of services.
- These bodies will be responsible to advice the government on matters relating to mental health.

5. Mental Health treatment

The Bill also specifies the process and procedure to be followed for admission, treatment, and discharge of mentally ill individuals.

A medical practitioner or a mental health professional shall not be held liable for any unforeseen consequences of following a valid advance directive.



The bill clarifies that now a person with mental illness shall not be subjected to electro-convulsive therapy. The bill says muscle relaxants and anesthesia would be mandatory for doing so. Also, minors will not be subjected to electro-convulsive therapy.

The bill also states that sterilization will not be performed on such persons. The bill adds a new provision that the mentally ill people shall not be chained in any manner or form whatsoever under any circumstances.

A person with mental illness shall not be subjected to solitary confinement or seclusion. Physical restraint on mentally ill people may only be used, if necessary.

6. Suicide is De-criminalized

A landmark provision in the bill is that a person who attempts suicide shall be presumed to be suffering from mental illness at that time and will be exempted from the punishment under the Indian Penal Code.

Before the bill, attempting suicide was punishable with imprisonment for up to a year and/or a fine. This Bill decriminalizes suicide by assuming that whoever attempts suicide will be presumed to be under severe stress, and shall not be punished for it.

7. Insurance

The Bill mandates that every insurance company shall provide medical insurance for mentally ill persons on the same basis as is available for physical illnesses.

Issues with the Bill

The Bill does not address issues pertaining to the guardianship of mentally ill persons. Before this, the 1987 Act had detailed provisions pertaining to appointment and removal of a guardian, and his powers and duties. Apart from it, the provisions related to guardianship of mentally ill persons are in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPD) Bill, 2014, which has been pending in Parliament.

When this bill becomes a law then there will be a legal vacuum with regard to provisions of guardianship of mentally ill persons. Another issue with the Bill is that it does not prescribe specific penalties for non-compliance with several of its provisions.

A general punishment for non-compliance is imprisonment up to 6 months or a penalty of up to Rs 10,000, or both. Repeat offenders can face up to two years in jail or a fine of Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh or both. The absence of specific penal provisions might create confusions with regard to the implementation of the Bill.

Challenges in implementation

The Bill states that it is mandatory for the central and state governments to ensure access to mental health services in every district. These services include hospitals, community-based rehabilitation establishments and outpatient and inpatient services.

But, the financial memorandum of the Bill neither it provides details of the sharing of expenses between the central and state governments nor estimates the expenditure required to fulfill the obligations under the Bill.

Without the allocation of required funds, the implementation of the Bill would be affected badly. The Parliamentary Standing Committee which was examining the Bill had

noted that public health is a state subject. Since many states in face financial constraints, the central government might have to take responsibility to ensure funds for the implementation of the mental health care bill.

Conclusion

The Mental Health Care Bill, 2016, is a watershed legislation that formulates clear responsibilities for the state and has provisions that empower individuals and families of the country. More importantly, it can expand access to treatment, which is abysmally poor today.

The Centre Government has adopted a medicalised approach to attempted suicide, treating it as the outcome of severe stress. The bill rightly outlaws the application of the Indian Penal Code section that criminalizes suicide.

A responsibility is also put on the authorities to rehabilitate and care for such individuals. This means that official policy must put efforts to strengthen the social determinants of health, especially universal welfare support systems against catastrophic events in people's lives. There is a huge urgency that reliable and free professionals for the purpose of counseling must be widely offered.

Ultimately, the success of this more progressive law will depend on how the community keeps up the pressure on the designated Central and State authorities to implement it in letter and spirit.

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Supreme Court verdict on BS-IV norms: What & Why

The Supreme Court of India on 29 March 2017 called for a blanket ban on the sell as well as the registration of Bharat Stage III (BS-III) compliant vehicles. It asked the government, concerned authorities and the automobile industry to switch over to the BS-IV compatible vehicles beginning on 1 April 2017.



Background

A directive of the Union Government, released in 2010, allows the production of BS-III compliant vehicles till 1 April 2017. However, there was no deadline in the directive regarding the sale of these vehicles.

In view of the possibility of sale of BS-III vehicles for an extended period beyond April 2017, the EPCA (Environment Pollution Control Authority), a governmental agency, has approached the Court to ensure that the "1 April 2017" deadline is applicable even for the sale of the vehicles too.

By considering the EPCA's plea, the Court directed the automobile manufacturers not to sell the BS-III vehicles and the authorities under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to not to register them if they are sold after 1 April 2017.

Bharat Stage Norms

- Bharat Stage (BS) emission standards were introduced in 2000 in line with recommendations made by the RA Mashelkar Committee.
- These are emission standards that have been set up the Union Government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles.
- These BS standards are based on European regulations, which are considered as benchmarks in many of the developed and developing countries.
- Subsequently, the Union Government came with a road map for the implementation of the BS-I to BS-VI (corresponding to Euro 1 – Euro 6).
- Accordingly, BS-I norms were rolled out in 2000, BS-II between 2001 and 2005 and BS-III between 2005 and 2010.
- In 2010 itself, the BS-IV were enforced in 13 major cities, where the availability of the fuel is not a constraint.
- In 2016, the Government announced that the country will switch over to BS-VI from the BS-IV by skipping the BS-V.
- The decision for rolling out of the BS-VI regime, from April 2020 onwards, was taken in view of the growing menace of the air pollution across the country.

What's New: BS-IV norms includes tightened NOx+HC emission limits, harmonization of the emission testing cycle and the definition of motorcycle classes with the UNECE Global Technical Regulation 2 (GTR-2). These norms also require significant changes in the design and capabilities of the vehicles.

Significance of the directive

For any government, in fact for any society, health is an essential and an uncompromising aspect. By switching over to BS-IV, we get to see a more cleaner environment as –

- A BS-IV compliant vehicle releases less pollutants, such as NO, NO₂, SO₂ and CO, than a BS-III compliant vehicle.
- A shift from BS-III to BS-IV will result in an 80% reduction in particulate matter (PM) emissions from heavy duty vehicles. Similarly, the move will result in a 50 % reduction in PM from cars.

In a country where 2 people die every minute (Lancet Report 2017) due to air pollution, every step towards reduction in the air pollution levels is of a much significance.

On the global front, this move will help India in reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 per cent by 2030 from the 2005 level, which is a commitment made by the Government under the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) of the UNFCCC.

Problems in its implementation

In fact, the only concern in its implementation is how to get rid of the present stock? As per a submission of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers' (SIAM) to the Supreme Court, there are about eight lakh unsold BS-III vehicles in the country.

They include 96,724 commercial vehicles, 6,71,305 two-wheelers, 16,198 four-wheelers and 40,048 three-wheelers; which cumulatively account for Rs 15,000 crore.

Further, as the time span between the Court's verdict and the 'deadline' is very less, the manufacturers have to either export them or have to 'dump' them. Any of these two choices will result in significant financial losses to the companies and could trigger job losses.

This measure is enough to make the air cleaner?

Definitely not. Because, pollution from vehicles is the not the only contributor to the overall air pollution. There are other factors, such as biomass burning, mining, power generation plants have an adverse impact on the air quality in the country.

Added to this, by looking at the number of vehicles coming on to the roads every year, the present directive by the Court looks so 'tiny'.

Hence, the Government should take up/initiate measures such as –

- Promoting public transportation instead of personal vehicles
- Encourage the use of renewable, alternate and cleaner fuels such as solar and wind
- Strengthening the Air Pollution Act, 1981 to prescribe more stringent punishments

Conclusion

Way back in 1992, in the Society For Clean Environment Vs Union Of India case, the apex court expanded the ambit of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution by including the "Right to Clean Environment" as an integral part of the "Right to Life, Liberty and the Security of Person."

By reaffirming its faith in this principle in letter and spirit, the Court made it clear that public health is far more important than "commercial interests" of manufacturers. This decision of the Supreme Court and the cooperation extended by the industry in implementing will go a long way in making India a cleaner, safer and healthier society.

NATIONAL | INDIA

Union Petroleum Ministry launched MoPNG e-Seva

Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan on 24 March 2017 launched MoPNG e-Seva, a dedicated grievances redressal platform on Social Media for all queries and grievances relating to Oil and Gas Sector.

The grievances will be dealt on real-time basis.

Highlights of the MoPNG e-Seva

- The MoPNG e-Seva portal will be a single point interface for all customers to reach out to the government for addressing their feedback or grievances related to Oil & Gas Sector on social media.
- It will also deliver 24 x 7 support for consumers.
- It will serve as a single point for queries on Twitter and Facebook to begin with; and other social media platforms in due course.
- A team of Nodal Officers from Oil Companies and Allied Services will be addressing the issues on real-time basis.
- Conversations will be tracked on real-time basis and a standard operating procedure will be put into place for immediate intervention and closure by concerned officials of Companies.
- It will also handle queries that are received on the official handles of Union Petroleum Minister and Union Petroleum Ministry.
- For quick intervention and resolution of complaints, consumers can send their feedback or query with compulsory information like Full Name, Consumer ID, Location, Service Agency and Company Details on Twitter or Facebook.

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Can colour-blind people pursue MBBS: SC to Medical Council of India

The Supreme Court (SC) on 25 March 2017 directed the Medical Council of India (MCI) to form a committee of experts to examine the possibility of colour-blind people pursuing the MBBS course.

A bench of Justices Dipak Misra and A M Khanwilkar also directed that the committee shall include experts from genetics, ophthalmology, psychiatry and medical education from

AIIMS, New Delhi and PGIMER, Chandigarh. The committee is expected to submit its report within three months.

The bench also suggested MCI to appoint KV Viswanathan along with M Shoeb Alam for the assistance. The committee will also concentrate on diagnostic test for progress and review of the disorder and what are the available prosthetics aids to assist medical practitioners.

The committee shall also suggest the areas of practice that could be undertaken by colour-blind people without difficulty with these aids.

The bench noted that there were no regulations framed by the MCI which stated that a candidate for the MBBS course should be able to identify the three primary colours.

Background

The court gave this direction while considering a plea by Pranay Kumar Podder and others, who were denied admission to the MBBS course at a Tripura college due to partial colour-blindness.

These aspirants also approached the High Court of Tripura and Agartala. However, the high court refused to interfere in the matter.

In their appeal, the appellants pointed out that there were no regulations framed by the Medical Council of India under the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956, debaring them from admission. These students were denied admission based on the recommendations of expert committee of Medical Council of India.

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PM Modi among Time magazine contenders for most influential people

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi features among the names of probable contenders for Time magazine's annual list of 100 most influential people in the world.

The official list comprising names of leading artists, world leaders, lawmakers, scientist and leaders in technology and business field will be announced by the magazine next month.



Key Highlights

- The final voting rights to decide among the probable contenders will lie in the hands of the publication's readers.
- The editors of Time will however, determine the ultimate honourees.
- Modi's name had been among the magazine's last year's list of probable contenders as well.
- He was also named among the publication's 100 most influential people in the world in 2015.
- In fact, former US President Barack Obama had written a profile for him in the magazine.

Indians in Times 100 most influential list 2016

The Indians who featured in the magazine's 100 most influential people list 2016 include Bollywood actress Priyanka Chopra, tennis star Sania Mirza, Indian environmentalist and political activist Sunita Narain, Indian American physician Raj Panjabi, Flipkart-founders Binny Bansal and Sachin Bansal, Indian born CEO of Google Sundar Pichai and the then Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Raghuram Rajan.

[India becomes the third largest aviation market in domestic traffic](#)

[Five Indian cities included in World Heritage List](#)

This year's contenders

Among the list of probable contenders this year are US President Donald Trump, Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner, First Indian American US Senator Kamala Harris, Russian President Vladimir Putin, UK Prime Minister Theresa May, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Pope Francis and actor and rapper Riz Ahmed.

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Aadhar card can't be made mandatory for government welfare schemes: Supreme Court



The Supreme Court (SC) of India on 27 March 2017 held that the government cannot make Aadhaar mandatory for availing benefits of welfare schemes. At the same time, the apex court also added that the government cannot be stopped from using Aadhaar in other schemes like the opening of bank accounts.

The court also said it will set up a seven-judge bench to hear the pleas challenging Aadhaar but right now it is not possible. The apex court refused to give an early date to hear a petition on making the Aadhaar card mandatory, saying it would hear the case in the due course of time.

[SC allowed use of Aadhar Card for all Central and State Welfare schemes on voluntary basis](#)

Earlier in the third week of March 2017, the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had said the Aadhaar card may become the only identity card in future and will be mandatory for the filing of Income Tax returns to curb tax evasion and frauds.

While replying to a debate on Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha, Jaitley said that Aadhaar may become the only card in future replacing all other types of identity cards such as Voter ID and PAN cards. The finance bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha as a money bill.

[Aadhar Card Not Mandatory for Government Benefits: Supreme Court of India](#)

Besides in October 2016, the court allowed the use of Aadhaar cards for Jan Dhan Yojana, MNREGA, pension and provident fund schemes. But it restricted the use of Aadhaar cards for LPG subsidies and public distribution system.

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Union Government launches Online Film Certification System E-Cinepramaan

Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting M Venkaiah Naidu on 27 March 2017 launched Online Film Certification System E-Cinepramaan of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) with an aim to promote transparency and ensure Clean Cinema Clean India.

This online system integrated the payments made by the producers towards certification fees with Bharatkosh portal, a system for all non-tax revenue receipts.

Highlights of the Online Film Certification System E-Cinepramaan

- This online certification system will enable in making the CBFC Office paper less.
- It will enable effective monitoring & real time progress in tracking for both CBFC Officials and the applicant.
- In the e-cinepramaan, the status of each application will be visible online in the dashboard of the producer or the concerned CBFC official.
- In case of short films and trailers which are of less than 10 minutes, the producer need not visit the office or theatre. They can submit their creations online.
- For films longer than 10 minutes, the applicant will only have to show the film at the Examining theatre and will not have to visit the CBFC Offices at all.
- The producer or applicant will be informed by SMS or e-mail of the status of their application.
- The transparency in the system and elimination of middle men will mitigate chances of any corruption and will also avoid allegations of jumping the queue or rigging up of Examination committees.
- The implementation of QR code on the certificates will eliminate chances of fraudulent certificates.
- It will envisage a robust MIS system for performance tracking and efficient reporting.
- The system also includes inbuilt alerts depending on the pendency of the application to ensure that time limits prescribed by the rules are not violated.

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Sahitya Akademi awardees cannot return award: HC

The Delhi High Court on 27 March 2017 ruled that Sahitya Akademi awardees are not eligible to return their awards as they are granted after considerable deliberations.

The ruling was given by a bench of Chief Justice G Rohini and Justice Sangita Dhingra Sehgal. The bench said that the executive board of the Akademi in 2015 had resolved that awards once granted cannot be taken back and therefore, there was no need to formulate guidelines against the return of the awards.

Background

This decision was taken in 2015 when several writers, poets and artists returned their awards protesting against the Akademi's silence on the murder of academician MM Kalburgi as well as against the atmosphere of intolerance and communalism in the backdrop of the Dadri lynching incident.

Oposing the return of awards, a PIL was moved in the high court for framing of guidelines to return the prize money received along with the awards.

The PIL had also sought framing of norms to protect the sanctity of the Sahitya Akademi Puraskar as is done for the National symbols. It also urged for strong punitive action against those who return such awards.

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Parliament passed Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016

The Lok Sabha on 27 March 2017 passed the Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016. It will replace the Mental Health Act, 1987.

The Bill recognises the rights of mentally ill people to affordable treatment and also seeks to decriminalise suicide.

The **Rajya Sabha already passed the Bill** in August 2016.

The Bill describes mental illness as *“a substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognise reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life, mental conditions associated with the abuse of alcohol and drugs.”*

Key highlights of the Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016

- One of the most important features of the Bill is that a person attempting suicide shall be presumed, though rebuttable, to be suffering from severe stress, and hence, exempt from trial and punishment.

- The Bill adopts a more nuanced understanding of “mental illness” than the Act of 1987. However, the Bill varies from the social model of disability incorporated in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. India had signed the Convention on 1 October 2007.
- Also, the Bill adopts a narrow approach to see mental illness as hampering recognition of reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.
- It also adopts a radically different approach empowering the individual to make decisions concerning his/her mental healthcare or treatment. This is in line with the objective of the Convention.
- It also provides every person, except a minor, with a right to make an Advance Directive specifying the way the person wishes to be cared for and treated for a mental illness.
- It creates a rights-based framework for mentally ill persons. Its Chapter V operates as a charter of rights for persons with mental illness consolidating and safeguarding the basic human rights of these individuals.
- It completely prohibits Electro-compulsive therapy as a measure of emergency treatment for these individuals.

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Law Commission of India submitted report on Hate Speech

The Law Commission of India on 23 March 2017 submitted its Report No. 267 titled Hate Speech to the Union Government for its consideration.

Why the Law Commission of India took up this matter?

- In the *Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan Vs Union of India* (AIR 2014 SC 1591) case, the Supreme Court of India had asked the Law Commission of India to examine issues related to hate speech including its definition.
- The court also directed the commission to submit its recommendations to the Parliament to strengthen the Election Commission to curb the menace of hate speeches.
- Against this backdrop, the Law Commission of India has undertaken a study of laws restricting hate speeches in India.

Legal backing to “Freedom of Speech” Principle

- Freedom of Speech and Expression is one of the most significant rights guaranteed in the Constitution.
- However, this right has been subjected to reasonable restrictions enunciated under Article 19(2) of the Indian Constitution.
- The reasonableness of this restriction is subject to several tests.
- Laws that seek to prevent speech that marginalise the vulnerable sections of the society strive to harmonise the freedom of expression with the right to equality.
- In order to protect the vulnerable sections from discriminatory attitudes and practices, it is necessary that forms of expression that have the potential of inciting hatred and violence are regulated.

Union Government sanctioned 101 Integrated Cold Chain Projects

Highlights of LCI’s report on Hate Speech

- The Commission recommended that the anti-discrimination should take into account the harmful effect of speech on the rights of the vulnerable group.
- The Law Commission also advised that the several factors need to be considered before restricting a speech, like, the context of the speech, the status of the victim, the status of the maker of the speech and the potential of the speech to create discriminatory and disruptive circumstances.
- After a thorough examination of the issue and an analysis of the international legal framework, the Commission proposed amendments to the Indian Penal Code by the insertion of new sections after section 153B and 505A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- The commission also advised the government for adoption of certain other strategies to encourage harmony among different groups of the society like sensitising and educating the public on the responsible exercise of speech.

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Union Government sanctioned 101 Integrated Cold Chain Projects

The Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) on 27 March 2017 sanctioned 101 new Integrated Cold Chain Projects. These are in addition to the 30 Cold Chain Projects that were sanctioned in May 2015.



Details related to 101 new Integrated Cold Chain Projects

- These 101 new Integrated Cold Chain Projects were sanctioned under the Cold Chain and Value Addition Infrastructure Scheme.
- Cumulatively, these new projects will attract Rs. 3100 crore investment for the creation of modern infrastructure in the food processing sector.
- While the financial assistance component will be up to Rs 10 crore for entrepreneurs, the total expected grant-in-aid by the government will be Rs 838 crore.

Earth Hour observed on 25 March 2017 across the World

- These projects are meant for fruits and vegetables, dairy, fish, meat, marine, poultry, ready to eat and ready to cook sectors.
- These new projects will reduce wastage of perishables, add value to the agricultural produce and create huge employment opportunities especially in rural areas.
- These projects will create additional capacity of 2.76 lakh MT of cold storage capacity, 115 MT per hour of Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) capacity, 56 lakh litres per day of milk processing capacity, 210 MT per batch of blast freezing capacity and 629 refrigerated or insulated vehicles.
- These projects will not only provide a big boost to the growth of food processing infrastructure in the concerned States, but also help in providing better prices to farmers.

Why India needs Integrated Cold Chain Projects?

- India is one of the largest food producers in the world. Though it is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, it only processes 2.2 per cent of total fruits and vegetables produced.
- To ameliorate this situation, India requires affordable cold storages and cold chains at every food producing hub in the country.
- Against this backdrop, the MoFPI is building the National Cold Chain Grid, in which building Integrated Cold Chain Projects is one of the key components.
- The goal of the National Cold Chain Grid, as well as Integrated Cold Chain Projects, is to connect all food producing hubs to cold storage and processing industries.
- These initiatives will create short, consistent and compressed supply chains from producers to processors, retailers and exporters.
- They also give major boost to fruits and vegetables processing, milk processing and non-horticulture food processing in the country.

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India-Nepal petroleum pact renewed

India and Nepal on 27 March 2017 signed an agreement to renew the supply of petroleum to Nepal for five years. The renewed MoU was signed between Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) and Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) for another five years.

The Indian Oil has been supplying petroleum and associated products to Nepal since 1974.

Highlights of the renewed petroleum trade pact

- With this renewal, the state-owned Indian Oil Corp (IOC) will supply about 1.3 million tonnes of fuel annually to Nepal with a promise to double the volume by 2020.
- India also agreed to extend the Raxaul- Amlekhganj product pipeline to Chitwan. It had promised to start work on the project in 2017-18. At present, the work on the pipeline was hanging since 2006.
- India has announced to constitute a high-level official committee. This committee will look into Nepal's demand for an LPG pipeline between Amblekhhanj and Motihari. It will also look after the extension plan of the natural gas pipeline from Gorakhpur into Nepal.

Renewal of the petroleum supply agreement between the two companies was needed because the existing pact was supposed to expire on 31 March 2017. The new agreement will come into effect from 1 April 2017 and will expire on 31 March 2022.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas statement said, “The agreement is an umbrella document between the two parties which apart from detailing the supply of petroleum, oil and lubricant products and also puts in place an institutional mechanism for cooperation in the areas of additional services and technical assistance between the two”.

The signing of the revision pact between IOCL and NOC was overseen by Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan and his Nepali counterpart Deepak Bohra.

At present, the two nations are working towards deepening engagement in the oil and gas sector including construction of Motihari-Amlekhgunj Pipeline. Once completed, the pipeline will help in uninterrupted supply of petroleum products to Nepal.

Comment: Revision of the petroleum supply-pact along with the promise to meet domestic demand of almost all petro products was signed by India to stop China from entering into India’s neighbourhood. As earlier in March 2015, the former Government of Nepal led by KPS Oli had signed a commercial pact with China under which the latter would have supplied petroleum products to Nepal. However, the pact failed to come into light after Oli resigned as Prime Minister of Nepal.

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SC asked Centre, J&K government to decide Muslim minority status in state

The Supreme Court on 17 March 2017 asked the Union and the Jammu and Kashmir governments to sit together and decide contentious issues including the question whether Muslims can be treated as a minority in the state.

A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar asked both the governments to resolve the issue and submit



a report to it within four weeks. The other members of the bench were Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice SK Kaul.

Terming the issue as a very important one, the bench had asked both governments should sit together and take a stand on it.

In February 2017, the court imposed a cost of Rs 30000 on the union government for not filing its reply on a PIL alleging that minority benefits are being enjoyed by majority Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir.

The apex court had accorded the last opportunity to the Centre to file its reply, saying the matter is very important. The court had allowed the counsel for the Centre to file the response after depositing the cost.

Earlier, the top court had issued a notice to the Centre, the state government and the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) on the plea filed by Jammu-based advocate Ankur Sharma. Sharma in his PIL has alleged that benefits accruing to minorities were being taken away by Muslims, who were in a majority in Jammu and Kashmir.

Sharma in his plea also alleged that the rights of religious and linguistic minorities of the state were syphoned off illegally and arbitrarily due to the extension of benefits to unqualified sections of the population. He also had sought for the establishment of the state minority commission for identification of minorities.

The PIL also alleges that communities that are eligible to be notified as minorities were not awarded the due share due to non-identification as minorities. This unavailability of the minority status and absence of due share in benefits are jeopardising their constitutionally guaranteed rights that is enshrined under Part III of the Constitution of India.

Muslim population in Jammu and Kashmir: According to the 2011 Census, the population of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir is 68.31 per cent.

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SC bans sale and registration of Non-BS-IV Compliant Vehicles

The Supreme Court (SC) on 29 March 2017 banned the sale and registration of vehicles which are not compliant with Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) emission norms.

A bench of Justice Madan B Lokur and Justice Deepak Gupta ruled that the BS-IV emission norms will come into effect from 1 April 2017 across the country.

The court further ruled that all the vehicle registering authorities under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, are prohibited from registering non-BS-IV compliant vehicles except on proof that such a vehicle has already been sold on or before 31 March 2017.

The court also noted that vehicles, that do not meet the Bharat Stage-IV emission standards, take primacy over the health hazard of millions of countrymen due to increased air pollution.

The ruling came on pleas seeking ban on the sale and registration of BS-III compliant vehicles after 1 April 2017.

Background

The Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) earlier submitted data on manufacturing and sale of BS-III vehicles on a monthly basis and told the Supreme Court that the companies were holding stock of around 8.24 lakh such vehicles.

The manufacturers, in turn, told the court that they were allowed to sell their stocks with old emission norms when BS-IV norms were brought in force on the previous two occasions at the time the industry had switched to BS-II and BS-III in 2005 and 2010 respectively.

Currently, BS-IV petrol and diesel vehicles are being supplied in whole of Northern India covering Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and parts of Rajasthan and western UP.

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India became net exporter of electricity for first time

India on 29 March 2017 became the net exporter of electricity for the first time, as per Central Electricity Authority, the designated authority of Union Government for Cross Border Trade of Electricity.

During the financial year 2016-17, India exported around 5798 million units to Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar which was 213 Million units more than the import of around 5585 million units from Bhutan.

Export to Nepal and Bangladesh increased by 2.5 and 2.8 times respectively in last three years. This export is expected to increase by around 145 MW shortly through 132 kV Katiya (Bihar)– Kusaha (Nepal) and 132 kV Raxaul (Bihar)– Parwanipur (Nepal) line.

Background

Ever since the cross border trade of electricity began in mid-1980s, India has been importing power from Bhutan and marginally exporting to Nepal in radial mode at 33 kV and

132 kV from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. On an average, Bhutan has been supplying around 5000- 5500 million units to India.

The export of power to Nepal further increased by around 145 MW with commissioning of Muzaffarpur (India)– Dhalkhebar(Nepal) 400kV line (being operated at 132 kV) in 2016.

On the other hand, export of power to Bangladesh from India began with commissioning of 1st cross border Interconnection between Baharampur in India and Bheramara in Bangladesh at 400kV in September 2013.

It was further augmented by commissioning of 2nd cross border Interconnection between Surjyamaninagar (Tripura) in India and South Comilla in Bangladesh. At present around 600 MW power is being exported to Bangladesh.

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India declared its Association status with International Energy Agency

India on 30 March 2017 declared its 'Association' status with the International Energy Agency (IEA). In this regard, Union Minister of Power & Renewable Energy Piyush Goyal handed over the formal letter to Fatih Birol, Executive Director of IEA.

India as an Association member of IEA will serve as a bridge and platform for deeper cooperation and collaboration between IEA Member and Association countries.

India and IEA have an MoU since 2011 under which both are working on capacity building to respond to an oil emergency situation.

Comment

Today, over 70 per cent of world's energy consumption is under the IEA umbrella. IEA is an important part of global dialogue on energy, providing research, data, analysis and recommendations on the global energy sector.

India's engagement with the IEA has enhanced over the last two decades and the 'Association' status will facilitate it to participate in meetings of the standing groups, committees and working groups that constitute the IEA governance structure.

India will also be able to richly gain from IEA's data gathering processes, survey methodologies and range of energy data. Moreover, India's participation will enrich the energy efficiency and renewable sectors of IEA member countries.

About International Energy Agency (IEA)

- Established in 1974, IEA is a Paris based autonomous organisation.

- It's mandate is to work towards ensuring reliable, affordable and clean energy mainly for its 29 member countries by coordinating collective response to major disruptions in oil supply.
- The four main areas of focus of IEA are: energy security, economic development, environmental awareness and energy engagement worldwide.

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India's longest Chenani-Nashri tunnel inaugurated

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 2 April 2017 inaugurated Chenani-Nashri tunnel, India's longest highway tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir. This 9 km long twin-tube tunnel is an ideal example of the government's 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' initiative.



PM Modi also announced to invest around Rs 7000 crore in highways projects in Jammu and Kashmir in the next two years. A ring road will be built around Jammu at a cost of Rs 2100 crore and another one around Srinagar at a cost of Rs 2200 crore.

Moreover, Zojila tunnel is also under construction between Leh and Ladakh at a cost of Rs 6000 crore.

Highlights of the India's longest Chenani-Nashri tunnel

- This 9 km long all-weather tunnel between Udhampur and Ramban in Jammu & Kashmir is not only India's longest highways tunnel but also Asia's longest bi-directional highways tunnel.
- Built at an elevation of 1200 metres on one of the most difficult Himalayan terrains, the tunnel will cut the travel time between Jammu and Srinagar by two hours, bypassing about 41 kms of road length.
- It will also ensure an all weather passage on a route that often sees heavy traffic jams and disruptions due to landslides, snow, sharp curves, breakdown of vehicles and accidents.

- The structure of the tunnel consists of a 9 km long two-laned main tunnel with a parallel escape tunnel of same length. The two tunnels are connected by 29 cross passages at regular intervals.
- These cross passages can be used for evacuation of vehicles and commuters in case of breakdown or any other emergency.
- There are two minor bridges on the south and north sides and 4-lane approach roads with Toll Plazas on both ends of the tunnel.
- The Traffic Control System in the tunnel has green and red lights, the speed limit signs and others to control traffic condition inside the tunnel.
- The tunnel has an Incident Detection Systems under which if any accident happens, the control team will get to know before the victim contacts through the SOS call box.
- The maximum height permitted in the tunnel is 5 meters and for checking the height, special sensors have been installed just before the toll points at both ends.
- The tunnel is a part of the 286 km long four-laning of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.
- The tunnel has an efficient ventilation system. There are inlets bringing fresh air at 8 metre intervals and outlet for exhaust every 100 metres.

Patnitop Tunnel, India's longest road tunnel, set to open in 2016

Comment

The Chenani-Nashri tunnel is an environment-friendly project. The construction of the tunnel avoided large-scale deforestation. Moreover, it will save much time on the Jammu-Srinagar route that will further result in fuel saving of approximately Rs 27 lakhs per day.

The Chenani-Nashri tunnel will also have a very positive impact on the state economy. The project provided employment to over 2000 unskilled and skilled youth of Jammu and Kashmir as 94 per cent of the work force was from the state itself.

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PowerTex India scheme for powerloom sector

The Union government on 1 April 2017 launched PowerTex India, a comprehensive scheme for the development of the powerloom sector.

The scheme was launched by Union Textiles Minister Smriti Irani through a video conference at Bhiwandi in Thane district, Maharashtra with a simultaneous launch in 45 other locations across the country including Surat, Erode, Malegaon, Bengaluru, Varanasi and Bhagalpur.

Key Highlights

- The scheme would especially benefit Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. It comprises new research and development in power loom textiles along with new markets, branding, subsidies and welfare schemes for the workers.
- It is meant to especially benefit the small power loom weavers. The powerloom sector alone employs over 44 lakh people.
- In all, it has nine components including In-situ up-gradation of Plain Powerlooms, Group Workshed Scheme (GWS), Common Facility Centre (CFC), Yarn Bank Scheme, Tex Venture Capital Fund, Grant-in-Aid and Modernisation & Upgradation of Powerloom Service Centres (PSCs).
- It also includes two new schemes, Pradhan Mantri Credit Scheme (PMCS) for powerloom weavers and solar energy scheme (SEC) for powerlooms.
- Under PMCS for powerloom weavers, financial assistance, including subsidy and interest reimbursement, would be given as against the credit facility under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana to the decentralised power loom units.
- Under SEC for powerlooms, financial subsidy for the installation of the Solar Photo Voltaic Plants would be provided to alleviate the problems of power cuts.
- Besides this, the government would provide a subsidy of 50% to power loom units having maximum eight looms for adopting solar energy for captive use either on grid or off grid system.

Smriti Irani along with Devendra Fadnavis, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra also launched a PowerTex India helpline number on the occasion to provide any kind of assistance related to the scheme.

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MoU between Forum of Regulators & National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners approved

The Union Cabinet on 31 March 2017 gave its approval for signing of an MoU between the Forum of Regulators (FOR) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) in the area of large-scale Grid Integration of Renewable Energy.

The MoU provides the following broad areas for cooperation in the area of large scale integration of renewable energy.

- i) Design of frameworks for renewable energy procurement
- ii) Regulatory interventions for the development of renewable energy such as State and national Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs), Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) framework
- iii) Load forecasting techniques and processes
- iv) Contracting and Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)
- v) Renewable energy forecasting methods
- vi) Renewable Energy integration
- vii) Regulatory framework for ensuring grid discipline by generators, including deterrents in the form of penalty for breach of discipline
- viii) Ancillary services including physical mechanisms, regulations and markets.
- ix) Data analysis and cost-benefit analysis for regulatory decision-making

Benefits of MoU

- The MoU envisages to promote information exchanges in the areas of renewable energy integration regulations and balancing using gas, storage, and demand-side approaches and energy imbalance markets.
- It will enhance the efforts of India's power system for better management of large-scale integration of renewable energy into the power grid.

About Forum of Regulators

- The Forum of Regulators was constituted by the Union Ministry of Power under provisions of section 166 (2) of the Electricity Act, 2003.
- The primary objective of the forum is to harmonize regulations in the power sector framed by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), State Electricity

Regulatory Commissions (SERCs) and Joint Electricity Regulatory Commissions (JERCs).

- In the past, in order to work on areas such as Demand Side Management and Energy Efficiency, Forum of Regulators had signed an MoU with The California Energy Commission, The California Public Utilities Commission and the University of California.

About National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC)

- The NARUC is the National Association in United States that represent the State Public Service Commissioner.
- The proposed MoU is under the larger bilateral agreement on Energy Efficiency Commercialization and Innovation signed between the USA and India.
- Further, the MoU is being pursued as a component of 'Greening the Grid' project, launched under US-India 'Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Deployment' (PACE-D).

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First Air services agreement between India and Georgia approved by Union Cabinet

The Union Cabinet on 5 April 2017 approved the signing of air services agreement (ASA) between India and Georgia.

According to an official press release, the agreement will not only help in establishing air connectivity between the two countries but it will also contribute to the expansion of trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchange between the two.

The cabinet meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself.

Key Highlights

- The agreement between the two countries is based on the latest International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) template keeping in view of developments in the Civil Aviation sector.
- The main objective is to improve the air connectivity between the two countries.
- Until now, there was no such air services agreement between the two nations.

- ASA is the basic legal framework for any air operation between the two countries.

The features of the Air Services Agreement are as follows:

- Both countries shall be entitled to designate one or more airline.
- Indian carriers would now be able to operate to any point in Georgia from any point in India.
- Carriers of Georgia would be able to establish a direct operation to six points in India including New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bengaluru, Goa and Hyderabad.
- The designated carriers of both sides will also be able to serve any intermediate and beyond point through routing flexibility.
- The designated airlines of both the countries would also be given the right to establish offices in the territory of the other for promotion and sale of air services.
- Besides this, the designated airlines of each party will also be allowed to enter into cooperative marketing arrangements with the designated carriers of the same party, other party and that of a third party.
- This will not only facilitate direct connectivity but also connectivity through third country carriers. It will provide viable options for the carriers of both the countries.

Further, this development will enable the creation of an environment for enhanced and seamless connectivity. It will also provide great commercial opportunities to the carriers of both the sides ensuring greater safety and security.

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Union Cabinet approved five agreements with Bangladesh including Audio Visual Co-Production

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 5 April 2017 approved five agreements with Bangladesh including a pact in the field of judicial sector cooperation and on passenger cruise services on the coastal and protocol routes.

All the agreements or draft of measures were cleared prior to visit of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India. These measures were cleared with an aim to strengthen cultural, judicial, maritime and economic engagements between India and Bangladesh.

India, Bangladesh signed Land Boundary Agreement of 1974

PM Hasina will be on a four-day official visit to India. She will be in India between 7 April and 10 April 2017 with a hope to deepen the bilateral relations between the two nations, which have seen a new trajectory in last three to five years. Her visit comes two years after **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka.**

List of Agreements/MoUs which were cleared during the Union Cabinet meet

• Approval to the agreement on Audio Visual Co-Production between India and Bangladesh: Salient features of the Agreement

a) The audio-visual co-production agreement would cover co-production of films, documentaries and animations films.

b) An audio-visual co-production made in accordance with the proposed Agreement shall be entitled to all the benefits which may be accorded to any national audio-visual work by both countries in accordance with their respective laws and regulations.

c) The agreement will lead to exchange of art and culture among the two countries. At the same time, it will also create goodwill and better understanding among the residents of the two countries.

d) Co-productions provide an opportunity to create and showcase our soft power.

e) The agreement will help in generation of employment among artistic, technical as well as non-technical personnel engaged in the arena of audio-visual co-production including post-production and its marketing. This employment will add to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of both the countries.

f) As per the agreement, Bangladesh will have the rights to utilise Indian locales for shooting, which in return raises the visibility/prospect of India as a preferred film shooting destination across the globe.

So far, India has entered into audio-visual co-production agreements with several nations like the United Kingdom, Italy, Brazil, Germany, New Zealand, France, Poland, Canada, Spain, China and Republic of Korea.

India, Bangladesh signed MoU to tackle the menace of fake Indian currency notes

- **Approval to the signing of MoU in the field of judicial sector cooperation:** This approval aims at developing, strengthening and promoting mutual cooperation between the judiciaries of the two countries. The approval will encourage mutual

interaction among judges and officials of the two nations via exchange visits, training and academic programmes. It will also promote mutual exchange of information on latest developments in the field of law and justice. It will enable exchange of knowledge in infrastructure and information technology in this field.

- **Approval to the MoU on passenger cruise services on the coastal and protocol routes between India and Bangladesh:** This approval on the passenger cruise services will help in starting regular movement of passengers and tourists in water crafts between the two countries. This operationalisation will also generate employment opportunities for the people of India and Bangladesh. Apart from this, it will also promote people to people contact and cooperation in respect to economic, cultural and social advancement of the neighbouring nations.
- **Approval to the MoU for fairway development of Ashuganj-Zakiganj stretch of Kushiara River and Sirajganj-Daikhawa stretch of Jamuna River in the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route:** This MoU between India and Bangladesh will considerably reduce the logistics cost of cargo movement to North Eastern India. It will also reduce the congestion through Siliguri Chicken's Neck corridor.

[India to provide financial assistance to Bangladesh for development of Sylhet city](#)

- **Approval to the MoU on Cooperation in the field of Mass Media:** Salient features of the MoU includes main areas of cooperation and they are
 - a) The two nations will facilitate training or study tour of personnel in the field of mass media and public relations.
 - b) It will encourage the exchange of experts in the field of Mass Media.
 - c) It will also encourage cooperation between educational, training and research institutions in the field of Mass Media & Communication and facilitate in the exchange of publications generated by these institutions.
 - d) It will also allow the two nations in cooperating and sharing their experiences in the field of regulations of the Mass Media activities and statistical data related to Mass Media.
 - e) It will also facilitate accredited mass media representatives to set up offices in the creation of conditions necessary for performance of professional duties on the basis of reciprocity.

[US policy memo: computer programmer not to qualify for H-1B visa](#)

Union Cabinet approved closure of Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana

The Union Cabinet on 5 April 2017 approved closure of the Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY). The scheme was set up in 2012 to address the social security-related issues of the Emigration Check Required (ECR) category workers going abroad for employment to ECR countries.

The scheme was launched with an aim to cover 5 million overseas blue collar Indian workers who have the ECR category passports in 17 countries.

However, the subscription under the MGPSY was very low and no new subscription was received for more than a year.

About Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana

- Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana (MGPSY) was a special social security scheme for overseas Indian workers on temporary work permit in 17 Emigration Check Required (ECR) countries.
- It was aimed at helping the workers to save money for their retirement, their return to India and resettlement and provides life insurance cover against natural death during the period of coverage.
- The scheme envisaged a co-contribution of Rs 1000 by Government to overseas Indian workers who save Rs 4000 per annum so that on return to India, a MGPSY subscriber could utilise these savings for return and resettlement purposes.
- It provided home and a life insurance cover of Rs 1 lakh for workers.
- Indian Workers Resource Centre or IWRC was the support centre for Indian workers in the UAE while Bank of Baroda was the official banking partner of the scheme to enrol the workers.

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Union government to revive 40-year-old North Koel Irrigation project

The Union government has decided to restart the North Koel Irrigation project that was thought of nearly 40 years ago. The project will aim to address the water requirements in Bihar and Jharkhand.



The decision was announced by the Union Minister for Water Resources, Uma Bharti during the launch of management information system (MIS) that will monitor the projects undertaken under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKYS).

According to the Union Minister, the project after completion is expected to irrigate almost 1 lakh hectares of land in both the states combined. It is estimated to cost around Rs 1600 Cr.

The Minister further added by saying that from irrigation point of view Jharkhand is the most backward state and PM Narendra Modi has initiated the revival of the project to eradicate poverty and backwardness of the common people in the state.

According to K Vohra, one of the main commissioners of the Jharkhand project, out of the total cost, the Centre would be financing about Rs 1000 crore.

[MP Govt to launch a Yojana to provide subsidised food to the poor](#)

[UP government orders probe into alleged misuse of money in Gomati River Front Development project](#)

Besides this, the Union ministry has also identified other places including Marathwada in Maharashtra, Bundelkhand in Uttar Pradesh and Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput in Odisha to implement smaller irrigation schemes to eliminate water problems in the regions.

The ministry also held a meeting recently with officials belonging to 15 states that face acute water problems.

Union Minister Bharti has also asked the Central Ground Water Board to undertake projects in order to identify and revive disappeared springs in the stretches between Jammu and Kashmir and the north-eastern states.

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SC seeks reply from 6 states on plea to ban cow vigilantes

The Supreme Court on 7 April 2017 sought response from six states, namely Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, on a plea seeking a ban on cow vigilante ('Gau Raksha') groups there.

A bench comprising Justice Dipak Misra and Justice A M Khanwilkar issued notices to these states and asked them to file their reply within three weeks. The court sought the response from these states during the brief hearing a petition referring to the recent incident at Alwar in Rajasthan where a man was killed allegedly by a mob of cow vigilante group.

The counsel appearing for the petitioner claimed that the ground-level situation in these states was worrisome as the cow vigilante groups were resorting to violence there.

The response of the six states was sought after the Solicitor General Ranjit Kumar, appearing on behalf of the Union Government told the bench that formal notices were not issued to the states on the plea. The bench has fixed the matter for hearing on 3 May 2017.

Background

Earlier on 21 October 2016, the apex court agreed to examine the plea, which sought action against cow vigilantes. The plea mentioned that these vigilantes were allegedly indulged in violence and committing atrocities against Dalits and minorities.

Activist Tehseen S Poonawalla, in his plea alleged that these groups were committing atrocities against Dalits and minorities in the name of protection of cows and other bovines and they needed to be regulated and banned in the interest of social harmony, public morality and law and order in the country.

The plea filed in the Supreme Court seeks to declare certain clauses of Acts of few states as unconstitutional. These acts provide for protection of persons acting in good faith under the Act or rules. **They are:**

- Section 12 of the Gujarat Animal Prevention Act, 1954
- Section 13 of Maharashtra Animal Prevention Act, 1976
- Section 15 of Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act, 1964

The plea termed these laws as a catalyst to violence perpetrated by these vigilante groups.

Besides, the plea seeks an action against the vigilante. The petition said the atrocities committed by these cow vigilantes were punishable under various provisions of IPC and under the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of atrocities) Act, 1989.

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Parliament passed Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2017

Indian Parliament on 10 April 2017 passed the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2017 after it was passed by Rajya Sabha. The Bill was already passed by Lok Sabha in March 2017.

The Bill amends the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and the Constitution (Pondicherry) Scheduled Castes Order, 1964.

Provisions of the Bill

- It seeks to modify the list of Schedule Castes for the state of Odisha. The castes Sualgiri and Swalgiri will be introduced as synonyms to the Sabakhia caste in the list of SCs for the state of Odisha.
- It modifies name of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to Puducherry by incorporating changes in the Constitution (Pondicherry) Scheduled Castes Order, 1964.

Article 341 of the Indian Constitution empowers the President to specify the Scheduled Castes in various states and UTs. Further, it permits Parliament to modify this list.

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SoI proposed joint mission with Nepal to re-measure Mt Everest's height

The Survey of India has proposed to re-measure the height of Mount Everest in 2017, as a part of the celebrations of its 250 years completion this year.

The announcement was made by the organisation on 10 April 2017,



which is also celebrated as the National Survey Day.

Key Highlights

- India was the first country to measure the height of Mount Everest and declare it to be the highest mountain peak in the world in 1855.
- The feat was completed under the excellent leadership of George Everest, the then Surveyor General of India.
- India carried out the exercise again in 1956 to re-confirm the height of the peak.
- •Following the devastating earthquake in Nepal in 2015, several scientists have raised doubts about the peak's current height.
- •The Survey of India has proposed to re-measure the peak's height in response to the same.
- •The organisation has proposed to carry out the feat as an Indo-Nepal joint scientific exercise along with the Survey department of Nepal.
- •A proposal for the same has been forwarded to Nepal. The expedition will begin once a formal consensus is achieved between the two countries.

Speaking on the proposal, Swarna Subba Rao, the Surveyor General of India stated that if all the paper works get completed in time then, the expedition would take off by May end or June.

The Plan

- A two pronged strategy would be adopted to complete the task.
- One team would be sent to the Himalayas with GPS devices to take a satellite data.
- The second team would undertake the triangulation method, the age-old trigonometric survey, in seven cities within India and Nepal.
- The outcome of both the methods would be studied and cross checked to determine the actual figure.

The survey would once and for all lay to rest all the doubts harboured by the scientists on whether the great peak has shrunk or grown taller following the major shift in tectonic plates.

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Union Minister launched 'Nakshe' portal to celebrate Survey of India's 250 Anniversary

The Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Harsh Vardhan launched a new web portal called 'nakshe' in New Delhi on 10 April 2017. The launch commemorates the 250th anniversary of Survey of India (SoI).



The event saw in attendance Y.S. Chowdary, the Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Swarna Subba Rao, the Surveyor General of India and other top scientists and professionals from the Geospatial Industry.

Key Highlights

- The portal will offer Topographic maps or Open Series Maps (OSM) for free download in a pdf format through Aadhar enabled user authentication process.
- The move is in line with the Indian government's Digital India programme.
- Topographic maps or Open Series Maps (OSM) comprise natural and man-made geographical features including terrain or topography.
- The maps have been prepared by the SoI since its inception in 1767 and are completely in accordance with the National Map Policy of 2005.

The portal's launch was followed by a curtain raiser of Survey of India's Geo-portal and Web services platform and a technical presentation on the development of the Geoid model for India. The event also included a panel discussion on Geospatial Paradigm in India, which deals with the user's perspective on Geospatial Policy Framework in the country.

[SoI proposes joint mission with Nepal to re-measure Mt Everest's height](#)

[Astronomers discover possible Venus twin](#)

About the Survey of India

- It is India's National Survey and Mapping Organization and comes under the Department of Science & Technology.
- It was set up in 1767 and so, this year the organisation is celebrating its 250th anniversary.

- It is not only the oldest scientific department of the government of India but also one of the oldest survey establishments in the world.
- As the country's Principal Mapping Agency, the department bears a special responsibility to ensure that the country's domain is explored and mapped suitably.
- The foundation for the scientific survey and mapping of the country was laid with The Great Trigonometric Survey (GTS), which was conducted on 10 April 1802.
- World renowned surveyors, Col. Lambton and Sir George Everest had played a huge role in the survey. They had surveyed and mapped each and every part of the country.
- The maps created as a result of their research have played a pivotal role in India's nation building process and in creating the foundation of almost all major developmental activities of modern India.

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Two day Convention on World Homoeopathy Day concluded in India

A two day National Convention on World Homoeopathy Day was on 10 April 2017 successfully concluded in New Delhi. The theme of the convention was 'Enhancing Quality of Research in Homoeopathy'.

As per the Ministry of AYUSH, the objective of this convention is to deliberate on the existing scenario of Homeopathy in India and other countries and develop strategies for formulating national policies.

The convention was organised by Central Council for Research in Homeopathy (CCRH), an autonomous research organization of Ministry of AYUSH. The event was organised to commemorate the 262nd birth anniversary of the founder of Homoeopathy **Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann** on the occasion of World Homoeopathy Day 2017.

Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann was a German physician, a great scholar, linguist and an acclaimed scientist. Hahnemann and his scientific aptitude helped him to discover a healing system of Homeopathy based on infallible laws of nature.

National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH)

On the occasion, the Ministry of AYUSH announced to constitute National Commission for Homoeopathy (NCH) as the regulatory body to standardise Homoeopathy.

National Commission for Homoeopathy will have four boards, one each for regulation of undergraduate education; postgraduate education; accreditation and assessment of institutions and regulation of the practice of the profession.

About World Homoeopathy Day

- Every year, 10 April is celebrated all over the world as 'World Homeopathy Day' as a tribute to Christian Friedrich Samuel Hahnemann.
- The week following the birth date of Hahnemann, that is, 10 April- 16 April is observed as the World Homeopathic Awareness Week.
- Samuel Hahnemann is the Father of Homeopathy, Father of Human Pharmacology, Father of Nano Medicine and the Father of Infinite Dilution concept in Chemistry.

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Union Ministry released Rs. 23,443 Cr to the states for development activities

The Union Ministry of Rural Development released Rs 23443.09 Cr to the states on 10 April 2017, as the first budgetary instalment for the financial year 2017-18 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

The released amount also includes all the pending dues as on 31 March 2017. The money was released to ensure there is no delay in the work towards water conservation.

Key Highlights

- This time under the MGNREGS scheme, the government is laying special focus on water conservation and water management works.
- The Rural Development ministry has also advised all the states to see that water conservation efforts are made wherever required with proper technical and scientific scrutiny.
- The ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources has also developed a set of guidelines for *Mission Water Conservation* that has already been shared with the states.
- Along with this, a list of 2264 water-stressed Blocks has been prepared with the help of the Water Resources ministry.
- These blocks are located in 324 districts spread across 21 states of the country.

Further, the ministry has advised the states to ensure that at least 65% per cent of the allocated amount is spent on Natural Resource Management (NRM) activities with top most

priority accorded to water conservation works, especially in the regions that are drought prone and receive inadequate rainfall.

There are 155 kinds of work permissible under MGNREGS, among which almost 100 are NRM related.

Besides this, the states have been requested to ensure work availability to poor households in poor regions on a priority basis.

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Lok Sabha passed Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017

The Lok Sabha on 10 April 2017 passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017. It was passed by the house with 360 MPs voting in favour and 2 against the bill.

The Bill seeks to give constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.

Objectives of the 123rd Amendment Bill, 2017

- The Bill seeks to insert a new Article 338B in the Constitution. The Article provides for the National Commission for Backward Classes, its composition, mandate, functions and various officers.
- The Bill also seeks to insert a new Article 342-A, which empowers the President to notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes of a state/union territory. In case of a state, President will make such notification after consultation with the Governor.
- Under the new Article 342-A, the Parliament, by making a law, can include or exclude the classes from the central list of backward classes.

About National Commission for Backward Classes

- The National Commission for Backward Classes is an Indian statutory body under the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It was established on 14 August 1993.
- It was constituted pursuant to the provisions of the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993.
- The Supreme Court of India in its Judgement dated 16.11.1992 in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 930 of 1990, *Indra Sawhney & Ors. Vs. Union of India and Ors.*, reported in (1992) Supp. 3 SCC 217, directed the Government of India, State Governments

and Union Territory Administrations to constitute a permanent body in the nature of a Commission or Tribunal for entertaining, examining and recommending upon requests for inclusion and complaints of over-inclusion and under-inclusion in the list of OBCs.

- At present, the Commission is responsible to look into the inclusion and exclusion of backward classes only.

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Kulbhushan Jadhav sentenced to death in Pakistan

Kulbhushan Jadhav, a former Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a military court of Pakistan on 10 April 2017. He was accused of espionage and sabotage activities in Pakistan, mainly Balochistan and Karachi.



The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of Pakistan in a release said Jadhav was arrested on 3 March 2016 in Balochistan's Mashkel area for his involvement in espionage and sabotage activities against Pakistan.

[Sarajit Singh Died in Lahore's Jinnah Hospital in Pakistan](#)

Jadhav was awarded the death sentence after being tried under section 59 of the Pakistan Army Act (PAA), 1962 and Section 3 of official Secret Act of 1923 by the Field General Court Martial (FGCM).

Earlier, the Pakistani Army has also released a video in which Jadhav allegedly confesses to his involvement in terror activities in Balochistan at his country's behest.

About Kulbhushan Jadhav

- Jadhav an Indian Navy official was commissioned as the naval officer in 1991 and retired from the services in 2013.
- He was arrested by the Pakistani authorities allegedly for being associated with the freedom fighters of Balochistan.

- Allegations are there that he was an active Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) agent. However, the charge against him was denied by India. RAW is India's external intelligence agency.
- Reports suggest that Union Government says that Jadhav was a small businessman and owns a cargo business in Chabahar, Iran. He has nothing to do with RAW and was abducted from Iran.

It seems that the decision of the military court of Pakistan would escalate the tensions between the two countries, namely India and Pakistan. On the day of sentencing, the Foreign Secretary Dr S Jaishankar summoned Pakistan High Commissioner Abdul Basit over the death sentence given by a Pakistani military court martial.

Besides, the Amnesty International also blasted Pak military court system for awarding of death sentence to Kulbhushan Jadhav, in Pakistan on the charge of spying.

Biraj Patnaik, South Asia Director of Amnesty International, in a strongly worded statement said that military courts are an inherently abusive system that is best left to deal with issues of military discipline, not any other crime.

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Supreme Court rejects Compensatory Power Tariff for Adani Power, Tata Power

The Supreme Court of India on 11 April 2017 rejected the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission's appeal of awarding compensatory power tariff to Adani Power Ltd and Tata Power Ltd.



The ruling was made by a bench of Justices Pinaki Chandra Ghose and Rohinton Nariman who cited that the compensatory tariff cannot be provided due to the rise in price of coal imported from Indonesia.

Following this ruling, both the companies witnessed a dip in their share prices by up to 18 per cent on BSE.

Hurdles faced by Tata Power

- Tata Power owns the 4000 MW mega power project through its subsidiary Coastal Gujarat Power Ltd.
- Presently, Tata Power is at a loss of Rs 47500 crore over the 25-year power purchase agreement period of the project.

- Earlier, Tata Power appealed Central Electricity Regulatory Commission and the Appellate Tribunal that if a compensatory tariff was not allowed, the project would lose Rs 1873 crore per year or Rs 47500 crore over the 25-year period.
- The company won the 4000 MW project through a bidding process coordinated by the public sector Power Finance Corporation in February 2006. It intended to run the power plant with coal procured from mines owned by the Tata group in Indonesia.
- But in 2010, the Indonesian government said that any export of Indonesian coal could be done only at prices linked to international prices. As a consequence, the project became unviable.

Hurdles faced by Adani Power

- The Adani group also set out building a 3960 MW coal-based power project at Mundra and entered into agreements with Gujarat and Haryana utilities at Rs 2.34 and Rs 2.94 a kWhr respectively.
- The coal was to come from Indian mines, but the Union Government in November 2008 changed the rules so that only 70 per cent of the needs of coast-based thermal power plants could be met from domestic mines and rest could be imported.
- For the purpose of importing coal, countries that were exporting it made it mandatory to link export prices to international prices.

What Happened Next?

Subsequently, both Tata Power and Adani Power appealed to the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission seeking a compensatory tariff under the Force Majeure (Act of God) and 'Change of Law' provisions of the power purchase agreements.

The Commission in turn responded that neither Force Majeure nor Change of Law was applicable in this case. However, it invoked Section 79 of the Electricity Act, 2003 under which it is empowered to fix tariffs and called for a committee to find out what tariff to fix for the two mega power projects.

After the constitution of committee, the power buyers (utilities) appealed to the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity (APTEL) against the Commission's orders. The APTEL ruled that the Commission had no powers to fix tariffs. However, it said that Force Majeure and Change of Law were applicable in this case.

Thereafter, the utilities went to the Supreme Court against this.

Cab safety measures for women included in new Taxi Policy Guidelines

The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has recommended the safety measures concerning safety of women commuters availing of cab services.

The recommended measures were included in the new Taxi Policy Guidelines on 12 April 2017.



These measures have been recommended by the Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, WCD Minister, to the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and Shipping (MoRTH).

The recommendations have come in the background of numerous cases of sexual harassment of women in cabs.

The Union WCD Minister has launched a hashtag, #HelpMeWCD, where any woman or child facing harassment/ violence can directly report their cases by tweeting.

Key recommendations of the WCD Ministry included in the New Taxi Policy Guidelines:

- The taxis should be mandatorily fitted with GPS panic devices.
- For the safety of women and child passengers, the central locking system in the taxis should not be allowed.
- The driver's identification along with the photo and registration number of the vehicle should also be prominently displayed in the taxi.
- Violation of the stipulated rules by the taxi operators/drivers should be strictly dealt in accordance with law.
- Sharing of seat should be subject to willingness of passengers.

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126th Birth Anniversary of Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar observed nationwide

The 126th birth anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar, also known as Ambedkar Jayanti, was observed across the India on 14 April 2017.

Dr Ambedkar was known as the father and architect of the Indian Constitution. He was an Indian jurist, economist, politician and social reformer who inspired the Modern Buddhist Movement.

To mark Ambedkar Jayanti 2017, the Union Government launched various initiatives including a BHIM Aadhaar platform for merchants and few cashback and bonus schemes for BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money).

About Dr B R Ambedkar

- B R Ambedkar was born to a Mahar (dalit) caste family on 14 April 1891 in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh (now known as Dr Ambedkar Nagar).
- He completed his school from Elphinstone High School and later pursued a degree in economics and political science from Elphinstone College, University of Mumbai.
- With the help of a scholarship, he completed his Masters in Economics (Major) at Columbia University and Doctor of Science in Economics from London.
- Throughout his life, he fought against untouchability and played a major role in Mahatma Gandhi-led Harijan movement, protesting against social injustices faced by people from backward castes.
- On 29 August 1947, he was appointed as the Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee, where he was asked to write India's new Constitution, which was adopted in November 1949 by the Constituent Assembly.
- Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951 following the stalling in parliament of his draft of the Hindu Code Bill.
- Later, he pointed out that Hinduism is the foundation of the caste system. In 1956, he converted to Buddhism.
- He brought the reservation law in India for the lower caste communities.

Dr Ambedkar's Contribution to Indian Constitution

- Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar is referred to as the Father of Indian Constitution or Architect of the Indian Constitution.

- He played a fundamental role in framing the Indian Constitution and basing it on the high pedestal of socio-politico-economic equality that still holds relevance in the context of issues currently faced by India.
- He was a strong advocate of the parliamentary democracy since the inception of the Government of India Act, 1935. He also advocated a federal structure of the Union and States.
- He was an ardent champion of fundamental rights which is enshrined in Part-III of the Indian Constitution. The text prepared by Ambedkar provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for individual citizens.
- He also framed Article 32, soul of the Constitution, in the constitution which is very significant in the sense that it makes the fundamental rights justifiable. Any violation of it can lead to Supreme Court to issue directions, orders or writs.

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Union Government launched Aadhaar Seeding Application

Bandaru Dattatreya, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment, on 13 April 2017 launched Aadhaar Seeding Application.

The Application aims efficient service delivery and widening the reach of Employees Provident Fund (EPF) benefits.

The Application was launched at the 217th special meeting of the Central Board of Employees Provident Fund (CBEPF/EPFO) in New Delhi.

Key highlights of Aadhaar Seeding Application

- The Aadhaar Seeding Application is developed by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation with support of the Common Service Centers (CSC) and CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing).
- The Application is developed in pursuance of the government's policy for optimum use of information technology for efficient service delivery and widening the reach of benefits to people.
- With the implementation of the Application, Provident Fund member or pensioner can walk in any of the field offices of EPFO or CSC outlets with UAN and Aadhaar and seed the Aadhaar with the UAN.

About Employees' Provident Fund Organisation

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation is tasked to assist the Central Board of Trustees, a statutory body formed by the Employees' Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.
- The organisation is under the administrative control of the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India.
- It assists the Central Board in administering a compulsory contributory Provident Fund Scheme.
- The Provident Fund Scheme is a pension scheme and an insurance scheme for the workforce engaged in the organized sector in India.
- The EPFO's apex decision making body is the Central Board of Trustees (CBT).
- On 1 October 2014, PM Narendra Modi launched Universal Account Number for Employees covered by EPFO to enable PF number portability.

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MoU between NSFDC & Development Commissioner (Handlooms) signed

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) and the Development Commissioner (Handlooms) on 14 April 2017 in New Delhi.

The MoU was signed between the NSFDC under the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Development and Commissioner (Handlooms) under the Union Ministry of Textiles.

Highlights of the MoU between NSFDC & Development Commissioner (Handlooms)

- The objective of this MoU is to help Scheduled Caste weavers and their families by promoting the production and marketing of high value, quality handlooms products at Block level Cluster in various States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Odisha.

- Under the cluster approach, new strategy for promoting production and marketing of high value, quality handloom products shall be adopted to ensure more earnings of the Scheduled Caste Handloom Weavers.
- Under the MoU, both the signing parties shall popularize the schemes of DC (Handlooms) amongst the SC weavers through Awareness Programmes and advertisements in electronic/print media in SC weavers concentrated areas.
- They also collaborate in capacity building, including skill upgradation and economic development of SC weavers and their families in achieving the desired outcome.
- Exhibitions/Fairs shall be organized by both the parties for providing marketing assistance to SC weavers for enhancing their earnings.
- Both the parties shall also organize relevant skill development programmes for upgradation of skills of the scheduled caste weavers in clusters and also for sharing knowledge and experience.
- This endeavour shall enable scheduled caste weavers to sharpen their skills for production and marketing of high value quality handloom products and better marketing linkages and therefore to have more income.

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President of India Inaugurates Global Exhibition on Services

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the third edition of the Global Exhibition on Services (GES-2017) at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 17 April 2017.

Commenting on the occasion, the President stated that India can be a key partner for emerging services like facilities management, urban infrastructure, environmental services and event and exhibition.



He further added that India can deliver many of these services to offshore locations and help large cities manage their facilities optimally, help hospitals in managing their medical records or provide required geospatial information.

Key Highlights from the President's speech

- Pranab Mukherjee stated that the services sector has a huge share in India's overall GDP and it is the fastest growing sector with an estimated growth rate of 7.1 per cent in 2016-17.
- He added that while India has emerged as the fastest growing economy in the world, its services sector has been the key growth driver, outpacing the growth rate of its GDP.
- India's share in the global services export has gone up to 3.3 per cent in the year 2015.
- The services exports of our country are in fact, supporting jobs across the world and are helping global businesses to build their productivity and competitiveness.

Furthermore, the President stated that the services trade is increasingly seen as an instrument to create jobs and drive national growth. Besides this, the sector also contributed heavily to trade in goods through e-commerce and supply chains.

Modi's Popularity: How it will benefit India?

Key Facts about the exhibition

- The event will be held from 17 April to 20 April at India Expo Mart in Greater Noida.
- It is being jointly organised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Services Export Promotion Council.
- The event is expected to witness participation from over 70 countries from across the world.
- It would be focussing on 20 vital services sectors. While some services include traditional ones like hospitality, information technology, tourism, education and financial services, other focus sectors include new ones such as space services, wellness services and sports services.
- The GES exhibit would include one by ISRO as well, which will be showcasing its offerings regarding application of space technology for implementing and monitoring of public programmes on a real time basis.
- The Ministry of Tourism will also be hosting the Incredible India Haat- a cuisine, culture and handicrafts show at the exhibition.

The Confederation of Indian Industry stated in a release that GES 2017 brings together 550 exhibitors from over 70 countries. The organisation further stated that the event is expected to witness more than 20000 visitors and will see over 5000 business meetings and deliberations at more than 30 seminars.

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Prakash Javadekar launches Portal and Mobile App of RUSA

The Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, on 17 April 2017 launched its own portal and mobile app. The portal and app were officially launched by Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar in New Delhi.



The portal is a one-stop location for States' Higher Education Plans, the decision of the States' Higher Education Councils and details of the resources. Also, the gallery is a rich repository of the projects initiated under RUSA. On the other hand, the mobile application will ensure that all projects under RUSA are tracked 24x7.

[Nation-wide training programme launched for Elected Women Representatives of Panchayats](#)

Besides, the minister also inaugurated 17 facilities created under Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) in one go in 14 states. **They include**

- A cluster university in Jammu and Kashmir
- Micro ATM facility at the RUSA centre for intelligent systems in Pune University
- New Colleges (Professional): Rajiv Gandhi Government Engineering College, Kangra (Himachal Pradesh)
- Equity Initiatives: Digital Language Laboratory in Ghatsila College, Ghatsila, Kolhan University (Jharkhand)
- Infrastructure Grants to Universities: Solar Panelling System in Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, Ernakulam (Kerala)
- Infrastructure Grants to University: Academic Block, Government Rani Durgawati College, Mandla (Madhya Pradesh)

- Research, Innovation and Quality Improvement in Shivaji University, Kolhapur & Savitribai Phule Pune University, Pune (Maharashtra)
- Up-gradation of existing degree colleges to Model Degree Colleges: Academic (Commerce) Block in Dera Natung Government College, Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh)
- Infrastructure Grants to University: Smart Classrooms and Moot Court Room, Mohan Lal Sukhadia University, Udaipur (Rajasthan)
- Infrastructure Grants to the University: Computer Lab at Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak (Haryana)
- Infrastructure Grants to Colleges: New building for M.Ed. Classrooms, Institute of Advanced Study in Education, Republic Veng, Aizawl (Mizoram)
- Infrastructure Grants to Colleges: Renovation of IT/Bioinformatics Centre, Laboratories in Biotechnology, Food Technology, Chemistry, Biological Science, Home Science and Geology in S. Kula Women's College, Kongkhampat, Nambol (Manipur)
- New Model Degree College (MDC) at Kalwakurthy, Nagarkurnool (District), Telangana and Infrastructure Grants to University: Yogic Science Laboratory in Uttarakhand Sanskrit University, Haridwar (Uttarakhand)
- Preparatory Grants: Management Information Systems (MIS) in all Government College of Sikkim; Infrastructure Grants to Universities: Women Hostel at Bharathiar University, Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu)

[Railways Ministry launches first-ever train with glass roof coaches on Visakhapatnam-Araku route](#)

In addition to this, Javadekar also launched the Fund and Reform Tracker for this centrally sponsored scheme. He also released the Booklet "Digital Launch of Projects; Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)" on this occasion. This fund and reform tracker will help in monitoring RUSA projects from the moment it is sanctioned and will continue till the project is completed. **Some of the key highlights of the Scheme**

- It will capture the fund allocation as per the Project Approval Board, which include the installment-wise fund release by the Union and the state governments,
- It will also track the institution-wise key project, vendors appointed and the payment made to them as also stage-wise photos and time stamps of payments made and comments entered.

- It will also provide component-wise details, which means a quick snapshot into the funding of RUSA projects.
- Whether it is infrastructure grants or equity initiatives, this window gives a peek into the funds approved, the amount released, the sum utilised and the percentage of work completed.
- Stakeholders can also get granular details on the money released from the centre and the state. The date stamps give a picture on the timelines followed and the pictures provide the ground reality.
- Tracking projects are the soul of this App, and every initiative is tagged with a unique ID number, thus providing the entire story of how an idea germinated and matured.

Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA)

- RUSA is the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of the Department of Higher Education, MHRD
- It aims to provide strategic central funding to State Higher Education Departments and Institutions and achieve the broad objectives of access, equity and excellence
- The State Higher Education Departments and Institutions undertake certain governance, academic and administrative reforms as a pre-requisite to be entitled to RUSA grants
- The implementation of RUSA in its right earnest began after May 2014.

States and UTs have responded very well to Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan as it has seen the participation of 29 States and UTs. Over 2000 State Universities and Colleges have been supported so far.

RUSA, which will allow the government to improve the quality of primary as well as higher education, has seen an allocation of Rs 1300 crore in its 2017-18 annual budget. In previous three years of Modi government, the Abhiyan has seen an increased expenditure of Rs 2800 crore.

National GER pre and prior to launch of RUSA

The National GER prior to the launch of RUSA was 20.8 (2012), with Male GER at 22.1 and Female GER at 19.4. RUSA assistance has been critical in witnessing a growth in the GER. A substantial increase in the National GER has been recorded at 24.5, with male GER at 25.4 and female GER at 23.5 in 2015-16 (Source: AISHE 2015-16).

Nation-wide training programme launched for Elected Women Representatives of Panchayats



The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development in collaboration with the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj on 17 April 2017 launched a comprehensive module for capacity building of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) of Panchayats.

In addition, a training program for trainers of women panchayat leaders across the country was also launched. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi, Union Minister of Women & Child Development, launched the program at Ranchi, Jharkhand through a video conference.

Key highlights of the training programme

- The National Commission for Women of the WCD Ministry in collaboration with TISS developed the module.
- The module includes training guidelines, timeline, implementation guidelines, training schedules and monitoring and evaluation.
- The training will include group discussions, brainstorming lectures, demonstrations, field visits, case studies, games, exercise, role play, small workshops and individual assignments.
- The module also discusses various topics like 'What is an ideal Panchayat', composition of the Gram Panchayat, development schemes and programmes, resources of panchayats and their utilization, laws for protection of the vulnerable sections among others.
- The training program aims to empower EWRs of panchayats by upgrading their capacity, capability and skill in governance and administration of villages.
- The training program will be closely monitored to ensure proper learning by the sarpanches and EWRs.

- In the first phase of the programme, 40 master trainers of Jharkhand will be trained at the State Institute of Rural Development in Ranchi.
- In the second phase of the programme, around 3000 EWRs will be trained by the master trainers in the three districts of Simdega, Pakur and Chatra of Jharkhand.
- Similar training programs will be organised in different states throughout India with the help of National Institute of Rural Development, State Institutes of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Departments of the States.

How the training programme will help the EWRs?

The EWRs will be trained in order to ensure that they take up the responsibility of all the tasks entrusted upon them on being elected. The programme will also lead to the empowerment of women sarpanches for the overall development of their villages and the country.

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Government banned red beacons on all VIP vehicles, including PM's, emergency services exempt

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 19 April 2017 decided to ban the use of red beacons symbols on the vehicles of VIPs. The decision says that Ministers and officials in the Central government will not be able to use red beacons on their official vehicles from 1 May 2017.

The ban does not exempt even vehicles of the country's top dignitaries such as the President, Prime Minister and the Chief Justice of India. However, a certain category of institutions is exempted from the ban and they are ambulances and vehicles of the fire service, police, and army. They will be allowed to use blue flashing beacons to cut through traffic.

During the cabinet meet the Rule 108 (I) and 108 (II) of the Motor Vehicles Act that allows central and state governments to permit red beacons for dignitaries was scrapped. As per the existing norms, the President, Vice President and Prime Minister along with several dignitaries like the Lok Sabha Speaker, Chief Justice of India, Chief Ministers, Governors, Chief Justices of High Courts, Supreme Court judges and Leader of Opposition were allowed red beacons.

The move is aimed at eradicating VVIP culture in the country and was taken with the spirit of new India where every Indian is special and a VIP.

Earlier, the Supreme Court of India had asked all state governments to restrict the list of VIPs who are allowed beacons on their vehicles. After which some state governments barred the use of red beacons. Example, after winning the assembly elections, Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab namely Yogi Adityanath and Captain Amarinder Singh respectively decided to remove beacons from the vehicles of ministers as well as government vehicles. Even, they ordered that the beacons will not be available on the vehicles of the Chief Ministers.

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SC restores trial against L K Advani, M M Joshi and Uma Bharti in Babri Masjid demolition case

The Supreme Court (SC) on 19 April 2017 restored criminal conspiracy trial against senior BJP leaders L K Advani, M M Joshi, Uma Bharti and other senior BJP leaders in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

The ruling was made by a bench comprising Justices P C Ghose and R F Nariman. The bench also ordered that separate trial courts at Rae Bareli and Lucknow should be clubbed and conducted in the capital of Uttar Pradesh only and directed that trials should be completed in two years.

Highlights of the SC orders

- It ruled that there will be no fresh trial because of framing of conspiracy charges against senior BJP leaders.
- However, Rajasthan governor Kalyan Singh, who enjoys Constitutional immunity, can be tried only after he ceases to hold the office.
- The trial will proceed on a day-to-day basis and will not be adjourned on any ground. Moreover, the judges presiding over the case will not be transferred till the trial is concluded and judgment is pronounced.
- The adjournment would take place only if the trial court judge feels that it was impossible to proceed and fix the next date of hearing after recording the reasons for the adjournment.
- It also directed probe agency CBI to ensure that prosecution witnesses appear on each and every date for recording of evidence in the case and the trial court should start the proceedings within one month.

Background

The verdict came on a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) plea challenging the order of Allahabad High Court for quashing the conspiracy charge against Advani and others in

May 2010. The Allahabad High Court ruled in favour of the conspiracy charges being dropped against the veteran BJP leaders.

The bench had earlier reserved the order on April 6 after the CBI and other petitioners had sought the restoration of conspiracy charge against the senior Bharatiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders.

Comment

At first, there were two sets of cases relating to the Babri Masjid demolition on 6 December 1992. The first involved unnamed 'karsevaks', the trial of which is taking place in a Lucknow court, while the second set of cases relates to the BJP leaders in a Rae Bareli court.

The Lucknow court is hearing the case against unknown 'karsevaks' who were in and around the Babri Masjid when it was pulled down.

CBI had charged Advani and 20 others under sections 153A (promoting enmity between classes), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national integration) and 505 (false statements, rumours etc circulated with the intent to cause mutiny or disturb public peace) of the IPC.

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Rajnath Singh inaugurates Civil Services Day function

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) along with the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions is organising a two-day Civil Services Day programme from 20 April to 21 April 2017.

The function was inaugurated by Rajnath Singh, the Union Home Minister and will be presided over by Jitendra Singh, who holds the portfolio of the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) among many others.

The event would commemorate Civil Services Day, which is on 21 April 2017.

Key Highlights

- The event would have an inaugural session followed a Plenary Session on the topic 'Creating value through Human Capital Management in Government', which would be led by the Jitendra Singh.
- The Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration would also be given away during the two-day function.
- The awards would be given to a total of 10 districts or organisations for innovation and effective implementation of five priority programmes.

- The five identified priority programmes are as follows:
 - Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana
 - Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana
 - Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana
 - Start Up India/Stand Up India
 - e-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)
- Besides this, the awards would also consider innovative work done by government organisations in defined themes such as disaster management, water conservation environment conservation, education, energy, women and child centric initiatives and health.
- The awards will be conferred in three groups:
 - First group will consist of eight North-Eastern States and the three northern Hill States of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
 - Second group would include all the seven Union Territories.
 - Third group would comprise the remaining 18 states.
- In addition to this, two awards will be given to government organisations under innovation category.

About Civil Services Day

- The Day is organized annually on 21 April.
- It is significant because on the occasion, all the civil servants re-dedicate themselves to the cause of the citizens and renew their commitment to public service.
- The Prime Minister of India also honours all officers of Central and state governments for excellence in public administration.
- The day coincides with the date on which Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had first addressed the batch of probationers at the All India Administrative Service Training School at Metcalfe House, New Delhi in 1947.

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Union Cabinet approved to introduce Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill 2017 in Parliament

The Union Cabinet on 19 April 2017 gave its ex-post facto approval for introduction of Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill 2017 and National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 in the Parliament.

Moreover, the Cabinet also approved retention of posts/incumbents and office premises that are held by the existing National Commission for Backward Classes.

Provisions of the Constitution (One Hundred Twenty-third Amendment) Bill, 2017

- It calls for constitution of a Commission under Article 338B for socially and educationally backward classes by name of National Commission for Backward Classes.
- It provides for insertion of Clause (26C) under Article 366 with modified definition of socially and educationally backward classes.

Provisions of National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017

- It calls for repealing the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 along with Savings Clause.
- It mentions the dissolution of the National Commission for Backward Classes with effect from the date when the Union Government may implement it. The National Commission for Backward Classes was constituted under sub-section (1) of Section 3 of the Act.
- It provides for appropriation of the sanctioned 52 posts of the existing National Commission for Backward Classes in the proposed National Commission for Backward Classes to be constituted under Article 338B.
- It provides for retention of the office premises of the existing National Commission for Backward Classes at Trikut-1, Bhikaiji Cama Place, New Delhi by the National Commission for Backward Classes to be constituted under Article 338B.

Comment

- The proposed National Commission for Backward Classes (Repeal) Bill, 2017 is necessary in view of setting up of the National Commission for Backward Classes

by insertion of Article 338B of the Constitution. It will certainly provide for overall welfare of socially and educationally backward classes.

- It will also enable effective continuity in the functioning of the National Commission for Backward Classes under Article 338B.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi to inaugurate UN Vesak Day in Sri Lanka

Wijeyadasa Rajapakse, Sri Lanka's Minister for Justice and Buddhasasana, on 19 April 2017 announced that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the UN Vesak Day.

PM Modi will inaugurate UN Vesak Day on 12 May 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

In addition, Modi will also hold meetings with the Sri Lankan leadership. The two nations will discuss key issues, including the Palk Bay fisheries conflict, apart from finalising development cooperation agreements.

It will be Modi's second official visit to Sri Lanka. In March 2015, he made the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the island nation in nearly three decades.

About Vesak Day

- Vesak Day is also known as Buddha Pournima.
- It is a traditional holiday commemorated by Sri Lanka's majority Sinhala Buddhists.
- In the year 623 B.C., the Buddha was born on the Day of Vesak. It was also on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on the Day of Vesak that the Buddha passes away in his 80th year.
- The UN General Assembly, by its resolution 54/115 of 1999, recognized internationally the Day of Vesak to acknowledge the contribution that Buddhism.
- The theme of the 2017 Vesak Day is *Buddhist teachings for social justice and sustainable world peace*.

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India contributes USD 250000 to United Nations election assistance programme

India in April 2017 contributed USD 250000 to the United Nations programme for helping countries to hold elections and develop their electoral systems.

Eenam Gambhir, the first Secretary in India's Mission to the United Nations, presented the cheque to Kyoko Shiotani, Chief of the Office of the Under-Secretary-General at the UN Department of Political Affairs, on 18 April 2017.

It is India's second contribution of USD 250000 to the programmes for electoral assistance and capacity building. The first contribution was made in the year 2012.

About Election Assistance Division

- The Election Assistance Division was set up in 1991.
- Through the division, the United Nations has helped over 100 countries with their elections.
- The division principally provides technical assistance for organising and conducting elections.
- However, it has also sent observers to ensure the integrity of elections at the request of the General Assembly or the Security Council, and even organised elections in Cambodia and Timor-Leste.
- The foundation of UN Electoral Assistance is Article 21 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that *"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections."*

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India develops National Action Plan to combat Antimicrobial Resistance

J P Nadda, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare, on 19 April 2017 announced the finalization of India's comprehensive and multi-sectoral National Action Plan.

The announcement was made at the Inter-Ministerial Consultation on AMR containment held in New Delhi.

The National Action Plan aims to enhance awareness, strengthen surveillance, improve rational use of antibiotics, reduce infections and promote research. The plan highlights the need for tackling antimicrobial resistance (AMR) across multiple sectors such as human health, animal husbandry, agriculture and environment in consideration of the “**One-Health Approach**”.

Ram Vila Paswan, Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Anil Madhav Dave, Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, and Anupriya Patel, MoS (Health & Family Welfare) also signed a ‘**Delhi Declaration**’ for collectively strategizing to contain AMR.

The Delhi Declaration pledges to espouse a holistic and collaborative approach towards prevention and containment of AMR in India. It also calls on all stakeholders, including United Nations, World Health Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization, to support the development and implementation of the national and state action plans on AMR.

Points to remember

In 2015, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health developed a Global Action Plan on AMR.

India, along with other member states, will have to submit their National Action Plans by May 2017.

India’s National Action Plan highlights six strategic priority areas namely:

- Awareness and understanding through education
- Communication and training
- Strengthening knowledge and evidence through surveillance
- Infection prevention and control
- Optimised antimicrobial use in health, animals and food, AMR-related research and innovation
- Strengthened leadership and commitment at international, national and sub-national levels

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Supreme Court approves e-auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel in Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) on 20 April 2017 approved the e-auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel in Delhi. A bench of Justices P C Ghose and R F Nariman allowed New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) to e-auction the property.

The bench rejected the claim of Tata group-owned Indian Hotels Co. Ltd (IHCL) over the property. The auctioning the Taj Mansingh Hotel property was stiffly opposed by Tata group-run Indian Hotels Company Ltd which manages the hotel. In an earlier hearing, the Supreme Court asked NDMC to reconsider its decision for the e-auction as the IHCL had approached SC against a Delhi High Court's ruling that allowed for the auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel.

However, on 27 October 2016 hearing, a division bench denied IHCL's claim to right of first refusal on the auction and called for the bidding. It allowed IHCL to participate in the bid and also match the highest offer.

Background

NDMC and IHCL had entered into an agreement in 1976 to construct and run a five-star hotel in one of the prime locations of Delhi that is Mansingh Road. This licence operated for a period of 33 years from late 1976 and concluded in 2011. However, NDMC declined to renew the IHCL licence for 30 years.

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Union Government and Naga rebel groups agree to extend ceasefire till April 2018

The Union Government and two Naga armed factions, namely **National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Reformation (NSCN-R)** and **National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Neakpao-Kithovi (GPRN/NSCN)**, have agreed to extend the ceasefire till 27 April 2018.

The decision over extension of ceasefire was taken at a meeting held between the officials of the Union Home Ministry and the Ceasefire Supervisory Board of Naga armed factions on 17 April 2017 in New Delhi. The Union Government was represented by Satyendra Garg, Joint Secretary of Union Ministry of Home Affairs, North East Division. GPRN/NSCN was represented by Jack Zhimomi and Chenyum Konyak. A ceasefire between the Union Government and NSCN-R and NSCN-NK is already in operation.

Background

- The Naga rebels have been insisting on their sovereignty and demanding creation of a 'Greater Nagaland' or Nagalim, which consists all the Naga-inhabited areas of neighbouring Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and some portions Myanmar.

- Insurgency in Nagaland began in 1947 when the Naga National Council (NNC) demanded independence. However, NNC was sidelined after the formation of the NSCN in 1980.
- The NSCN brought with itself a section of Myanmarese Nagas headed by S S Khaplang into the organisation. However eight years later, the NSCN was divided into the Khaplang and Isak-Muivah factions.
- In 1997, a ceasefire was declared between the Union government and the Isak-Muivah group and a dialogue was initiated for a negotiated settlement.
- Five years down the line, Khaplang followed suit by declaring cessation of hostilities with the Union Government, which led to an agreement.
- In April 2012, a ceasefire agreement was concluded with NSCN(K).

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SC sets 25% of net salary of husband for maintenance to an estranged wife

The Supreme Court (SC) of India in April 2017 set a benchmark for maintenance to be paid by a husband to his estranged wife. The Court said that twenty-five percent of his net salary should be paid for maintenance by a husband to his estranged wife. It said that this twenty-five percent of his net salary might constitute a just and proper amount as alimony.

According to media reports, a bench of Justice R Banumathi and Justice MM Santanagoudar directed a resident of West Bengal to set aside twenty-five percent as maintenance for his former wife and their son. The man who earns Rs 95527 a month was directed to set aside Rs 20000 for the wife. The court also turned down the man's plea that the amount was excessive.

The court said the amount of maintenance or permanent alimony must be sufficient to ensure that a woman lived with dignity after separating from her husband.

About the plea

In his plea to the Supreme Court, a man from West Bengal challenged an order of the Calcutta High Court in which he was directed to pay Rs 23000 per month to his former wife.

The Supreme Court's take on the plea

The apex court in its direction said that there was nothing wrong in the order of the high court; however, it reduced the sum by Rs 3000 on the ground that the man had remarried and was responsible for his new family.

Reports suggest that the former couple has been fighting a legal battle over maintenance since 2003, the year when the district court fixed the amount at Rs 4500. Later the high court enhanced the amount to Rs 16000 per month and Rs 23000 per month in 2015 and 2016. The sum was increased as the former husband's salary went up to Rs 95527 from Rs 63842 per month.

Earlier in its 2016 judgement, the Supreme Court pronounced that "A Hindu woman's right to maintenance is a personal obligation so far as the husband is concerned, and it is his duty to maintain her even if he has no property. It is well settled that under the Hindu Law, the husband has got a personal obligation to maintain his wife and if he is possessed of properties then his wife is entitled to a right to be maintained out of such properties".

It seems that the decision of the apex court has an inclination towards protecting the claims of women in matrimonial disputes that affects the financial status of the couple.

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India wins elections to two UN subsidiary bodies

India on 21 April 2017 won the elections to two subsidiary bodies of United Nations (UN) Organisations.

These two organisations are Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and International Narcotics Control Board.

India's Election to Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC)

- India, along with 12 other members, was elected for the period of three years to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
- It garnered the most number of votes in the Asian group, with 49 out of 50 members of ECOSOC voting in its favour.
- The other 12 members elected for three-year terms include Burkina Faso, Iran, Japan, Pakistan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Moldova, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, the United Kingdom and United States.
- The CPC is the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination.

India's Election to International Narcotics Control Board

- On the other hand, India, along with 19 other nations, was also elected by acclamation to the International Narcotics Control Board for a four-year term period beginning January 2018.

- The other 19 members include Burkina Faso, Cd'Ivoire, Togo, Algeria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Croatia, Czech Republic, Russia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Cuba.
- The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is the independent and quasi-judicial control organ for the implementation of the United Nations drug conventions.

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India Post releases commemorative postage stamp on coffee as fragrance stamp

The India Post on 23 April 2017 released a Commemorative Postage Stamp on Coffee as a Fragrance Stamp in Bengaluru. The stamp was jointly released by Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman and Union Minister of State for Communications Manoj Sinha.

After releasing the postage stamp, Nirmala Sitharaman thanked the department of Posts for releasing the stamp and printing one lakh stamps in the denomination of Rs 100. These fragrance stamps will be available for sale at Bengaluru GPO, Mysuru, Mangaluru and Belgaum Philately Bureaus and other head post offices in the state from the date of its release.

She also said that such cross coordination between the Coffee and Postal Departments would go a long way in promoting coffee for which India was known as a major producer of specialised flavours of the beverage bean.

At present, the coffee is being planted in non-traditional areas like parts of hilly Odisha, Araku in Andhra Pradesh and other places in North India. Sitharaman also urged the coffee board to brand the Indian coffee in the lines of tribals in Araku who had opened sleek outlets in Paris and garnered much-wanted attention for the Indian Coffee.

In 1973, Bhutan became the first country to release aromatic stamps and was followed by countries like New Zealand, Thailand and Switzerland. However, India joined the league of countries with aromatic stamps in 2006 by launching Rs 15 sandalwood-scented stamp. About 30 lakh of these stamps were sold out within 15 days. Later in 2007, India Post released rose-scented stamps priced at Rs 5; these stamps were released in four varieties of flower namely Neelam, Jawahar, Delhi Princess and Bhim. In 2008, the rose scented stamps were joined by the jasmine fragrance.

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ECONOMY

Lok Sabha passed four GST Bills

The Lok Sabha on 29 March 2017 passed four Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bills:

- i. The Central Goods and Services Tax Bill, 2017 (The CGST Bill)
- ii. The Integrated Goods and Services Tax Bill, 2017 (The IGST Bill)
- iii. The Union Territory Goods and Services Tax Bill, 2017 (The UTGST Bill)
- iv. The Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to the States) Bill, 2017 (The Compensation Bill)



These GST Bills will subsume all the indirect taxes currently levied such as the Value Added Tax (VAT), excise duty, service tax and central sales tax. It empowers the centre to impose an additional tax of up to 1 per cent on the inter-state supply of goods for two years or more.

[GST Council approves the CGST Bill and IGST Bill](#)

Provisions of these four GST bills

- IGST Bill makes provisions for levy and collection of tax on inter-state supply of goods or services or both by the Union Government.
- The CGST Bill makes provisions for levy and collection of tax on intra-state supply of goods and services by the Union Government.
- The UTGST Bill makes provisions for levy on collection of tax on intra-UT supply of goods and services in the Union Territories without legislature.
- Union Territory GST is similar to States Goods and Services Tax (SGST), which shall be levied and collected by the States and Union Territories on intra-state supply of goods or services or both.

Earlier in the beginning of March 2017, all the above four bills were approved by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council after thorough discussion. Following this, the Union Cabinet also approved these bills on 20 March 2017 for their presentation in the Budget Session.

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India signs loan agreement with NDB for development of roads project in Madhya Pradesh

India on 30 March 2017 signed loan agreement with the New Development Bank (NDB) of USD 350 million for development and upgradation of major district roads project in Madhya Pradesh.

The loan agreement was signed by Raj Kumar, Joint Secretary in the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) and Xian Zhu, Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of the New Development Bank.

While, the project agreement was signed by Pramod Agrawal, Principal Secretary of Public Works Department and Manish Rastogi, Managing Director of Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation (MPRDC).

This is the first loan agreement for NDB assisted project in India.

Highlights of the project

- The Project is aimed at upgradation of major district roads in the state of Madhya Pradesh to improve connectivity of the interior areas of the state with the national and state highway networks.
- It will include upgradation, rehabilitation or reconstruction of approximately 1500 km of district roads to intermediate lane, all-weather standards, with road safety features and improved road asset maintenance & management.
- It will also aim to improve transport connectivity to the interior regions and resultant boost to economic activity in the rural hinterland.
- Madhya Pradesh Government and the Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation (MPRDC) are the implementing agencies of the project.
- The time allotted for the project implementation is 5 years.

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Five associate banks, Bharatiya Mahila Bank merged with SBI

Five associate banks of SBI and the Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) were on 1 April 2017 merged with the State Bank of India (SBI).

These **five associate banks** that were merged with the SBI are –



i. State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur

ii. State Bank of Hyderabad

iii. State Bank of Mysore

iv. State Bank of Patiala

v. State Bank of Travancore

The merger of these five associate banks with SBI was approved by the Union Government in February 2017. Later in March 2017, the Union Cabinet approved merger of BMB as well.

Key Highlights

- With this merger, SBI will join the league of top 50 banks globally in terms of assets. Currently, no Indian bank features in the top 50 banks of the world.
- The total customer base of the SBI will now reach to 37 crore people with a branch network of around 24000 and nearly 59000 ATMs across the country. The merged entity will have a deposit base of more than Rs 26 lakh crore and advances level of Rs 18.50 lakh crore.
- Soon, the bank will rationalise its branch network by relocating some of the branches to maximise reach. This will help the bank in optimising its operations and improve its profitability.
- Integration of treasuries of the associate banks with the treasury of SBI will bring in substantial cost saving and synergy in treasury operations.

Background

SBI first merged State Bank of Saurashtra with itself in 2008. Later in 2010, State Bank of Indore was merged with it.

SBI has close to 16500 branches, including 191 foreign offices across 36 countries while the five subsidiaries have nearly 6000 branches.

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Tax evasion over Rs 5 crore will be non-bailable offence under new GST regime

Tax evasion of over Rs 5 crore under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime would be a non-bailable offence. The new regime also empowers police to make an arrest without warrant.



The Central GST (CGST) Act has defined offences related to taxable goods or services. The act provides that if the offences will be cognizable and non-bailable when the taxable goods and/or services where the amount of tax evaded or the amount of input tax credit wrongly availed or the amount of refund wrongly taken exceeds Rs 5 crore.

The Central Board of Excise & Customs (CBEC) in its 223-page frequently asked questions (FAQ) on GST said other offences under the act are non-cognizable and bailable. FAQ suggests that cognizable offence means the serious category of offences in respect of which a police officer has the authority to make an arrest without a warrant and to start an investigation with or without the permission of a court.

[Lok Sabha passes four GST Bills](#)

Safeguards mentioned in the FAQ

- FAQ that outlines the safeguards to be taken during arrest says that if a person is arrested for a cognizable offence, he must be informed in writing of the grounds of arrest and he must be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours of his arrest.
- In the case of arrest for a non-cognizable and bailable offence, the person can be released on bail by the Deputy/ Assistant Commissioner of CGST/SGST. The person will be subject to the same provisions as an officer-in-charge of a police station under section 436 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- In case the person fails to appear before the CGST/SGST officer when a summons is issued against him then he will be liable to pay a penalty of up to Rs 25000. Issued guidelines say that a summons can be issued as a last resort where the assessee is not co-operating and this should not be used for the top management.
- The FAQs also mention guidelines for the tax department in which it asks to ensure that summons provisions are not misused by field officers.
- The guidelines suggest that the summons should not be harsh and legal which may cause unnecessary mental stress and embarrassment to the receiver.

- In the case of senior management officials like CFO, CEO, General Managers of PSUs and large companies the summons should not be issued at the first instance. However, the summons can be issued to them when the investigations indicate about their involvement in the decision-making process which led to the loss of revenue.
- Interesting fact about the summons is that superintendents can issue summon only after obtaining a written permission from an officer not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner. The permission letter must include the reasons for the issuance of summons to be recorded in writing.

[CBEC launched a mobile application for Goods and Services Tax](#)

The government has set a target date of 1st of July for rollout of the GST, which will subsume central excise, service tax, VAT and other local levies.

The Central GST (CGST) and State GST (SGST) Act have empowered the officers from Police, Railways, Customs, village officers, and any other government officers to assist CGST and SGST officers under the GST regime.

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Cabinet approved signing of Agreement for establishment CIRDAP Centre

The Union Cabinet on 31 March 2017 gave its approval for signing of an agreement between the Ministry of Rural Development and Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP) for the establishment of a CIRDAP Centre at National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj in Hyderabad, Telangana.



The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The establishment of the centre within the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD & PR) premises would give the institute an advantage of acquiring first-hand knowledge about networking with organizations that specialise in rural development programmes.

Key Highlights

- The new centre would help the NIRD & PR to enhance its position in the region through connections with other institutes in the CIRDAP member countries and help it create its own storehouse of institutional knowledge.

- It would also benefit the faculty at the institute with exchange visits to the best practices in the CIRDAP member countries.
- The main aim of the centre would be to focus on the implementation of integrated rural development with special focus on poverty alleviation programmes within the member countries of CIRDAP.

About CIRDAP

- It is a regional Inter - Governmental and autonomous institution.
- It was jointly established on 6 July 1979 by the countries of the Asia-Pacific region and UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in coordination with several other UN bodies and donors.
- India is one of the key founding members of this Organisation.
- The headquarters of the institution is located at Dhaka in Bangladesh.
- The main objective of the body is to promote regional cooperation and act as a serving institution for its member countries for promotion of integrated rural development through research action, training and information dissemination,
- There are 46 countries in Asia Pacific Region, therefore CIRDAP has great potential for expansion for which they would be assisted by CIRDAP Centres.
- Originally the institution had six members but now the number has gone up to 15. The member countries include India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

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Fake house rent receipts may not work anymore to lower tax burden

Income Tax (IT) Department is going to be harsh against people (taxpayers) who claim benefits/tax deductions under the House Rent Allowance (HRA). Reports suggests that following a recent judgement of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, the IT department may ask taxpayers to submit more proofs in relation to the HRA deduction and



they are genuine tenant.

The proof may include rent agreement, electricity or water bill, licence agreement among others.

The case came in light while the ITAT Mumbai was hearing the HRA exemption claim of a salaried individual for rent paid to her mother. **Highlights of Income Tax Appellate Tribunal ruling**

- Several salaried employees submit fake rent receipts signed by their relatives even after residing in the house of their own or family.
- In case of actual tenants, there are chances where the amount mentioned in the receipt may vary from the actual rent he/she pays to the house owner.

As per a report in a leading newspaper, Sandeep Sehgal, the director-tax and regulatory at Ashok Maheshwary & Associates LLP, has said that “the Mumbai Tribunal in its recent judgement clearly spelt that only rent receipts in itself shall not be treated as conclusive document for claiming exemption for HRA and the tax authorities may ask for details to vouch that the claim for rent paid is genuine and reasonable”.

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Why such an action against HRA claims for the tax deduction?

House Rent Allowance (HRA) is a big component of an employee’s salary. Tax rules says that salaried individuals who live on rent can claim HRA to lower down their taxes, which is partially exempted from taxes. However, the HRA is fully taxable for people who do not live in a rented accommodation.

Reports suggest that there are people who submit fake rent receipts to pay lower taxes. It says that about 60 per cent of the salaried workers who receive HRA from their employer have claimed tax deduction with fake rent receipts.

Conditions for tax exempts under Section 10(13A) of the Income Tax Act on HRA received by Assessee from his/her employer **includes**

- He/she should have rented an accommodation
- He should be occupying the mentioned accommodation

Conditions for tax deduction in case of housing loan: Section 24b of the Income Tax Act allows a person to claim a deduction for the interest paid on their house loan, which is restricted to Rs 2 lakh per financial year in case, where the property is self-occupied by the assessee.

Issuance of PAN number: The existing tax bracket says that every individual who claims the tax deduction by depositing rent receipts must provide PAN number of his/her landlord, if he/she pays a rent above Rs 8333 per month. This submission of PAN will allow the tax department to have a look on the landlord that whether he/she has provided the details of income via house rent in his/her tax return.

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Japan officially recognized Bitcoin as currency

Japan officially recognized bitcoin and digital currencies as legal money with effect from 1 April 2017.

The recognition comes after implementation of a new law amending Banking Act in Japan for legalizing these currencies. The step will facilitate integration of digital currency into legal banking system through regulatory scrutiny.



Key highlights

- The law proposes setting financial conditions that virtual currency exchange operators should meet, such as a certain amount of capital, and requiring them to manage customer assets separately from their own corporate assets.
- It calls for introducing a mandatory system for exchange operators to undergo external checks by certified public accountants or auditing firms for their asset management conditions and financial statements.
- The recognition of cryptocurrency as a legal tender also means the applicability of regulations governing banks and financial institutions to cryptocurrency exchange platforms.
- The bank and institutions will be required to comply with strict anti-money laundering (AML) and Know Your Customer (KYC) requirements.
- Adoption of cryptocurrency is expected to increase among people, which will, in turn, drive demand and price.

What is bitcoin?

- Bitcoin is a cryptocurrency and an electronic payment system.

- It was invented by an unidentified programmer, or group of programmers, under the name of Satoshi Nakamoto.
- It was introduced on 31 October 2008 to a cryptography mailing list, and released as open-source software in 2009.
- The system is peer-to-peer, and transactions take place between users directly, without an intermediary. These transactions are verified by network nodes and recorded in a public distributed ledger called the blockchain, which uses bitcoin as its unit of account.
- As of February 2015, over 100000 merchants and vendors accept bitcoin as payment.

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Parliament cleared decks for GST rollout from July 1

Rajya Sabha on 6 April 2017 passed all four supporting legislations of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill 2017. The four bills were passed by the Rajya Sabha by a voice vote as all parties were on board. The four legislations are



i. The Central Goods and Services Tax Bill, 2017 (The CGST Bill)

ii. The Integrated Goods and Services Tax Bill, 2017 (The IGST Bill)

iii. The Union Territory Goods and Services Tax Bill, 2017 (The UTGST Bill)

iv. The Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to the States) Bill, 2017 (The Compensation Bill)

The passage in the upper house of the Parliament has cleared the decks for the rollout of the historic GST Bill from 1 July 2017 and usher the one-nation-one-tax regime.

With this passage in Rajya Sabha, the Bill will be sent to President Pranab Mukherjee for the final nod. The bills will become the law after the President gives his assent to them. The [Bill was earlier passed by the Lok Sabha](#) on 29 March 2017.

Now, the States can pass the State GST Bill in their assemblies.

After the passage of the bills in both houses of the Parliament, the Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that bills related to GST were unanimously passed. It is a matter of happiness that all political parties extended their support in the passage of the bills.

Later talking to reporters outside Parliament, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said, Parliament passed all the four bills related to GST unanimously. He said it is a matter of happiness that all political parties extended their support in the passage of the bills.

Jaitley also said that the successive governments have contributed towards the GST and no one person can take credit for it. In addition to this, he also informed that Jammu and Kashmir government has agreed to bring the legislation in its assembly to get its extension to that State.

[Parliament passes Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016](#)

Replies on debate on the Bill before passage in the Rajya Sabha

- Earlier, replying to the debate on the GST, Jaitley assured the Rajya Sabha that agricultural produce will not be taxed under the new indirect tax regime.
- He said, all those items which are exempted as of now will continue to be so.
- The Finance Minister said, under the present system, there is a federal arrangement which no party can unilaterally alter.
- On GST network, Jaitley said the data is fully secured with an IT firewall.

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RBI kept Repo Rate unchanged in its First Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement 2017-18

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 6 April 2017 kept the Repo Rate under the Liquidity Adjustment facility (LAF) unchanged at 6.25 per cent in its First Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement 2017-18.

On the basis of an assessment of the current and evolving macroeconomic situation at its meeting today, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of RBI announced following decisions:

- Keep the policy Repo Rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) unchanged at 6.25 per cent.

- The Reverse Repo Rate under the LAF was kept at 6.0 per cent, an increase by 0.25 per cent.
- The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate and the Bank Rate were fixed at 6.50 per cent.

Highlights of the First Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy Statement 2017-18

- Economic indicators point to improvement in the microeconomic outlook.
- There might be an upside risk to inflation from GST, poor monsoon and pay commission award.
- It forecasts GDP growth for current fiscal at 7.4 per cent as against 6.7 per cent of last year.
- The inflation is forecasted at an average 4.5 per cent in Financial Year 2017-18.
- It seeks to manage the currency expansion via Reverse Repo Rate.
- While reviewing the monetary policy, RBI also proposed that banks will now be allowed to invest in Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs) within the 20 per cent umbrella limit.
- RBI also noted that international financial markets were impacted by policy announcements in major advanced economies, geo-political events and country-specific factors. However, risks to higher growth have arisen from underachievement of macroeconomic policies.
- Upside risk to inflation may arise from one-off effect of Goods and Services Tax Bill.
- Changes in liquidity management will help drain out excess cash in the system.
- RBI will introduce Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) to help manage liquidity effectively.

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CBDT to issue PAN and TAN within 1 day to improve Ease of Doing Business

The Central Board of Direct Taxation (CBDT) on 11 April 2017 tied up with the Union Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to issue Permanent Account Number (PAN) and Tax Deduction Account Number (TAN) in 1 day in order to improve ease of doing business.

Applicant companies will be required to submit a common application form SPICe (INC 32) on MCA portal. Once the data of incorporation is sent to CBDT by MCA, the PAN and TAN will then be issued immediately without any further intervention of the applicant.

The Certificate of Incorporation (COI) of newly incorporated companies will include the PAN in addition to the Corporate Identity Number (CIN). TAN will also be allotted simultaneously and communicated to the Company.

In March 2017, PAN was allotted within 4 hrs in 95.63 per cent cases and within 1 day in all cases to the newly incorporated companies.

Comment

This initiative of CBDT is expected to significantly improve the ranking of India in the Ease of Doing Business Study conducted by World Bank. It will reduce the number of processes of registration before various authorities which will simultaneously reduce the time taken for allotment of the registration number (CIN, PAN, TAN).

Earlier, CBDT also introduced the Electronic PAN Card (E-PAN) which is sent by email in addition to issue of the physical PAN Card to all applicants including individual.

Applicants will be benefited by having a digitally signed E-PAN card which they can submit as proof of identity to other agency electronically directly or by storing in the Digital Locker.

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PM Narendra Modi launches BHIM-Aadhaar Pay app

Prime Minister Modi on 14 August 2017, the 126th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, launched BHIM-Aadhaar app for merchants in Nagpur. In addition to this, he also launched cash back and referral bonus schemes for BHIM and declared about 75 townships spread all over India as 'less-cash townships'.



The initiatives were launched with an aim to further the digital payments revolution in India. It also seeks to reinforce the vision of Baba Saheb for social empowerment of all through financial inclusion.

About BHIM-Aadhaar platform

BHIM-Aadhaar, the merchant interface of the BHIM App will pave the way for making digital payments by using the Aadhaar platform.

- This will enable every Indian citizen to pay digitally using their biometric data like their thumb imprint on a merchants' biometric-enabled device which could be smart phone having a biometric reader.
- Any citizen without access to smart phones, the internet, debit or credit cards will be able to transact digitally through the BHIM Aadhaar platform.

Ambedkar Jayanti 2017: Baba Saheb and his major contributions

With a view of achieving the target of 2500 crore digital transactions during the financial year 2017-18, the Prime Minister will also announce about 75 townships spread all over India as 'less-cash townships'.

Besides, the Prime Minister also launched two new initiative schemes and they are BHIM - Cashback and Referral bonus. These schemes have an outlay of Rs 495 rupees for a period of six months. These schemes will provide a major impetus to the digital payment revolution in India.

- **Referral bonus scheme:** Under the scheme both the existing user who refers BHIM and the new user who adopts BHIM would get a cash bonus credited directly to their account. Per referral, the government will deposit Rs 10 to the account holder. The scheme will run until 14 October 2017.

- **Cashback scheme:** Under the scheme, the merchants will get a cash back on every transaction using BHIM.

What is a less-cash township?

A less-cash township is one where the deployment of payment acceptance infrastructure is complete and all the families in the township are covered under training programmes. These townships are likely to generate over 1.5 lakh digital transactions every day.

Before inaugurating these schemes and the app, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi went to pray at Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur, a holy spot closely associated with Dr Ambedkar. After which he inaugurated several units of Thermal Power Stations at Koradi, Chandrapur and Parli.

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President assent to four GST related legislations

President Pranab Mukherjee on 13 April 2017 gave his assent to four supporting legislations related to Goods and Services Tax, GST. The nod paves the way for the roll out of one-nation-one-tax regime from 1 July 2017.

The four legislations are the Integrated GST Act 2017, GST (Compensation to States) Act 2017, Central GST Act 2017 and Union Territory GST Act, 2017.

These GST bills were passed in **Rajya Sabha** and **Lok Sabha** on 6 April 2017 and 29 March 2017 respectively.

What will GST do?

The GST, which is being termed as the biggest taxation reform since independence, will create a uniform market across India by subsuming the central excise, service tax and Value Added Tax (VAT) along with other local levies.

[Education, healthcare to stay out of GST ambit](#)

About the four legislations of the GST

- The Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017: It provides for the levy of the Central Goods and Services Tax by the Union Government on the supply of goods and services within the boundary of a state.
- Integrated GST Act, 2017: It deals with the levy of Integrated Goods and Services Tax by the Union Government on the inter-state supply of services and goods.
- Goods and Services Tax (Compensation to States) Act, 2017: It provides for compensation to the states for the loss of revenue (if any), which arises on account of implementation of Goods and Services Tax.
- Union Territory GST Act, 2017: This legislation makes a provision for levy and collection of tax on intra-state supply of services and goods or both by the Union Territories.

[Tax evasion over Rs 5 crore will be non-bailable offence under new GST regime](#)

Limitation of the GST bill

The Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley earlier in Rajya Sabha said that the law will not apply in Jammu and Kashmir due to Article 370 of the constitution that gives special

status to the state. For the purpose of being the law, J&K will have to legislate its own law so that they can integrate themselves with the GST regime.

With this nod from the President, all eyes are on the meeting of the goods and services tax (GST) council that will meet on 18 and 19 May 2017 in Srinagar to discuss the tax rates under the new tax regime system. The meet on the GST rates will be chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

The GST council constitutes of the Union Finance minister and finance ministers of states.

Earlier in Rajya Sabha in the second week of April 2017, Jaitley said that the GST Council had agreed to take a decision on bringing real estate within the ambit of the new tax regime within a year of its rollout. The council will also take decisions on inclusion of petroleum products and alcohol in the GST network, one by one. The inclusion will take place in the foreseeable future.

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I-T department launches 2nd phase of Operation Clean Money to probe 60000 people

The Income Tax (IT) department on 14 April 2017 launched the second phase of 'Operation Clean Money' to detect black money post-demonetisation. Over 60000 individuals will be investigated in the second phase.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), the policy-making body of the department, detected undisclosed income of over 9334 crore rupees between 9 November 2016 till 28 February 2017, that time of the Financial Year 2016-17 when old currency notes were banned by PM Narendra Modi.

The identification of undisclosed income was done through use of advanced data analytics, including integration of data sources, relationship clustering and fund tracking. The high risk categories identified include businesses claiming cash sales as the source of cash deposits and large cash deposits made by government employees.

Highlights of the 2nd phase of Operation Clean Money

- As per CBDT, over 60000 people including 1300 high risk people were identified for investigation into claims of excessive cash sales during the demonetisation period.
- More than 6000 transactions of high value property purchase and 6600 cases of outward remittances will be subjected to detailed investigations under the second phase.

- All the cases where no response is received shall also be subjected to detailed enquiries.

Background

- The Income Tax Department (ITD) launched Operation Clean Money (OCM) on 31 January 2017 to leverage technology for e-verification of cash deposits made during the demonetization period that is from 9 November 2016 to 30 December 2016.
- It is being conducted by the Income-tax Department (ITD) through use of advanced data analytics allowing for optimization of government resources.
- The First Phase of Operation Clean Money involved e-verification of cash deposits made in the banks. The entire phase was conducted online wherein 17.92 lakh persons were identified and requested for on-line responses on such transactions.

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REPORT | SURVEY

Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar releases India Rankings 2017

Prakash Javadekar, the Union Minister of Human Resource Development, on 3 April 2017 released the India Rankings 2017 for the educational institutions.

The rankings were charted out by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), working under the Union HRD Ministry.

Key highlights

- The India Rankings 2017 is the second edition of India Rankings.
- A total of 2995 institutions have participated in the rankings. This includes 232 Universities, 1024 Engineering Institutions, 546 Management Institutions, 318 Pharmacy Institutions and 637 General Degree Colleges, and others.
- The India Rankings 2017 ranked institutions in various disciplines/categories, and also provided a common overall rank across all disciplines for those institutes which either have more than 1000 enrolled students, or which are centrally funded.
- The Rankings List includes 100 institutions each in the Overall, University, Engineering and General College Categories, and 50 each in Management and Pharmacy Disciplines.

List of top 5 India Rankings 2017

Overall:

1. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka
2. Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (Chennai), Tamil Nadu
3. Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (Mumbai), Maharashtra
4. Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, West Bengal
5. Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, Delhi

Engineering:

1. Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Tamil Nadu

2. Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (Mumbai), Maharashtra
3. Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, West Bengal
4. Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, Delhi
5. Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

Management:

1. Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
2. Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, Karnataka
3. Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, West Bengal
4. Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh
5. Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode, Kerala

Univerity:

1. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka
2. Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Delhi
3. Banaras Hindu University
4. Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore, Karnataka
5. Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal

Colleges:

1. Miranda House, Delhi, Delhi
2. Loyola College, District Chennai, Tamil Nadu
3. Shri Ram College of Commerce, New Delhi, Delhi
4. Bishop Heber College, District Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu
5. Atma Ram Sanatan Dharma College, New Delhi, Delhi

Pharmacy:

1. Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi, Delhi
2. National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Mohali, S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali), Punjab
3. University Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Chandigarh, Chandigarh
4. Indian Institute of Chemical Technology, Mumbai, Maharashtra
5. National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research, Hyderabad, Telangana

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India ranked 40th in Travel and Tourism Competitive Index of World Economic Forum

The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) 2017 was released on 5 April 2017 by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

India was ranked 40th among the 136 economies across the world in the Index. The position of India has improved over 52nd rank in 2015 and 65th in 2013.

Top 10 countries in the Index

| Position | Country |
|----------|----------------|
| 1 | Spain |
| 2 | France |
| 3 | Germany |
| 4 | Japan |
| 5 | United Kingdom |
| 6 | United States |
| 7 | Australia |
| 8 | Italy |
| 9 | Canada |
| 10 | Switzerland |

Key highlights of the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index

- The Report was published under the theme “Paving the Way for a More Sustainable and Inclusive Future.”
- Spain tops the 2017 edition of the TTCI global rankings for the second time, followed by France and Germany.
- Europe and Eurasia is once again the region with the strongest overall T&T competitiveness performance, with six economies in the top 10.
- The Americas is the macro region with the second most improved performance at the aggregate level, with the United States (6th), Canada (9th), Mexico (22nd) and Brazil (27th) all ranking in the top 30.
- Asia-Pacific consists of some of the economies that have flourished most in recent years and five out of the 15 most-improved countries in the index: Japan (4th), Korea (19th), India (40th), Vietnam (67th) and Bhutan (78th).
- The Travel and Tourism competitiveness is improving, especially in developing countries, and particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

India in the report

- India is one of the most improved nations, gaining 12 places to reach the 40th position globally.
- India has seen continued growth in international arrivals over the past 15 years, reaching the 8 million mark in 2015.
- The country continues to charm international tourists with its vast cultural and natural resources, and its price competitiveness advantage.
- It continues to enrich its cultural resources, protecting more cultural sites and intangible expressions through UNESCO World Heritage lists, and via a greater digital presence.
- International openness, through stronger visa policies implementing both visas on arrival and e-visas, has enabled India to rise through the ranks.

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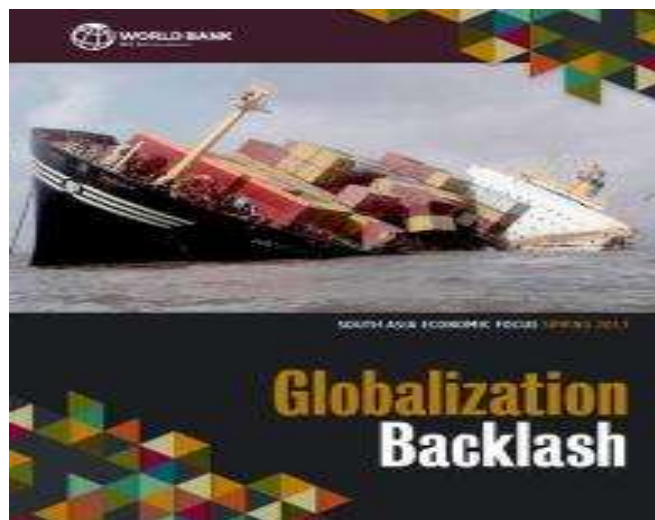
World Bank released report Globalization Backlash

The World Bank on 16 April 2017 released a report entitled Globalization Backlash. The report observed that despite possible protectionism, South Asia has an opportunity to increase exports and create jobs.

The report also confirms that South Asia remains the fastest-growing region in the world, gradually widening its lead relative to East Asia.

Highlights of Globalization Backlash

- With a strong performance in the eastern part of the South Asia Region – in particular in Bhutan, Bangladesh and India – the region defied disappointing world growth in 2016.
- Inflation slowed down in the second half of 2016, mainly due to lower food prices, but appears to be turning up again.
- Despite recent real exchange rate appreciation, current account balances are mostly in order throughout the region.



- After a sharp decline triggered by lower oil prices, remittance inflows are stabilizing in most countries and international reserves are mostly at comfortable levels.
- Progress on fiscal consolidation has been more gradual and public debt levels remain high.
- India's economic momentum is expected to pick up speed from 6.8 percent in 2016 to 7.2 percent by 2018 after a modest setback due to weaker than expected investments and the effects of the withdrawal of large denomination bank notes.
- Timely and smooth implementation of the GST could prove to a significant benefit to economic activity However, India faces the challenge of further accelerating the responsiveness of poverty reduction in growth.

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CORPORATE

HDFC Bank MD Aditya Puri features in World's Best CEOs list by Barron's

HDFC Bank Managing Director Aditya Puri was on 25 March 2017 got featured in the World's Best CEOs list of American financial magazine Barron's. Puri ranked at 23rd position in the list beating social media giant Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg who got the 30th spot.

The top three positions in the list were secured by Mary Barra of General Motors, Gary Dickerson of Applied Materials and Stephen Hemsley respectively.

Microsoft's CEO Satya Nadella got the fifth spot in the list.

Reason behind Aditya Puri's ranking in the list

A 2014 trip to Silicon Valley made Puri a digital evangelist. He swiftly transformed India's second-largest private-sector bank HDFC into the digital spot for anything money-related.

Puri transformed HDFC from a start-up into one of the world's highest-quality banks that now generates optimum returns by maintaining lending standards while expanding beyond corporate loans into a full-service retail bank.

About Barron's

- Barron's is America's premier financial magazine. It provides in-depth analysis and commentary on the markets, updated every business day online.
- Published by Dow Jones & Co since 1921, it reaches an influential audience of senior corporate officers, institutional investors, individual investors and financial professionals.
- The company offers unique focus on fast-growing Asian markets through Barron's Asia.

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SBI launched Unnati Credit Card to spread credit inclusion

SBI Card on 28 March 2017 launched the Unnati Credit Card to spread credit inclusion among masses. The card was launched by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines Piyush Goyal at a programme in New Delhi.

The card was launched in the presence of SBI Chairman Arundhati Bhattacharya and SBI Card CEO Vijay Jasuja.

[IAF launched Aviation Turbine Fuel Digital Issue and Payment](#)

Features of Unnati

- The card is targeted at all SBI customers, including the Jan Dhan account-holders across the country. And, It is primarily tailored for new users of credit cards, those who do not have a credit history.
- The Unnati would have no annual fees (Rs 499/year) for the initial four years and the credit card will be offered through 20,000-plus State Bank of India (SBI) branches.
- Any SBI customer with a balance of at least Rs 25,000 in the savings account is eligible for the Unnati credit card.
- The card is accepted in over 24 million outlets across the globe, including 3,25,000 outlets in India.
- With SBI Card Unnati, add-on cards will be provided to the customer's parents, spouse, children or siblings above the age of 18.
- The Easy Bill Pay facility of the card can be used to pay electricity, telephone, mobile and other utility bills.

About SBI Card

- SBI Card was launched in October 1998. It is a joint venture between the State



Bank of India (SBI) and the GE Capital, the financial services arm of the US-based General Electric (GE).

- Incorporated as SBI Cards and Payment Services Private Limited, SBI Card is headquartered in Gurugram, Haryana.
- In 2002, the SBI Card reached 1 million card holders within 4 years of the launch. Eventually, the company reached 4 million customer milestone in 2016.
- In 2012, the SBI Signature Card was launched for the high net worth individuals (HNIs) and the affluent segment of the country.

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Facebook added new camera and Snapchat-like features

Social media giant Facebook on 28 March 2017 added Snapchat-like features and Facebook Camera on its app. It introduced filters, masks, frames, animation and other interactive elements to visually decorate images and video as that of Snapchat.

Its new camera will give users more options to share and enhance photos and videos. It will also be rolling out the new feature on iOS and Android over the coming weeks.



Facebook has been adding its own video features including Facebook Live, its live video streaming service which was launched in 2016. Facebook, the world's largest social media platform, has more than 1.86 billion monthly active users as of December 2016.

Snapchat is a widely popular video platform with a young demographic and pioneers camera-first sharing. It's parent company Snap Inc. last month publicly filed for an IPO with a valuation around USD 20-25 billion. Snapchat had 301 million monthly users at the end of 2016.

Highlights of the new features

- The new functionality will allow users to integrate dynamic objects like falling snow.
- The Facebook camera will be accessed in-app by tapping a camera icon on the top left corner or by swiping right from the news feed.
- Among other new features are movie masks which is a branded collaboration with Disney, Fox, Lionsgate, Sony, Universal/Illumination and Warner Brothers.

- The movie masks will be promoting new feature films including Alien: Covenant, Despicable Me 3, Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2, Power Rangers, Smurfs: The Lost Village and Wonder Woman.
- It is also introducing Facebook Stories, which lets users combine multiple photos and videos as part of a collection which then can be posted atop the news feed.
- Another Snapchat-like enhancement is called Direct which allows users to share film or video with friends for a limited time.

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Truecaller ties-up with Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and Google in India

Stockholm-based Truecaller on 28 March 2017 tied-up with Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank and Google in India and also launched the latest version of its application with new features.

The latest version of the app Truecaller 8 extends the caller ID to SMSes while also enabling users to filter out all spam messages. There's a new Flash messaging feature that allows users to quickly send pre-set customised messages, smileys or location to a contact.

Partnership with Bharti Airtel

The partnership with Bharti Airtel will bring Truecaller app to feature phones in India. The caller ID feature of Truecaller will be extended to Bharti's non-data users using feature phones. The 'Airtel Truecaller ID' feature will identify a caller and send his information via a flash message in advance. The service will be rolled out in April 2017.

Partnership with ICICI Bank

On the other hand, in partnership with ICICI bank, Truecaller will launch its new payments

service called Truecaller Pay. The Unified Payments Interface-based service will allow users to send or receive money using an UPI ID or via mobile numbers registered with BHIM app.

The Truecaller payments service will be available to ICICI as well as non-ICICI users. It can be used to recharge phone and pay postpaid bills. The service powered by ICICI bank is absolutely secure and follows 2-factor authentication as per RBI guidelines.

Partnership with Google Duo

While, Google Duo will be integrated into the Truecaller app allowing users to make video calls through it. The updated Truecaller app will now have a 'Duo' icon along with 'Call' and 'SMS' icon in its dialer.

This will add a crucial communications layer that strengthens the value of Truecaller's dialer, caller ID, and spam blocking service that is already used by more than 250 million users globally.

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Amazon acquired Souq.com, the Middle East's biggest online retailer

Amazon.com Inc., the USA based e-commerce giant, on 28 March 2017 acquired Souq.com, the Middle East's largest online retailer. However, the deal's specific value was not announced.

Ronaldo Mouchawar, the Chief Executive and Co-founder of the Souq.com, called the agreement "*a critical next step in growing e-commerce presence on behalf of customers across the region.*"

About Souq.com

- Souq.com is an English-Arabic language e-commerce platform.
- It is often described as the Amazon of the Middle East.
- It is the largest e-commerce platform in the Arab world.

About Amazon

- Amazon.com is an American electronic commerce and cloud computing company.
- It was founded on 5 July 1994 by Jeff Bezos.
- It is based in Seattle, Washington.
- It is the largest Internet-based retailer in the world by total sales and market capitalization.
- Amazon has separate retail websites for the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Australia, Brazil, Japan, China, India, and Mexico.
- In 2015, Amazon surpassed Walmart as the most valuable retailer in the United States by market capitalization.

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Indian billionaire Anil Agarwal buys 11.4% of miner Anglo American

Anil Agarwal, an Indian billionaire, in the second week of April 2017 became the second largest shareholder (11.44 per cent) in a British mining group, Anglo American.

According to a notice posted on the London Stock Exchange, the Volcan Holdings investment company owned by Agarwal's family now owns 11.44% of the group's capital and voting rights following 11 April 2017 share purchase. The London Stock Exchange (LSE) notice said the transaction for a total of 160685162 shares took place.

It is now the second largest shareholder behind South Africa's Public Investment Corporation, which owns more than 13 per cent.

Agarwal's investment is believed to be worth 1.9 billion pounds (USD 2.4 billion, 2.2 billion euros).

The company's market capitalisation is around 16.4 billion pounds. Volcan also owns mining competitor Vedanta Resources, which specialises in zinc.

Anglo American plc

- The company was founded by Sir Ernest Oppenheimer in 1917 with financial backing from the American bank J.P. Morgan & Co. and £1 million raised from UK and US sources to start the gold mining company.
- It is a multinational mining company based in Johannesburg, South Africa and London, United Kingdom.
- It is the world's largest producer of platinum, with around 40% of world output.
- It is also a well-known producer of diamonds, copper, nickel, iron ore and metallurgical and thermal coal.
- The company has operations in Asia, Africa, Australasia, North America, Europe and South America.

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SBI becomes India's most-valued Public Sector Company

The State Bank of India (SBI) on 18 April 2017 became India's most valued Public Sector Company in terms of market valuation. The market cap of SBI stood at Rs 235307.51 crore as on 18 April 2017.

It surpassed state-run energy major Oil & Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) as its market cap was about Rs 2961.79 crore more than that of ONGC's Rs 232345.72 crore. ONGC once used to be the country's most-valued Public Sector Company in terms of market valuation.

Among the top-10 most valued companies list, SBI is at the fifth position while ONGC is seventh on the list. So far in Financial Year 2017-18, shares of SBI have surged almost 16 per cent while ONGC's shares have fallen by over 4 per cent.

Private Sector

On the other hand, in Private Sector, IT major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) became the most-valued Indian company with a market cap of Rs 454902.85 crore, followed by Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) with Rs 445578.92 crore market cap.

TCS had replaced RIL as the most valued firm more than four years ago itself. However, RIL witnessed a sharp growth in recent past on success of telecom venture Jio.

Broader market Overview

In the broader market, the Sensex ended lower for the fourth straight session. The 30-share index rose by over 267 points in morning trade but later lost momentum. It finally ended to 94.56 points or 0.32 per cent, lower at 29319.10.

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Amazon launches Fire TV Stick with Voice Remote in India

Global e-commerce major Amazon on 19 April 2017 launched the Amazon Fire TV Stick with Voice Remote in India.

Fire TV Stick is the powerful streaming media device that plugs into an HD Television and lets customers access thousands of movies, TV shows, apps and games.

The device will be available on Amazon India and selected retailers like Reliance Digital and Croma. It will compete with devices like Google Chromecast, Amkette's EvoTV and Apple TV.

Highlights of the Fire TV Stick

- Fire TV Stick comes with a quad-core processor and fast Wi-Fi for great picture quality.
- It makes it easy to search Amazon Video content by using voice and offers spoken language support for Indian customers in Hindi and English.

- It offers access to a vast selection of movies and TV shows, popular apps, and features designed specifically for customers in India including powerful voice search for Amazon Video titles in Hindi and English.
- It also offers data monitoring and other features to help customers in India get the most from their data plan and stream more content using less bandwidth.
- It will not only stream content from Amazon's video service Prime Video, but will also source videos from its biggest rivals Netflix and YouTube as well as Indian players such as Hotstar, Voot, Eros and Airtel Movies.
- It is simple and easy to use, it just requires to be plugged in and thereafter one can enjoy movies, TV shows and music within minutes.

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TIME releases list of 100 Most Influential People of 2017

Time Magazine on 20 April 2017 released the annual list of 100 most influential people of 2017.

This year's list includes the names of Presidents and Prime Ministers, CEOs and celebrities for the power of their inventions, the scale of their ambitions, the genius of their solutions to problems that could not be solved before.

This year, only two Indians to feature on the list- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma.

Highlights of the 100 Most Influential People of 2017

- Oscar winner Viola Davis, Grammy winner John Legend, actor Riz Ahmed, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and philanthropist Melinda Gates graced the five different covers of this year's list of 100 most influential people.
- US President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and British Prime Minister Theresa May featured on the new list of 100 most influential people by the magazine.
- The list includes active opponents not only US President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un but also the Philippines' President Rodrigo Duterte and his nemesis Senator Leila de Lima.

- There are several people on the list whose influence is the subject of heated debate, from WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to FBI Director James Comey to White House adviser Stephen Bannon.
- PM Narendra Modi featured on the list as a political leader. He is described as a maestro of the art of political seduction, playing on the existential fears and cultural insecurities of people facing downward or blocked mobility.
- Another Indian Vijay Shekhar Sharma, Paytm founder, also featured on the list. His venture Paytm witnessed a huge growth by the end of 2016 with 177 million users, compared with 122 million at the beginning of the year.

List of 100 Most Influential People of 2017

| Pioneers | Artists | Leaders | Titans | Icons |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Samantha Bee | Emma Stone | Theresa May | Janet Yellen | Simone Biles |
| Chance the Rapper | Colson Whitehead | Narendra Modi | LeBron James | Ashley Graham |
| Constance Wu | Ed Sheeran | Chuck Schumer | Daniel Ek | Cindy Sherman |
| Gavin Grimm | Alicia Keys | Donald Trump | Bernard J. Tyson | John Lewis |
| Kirsten Green | Ryan Reynolds | Elizabeth Warren | Evan Spiegel | Margaret Atwood |
| Bob Ferguson | Donald Glover | Julian Assange | George Church | Colin Kaepernick |
| Ivanka Trump | Leslie Jones | James Comey | Jean Liu | Jeanette Vizguerra |
| Demis Hassabis | Ben Platt | Kim Jong Un | Tom Brady | Neymar |
| Barbara Lynch | Ava DuVernay | Reince Priebus | James Allison | RuPaul |
| Hamdi Ulukaya | Barry Jenkins | Xi Jinping | Rebekah Mercer | Raf Simons |
| Jared Kushner | Margot Robbie | Rodrigo Duterte | Jason Blum | Biram Dah Abeid |
| Celina Turchi | Sarah Paulson | Stephen Bannon | Jeff Bezos | Leila de Lima |
| Jordan Peele | James Corden | Theo Epstein | Vijay Shekhar Sharma | David Adjaye |
| Glenda Gray | John Legend | Tom Perez | Margrethe Vestager | Gretchen Carlson |

| | | | | |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| Yuriko Koike | Alessandro Michele | Vladimir Putin | | Fatou Bensouda |
| Conor McGregor | Kerry James Marshall | Wang Qishan | | Thelma Aldana |
| Riz Ahmed | Demi Lovato | Recep Tayyip Erdogan | | Fan Bingbing |
| Guus Velders | | Sandra Day O'Connor | | Viola Davis |
| Tamika Mallory, Bob Bland, Carmen Perez and Linda Sarsour | | Pope Francis | | Raed Saleh |
| Natalie Batalha, Guillem Anglada-Escudé and Michaël Gillon | | General James Mattis | | Cindy Arlette Contreras Bautista |
| | | King Maha Vajiralongkorn | | |
| | | Juan Manuel Santos | | |
| | | Major General Qasem Soleimani | | |
| | | Melinda Gates | | |

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Myntra acqui-hired logistics start-up for an undisclosed amount

Flipkart-owned online fashion retailer Myntra has acquired Bengaluru-based logistics start-up InLogg for an undisclosed amount.

The move has been made by the e-commerce company to strengthen and expand its supply chain capabilities. With this, Myntra would also be acquiring InLogg's technology platform that will provide end to end logistics solutions for the e-commerce sector.

Key Highlights

- The deal will see the InLogg team join Myntra.

- The deal will help Myntra smooth its delivery and customer experience in Tier 2, 3 and 4 cities.
- It is Myntra's fourth technology-led acquisition.
- Prior to this, the company had acquired two Bengaluru-based tech ventures, Cubeit and Native5.
- InLogg was founded in 2015 by former Flipkart employees Preeti Jain, Rajat Khanduja and Prateek Gautam.

[Amazon launches Fire TV Stick with Voice Remote in India](#)

Commenting on the move, Ananya Tripathi, the chief strategy and planning officer of Myntra stated that Myntra's vision is to use technology to democratise fashion and with an 80% year-on-year growth, they are on a strong trajectory to achieve this.

Further, the acquisition will allow the e-commerce firm to influence local and regional players to enhance its reach, reduce its delivery time and develop a plug and play model.

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Google to introduce 'Copyless Paste' feature

Google on 23 April 2017 introduced the first code for its new feature 'Copyless Paste' in its Chrome app running on Android OS.

The Copyless Paste feature will take data from Chrome usage and use that to improve the experience in other apps.

How Copyless Paste feature will work?

Copyless Paste feature will automatically copy the useful information and will suggest it for pasting in apps where it might be relevant.

For instance, If a user is checking out a restaurant website and then switch to the Maps app, the keyboard will automatically offer the name of that restaurant as a suggestion to enter into the search bar.

The new feature is not yet functional now as it is still in its testing phase.

Android O Version

- Google also released the developer preview of the Android O version with some new features of the upcoming operating system.

- With this new update, Google plans to enhance the Operating System design, functionality and upgrading the notification centre. The new feature is dubbed as the 'Notification Timeout'.
- The new feature will enable notifications to dismiss themselves automatically, if the user hasn't interacted with them in certain amount of time.
- This should be quite useful when users receive notifications from games or alerts that are of little importance at a certain moment in time.
- Developers will set the timeouts for various notifications and when the countdown ends, the notifications will disappear from the screen.
- This feature will improve the battery life and device's interactive performance.
- Android O is expected to roll out soon with Pixel smartphones and will be made available for other smartphones in 2018.

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COMMITTEES | COMMISSIONS

Indian Navy deploys INS Shardul for surveillance in the Indian Ocean

The Indian navy has deployed its warship Indian Naval Ship (INS) Shardul for two months in the South Indian Ocean to provide surveillance support in the region.

This move has been made keeping in mind India's national objective of ensuring a safe and secure regional environment to allow unobstructed social and economic development in India as well as in the Indian Ocean Region.

Key highlights

- In its initial phase of deployment, the warship carried out joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance of Mauritius from 8-26 March 2017 in close coordination with the National Coast Guard of Mauritius.
- After successful completion of the Mauritius surveillance project, the warship entered the EEZ of Seychelles on 27 March 2017 to initiate the phase I of EEZ surveillance of Seychelles.
- Led by Commander Rohit Mishra, the warship entered Port Victoria in Seychelles on 28 March 2017, following which a coordination meeting was held between the officials from INS Shardul and Seychelles Coast Guard at the Coast Guard headquarters.
- The meeting led to the framing of a surveillance area and communication plan. The warship commenced phase II of the EEZ surveillance on 1 April 2017.
- The surveillance was mainly aimed to deter illegal fishing and drug trafficking and to ensure safe waters for the transit of mercantile traffic.
- The warship will enter Port Victoria on 6 April 2017 to assess the progress of the plan.
- The mission debrief would be attended by the High Commissioner of India to Seychelles, Senior Officials from SPDF along with the Seychelles Coast Guard.
- The warship will then set off for phase III of the surveillance plan on 17 April before returning to India on 17 April.

The Indian navy has been deploying warships to the region bi-annually since 2009, to assist in the patrolling of the vast EEZ of the country based on request by host nations.

About INS Shardul

- It is a Landing Ship Tank of the Indian Navy whose primary role is to transport troops, vehicles and armaments.
- Its role also includes fulfilling all objectives of an amphibious operation that includes landing of combat equipment and personnel to an Amphibious Objective Area.
- The warship has the capability to launch and recover Marine Commandos through the sea as well as by air, through helicopters.
- Aside from this, the ship can also act as a 'Hospital Ship' with facilities provided in containerised form as well as a 'Fleet Tanker' for limited missions.
- On a general basis, the ship is deployed with the First Training Squadron and is responsible for the ab-initio sea training of young Indian naval officers.

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Shunglu panel pointed out gross abuse of power by AAP government

The three-member Shunglu committee in its report has pointed out gross abuse of power by Delhi government. The committee was formed by the former Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Najeeb Jung to look into the decisions taken by the Aam Aadmi Party government.



Shunglu committee in its report also questioned several appointments, including the appointment of Health Minister Satyendar Jain's daughter Soumya Jain in Mohalla Clinic project and a number of purported AAP functionaries as advisors.

[Madhukar Gupta Committee report submitted to Union Government](#)

Key highlights of the Shunglu panel report

- The committee reviewed 404 files of the Delhi government and found several irregularities with various appointments.
- The panel in its report has said that the decision to allot land to AAP to build a party office should be considered null and void.

- It also questioned the allotment of residence to DCW Chairperson Swati Maliwal.
- Among other issues, the report raised questions on the government posting officers to the Anti-Corruption Branch, its decisions on transfer and appointments of officers, foreign travel undertaken by ministers without the LG's sanction and appointment of lawyers.

[Parliamentary panel suggests BSNL-MTNL merger for long-term survival](#)

The Committee, headed by former Comptroller and Auditor General VK Shunglu, was set up in August 2016 after the Delhi High Court gave primacy to the LG in Delhi administrative affairs in August 2016. The committee submitted its report to the Lieutenant-Governor in November 2016. But the report was not made public by the government or the Lieutenant-Governor's office.

The report which was submitted to the committee in November 2016 was not made public by the government or the Lieutenant-Governor's office.

The Shunglu Committee report was made public on 6 April 2017 by Delhi Congress president Ajay Maken, who earlier obtained a copy of the report through a Right to Information query. He filed the RTI application on 22 February 2017.

The Shunglu panel report suggests that the conflict between the government and LG began in April 2015, when the chief minister Arvind Kejriwal directed officers of all departments to take decisions on all subjects without consulting the Lt Governor that is transferred to the Delhi Assembly under the Article 239AA(3)a of the Constitution of India.

[SC constituted committee to explore technical solution to block videos of sexual offences on social networking sites](#)

Article 239AA(3)a reads, "Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the Legislative Assembly shall have power to make laws for the whole or any part of the National Capital Territory with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the State of List or in the Concurrent List in so far as any such matter is applicable to Union territories except matters with respect to Entries 1,2, and 18 of the State List and Entries 44, 65 and 66 of that List in so far as they relate to the said Entries 1,2,and 18."

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UP government orders probe into alleged misuse of money in Gomati River Front Development project

The Uttar Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in first week of April 2017 set up a high-level judicial committee to probe the alleged misuse of money and work being carried out on Gomati River Front Development project.

An official spokesman said, the three-member committee will be headed by retired judge of Allahabad High Court, Alok Kumar Singh. The committee has been asked to file its report within 45 days.

Task of the Alok Kumar Committee: The committee will probe several aspects, including delay in construction work, quality of work, significance of the project in view of environment conservation and irregularities in its implementation.

As per reports, Rs 1500 crore was allocated for the Gomati River Front Development project of which 90 per cent of has been spent, while only 60 per cent of work was completed.

The project came under scrutiny of CM Yogi after he visited the project site. He expressed dissatisfaction over the alleged misuse of funds and additional demand to complete the project.

Yogi said the project will be linked with the Centre's initiative of scheme Namami Gange Project.

Comment: The constitution of the committee can be termed as a newly appointed Chief Minister step towards weeding out corruption in the state.

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DEFENCE | SECURITY

India, US, Britain, France boycott UN's conference on banning nuclear weapons

The United Nations conference to 'negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination' took off at the UN headquarters in New York on 27 March 2017. The meeting was attended by more than 100 countries.

The United States, leading a coalition of more than 40 countries including Britain and France boycotted the talks. India too chose to skip the meeting. The decision was taken independently by New Delhi by taking into account the nation's own interests but it would, however, be closely monitoring the developments at the conference.

Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the UN, speaking on the sidelines of the opening day of the nuclear ban talks stated that the countries skipping the negotiations are instead committed to the Non-Proliferation Treaty that was brought into force in 1970 and is aimed at preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons technology.

Haley further stated that being a wife and a mother, there is nothing more that she wants for her family than a world without nuclear weapons but the world was too unsafe for the US not to have nuclear weapons. She added by saying that in this day and time people cannot be protected by allowing the bad actors to have nuclear weapons and the good ones trying to keep peace and safety not to have them.

Key Highlights

- France and UK's ambassadors to the UN also spoke against the ban treaty negotiations saying that the security conditions were not rights to disarm the nuclear states.
- The countries leading the ban effort include Austria, Ireland, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa and Sweden. Their efforts are being backed by hundreds of NGOs.
- Among the non-nuclear states opposing the ban treaty, Australia has been the sole one in its neighbourhood to side with the nuclear-armed nations and boycott the negotiations for a new global treaty.
- Indonesia, Thailand, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea are the prominent countries among the regional ones that have agreed to push for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Speaking on the issue, a spokeswoman from the Australian Foreign Affairs department stated that negotiating a ban without the participation of countries possessing nuclear weapons would not help the goal of reductions in nuclear arsenals.

Background

- The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution in December with 113 votes in favour, 35 against and 13 abstentions that decided to "negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination" and encouraged all member states to participate
- The ban treaty was opposed by all nine known nuclear-armed states – the US, China, France, Russia, India, UK, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.
- While the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Israel and Russia voted no, China, India and Pakistan abstained from voting.
- Even Japan, the only country to have suffered the devastation of nuclear bombing, voted against the talks stating that the lack of consensus over the negotiations could undermine the progress of effective nuclear disarmament.

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Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems inaugurated at INS Rajali

The Chief of the Indian Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lamba inaugurated the first ever Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological System (IAAMS).

It was inaugurated on 28 March 2017 at INS Rajali, which is informally known as Arakkonam Naval Air Station, in Tamil Nadu.

Features of Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems (IAAMS)

- The IAAMS is an ambitious project of the Indian Navy to modernise the meteorological infrastructure of the nine Naval Air Stations (NAS).
- Equipped with the state of the art Meteorological Sensors - Radar Vertical Wind Profiler, Transmissometer, Ceilometer and Automatic Weather Observation System, IAAMS undertakes automatic and continuous recording of relevant weather parameters that are vital for accurate weather forecasting.

SBI launched Unnati Credit Card to spread credit inclusion

- It has a special alarm feature that alerts the duty staff during abnormal change of weather parameters that may affect safe flying operations.
- The system can also provide automatic dissemination of routine weather reports as per the standards of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to other air stations and Air Traffic Controller towers without human intervention.

- INS Rajali at Arakkonam was identified for setting up this sophisticated system on a 'Test Bed' site, where the complete integrated system has been tested for its reliability, performance and functioning.
- Installation at remaining eight NAS would be undertaken by the system integrator M/s SGS Weather and Environmental Systems Private Limited, New Delhi. The installation process is expected to be completed by March 2019.

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INLCU L51 commissioned into Indian Navy

The INLCU L51 was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 28 March 2017.

The ship was commissioned by Vice Admiral Bimal Verma, AVSM, Commander-in-Chief, Andaman and Nicobar Command at Port Blair.

Key highlights of the INLCU L51

- The LCU 51 is first of the eight ships of the LCU MK IV Class.
- The vessel is built by M/s Garden Reach Ship Builders & Engineers Ltd, Kolkata.
- The ship was conceived and designed indigenously.
- With a displacement of 900 tons, the vessel spans 62.8 m in length and 11 m in breadth.
- It is propelled by 02 MTU diesel engines of 1840 Kw rating and can sustain speeds up to 15 knots.
- It has been built to assist in amphibious operations by carrying out beaching operations and has an endurance of 1500 nm.
- It will play a pivotal role in carrying out maritime surveillance of Andaman & Nicobar Islands for preventing anti-poaching, illegal fishing, drug trafficking, human trafficking, poaching and other illegal activities.
- The ship will also enhance the capabilities of the Andaman and Nicobar Command in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.
- The armament onboard the ship consists of two 30 mm CRN -91 guns manufactured by Ordnance Factory, Medak.
- It is also equipped with 12.7 mm Heavy Machine Guns and 7.62 mm Medium Machine Guns.

- It is fitted with state-of-the art electronic warfare suite for early detection of adversaries.
- It is equipped with Integrated Platform Management System and Integrated Bridge System for automated controls and quick functioning.
- The vessel is commanded by Cdr Vishwesh S Nadkarni.

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General Bipin Rawat conferred with title of Honorary General of Nepalese Army

The Chief of the Army Staff General Bipin Rawat was on 29 March 2017 conferred with the title of Honorary General of the Nepalese Army during his official visit to Nepal and Bangladesh from 28 March 2017 to 2 April 2017.

This was his first foreign visit after assuming the office.

Earlier, General Rajendra Chettri, the Chief of the Nepalese Army, was conferred with the title of Honorary General of the Indian Army in February 2017 during his first visit to India after assuming office.

This tradition is a reciprocal arrangement to honour each other's Army chiefs with the honorary titles. It has been continuing uninterruptedly since it began in 1969.

During his visit to Nepal and Bangladesh, General Rawat will be visiting several important military installations and will be meeting high-ranking dignitaries including the Prime Minister, Defence Minister and the Chief of the Army Staff.

General Bipin Rawat took charge as the new Chief of the India Army Staff in December 2016 by succeeding General Dalbir Singh Suhag.

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IAF launched Aviation Turbine Fuel Digital Issue and Payment

The Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal BS Dhanoa PVSM AVSM YSM VM ADC on 28 March 2017 formally launched the Aviation Turbine Fuel Digital Issue and Payment (ATF DIP) system.



On this occasion, the Chief of Air Staff complimented the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) for its commitment and unstinted support in ensuring robust supply chain management of Aviation Fuel, especially at high altitude locations and during natural calamities.

Besides, the IOC was also lauded for its initiative in developing new designs for Bulk Petroleum Installation and Rubberised Fuel Tanks for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) supplies on Advance Landing Grounds (ALGs) and helipads to support various contingencies.

Features of Aviation Turbine Fuel Digital Issue and Payment (ATF DIP)

- The ATF DIP is a web based e-billing module. It was conceptualized by the Indian Air Force (IAF) in line with the Union Government's flagship programme - Digital India.

Book on Rashtriya Rifles 'Home of the Brave' released

- It facilitates speedy accounting and the clearance of over 2 lakh aviation fuel bills of Oil Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).
- The Aviation Turbine Fuel Digital Issue and Payment will be implemented from 01 April 2017.
- It was jointly developed by the Controller General of Defence Accounts (DGCA) and the Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL).

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Government cleared proposal to procure Barak surface-to-air missiles for Navy

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Arun Jaitley on 3 April 2017 approved the procurement of a fresh batch of Barak surface-to-surface missiles for naval warships. This procurement will help to enhance India's maritime capability.



During the meeting held in New Delhi, DAC approved capital acquisition totalling over Rs 860 crore, including for the purchase of Barak missiles. During the meeting, Jaitley, who chaired the meet also took stock of other procurement proposals and issued directions for close monitoring and expeditious clearance of pending capital acquisition cases.

As per reports, the missiles will be procured under Buy Global category from Rafael Advance Defense Systems Limited of Israel at an approximate cost of around 500 crore rupees.

Barak missiles

Barak missiles are an Indian-Israeli surface-to-air missile (SAM). It was designed to defend against any type of airborne threat like aircraft, helicopters, anti-ship missiles, and UAVs. It can be used to defend against threats of cruise missiles and combat jets. At present, Barak missiles are installed on the most of the front-line warships, including the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya.

Approval for other deal

Other deals for procurement include expendable Bathy thermograph systems for the Navy. The system that will help the Navy to detect temperature changes under water will be procured under as a repeat order with 'buy global' categorization through the foreign military sales route from the US. The systems will be procured at an expense of Rs 311 crore to counter mines in the sea.

Defence Acquisition Council (DAC): DAC is Defence Ministry's highest decision making body for capital acquisition. It was the first meeting of the DAC after Jaitley took additional charge as Defence Minister following sudden exit of Manohar Parrikar. Parrikar resigned from his office to take charge as the Chief Minister of Goa.

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South Korea test-fired ballistic missile that can hit any part of N Korea

South Korea successfully test-fired a home-developed ballistic missile on 6 April 2017. The missile, with a range of 800 km is long enough to hit any part of North Korea.

The development comes just a day after North Korea test-fired a ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan, which many dubbed as a warning ahead of US President Donald Trump's meeting with China's leader Xi Jinping.

North Korea's increasingly rebellious nuclear weapons programme is reported to be one of the main points of discussion during the meeting.

Key Highlights

- South Korea, which is home to thousands of American troops, falls under the US security umbrella.

- However, in 2012 it reached an agreement with the US to almost triple the range of its ballistic missile systems to protect itself against North Korea's nuclear threats.
- The country has since then focussed on developing long-range missiles.
- The latest missile, which has a range of around 800 km, could serve as a strong deterrent to North Korea's antics.
- The country plans to set up the missile this year itself after conducting few more tests to determine its reliability.
- The new missile has the capacity to cover all of North Korea even when fired from the southern part of South Korea.

Similar tests were carried out by the country in June 2016 as well when it successfully test-fired two home-developed missiles with a range of 500 kilometres and capacity of one tonne.

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Indo-Mongolia Joint Military Exercise Nomadic Elephant 2017

The joint military training exercise of India and Mongolia has begun recently in Mizoram. The 14-day long exercise began on 5 April 2017 and will end on 18 April 2017.

Highlights of Nomadic Elephant 2017

- It is the twelfth edition of the Indo-Mongolia joint military exercise Nomadic Elephant.
- It is being conducted at the Indian Army's elite Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School Vairengte in Mizoram.
- The exercise is aimed at training the troops in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations (CICT Ops) under the United Nations mandate.
- In the exercise, the Indian Army is represented by a contingent comprising of three officers, four JCOs and 39 soldiers of the Jammu and Kashmir Rifles.
- The Mongolian Army is represented by 9 officers and 36 soldiers of the elite 084 Special Forces Task Battalion.
- The focus of the exercise is to enhance the interoperability between the two armies in adverse operational conditions.

- The exercise covers key areas like convoy protection, drills related to room intervention, ambush as well as counter-ambush drills.

Some of the recent joint exercises of the Indian Armed Forces are –

- On 20 March 2017, the Indo-Nepal joint military exercise Surya Kiran XI concluded at Pithorgarh in Uttarakhand.
- On 19 March 2017, the Indo-Oman joint military exercise Al Nagah-II 2017 concluded at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.
- On 28 December 2016, the Indo-Maldives joint military exercise EKVURIN concluded at Kadhdhoo in Maldives.

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Indian Navy dedicates its Largest Missile destroyer to Chennai

INS Chennai, a 'P15A Guided Missile Destroyer', was dedicated to the city of Chennai on 17 April 2017 in the presence of Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

The dedication ceremony included a series of events and drills. Also present at the event was Vice-Admiral HCS Bisht, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command.



On the occasion, Palaniswami also unveiled a plaque at the Chennai Port Trust.

Key facts about INS Chennai

- The indigenously designed guided missile destroyer was commissioned into the Indian navy's combat fleet on 21 November 2016 by the then Defence minister Manohar Parrikar in Mumbai.

- It is commanded by Captain C. R. Praveen Nair and has 45 officers.
- It is the largest-ever destroyer to be built in India.
- It is also the third and last Kolkata-class guided-missile destroyers built under Project 15A.
- It has state of the art weapons and sensors and stealth features.
- It also has a highly advanced action information system, a comprehensive auxiliary control system, world class modular living spaces and a sophisticated power distribution system among other things.
- It is capable of fighting under any type of situation including nuclear, biological and chemical warfare conditions.
- It also has a strong expertise in missile technology and is loaded with the supersonic surface to surface 'BrahMos' missiles and long range surface to air 'Barak-8' missiles.

[Hijacked Indian ship 'Al-Kausar' released](#)

The ship has been anchored at Chennai's port since 15 April 2017. It has received over 5000 visitors till now including almost 2000 were students.

Speaking on the occasion, the state's Chief Minister Palaniswami urged the Navy to protect the maritime interests of the country and its fishermen, enabling them to go about their daily tradition of fishing without the fear of being attacked.

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INS Darshak conducting joint hydrographic survey of Sri Lankan bay

The Indian Navy's hydrographic survey ship, INS Darshak, jointly with Sri Lankan Navy, is undertaking a hydrographic survey of Weligama Bay.

The announcement was made by the Indian Navy on 20 April 2017 on a social media platform.

INS Darshak, which is on a two-month deployment in the Sri Lankan waters, jointly with the Sri Lankan Navy is surveying the bay, which was last studied in the year 1901.

The Eastern Naval Command's (ENC) vessel had left for Sri Lanka on 3 March 2017. The vessel is also carrying an integral Chetak helicopter which would be extensively deployed during the course of the survey.

About INS Darshak

- INS Darshak is a hydrographic survey ship in the Indian Navy. The vessel is under the Eastern Naval Command.
- It is fitted with the latest state-of-the-art survey equipment like multi-beam system, side scan sonar and a fully automated digital surveying and processing system.
- The vessel was built by Goa Shipyard Limited.
- In 2001, it was commissioned into the naval service at Visakhapatnam under the command of Captain S.S. Karnik.
- It is the Indian Navy's eighth hydrographic survey ship to have been indigenously designed and constructed.
- It is the first of the Darshak class of ships and has a complement of 20 officers and 200 sailors and is currently commanded by Captain Peush Pawsey.
- In 2015, the ship conducted hydrographic survey in Seychelles for a period of 1 month concentrating off the coast of Port Victoria and in nearby areas.
- In 2016, the ship completed a hydrographic survey of Tanga Port, Tanzania coast for the Government of Tanzania. Later in the same year, the INS Darshak also carried out survey work off the waters of Mauritius to prepare two new charts of the Mauritian waters as per charting scheme agreed the two governments.

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India, South Korea sign pact for defence shipbuilding

The governments of India and South Korea signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on 21 April 2017 to strengthen their bilateral cooperation in defence shipbuilding.

The agreement was signed between Ashok Kumar Gupta, Secretary (Defence Production) and Chang Myong Jin, Korea's Minister of Defence Acquisition and Programme Administration in New Delhi.

According to the MoU, the two countries under the broader term of a special strategic partnership will be nominating one shipyard each for the project.

Commenting on the development, Ashok Kumar Gupta stated that India has already chosen Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL) for the purpose while South Korea is still to announce its nomination.

Indian Navy dedicates its Largest Missile destroyer to Chennai

INS Darshak conducting joint hydrographic survey of Sri Lankan bay

Gupta further stated that this agreement will enable HSL to upgrade and modernise its facilities, which will, in turn, enable it to execute naval projects in a timely manner. The whole deal is in line with Narendra Modi-led Centre's 'Make in India' initiative.

He also added by saying that the MoU will be useful for the development of vendors for supply of material and it will also help generate huge employment opportunities and will increase HSL's turnover.

Speaking on the same, Korea's Minister Jin stated that the agreement would form the basis of defence cooperation between the two countries in shipbuilding.

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ENVIRONMENT | ECOLOGY

Environment Ministry official to chair Animal Welfare Board of India

The Union Government in March 2017 notified that Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) will be permanently chaired by a senior official of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF).

At present, the Board is chaired by Sharad Singh Negi, Special Secretary and Director-General (Forests), MoEF.

In AWBI's 55-year history, it was always chaired by somebody outside government, like veterinarians, animal welfare activists or retired judges. However, lately due to differences between AWBI and MoEF, especially on the conduct of the Jallikattu, the Union Government exercised its primacy in the management of the organisation.

About Animal Welfare Board of India

- The Animal Welfare Board of India is a statutory advisory body advising the Government.
- It was established in 1962 under Section 4 of The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.
- Rukmini Devi Arundale was instrumental in setting up the organisation. She was also its first chair.
- The Board consists of 28 Members, who serve for a period of 3 years.
- Initially, the Board was within the jurisdiction of the Government of India's Ministry of Food and Agriculture. In 1990, the subject of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

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Uttarakhand High Court banned river mining across the state for four months

The Uttarakhand High Court on 28 March 2017 ordered 'complete' ban on mining activities in the State for four months.



The order was passed by a division bench comprising Justice Rajiv Sharma and Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia while hearing a PIL filed by Navin Chandra Pant in 2016. The order was passed just four days after a forest worker was allegedly killed while chasing the mining mafia in Ramnagar.

[Uttarakhand HC accords human status to Ganga, Yamuna](#)

The court also directed the state government led by Trivendra Singh Rawat to form a “high-level committee” to recommend guidelines to stop illegal mining and reclaim mined areas. The committee will also assess the expanse of river bed mining in the state and submit its report within four months.

About the “High-Level Committee”

- The chairman of the committee should be the secretary of the environment and forest department or his nominee. The nominee must not be below the rank of additional secretary.
- Other members of the committee should be Director General of Forest Research Institute, Dehradun; Director of Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun and Director General of Geological Survey of India, Dehradun.
- Rajendra Mahajan, the principal chief conservator of forest, and D Sainthil Pandiyan, the Commissioner of Kumaon, would act as Secretary and Nodal officer of the Committee respectively.
- The committee will have to look into various aspects of mining activities in the state and find out that mining activity should be allowed in the state or not, if yes, then provide suggestions for next five decades.
- For functioning of the committee and meet the daily expenses, the court has ordered to release a sum of Rs 50 lakh.
- The committee will submit its interim report in four months and a final report in nine months.
- It will also suggest the ways to make up for the loss incurred by environment.

The court in its order said that till submission of the report, there will be a complete ban on mining activities in rivers, rivulets and streams in Uttarakhand. Mining in forest areas also falls under this ban.

Besides, the court also ordered the state government to refrain itself from granting any fresh licence or mining lease or reconnaissance or prospecting licence till the report of the committee is not submitted.

Comment: The order may stop mining in the interstate rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, Dabka, Kosi and Kali. It will also restrict mining in about 100 seasonal rivers and rivulets on foothills of the state. It will also protect the forest area from being mined. This ban may be for a limited period will help the forests, rivers and rivulets to heal its ecological balance to some amount.

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Kanha Tiger Reserve becomes first in India to get official mascot

Kanha Tiger Reserve in the last week of March 2017 became the first tiger reserve in India to officially introduce a mascot, named Bhoorsingh the Barasingha.

The step was taken to present the hard ground swamp deer as the spirit of the reserve. It will also spread awareness to save the species from possible extinction.

Barasingha (swamp deer) is the state animal of Madhya Pradesh. The Kanha tiger reserve is the only place in the world where the species exists.



About barasingha

- The barasingha is a deer species distributed in the Indian subcontinent.
- Populations in northern and central India are fragmented, and two isolated populations occur in southwestern Nepal. The species is extinct in Pakistan and in Bangladesh.
- The species differs from all the Indian deer species in that the antlers carry more than three tines. Because of this distinctive character, the species is designated barasingha, meaning "twelve-tined."
- Their population outside protected areas and seasonally migrating populations are threatened by poaching for antlers and meat.
- They lost most of its former range because wetlands were converted and used for agriculture.

About Kanha Tiger Reserve

- The Kanha Tiger Reserve is the largest national park of Madhya Pradesh.

- The Kanha National Park was created on 1 June 1955. In 1973, the Kanha Tiger Reserve was made.
- At present, it stretches over an area of 940 km in the two districts Mandla and Balaghat.
- It has a significant population of Bengal tiger, Indian leopards, the sloth bear, barasingha and Indian wild dog.
- The lush sal and bamboo forests, grassy meadows and ravines of the park provided inspiration to Rudyard Kipling for his famous novel Jungle Book.

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Tree-living crab species, Kani maranjandu, found in Kerala

A group of scientists discovered a new species of long legged, tree-dwelling crabs in Western Ghats of Kerala.

The species, named Kani maranjandu, are substantially different from other congeners. The species are named after the Kani tribe in Kerala.

The finding was published in **The Journal of Crustacean Biology**.



Key characteristics of the new species

- The key traits of the crab include the structure of its hard upper shell, its male abdominal structure and reproductive parts and diagnostic elongated walking legs, which no other genus has.
- The species is a first report of its kind to offer a record of an arboreal crab, a species that lives in trees.
- Water holding hollows in large trees are essential for the survival of the unique species.
- The survey of the freshwater crab fauna had started in the year 2014 in the Westerns Ghats in Kerala.
- People from the Kani tribe reported sightings of a long legged tree crabs in the area. It was only after a year that researchers were finally able to capture a female specimen and later a large adult male.

About Kani tribe

- Kani is a tribe living in the Western Ghats area of Kerala.
- The tribe's use of the forest plant *arogyapacha* as a key ingredient in a herbal remedy called Jeevani was noted by visiting scientists in the 1980s. The formula was eventually developed as a commercial enterprise by Arya Vaidya Pharmacy, with the tribe's Kerala Kani Welfare Trust receiving license fees and royalties.

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North India to get DNA bank for wildlife

The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh is going to set up a DNA bank for wildlife, first of its kind in North India.

Researchers at the institute are in the process of collecting the DNA of all wild animals. They have up until now collected samples of around 140 species.

Key Highlights

- Though the bank, the scientists at IVRI's Centre for Wildlife will be able to tell the name and schedule of the species by studying just a part of the meat, hair, blood, skin or bone of any animal.
- The centre would also be collecting serum of animals.
- The move is expected to assist in research and help bring down poaching and smuggling of wildlife.
- The bank would be only next to Hyderabad's Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES), which is currently the only such facility in India.

According to Anil Kumar Sharma, the principal scientist and in-charge of the Centre for Wildlife, IVRI, so far, the scientists have collected 140 samples of 25 wild animals. He added that the bank is expected to be fully functional at the end of 2017.

[Smoking causes one in 10 deaths worldwide: Study](#)

[Scientists have detected atmosphere around an Earth-like plane](#)

The Veterinary Research Institute took almost a year to collect the DNA samples of big animals like tigers, lions, elephants, rhinos, deer and leopards, which are most susceptible to illegal activities like poaching.

Sharma further added that currently whenever there is a poaching incident, the specimen of the animal is immediately sent to the facility in Hyderabad, which not only makes the whole process expensive but also puts too much pressure on the Hyderabad institute.

The new DNA bank would cater to the needs of North India.

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Two billion people drinking contaminated water: WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) on 13 April 2017 published a report, Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-Water (GLAAS) 2017, that states that nearly two billion people currently use contaminated water.

The revelation was by made in the new report published by WHO on behalf of UN-Water.

Key highlights of the report

- The report states that countries will not meet global aspirations of universal access to safe drinking-water and sanitation unless steps are taken to use financial resources more efficiently.
- Contaminated drinking-water is estimated to cause more than 500000 diarrhoeal deaths each year.
- Contaminated water is also a major factor in several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis and trachoma.
- As per the report, countries have increased their budgets for water, sanitation and hygiene at an annual average rate of 4.9 per cent over the last three years.
- However, 80 per cent of countries report that Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) financing is still insufficient to meet nationally-defined targets for WASH services.
- In many developing countries, current national coverage targets are based on achieving access to basic infrastructure.



- Planned investments have yet to take into account the much more ambitious Sustainable Development Goals targets, which aim for universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services by 2030.
- Water and sanitation official development assistance disbursements increased from USD 6.3 to USD 7.4 billion from 2012 to 2015.

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Wildlife trafficking threatens 30% world natural Heritage Sites: WWF

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) on 18 April 2017 published a report, which revealed that poaching, illegal logging and fishing in nearly 30% of World Heritage sites are driving endangered species to the brink of extinction.

The report urges for additional and immediate measures to halt the worrying trend in illegal trafficking for international trade of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)-listed species in the world's most ecologically important places.



Key highlights of the report

- The report finds that illegal poaching, logging and fishing occur in nearly 30 per cent of natural and mixed World Heritage sites, are driving endangered species to the brink of extinction and putting the livelihoods and wellbeing of communities who depend on them at risk.
- Many Natural World Heritage sites are threatened by destructive industrial activities. Their unique animals and plants are also affected by overexploitation and trafficking.
- Illegal harvesting of species in World Heritage sites degrades vital social and economic benefits. Illegal harvesting also modifies the natural ecosystem.
- Species mainly targeted in the World Heritage sites includes rhino, eastern swamp deer, snow leopard, white-lipped peccary, jaguar and elephants among others.

- Around 5% of the Sumatran tiger population was killed in 2016 alone and if current levels of poaching and trade continue, tigers could disappear from the wild on Sumatra.
- The report highlights that improved protection and monitoring at the World Heritage site level must be accompanied by greater action to curb demand for illegal wildlife and wildlife products through education, enforcement and prosecution.

About World Wide Fund for Nature

- The World Wide Fund for Nature is an international non-governmental organization.
- It was founded in 1961.
- It was formerly named the World Wildlife Fund, which remains its official name in Canada and the United States.
- The organisation works in the field of the wilderness preservation, and the reduction of humanity's footprint on the environment.
- The organisation's mission is "*to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.*"

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NGT directs shutdown of all industries near Bellandur Lake

The National Green Tribunal on 19 April 2017 ordered an immediate closure of all the industries located near Bengaluru's Bellandur Lake.

The directive was delivered by a bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter who banned dumping of any kind of solid municipal waste around the lake.

He has also announced an environment compensation fine of Rs 5 lakh on anyone found dumping waste in or around the lake.



Image Source: bbc.com

Key Highlights

- The green panel has ordered the State Pollution Control Board to seal all the industries found violating the directions.
- The ban would cover all the industries located in the vicinity of the lake and that are discharging effluent into it.
- Only those industries that pass the inspection process conducted by a joint inspection team will be allowed to operate.
- The inspection team will analyse the effluent in the discharge and see whether it is within the permissible limit.
- The panel has also directed a committee comprising officials from various developmental bodies of the city to oversee cleaning of the lake once in a month, which includes desilting, surface cleaning and removal of all waste.
- The bench also directed the authorities to ensure that no untreated sewage enters the lake.

[Wildlife trafficking threatens 30% world natural Heritage Sites: WWF](#)

[Two billion people drinking contaminated water: WHO'](#)

Further, the NGT slammed the local bodies and the Karnataka government for their inaction and inability in maintaining the Bellandur Lake. In February 2017, a mound of garbage was set on fire causing emission of thick clouds of smoke that severely impacted the traffic and caused panic.

The NGT stated that such emissions are bound to have an adverse impact on environment and ecology as well as human health and thus, it requires serious investigation and remedial measures.

To ensure that these directions by the NGT are implemented fully, the Namma Bengaluru Foundation, which is at the forefront of the fight to revive the river, announced the formation of a 10-member committee called United Bengaluru for Bellandur, which will comprise petitioners, local residents and experts.

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Cubbon Park, Lalbagh to take up leaf composting to clear dry leaves

To solve the problem of getting rid of fallen leaves, the Horticulture Department in Bengaluru has set up eight leaf composting machines in Cubbon Park.

Another park, Lalbagh is also planning to compost leaf waste, as it is almost impossible to clear dry leaves spread across over 200-300 acres of area.

Key Highlights

- The leaf composting machines promise quality compost within just four months.
- The traditional methods undertaken by the park authorities up until now took at least one and half years to complete the same job.
- The Horticulture Department has installed eight leaf composters in both Cubbon Park and Lalbagh, each having a capacity of 2,000 litres.
- To begin, the department would be using smaller leaf composters, which would be able to presently clear only 5 per cent of the leaf waste.
- The bigger composters would be able to take in almost 80% of the park's total leaf litter.

Speaking on the development, Joint Director of Horticulture Dr Jagadeesh stated that the department decided to try the method on the suggestion of the solid waste management expert Ramakanth. He further stated that if it works then they would be opting for bigger composting pits.

[NGT directs shutdown of all industries near Bellandur Lake](#)

Other Details

- The current size of one pit would be about 5x5 feet in diameter and height.
- The pit would be able to store around 2000 kg of leaves brought in by two tractors.
- Elements like neem cake powder, coco peat, a micro-organism solution and water would be used to decompose the leaves.
- Within 4 months, around 300 kg of manure is expected to be ready for use.
- The move was essential, as both Cubbon and Lalbagh produce several tonnes of dry leaves, which are not only difficult to be cleaned but also pose the risk of catching fire.

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SCIENCE | TECHNOLOGY

FDA approves first drug for moderate and severe eczema cases

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on 28 March 2017 approved **Dupixent** injection to treat adults with moderate-to-severe eczema (atopic dermatitis).

Dupixent is intended for patients whose eczema is not controlled adequately by topical therapies, or those for whom topical therapies are not advisable.

The injection will have an initial list price of USD 37000 per year, as per Sanofi SA and Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, which developed the drug.

About Dupixent

- Dupixent is administered as an injection under the skin.
- The injection's active ingredient is an antibody (dupilumab) that binds to a protein [interleukin-4 (IL-4) receptor alpha subunit (IL-4Ra)], that causes inflammation.
- By binding to the protein, the drug is able to inhibit the inflammatory response that plays a role in the development of atopic dermatitis.
- The safety and efficacy of the injection were established in three placebo-controlled clinical trials with a total of 2119 adult participants with moderate-to-severe atopic dermatitis not adequately controlled by topical medication.

About atopic dermatitis

- Atopic dermatitis is a chronic inflammatory skin disease.
- It is the most common of the many types of eczema.
- Its cause is a combination of genetic, immune and environmental factors.
- In atopic dermatitis, the skin develops red, scaly and crusted bumps, which are extremely itchy.

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Australian University invited stargazers to join their search for Planet 9

The Australian National University (ANU) has invited everyday Australian stargazers to join in their search for a new planet (Planet 9) in our Solar System.

The project, headed by ANU astrophysicist Brad Tucker will be launched by Professor Brian Cox during a live broadcast from the ANU Siding Spring Observatory.



According to Brad Tucker, modern computers are no match for the passion of millions of people and it would make possible the discovery of the predicted planet and several other space bodies.

Key Highlights

- The planet, which is predicted to be four times as big as Earth with 10 times its mass, is said to exist on the fringe of our solar system.
- It is expected to be extremely cold and very far away, almost 800 times the distance between the Earth and the sun.
- Scientists predicted the existence of the new planet after analysing Pluto's weird orbit. They felt that the existence of a big-sized planet would make Pluto's orbit make more sense.
- Neptune was predicted in the exact same way.
- The search operation could also lead to the discovery of new asteroids, comets and dwarf planets like Pluto.

About the Search Operation

- The ANU will be launching online access to the first complete digital map of the southern sky, the part where the planet is predicted to exist.
- The map will be made up of hundreds of thousands of images taken by a robotic telescope called the SkyMapper at the university's Siding Spring Observatory.
- The telescope would be clicking 36 images of each unexplored part of the southern sky to identify changes occurring within the space.

- The star gazers will be required to comb through the time-lapse images for signs of new objects or differences.
- All they would have to do is look for a red, blue and green dot that would signify the movement of an object across the image over time.
- They will just have to click on the image and mark the difference.
- Once they locate the dots and click on the position, the action would initiate some calculations that would help figure out if it is a good orbit and whether it could be the predicted planet.
- The star gazers would get the chance to name their finding after one of their family members.

[NASA may send robotic spacecraft to Sun in 2018](#)

[Seven Earth-like planets found orbiting the same star](#)

Scientists at ANU hope to go through the bulk of pictures within few weeks itself. However, in total, the investigation is expected to take a couple of months.

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Scientists for first time saw eclipses of binary star shed light on orbiting exoplanets

A team of researchers at the Raman Research Institute in Bengaluru and the University of Delhi reported that they have discovered indications of a massive planet orbiting a low mass X-ray binary star system, the first-ever discovery of its kind.

The discovery was made through a new technique, X-ray observations, which is a new way of detecting exoplanets. The results of the study have been published in the monthly notices of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Key Highlights

- The star system in question-MXB 1658-298 is an X-ray binary, which was discovered in 1976.
- It is a part of the constellation Ophiuchus (serpent bearer) and is located nearly 30,000 light years away.
- The newly discovered exo-planet is expected to be nearly 8,000 times as massive as the earth.

- The X-ray binaries consist of a pair of stars orbiting each other of which one is a compact one, similar to a black hole or a neutron star.
- In this case, it is a neutron star. A neutron star draws matter from its less massive companion and generates X-rays that are detected by the detectors in satellites orbiting in space.
- The system is so far and faint that it can be observed only when it shows an outburst of X-rays. The recent discovery too was aided by such an outburst.

According to Chetana Jain, an Assistant Professor at Hansraj College Delhi, who is also the first author of the published paper, the outburst provided them with an excellent opportunity to try and trace the orbital evolution of the system.

However, while generally in X-ray binaries, the time in-between eclipses of the source can increase, decrease and show abrupt changes, in this particular system - MXB 1658-298- the time between the eclipses was seen to increase and decrease periodically.

Elaborating more on the system's unusual behaviour, Biswajit Paul, the lead researcher in the study, stated that the eclipse first time arrived about ten seconds earlier, after a year it arrived about ten seconds later than expected.

This periodic variation in the eclipses led the researchers to believe that there was a third body orbiting the system.

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Scientists discovered fungus that eats plastic

Researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) have discovered a soil fungus *Aspergillus tubingensis* that can break down plastic materials using its enzymes.

This discovery could help solve the ever-growing problem of plastic waste that threatens to destroy our environment.

Key facts

- The plastic-eating fungus was discovered in Islamabad, Pakistan when the scientists in the hopes of finding an organism that could feed off plastic waste took samples of the soil and various pieces of rubbish.
- Scientists have identified that the fungus, which ordinarily lives in the soil, can also grow on the surface of plastic.

- The fungus in its process of growth secretes enzymes that can break the chemical bonds between the plastic molecules, or polymers when it grows on a plastic surface.
- With the use of advanced microscopy and spectroscopy techniques, the research team found that the fungus also uses the physical strength of its mycelia (the network of root-like filaments grown by fungi) to help break apart the polymers.

This is the first such discovery of its kind that could make plastic disposal in a safe manner a possible reality. Prior to this, all attempts to deal with plastic waste including burying, recycling, incineration have proved to be unsustainable, costly and hazardous to human health.

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Veteran NASA spacewoman to get 3 extra months in orbit

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced on 5 April 2017 that Peggy Whitson, the world's oldest and most experienced spacewoman will remain on the International Space Station (ISS) until September 2017, extending her mission by three months.

The 57-year-old American astronaut had flown up to the space station in November 2016 along with two others, France's Thomas Pesquet and Russia's Oleg Novitskiy, both of whom will return to earth as planned, in June 2017 but without Whitson.



This decision was taken after an agreement between NASA and the Russian Space Agency, Roscosmos.

Key Highlights

- This mission is Whitson's third in space. She will be completing close to 10 months with the extension.

- The extension will help scientists monitor the changes that happen to Whitson's body (if there are any) and add to the already existing knowledge that they gained from retired veteran astronaut Scott Kelly's recent one-year space mission.
- Whitson already has spent more time in space than any other woman astronaut and last week she set a record for the most spacewalks by a woman, with eight spacewalks.
- She would also be taking over as the space station commander in the coming weekend, for the second time.
- Further on 24 April 2017, she would be setting a new US record for most accumulated time in space.
- The NASA record for most accumulated time in space is being held by former space station occupant Jeffrey Williams, who completed 534 days in space.

Welcoming the decision giving her 3 extra months in the orbit, Whitson stated that she loved being up there. She further added that living and working aboard the space station makes her feel like she is making the greatest contribution so she is dedicated to putting every second of her time there to good use and getting three extra months is exactly what she would have wished for.

NASA's space station program director Kirk Shireman stated that Whitson's skill and experience made her an incredible asset for the space body and her extra time will be put to a good use.

Whitson would be able to return in September in the Soyuz spacecraft that is scheduled to launch later this month. Unlike its previous missions, the spacecraft would be carrying one person lesser than usual. It would be returning with just two people this time, one American (Jack Fischer) and one Russian (Fyodor Yurchikhin), leaving a seat vacant for Whitson.

About Peggy Whitson

- Born on 9 February 1960, Whitson, a biochemistry researcher, became an astronaut in 1996.
- She served as NASA's chief astronaut from 2009 to 2012 becoming the only woman to ever hold the job.
- Her first space mission was in 2002, as a member of Expedition 5 to the International Space Station.
- She took off on her second mission to space in October 2007 with Expedition 16, as the first female commander of ISS.

- Both her stays aboard the ISS were of long duration, which made her NASA's most experienced female astronaut with over 376 days in space.
- She went up for her third space mission in November 2017, as part of the crew of Expedition 50 and will now be heading Expedition 51.
- She will become the first female astronaut to command the ISS twice.

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Smoking causes one in 10 deaths worldwide: Study

The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) report was published in April 2017 in medical journal *The Lancet*.

The report indicates that smoking caused one in ten deaths worldwide in 2015. It also stated that half of these deaths occurred in just four countries, which are China, India, the United States and Russia.



Key highlights of the Global Burden of Disease report

- The 10 countries with the largest number of smokers in 2015 were China, India, Indonesia, U.S., Russia, Bangladesh, Japan, Brazil, Germany and the Philippines.
- In 2015, about 6.4 million deaths worldwide were caused by smoking and 52.2 per cent of them took place in China, India, U.S. and Russia.
- China, India, and Indonesia, the three leading countries with male smokers, accounted for 51.4 per cent of the world's male smokers in 2015.
- India holds 11.2 per cent of the world's total smokers.
- Deaths attributable to smoking increased by 4.7 per cent in 2015 from the figures in 1990.
- Smoking was rated as a bigger burden on health, moving from the third to the second highest cause of disability.
- The U.S., China and India, the leading three countries in total number of female smokers, accounted for 27.3 per cent of the world's female smokers.

- The study also warns that the war against tobacco is far from won. The report goes on to argue that despite implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2005, policy makers need to make renewed and sustained efforts to tackle it.
- Population growth has led to an increase in the overall number of smokers from 870.4 million in 1990 to 933.1 million in 2015.
- India, Pakistan and Panama are the three countries that have implemented a large number of tobacco control policies over the last ten years.
- The FCTC is necessary and vital for creating policy environment for more effective tobacco control worldwide but is not enough to fully address each country's tobacco-control needs.

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Scientists have detected atmosphere around an Earth-like planet

Scientists have for the first time detected atmosphere around an Earth-like planet beyond our solar system.

The planet, GJ 1132b, which orbits the dwarf star GJ 1132, is reported to be 39 light years away from Earth. The discovery is a significant step towards discovering life beyond Earth. The study was published in the *Astrophysical Journal* on 31 March 2017.



Key Highlights

- The planet is reported to have a radius of about 1.4 times that of the Earth and mass of about 1.6 times that of the Earth.
- The researchers initially called the planet a potential Venus twin considering its rocky world with a high surface temperature.
- The recent discovery shows that the planet also has a thick atmosphere. Though Venus has a thick atmosphere as well, the atmosphere of the two planets may be made up of different compositions.

- While Earth's atmosphere is mostly made up of nitrogen with a large oxygen component, Venus' is a thick veil of carbon dioxide.
- According to the researchers, the new planet's atmosphere is likely to be rich in water vapour or methane.

[Veteran NASA spacewoman to get 3 extra months in orbit](#)

[Scientists for first time saw eclipses of binary star shed light on orbiting exoplanets](#)

While this is not the first instant that the scientists have discovered an atmosphere around a planet, as they have previously detected atmospheres around large Jupiter-like gaseous bodies and on the even larger super-Earth, this is the first time that they have detected it around an exoplanet that is almost close to Earth's size.

Scientists can use a planet's atmosphere to identify potential traces of life on it or to determine if it is suitable for life, as we have on earth.

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Astronomers discover possible Venus twin

Astronomers have discovered a Venus-like planet, 219 light years away. The discovery was made using NASA's Kepler space telescope.

The newly discovered planet has been found closely orbiting a dim, low-temperature star called Kepler-1649, which is almost one-fifth the diameter of our Sun.

Key Highlights

- The planet is only slightly larger than Earth.
- It tightly encircles the dim star, orbiting around it in every nine days.
- The tight orbit causes the sunlight reaching the planet to be 2.3 times greater than the solar flux on the Earth.
- The solar flux on Venus is 1.9 times the terrestrial value.
- This discovery will provide more insight into the nature of planets around M dwarf stars, which are by far the most common type in the universe.



- The study was published in AstroNOMICAL Journal.

The M dwarf stars, though are redder and dimmer than the Sun, recent discoveries reveal the existence of Earth-sized planets encircling the dwarf stars in an orbit that would place them in the habitable zone of their star, similar to the Earth.

However, such planets may not resemble Earth wholly, especially with their climate, which could well be similar to that of Venus, with thick atmospheres and hot temperatures.

According to Isabel Angelo, scientist at SETI Institute, the study of Venus-like planets is becoming increasingly important to understand the habitable zones boundaries of these dwarf stars. She added by saying that if we wish to find life on other Earth-sized worlds, we should get to know the territory properly.

Elisa Quintana, SETI scientist and a member of the team that discovered Kepler 1649b, also stressed on the importance of studying Venus-like planets. She added that only the study focusing on planets similar to both Venus and Earth will help decipher why one planet allows life to grow and other does not despite having similar masses and comparable densities.

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Large asteroid 2014 JO25 to fly past Earth on 19 April

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced on 8 April 2017 that a big asteroid will fly safely past Earth on 19 April 2017 at a distance of about 1.8 million kilometres.

Although there is no possibility for the asteroid to collide with Earth, this will be a very close approach for an asteroid of this size.

The asteroid is known as 2014 JO25.

The next known encounter of an asteroid of comparable size will occur in 2027 when the 800-metre-wide asteroid 1999 AN10 will fly by at one lunar distance, about 380000 kilometres.

About 2014 JO25

- The 2014 JO25 is a near-earth asteroid.
- It was discovered in May 2014 by the Catalina Sky Survey as part of NASA's NEO Observations Program.

- The asteroid measures some 650 meters in size with an optical albedo of 0.25 as measured by NASA's NEOWISE mission.
- Its surface is about twice as reflective as that of the Moon.
- As of now, little is known about the object's physical properties, even though its trajectory is well known.
- The asteroid will approach Earth from the direction of the Sun and will become visible in the night sky after 19 April 2017.
- It is predicted to brighten to about magnitude 11, when it could be visible in small optical telescopes for one or two nights before it fades as the distance from Earth rapidly increases.

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Bharat Biotech's Zika Virus vaccine 100% efficient in animal trials

A study has indicated that the Bharat Biotech's 'killed Zika virus vaccine' has shown 100 per cent efficacy against mortality and disease in animal studies.

The study has been published in April 2017 the Nature group journal *Scientific Reports*.



As per the study, the firm's 'killed virus vaccine' or 'inactivated vaccine' contains virus that has been grown in culture and then killed using physical or chemical processes.

Key results of the study

- The vaccine was found to confer 100 per cent protection against infection caused by an Asian Zika virus strain as well as by the African Zika virus strain.
- Two doses of 5 and 10 microgram of the vaccine given through intramuscular route on days 0 and 21 to mice were found to protect the animals against Zika virus 7 days after the second vaccination.
- During the testing, the animals that were not vaccinated died 8 days after infection by the African strain and 12 days after infection by the Asian strain.

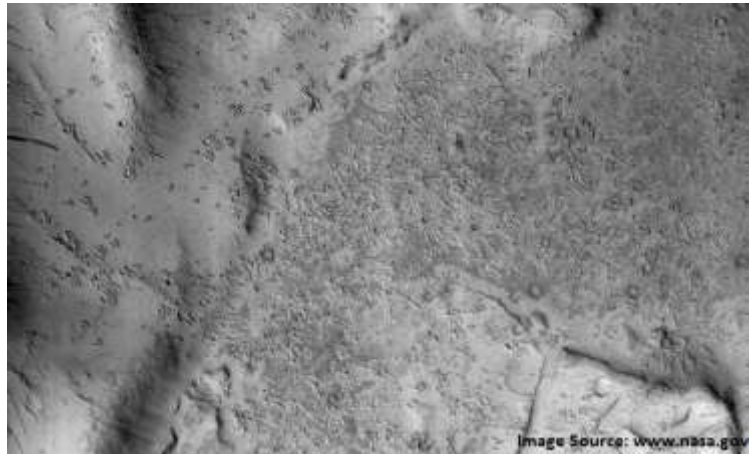
- On the other hand, the animals that received the vaccine exhibited “undetectable” viral load. The amount of virus present in animals that did not receive the vaccine peaked four days after being infected with either the African or Asian Zika virus strain.
- The animals that received the vaccine developed Zika-neutralising antibodies on day 14 after the first dose and a week after the second dose.
- The vaccine was developed using the African strain of the virus. Still, the vaccine protects against Zika infection caused by the contemporary Asian strains of Zika virus.

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NASA orbiter spots strange secondary craters on Mars

NASA on 18 April 2017 said that its Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) has captured a region of Mars sprayed with strange-shaped secondary craters.

In a statement, NASA said that the new images show the region of the red planet with secondary carters from 10-kilometer Zunil Crater to the north-west.



The secondary craters are formed from the rocks that were ejected at high speed from the primary crater, which then impacts the ground at sufficiently high speed to make huge numbers of much smaller craters over a large region.

In the new images, however, the secondary crater ejecta have an unusual raised-relief appearance like bas-relief sculpture.

How did that happen?

One idea is that the region was covered with a layer of fine-grained materials like dust or pyroclastics about 1 to 2 meters thick when the Zunil impact occurred about a million years ago. The ejecta served to harden or otherwise protect the fine-grained layer from later erosion by the wind.

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First Made in India industrial robot BRABO unveiled

TAL Manufacturing Solutions in April 2017 unveiled India's first conceptualized, designed and manufactured articulated industrial robot called BRABO.

BRABO stands for "Bravo Robot". It has been developed indigenously for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) in India.



TAL Manufacturing Solutions is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tata Motors.

Key highlights of BRABO

- The robot was designed and manufactured at the TAL's Pune factory.
- It is mainly developed to complement the human workforce.
- It also developed to repeatedly perform high volume, dangerous and time-consuming tasks ranging from handling of raw materials to packaging of finished products.
- Other than the motors and drives for the Robo-arm, which are sourced from Italy, all the other parts of the robot were indigenously manufactured in India.
- The robot has four patents registered in its name. TAL has also applied for an intellectual property certification for the robot.
- The robot is easy to install, use, program and maintain. It needs only one-time calibration. It does not require any many calibration in case of maintenance.
- It comes with low-cost power transmission system.
- It will be able to work on single phase power supply suitable for MSMEs in the country.
- It has an inbuilt programmable logic controller and comes with additional software like CAT2Motion, which can input 3D drawings and convert into the BRABO programme.
- The robot can also act as a virtual controller for simulation.

- BRABO will be priced at Rs 3 Lakh for 2kg payload, and Rs 6 Lakh for 10kg payload.

How BRABO will help MSMEs in India?

- BRABO is around 30-40 per cent cheaper than any international industrial robot with similar applications.
- The robot can be used for varied applications for tasks like pick and placement of materials, assembly of parts, machine and press tending, as a sealing application, and camera and vision-based jobs.
- Being an industrial robot, it will help in cost reduction, improved quality, increased production, and improved workplace health and safety.

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New version of Google Earth launched

Search giant Google launched its new version of Google Earth on 18 April 2017 during an Earth Day event, held at the Whitney Museum of Art in New York City.

Speaking on the occasion, Rebecca Moore, Director of Google Earth stated that this is their gift to the world. She added by saying that it is a product that speaks to their deepest values around education and making information available to people.



New Features

- The re-imagined version of the free-mapping service includes a new 'Voyager' feature that will offer a whole new range of curated content.
- It will enable people who are digitally exploring the planet to be guided on interactive stories narrated by experts and professionals from BBC Earth, NASA, Jane Goodall Institute and Sesame Street.
- The artificial intelligence will be offered to the app users in the form of "knowledge cards" that will enable them to dive deeper into the information regarding any of their chosen virtual landmarks.

- It will also give suggestions on other locations that the explorers might be interested in exploring based on their search history.
- The app also offers a new feature called 'Feeling Lucky' that will suggest locations of hidden gems to users who wish to go on a scavenger hunt.
- Users will also be able to virtually fly around the world using a 3-D button and see the places they wish.
- The online explorers will also be able to take pictures on their travels and send their friends digital postcards.

[ISRO to enter into a joint venture with industries to build rockets](#)

Speaking on the new version, Engineering Manager of Earth, Sean Askay said that this is the first time that they have done this deep integration with the Google Knowledge Graph and it would enable the users to know everything that Google knows about the world.

The new version of the app was launched on Google's Chrome and Android software. The version customised for iOS devices and other Internet browsing softwares will be released soon. This is the first that the app can be accessed through a web browser unlike earlier when it could only be reached through applications installed on devices.

About Google Earth

- It is a geo-browser which accesses satellite and geographical data over the internet and represents the same in a three-dimensional globe.
- It provides us with a clear view of Earth, of how it looks like naturally.
- It even allows the user to search for places of their choice and pan, rotate, zoom and tilt the Earth.
- One can search for any area on Earth through the app and such a clear view of Earth is possible because of the high-resolution image.
- It can even provide a link to Wikipedia articles about places that a user has shown interest in.
- Even Google maps app includes some features of Google Earth.

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INTERNATIONAL

President Donald Trump signed executive order to roll back Obama's climate change measures

US President Donald Trump on 28 March 2017 signed an executive order to roll back his predecessor Barack Obama's climate change measures keeping up his campaign promise. The order seeks to suspend, withdraw or flag for review of more than a half-dozen measures in an effort to boost domestic energy production in the form of fossil fuels.

The Executive Order directs all agencies to conduct a review of all regulations, rules, policies and guidance documents that put up roadblocks to domestic energy production. The opposition Democratic Party and environmental groups, however, slammed Trump for his latest move.

[Union Government to set up \\$2 bn clean energy equity fund for additional renewable energy](#)

The order was signed at the headquarters of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). After signing the order, Trump said that the executive action is a historic step as it will lift the restrictions on American energy. He said that this roll back is the start of a new era in energy production and the latest decision will help in creating jobs in America.

Highlights of the roll-back

- Review of the clean power plan will be initiated. The plan restricts greenhouse emissions at coal-fired power plants. This regulation was an effort of Barack Obama to curb emissions of carbon.

[India, US launched USD 95 million clean energy projects](#)

- The decree, dubbed the "Energy Independence" order, will seek to undo former President Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan requiring states to slash carbon emissions from power plants.
- It will also rescind a ban on coal leasing on federal lands, reverse rules to curb methane emissions from oil and gas production, and reduce the weight of climate change in federal agencies' assessments of new regulations

Reactions on the signing of the Roll Back Plan

Trump's decision of rolling back the Obama-era rules aimed at tackling global warming was criticised by several people. Few of the reactions include

- **Environmental Advocates:** They were not surprised by the move but they said that the decision will have an impact on the health and economic implications for not fighting against the climate change. The decision will also affect US stand in the world.

- **Laurence Tubbiana, the CEO of the European Climate Foundation:** She termed the order will propel the economy backwards.

- **Trip Van Noppen, President of Green group Earthjustice:** He said that the group will fight the order both in and out of the court, as it ignores the law and scientific reality.

Earlier during campaigning for the President election, Trump once termed global warming as a hoax. Terming it as a hoax, he criticised Obama's efforts as an attack on American workers and the struggling US coal industry.

Comment: It seems that the roll back of the Obama era Clean Power Plan would hurt job creation in the field of renewable energy sector of the United States. At the same time, it will also have a negative impact on the health of residents of the country.

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US Senate voted to approve Montenegro as NATO's 29th member

The US Senate on 28 March 2017 voted to approve Montenegro as the 29th member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The accession treaty for the small Balkan nation to join the transatlantic alliance was passed through a 97-2 vote. Republicans Rand Paul and Mike Lee voted against the measure.

The move to add Montenegro as the 29th member was backed by President Donald Trump.

As of now, 25 other NATO members have ratified Montenegro's accession. The Netherlands and Spain have yet to do so.

However, Russia opposes Montenegro's accession, calling it a "provocation" that would reinforce the pro-Western military alliance's presence in the Balkans.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organization

- NATO is an intergovernmental military alliance.
- It is based on the North Atlantic Treaty, which was signed on 4 April 1949.
- The organization constitutes a system of collective defence whereby its member states agree to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party.

- Three NATO members (the United States, France and the United Kingdom) are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council with the power to veto.
- The organization's headquarters are located in Haren, Brussels, Belgium.

About Montenegro

- Montenegro is a sovereign state in Southeastern Europe.
- It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea to the south-west and is bordered by Croatia to the west, Bosnia and Herzegovina to the northwest, Serbia to the northeast, Kosovo to the east, and Albania to the south-east.
- The country's capital is Podgorica.
- The World Bank classifies it as an upper middle-income country.
- It is a member of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and others.
- On 2 December 2015, the country received an official invitation to join NATO.

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British PM Theresa May signed letter to trigger Brexit from EU

British Prime Minister Theresa May on 28 March 2017 signed the letter that will trigger Britain's exit from the European Union (EU). The formal notification that seeks to leave EU was signed by May at 10 Downing Street office.

The letter is an official notification to other 27 European Union members that Britain has invoked Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. This letter was delivered to European Council President Donald Tusk by British ambassador to the EU Sir Tim Barrow on 29 March 2017.

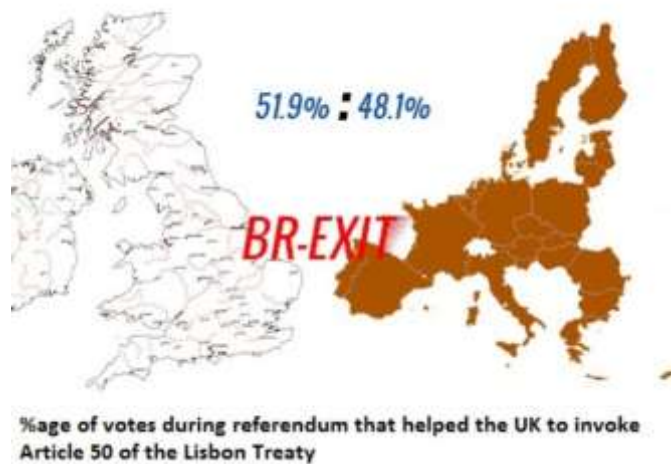
Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty that was invoked with the sign provides both sides a time-limit of two years to reach an agreement.



UK parliament gives final approval for Brexit bill

This means, the letter also sets the clock for a two-year negotiation process for Britain's relationship with the EU as a non-member. Unless that time-frame is extended, Britain will have to leave the economic bloc by 29 March 2019.

After signing the letter, the Prime Minister chaired a cabinet meeting before making a statement in the House of Commons confirming the countdown to the UK's departure from the EU has begun.



The signed letter is a follow-up step of the 23 June 2016 referendum which resulted in a vote to leave the European Union. In short, the notification of Article 50 marks the first formal step in the direction of Brexit after the June referendum in favour of Britain leaving the EU.

Britain votes to exit European Union in historic referendum

Timeline for Brexit

- **29 March 2017:** Article 50 was triggered
- **30 March 2017:** Great Repeal Bill was published. The bill aims at converting EU law into domestic legislation and repeal the European Communities Act.
- **31 March 2017:** negotiation guidelines will be published by Donald Tusk, the President of the European Union
- **29 April 2017:** EU summit, where remaining members of the European Council will adopt negotiation guidelines
- **Spring 2017:** Great Repeal Bill will be announced at the opening of the Parliament
- **May/June 2017:** Face to face talks will start
- **Late 2017:** The Great Repeal Bill will go through stages of parliamentary scrutiny
- **December 2017:** Michel Barnier, the EU chief negotiator, will expect initial discussions to conclude
- **Early 2018:** The Great Repeal Bill will receive royal assent

- **Mid 2018:** Parliament will have to pass certain laws that will help in covering gaps (if any) in the legislation
- **30 September 2018:** Michel Barnier will wrap up the Brexit terms
- **End of 2018 or start of 2019:** Both houses of Parliament along with European council and Parliament will have a vote on the deal
- **March 2019:** The negotiation period of two years comes to an end and with this end UK will leave the Union with or without any agreement.

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Argentina approved medicinal use of marijuana

The Argentine Senate on 29 March 2017 gave final legislative approval to a bill that permits the medicinal use of marijuana.

The measure was accepted unanimously by the senators with 58 votes in favour. The legislation had already obtained the green light from the Chamber of Deputies in November 2016.

The measure will become law once it is signed by President Mauricio Macri, whose Cambiemos party sponsored the bill.

With the approval, Argentina joins other Latin American nations such as Uruguay, Chile and Colombia, which have already approved measures regulating the therapeutic use of cannabis.

About cannabis

- Cannabis is a preparation of the Cannabis plant intended for use as a psychoactive drug or medicine.
- It is also known as marijuana.
- The main psychoactive part of cannabis is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
- It can be used by smoking, vaporization, within food, or as an extract.
- It is also the most commonly used illegal drug in the world.



Therapeutic uses of cannabis

- Cannabis and its cannabinoids can be used to treat disease or improve symptoms; however, there is no single agreed upon definition.
- The medicinal use of cannabis has not been rigorously scientifically tested, often due to production restrictions and other federal regulations.
- There is limited evidence suggesting cannabis can be used to reduce nausea and vomiting during chemotherapy, to improve appetite in people with HIV/AIDS, and to treat chronic pain and muscle spasms.

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Ratification of Minimum Age Convention & Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention approved

The Union Cabinet on 31 March 2017 approved the ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

The approval for the ratification of the two fundamental conventions of the

International Labour Organization (ILO) was given at a meeting of the Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi.



While the Minimum Age Convention deals with the minimum age for admission to employment, the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 is concerned with the prohibition and immediate action for elimination of the worst forms of Child Labour.

India's role in the International Labour Organization

- India is a founder member of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which came into existence in 1919. At present, the ILO has 187 members.
- The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up of International standards in the form of Conventions, Recommendations and Protocol.
- India has so far ratified 45 Conventions, out of which 42 are in force. Out of these 4 are Fundamental or Core Conventions.

Background

- The Union Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy, including both stringent legislative and project based approach, to address the concerns related to child labour.
- As part of this strategy, the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 was enacted to prohibit employment or work of children below 14 years in any occupation or process.
- In recent years, the government has stepped up its momentum to eliminate child labour, which is a commitment under the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- The ratification of the Convention No 138 and 182 is considered as a right step in this direction.
- So far, the Convention 138 has been ratified by 169 countries and the Convention 182 has been ratified by 180 countries.
- Hence, by ratifying these two core conventions, India would join the majority of the countries, who have adopted the legislation to prohibit and place severe restrictions on the employment and work of children.

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Myanmar becomes seventh member of South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation

Myanmar on 31 March 2017 became the seventh member of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program.



Myanmar's association with the SASEC open up new markets and supply chain links for trade and business between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The SASEC countries coordinate the planning of projects and activities to increase economic growth by building transport connectivity, facilitating faster and more efficient trade, and promoting cross-border power trade.

Up till now, SASEC members have invested more than USD 9 billion in development projects, which have connected markets and businesses over the last 15 years in the subregion.

Significance of Myanmar joining SASEC

- Myanmar's membership in SASEC can offer a host of opportunities for realizing synergies from economic cooperation in the subregion.
- Road corridors in the country provide the key links between South Asia and Southeast Asia, while its ports can provide alternate routes and gateways to India's northeastern region.
- Myanmar has the potential to unleash significant economic potential and bring better livelihoods to millions of people residing in India's northeastern region and Bangladesh.
- With the association of Myanmar, transport linkages between South and Southeast Asia will become more attractive to businesses once ongoing and planned motor vehicle agreements are finalized.

About South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation

- The SASEC brings together seven countries in a project-based partnership to promote regional prosperity by improving cross-border connectivity, boosting trade among member countries, and strengthening regional economic cooperation.
- The SASEC countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka.
- The Program was set up in 2001.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) serves as the Secretariat for the SASEC member countries.

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India, Malaysia inked seven agreements

India and Malaysia on 1 April 2017 inked seven agreements including the development of a fertiliser plant in Malaysia. The agreements were signed to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two nations.

These MoUs/agreements were signed during the Malaysian Prime Minister Mohd Najib Bin Tun Abdul Razak's



visit to India. Raazak was on a six-day visit (from 30 March - 04 April 2017) to India.

List of Agreements/ Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) exchanged during the State Visit of Prime Minister of Malaysia to India

- **Air Services Agreement:** The two nations signed an Air Services Agreement.
- **MoU on Cooperation in the proposed development of a Urea and Ammonia Manufacturing Plant in Malaysia and off-take of existing surplus urea from Malaysia to India:** It envisages Malaysian consortium of Isomeric Holding Sdn Bhd and Edra Power Holdings Sdn Bhd to put up a 2.5 MT/annum urea and ammonia manufacturing plant in Melacca, Malaysia for dedicated consumption by India. It also envisages off take to India the existing surplus Urea from Malaysia as per India's requirement.
- **MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Sports:** It envisages cooperation through exchange of sportspersons, instructors, information on sports regimen and training curricula, among others.
- **MoU for cooperation in training and others:** The MoU was signed between the Malaysian Human Resource Fund (HRDF)/Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad (PSMB) and EDII, Ahmedabad. The signed agreement envisages that EDII of Ahmedabad will carry out training and other capacity building programmes, as necessary on behalf of the Human Resource Development of Malaysia.
- **MoU on Mutual Recognition of the Educational Qualifications:** it was signed between Association of Indian Universities (AIU), India and Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), Malaysia. It establishes recognition of equivalence of the various degrees awarded by educational institutions in the two countries. It also envisages the eventual signing of a mutual recognition agreement between the two education/higher education ministries, following technical consultations.
- **MoU for collaboration in technology development in the field of Palm Oil:** It was inked between Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) and Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), India.
- **MoU on the implementation of 4th Generation Technology Park in AP:** It was inked between MIGHT Technology Malaysia and AP Economic Development Board. As per the MoU, the Malaysian industry-government group for high power technology (MIGHT) will act as a facilitator to develop a cluster in AP. As part of fourth generation Technology Park, packing material would be made from recycled agricultural materials.

US policy memo: computer programmer not to qualify for H-1B visa

The US government has ruled that being a simple computer programmer would no longer qualify as a specialist profession, which is a must for the issue of H-1B work visa.

The country through its new policy memorandum titled Rescission of the December 22, 2000 Guidance memo on H-1B computer-related positions ruled that an entry level computer programmer position would not generally qualify as a position in a specialty occupation. It positions supersedes and rescinds its previous guidelines of December, 2000.

The policy memorandum was issued on March 31 by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Highlights of the Rescission of the December 22, 2000 Guidance memo on H-1B

- According to the USCIS, the 22 December 2000 memorandum entitled 'Guidance memo on H-1B computer related positions' is not an accurate articulation of current agency policy.
- The ruling reverses Washington's more than decades and a half old guidelines, that were issued in the context of addressing the new millennium needs.
- The move could have far reaching implications on thousands of Indians applying for H-1B work visas for the next fiscal beginning on 1 October 2017, the process for which started on 3 April 2017.
- The memo also adds the fact that a person may be employed as a computer programmer and may he/she carries IT skills to help the firm/enterprise to achieve its goals in course of the job but it is not sufficient to establish the position as a specialty occupation.

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11 dead and over 43 injured in terror attack at Russia's metro system

At least 11 people were confirmed to be dead and over 43 injured after a bomb blast ripped through a train carriage on 3 April 2017, as it was travelling between two metro stations in Saint Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city.

The blast happened while Russian President Vladimir Putin was visiting the city, his hometown. While the police initially suspected that the exploding device had been left on the train by the attacker, later they claimed that it had in fact been caused by a suicide bomber.



Key Details

- The explosion occurred around 2.30pm local time after the train had left Sennaya Ploshchad metro station.
- The train driver decided to continue to the next station, Tekhnologichesky Institut, in order to make evacuation easier.
- The blast was mainly felt in the carriage where the device had been detonated, three from the front of the train.
- A second and much larger explosive device was found and defused at a different metro station, Ploshchad Vosstaniya, in the centre of the city.
- The second bomb, which was disguised as a fire extinguisher, had been rigged with shrapnel. It would have been several times more powerful than the first.
- Investigators suspect that the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber who left the explosive at the metro station before boarding the train with the other device.

Putin while expressing his condolences to the families of the victims said that it was too early to say what had caused the blast but he confirmed that it could be a criminal or terrorist. Putin also visited the Tekhnologichesky Institut metro station to lay flowers in the memory of the victims.

Though the police suspect radical Islamists with links to Islamic State to be involved in the blast, no claims of responsibility have yet been made by any terrorist group

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Defence deals over USD 2 billion signed between India and Israel

Israel on 7 April 2017 signed about USD two billion deal with India to supply advanced missile defence systems, bolstering bilateral military ties.

In a statement, the CEO of the state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Joseph Weiss



said that, it will provide advanced medium-range surface-to-air missile systems (MRSAM) to the Indian Army.

In addition to this, he also said that it would also supply additional long-range air and missile defence systems (LRSAM) for the first locally produced Indian aircraft carrier.

The current contracts represent an enormous expression of confidence by the Government of India in IAI's capabilities and advanced technologies, which are being developed with our local partners as part of the Indian Government's 'Make in India' policy'.

MRSAM's current version is operational with the Indian Air Force, Indian Navy and Israel Defence Forces (IDF). The system includes an advanced phased-array radar, command and control, mobile launchers and missiles with advanced RF seekers.

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Thai king Maha Vajiralongkorn signs new Constitution

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn on 6 April 2017 signed a military-backed Constitution of the country into a law. The signing is an essential step toward an election that would bring the country back to democratic rule.



The document was signed by the King in a ceremony at Bangkok.

[Thailand officially named its new King](#)

Few provisions of the new Constitution

- The outgoing military government will have the right to appoint a senate that will have a say in appointing the prime minister.
- It allows the King to travel abroad without appointing a regent. The king has spent much of the past few years in Germany, where he has a son in school.
- It removes a clause of giving power to the constitutional court and other institutions in the event of an unforeseen crisis. Removing it underlined the King's role.

[Royal Thai Army announced military coup in Thailand](#)

Background

An original draft of the constitution, viewed as the basis for returning to democracy, was approved in a referendum in August 2016. But the King has asked in January that

changes be made to give him more power on appointing a regent in the event he isn't in the country.

The interim government has pledged to hold the election by the end of 2017. But the vote is likely to be put off to 2018 due to a delay caused by the revision work. The military-led interim government has ruled the country since it seized power in a 2014 coup.

Key Facts

- The Junta that seized the power after the 2014 Coup has promised to restore democracy in the nation. The 2014 coup was its 12th successful coup in some 80 years.
- The new constitution is the 20th constitution of the South-east Asian country since the end of absolute monarchy in 1932.

Bhumibol Adulyadej, King of Thailand, passes away

The incumbent Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha said that his government will hand over his duties to the new government after it is formed. He took the charge of the country after the 2014 Coup.

Besides, 6 April was a public holiday in Thailand as the day marks the establishment of the Chakri dynasty 235 years ago. The current king is also known as King Rama X in the dynasty.

According to critics, the new constitution of Thailand will give a powerful say over Thai politics to the generals for years, if not decades.

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India and Bangladesh signed 22 agreements including defence and cyber security



India and Bangladesh on 8 April 2017 signed 22 agreements to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The signed agreements include Defence Cooperation Framework and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space.

The agreements were inked after delegation level talks were held between the two nations in the Hyderabad House, New Delhi. The delegation level talks were held during Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's four-day visit to India. She was in India from 7 April to 10 April 2017.

List of 22 agreements/MoUs exchanged during the State Visit of Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India

- **MoU for Enhancing Cooperation in the Field of Strategic and operational studies:** It was signed between Defence Services Staff College, Wellington (Nilgiris), Tamil Nadu, India and Defence Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- **MoU for enhancing cooperation in the field of national security, development and strategic studies:** It was signed between National Defence College, Dhaka, Bangladesh and National Defence College, New Delhi, India.
- **Arrangement for the Exchange of Technical Information and Co-operation in the Regulation of Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection:** It was inked between the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) of the Union Government and the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority (BAERA) of the Government of Bangladesh.

Union Cabinet approved five agreements with Bangladesh including Audio Visual Co-Production

- **Inter-Agency agreement on cooperation regarding Nuclear Power Plant Projects in Bangladesh:** It was signed between Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP), Department of Atomic Energy, Union Government and Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC), Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of Bangladesh.
- **MoU on Co-operation in the field of Information Technology and Electronics:** It was signed between the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) of the Union Government and Information and Communication Technology Division of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- **MoU on cooperation in the area of Cyber Security:** It was signed between the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Union Government and Bangladesh Government Computer Incident Response Team (BGD e-Gov CIRT), Bangladesh Computer Council of Information and Communication Technology division, Ministry of Post, Telecommunication and IT.
- **MoU on establishing Border Haats across the border between India and Bangladesh** was signed.
- **MoU concerning cooperation on aids to navigation:** It was signed between the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL), Ministry of Shipping, the

Union Government and the Department of Shipping, Ministry of Shipping, the Government of Bangladesh.

- **MoU on Mutual Scientific Cooperation in the field of Earth Sciences for Research and Development:** It was signed between Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB).
- MoU on Development of Fairway from Sirajganj to Daikhowa and Ashuganj to Zakiganj on Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route: It was inked between the Ministry of Shipping of India and the Ministry of Shipping of Bangladesh.
- **MoU on Training and Capacity Building Programme for Bangladeshi judicial officers in India:** It was signed between the National Judicial Academy, India and the Supreme Court of Bangladesh.
- MoU on bilateral judicial sector cooperation was signed.
- MoU on Cooperation in the Field of Mass Media was signed.
- Audio-visual co-production agreement was signed.
- MoU for extending Defence LOC of USD 500 million was signed.
- Agreement for the regulation of motor vehicle passenger traffic (Khulna-Kolkata route) and SOP of the agreement was signed.
- MoU for **Extending a 3rd Line of Credit (LoC)** by Union Government to Government of Bangladesh was signed.
- Financing agreement for the Construction of 36 Community Clinics in Bangladesh was signed.
- MoU & SOPs on Passenger and Cruise Services on the Coastal and Protocol Route were signed.
- MoU on Defence Cooperation Framework was signed.
- MoU on Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space was signed.
- Agreement on Cooperation in Peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy was signed.

Besides, the much-delayed agreement on sharing of the Teesta water remained elusive between the two sides. Hopes were there that this issue of water sharing will see its end during this visit of PM Hasina. PM Modi who admitted that the pact was important for India-Bangladesh ties assured her counterpart that India is committed to the issue.

India, Georgia signed Joint Statement on Free Trade Agreement

India and Georgia on 11 April 2017 signed a Joint Statement on the launching of the Joint Feasibility Study on the bilateral Free Trade Agreement.

The agreement was signed after a meeting between the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Giorgi Gakharia and the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi.



On this occasion, both the ministers expressed the hope that the Joint Feasibility Study Group shall issue a report with the relevant analysis and recommendations within a period of six months.

Details related to the Joint Statement on Joint Feasibility Study on FTA

- The joint statement was signed to further promote economic, trade and investment relations between the two countries.
- It was signed with the objective to create a favourable condition for more comprehensive bilateral economic cooperation.
- The purpose of establishing the Joint Feasibility Study Group is to provide an opportunity for more in-depth and systematic examination of potential FTA.
- The Joint Feasibility Study Group shall discuss the possible scope of a potential FTA and analyse the sensitiveness of specific sectors, while recommending possible ways to address them.
- Upon the completion of the Joint Feasibility Study, India and Georgia may proceed with negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Joint Secretary, Foreign Trade (CIS), Department of Commerce, Government of India and Genadi Arveladze, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia would be the leaders, respectively, of Indian and Georgian side.

India-Georgia Trade Relations

- India is having positive trade balance with Georgia.

- In 2015-2016, the total export from India to Georgia was USD 82.57 million and import from Georgia was USD 24.47 million.
- During the period between April 2016 and February 2017, India's export to Georgia stood at about USD 83 million as compared to USD 73 million between April 2015 and February 2016.

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First rail freight service to China departs UK

The Government of China on 10 April 2017 launched a rail freight service between China and London.

The train is loaded with whisky, soft drinks, vitamins and baby products. The train, with thirty containers filled with UK-produced goods, set off on the 7500-mile journey from Stanford-le-Hope in Essex. The train will reach its destination in 18 days.



It is the **first direct rail link between China and Great Britain**. The route of the train will traverse from Beijing, across Asia and Europe, before terminating in London.

The route is a part of the old Silk Road through which Chinese silk caravans carried garments to Europe and Africa.

The train will go pass through the Channel Tunnel. It will then cross France, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan before heading into China.

The new rail route is cheaper than air freight and faster than sea freight, unlocking new option for shippers.

The first train from China to Britain had arrived on 18 January 2017, filled with clothes and other retail goods.

Why the revival of ancient Silk Route?

In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the idea of creating a new Silk Road through Russia and Ukraine into Europe. Under the title **One Belt, One Road**, this plan is China's new national vision to improve its connectivity to Europe, Asia, and Africa.

The first freight train as a part of this strategy linked **China to Tehran**.

About ancient Silk Route

- The Silk Route was an ancient network of trade routes that were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the West and East from China to the Mediterranean Sea.
- It derived its name from the lucrative trade in Chinese silk carried out along its length, beginning during the Han dynasty. The Central Asian sections of the trade routes were expanded around 114 BCE by the Han dynasty, largely through the missions and explorations of Chinese imperial envoy, Zhang Qian. The Chinese took great interest in the safety of their trade products and extended the Great Wall of China to ensure the protection of the trade route.
- Trade on the Silk Route was a significant factor in the development of the civilizations of China, the Indian subcontinent, Persia, Europe, the Horn of Africa and Arabia, opening long-distance, political and economic relations between the civilizations.
- In addition to economic trade, the Silk Road served as a means of carrying out cultural trade among the civilizations along its network.

Comment

A direct rail link between China and Western Europe enables manufacturers to explore new means to lower transport costs.

On the other hand, an expanded Chinese economic role within central Asia will enhance the country's political influence over an increasingly important global region.

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India-Australia signed six agreements including cooperation in civil aviation security

India and Australia on 10 April 2017 signed 6 agreements to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two nations. The signed agreements include cooperation in combating international terrorism and transnational organised crime.

These agreements were signed during Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's four-day visit to India. He will be in India from 9 April to 12 April 2017. This is



Turnbull's first visit to India since he assumed office in 2015.

[India and Bangladesh signed 22 agreements including defence and cyber security](#)

The six agreements which were exchanged during Prime Minister Turnbull's visit to India **includes**

- MoU on cooperation in combatting international terrorism and transnational organised crime
- MoU for promotion and development of cooperation in civil aviation security
- MoU on cooperation in the field of environment, climate and wildlife
- MoU on cooperation in sports
- MoU on cooperation in the field of health and medicine
- Implementation arrangement between ISRO and Geoscience Australia on cooperation in earth observation and satellite navigation



[Defence deals over USD 2 billion signed between India and Israel](#)

These agreements were inked after the two sides held comprehensive discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest and concern. The two nations also agreed to repeat a bilateral maritime exercise which was first held in the Bay of Bengal in 2015. It will be repeated in Western Australia in the first half of 2018. They also welcomed a decision of holding the first bilateral Army-to-Army exercise, which will take place in 2018.

Besides, the much awaited free-trade agreement remained elusive during the visit of PM Turnbull. The two sides also failed to conclude negotiations for Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

In addition to this, lack of a commercial contract between the two countries has not allowed Australia to supply uranium to India, even after the two nations signed a civil nuclear cooperation three-year ago.

PM Turnbull also announced that his country has decided to join the International Solar Alliance put together at PM Modi's initiative. The two leaders also remotely

inaugurated a Nano-technology research centre which was jointly established by TERI Institute and the Deakin University of Australia.

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Syria war: G7 rejects sanctions on Russia after 'chemical attack'

The G7 nations have rejected Britain's call to impose sanctions against Russia in the view of the deadly chemical attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhou in the north-west of Syria that led to the killing of over 80 people.

At the G7 Foreign Minister's meet in the Italian city of Lucca on 10 April 2017, British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson raised the point that Russia's support for the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was toxifying for its reputation and suggested that sanctions should be imposed on Moscow if it refused to change its course.

Johnson had wished to project a united stance of the west on the subject, especially ahead of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's visit to Moscow to meet his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

However, this call was rejected by the foreign ministers of all the other G7 nations with Italy's Foreign Minister, Angelino Alfano stating that the group did not want to back Russia into a corner and hurt efforts to press Moscow to bring Assad back on to the negotiating table. The Ministers were all of the opinion that the attack was carried out by Syria.

[Egypt declares three-month state of emergency after church attacks](#)

[India, Georgia signed Joint Statement on Free Trade Agreement](#)

Meanwhile, Russia has rejected claims that suggest Syrian President is behind the attack and has said that it will not cut ties with Assad. In fact, the Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for the United Nations to conduct an independent investigation into the chemical attack.

The chemical attack was followed by a retaliatory strike by the US, which including firing 59 cruise missiles at a Syrian airbase. All the G7 nations gave their full support to the missile strike, as the airbase is where the chemical attack is believed to have originated.



The nations were also completely united in their condemnation of Assad and agreed that no solution could be arrived at in the Syrian war crisis while Bashar al- Assad remained in power.

The Chemical attack: as it happened!

- Over 80 were killed in Khan Sheikhoun, a rebel-controlled town in the north-west of Syria, after a suspected chemical attack.
- While Syria has denied using any chemical ammunition, its ally Russia in one of its statements said that an air strike had hit a depot full of chemical ammunitions.
- Witnesses claim to have seen a yellow mushroom cloud in the air that stung their eyes.

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US dropped 'Mother of All Bombs' on ISIS Caves in Afghanistan

The United States on 13 April 2017 dropped its largest non-nuclear bomb ever deployed in combat on an Islamic State tunnel complex in eastern Afghanistan. The bomb was dropped at around 7 PM local time in Afghanistan.

Adam Stump, the spokesman of the Pentagon stated, "a GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB), nicknamed Mother of All Bombs, was dropped on a tunnel complex of ISIS-Khorasan, a regional affiliate of the terror group, in Achin district of Afghanistan's Nanagarh province."



The **bomb was dropped by an MC-130 aircraft**, operated by the Air Force Special Operations Command.

President Donald Trump praised the military for the bombing run and called it a successful mission.

President Donald Trump praised the military for the bombing run and called it a successful mission.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer stated that the US took all precautions necessary to prevent civilian casualties and collateral damage as a result of the operation.

Also Read: [70th Hiroshima Day observed to commemorate dropping of Atomic bomb on Hiroshima](#)

What is Mother of All Bombs?

- The GBU-43/B Massive Ordnance Air Blast is a large-yield conventional (non-nuclear) bomb.
- It was developed for the United States military by Albert L. Weimorts, Jr. of the Air Force Research Laboratory.
- At the time of development, it was touted as the most powerful non-nuclear weapon ever designed.
- The bomb was designed to be delivered by a C-130 Hercules, primarily the MC-130E Combat Talon I or MC-130H Combat Talon II variants.
- It is a 21600-pound, GPS-guided munition that is America's most powerful non-nuclear bomb.

Why America used Mother of All Bombs?

- Following the bombings on Afghanistan, US President Trump said that he does not know if this sends a message to North Korea. He said that North Korea is a problem and it will be taken care of.
- Perhaps, the US signals the North Koreans and the Syrians that the US can deploy such weapons against their bunker systems.
- Also, it is in American and Afghan interests for the US to stay in Afghanistan so that it does not transform into Iraq of 2014, when Taliban controlled much of the country while hosting a strong presence of ISIS.

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MoU signed between Indian Academy of Highway Engineers & University of New South Wales

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in April 2017 between the Indian Academy of Highway Engineers and the University of New South Wales.

The MoU was signed in line with the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highway's vision to influence and adopt global innovation into the transportation sector.

Features of the MoU

- The MoU seeks to establish a Centre of Excellence in Smart Transportation in India.

- The MoU was exchanged between the Director of IAHE V L Patankar and Vice Chancellor of UNSW Prof. Ian Jacobs in the presence of Simon Birmingham, Australian Minister for Education.
- The vision for the centre is to accelerate the evaluation and adoption of new transportation technologies and explore market opportunities for them in India and Australia.
- The centre will conduct research, development and training in the areas of transport system modelling and data for smart cities.
- This centre be the world's first transportation centre involving two countries committed to seeing technological innovation for economic development through improved safety and reduced congestion.

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Palestinians in Israeli prisons begin hunger strike

Thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails have begun a mass hunger strike against detention conditions. The protest that came in news in April 2017 is being led by Marwan Barghouti, a leader of the mainstream Fatah movement of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Marwan Barghouti, 58, was jailed by Israel for life for murders of Israelis during the 2000 to 2005 uprising. Reports suggest that he is widely seen as a possible future Palestinian president.

Why the protest?

The open-ended strike of Palestinians is in response to the poor conditions and the Israeli policy of detention, in which they are being jailed since the 1980s without any trial. They also have a demand for better medical treatment and calls for freedom of inmates who are suffering from chronic diseases or are the disabled ones.

Israel said the move by the prisoners, many of whom were convicted of attacks or planning attacks against Israel, was politically motivated.

Palestinians termed the open-ended strike a protest against poor conditions and an Israeli policy of detention without trial that has been applied against thousands since the 1980s. According to Palestinian prisoners' groups, there were about 7000 Palestinians held in Israeli jails.

Qadoura Fares, the head of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club said about 6500 Palestinians are being held in 22 Israeli prisons. Palestinian Prisoners' Club is an organisation that advocates on behalf of the inmates.

Comment: If this hunger strike stays for a long time than it would create a challenge for the Israeli government as it will raise tensions between the two sides. Israeli side will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its occupation in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem in June 2017.

However, Israeli troops and settlers had pulled out of the Gaza strip in 2005. The strip is now controlled by Hamas Islamists.

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US President Donald Trump signs executive order to tighten H-1B visa programme

US President Donald Trump on 18 April 2017 signed an executive order named "Buy American, Hire American". The order tightens the rules for technology companies seeking to bring highly skilled foreign workers to the United States.



The executive order that targets the H-1B visa programme was signed during Trump's visit to the world headquarters of Snap-On Inc, a tool manufacturer in Kenosha, Wisconsin. In short, the order aims at cracking down on skilled worker visa abuse and forces the government agencies to buy more domestically produced products.

Signing the executive order Trump said the order sends a powerful signal to the world that the United States will defend its workers, protect their jobs and put America first.

The order directs US agencies to propose rules to prevent immigration fraud and abuse in the programme. Agencies have also been asked to suggest changes so that the H-1B visas are granted to the most-skilled or highest-paid applicants.

[US policy memo: Computer programmer not to qualify for H-1B visa](#)

The White House said the programme undercuts American workers by bringing in large numbers of cheaper foreign workers, which drives down US wages.

H-1B visas

- H-1B visas are intended for foreign nationals in speciality occupations that generally require higher education, which according to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) includes, but is not limited to, scientists, engineers or computer programmers.
- The government uses a lottery to award 65000 visas every year and randomly distributes another 20000 to graduate student workers.
- According to US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the number of applications for H-1B visas fell to 199000 in 2017 from 236000 in 2016.

Comment: It seems that the order is Trump's attempt to carry out his America First campaign, which pledges to reform US immigration policies and encourage purchases of American products in federal contracts.

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Australia unveils major changes to citizenship process

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on 20 April 2017 announced that migrants seeking Australian citizenship will have to undergo tougher tests on their English language skills and ability to demonstrate Australian values.

The move is being considered as a major overhaul of its migration process. The move will make it difficult to gain citizenship.

However, the opposition Labor Party accused Turnbull of making announcements for political gain.

[Former Iranian President Ahmadinejad disqualified from running for president](#)

Key fact and Changes include

- Under the new regime, the applicants seeking citizenship should have completed four years as a permanent resident - three years longer than at present.
- The applicant will have to demonstrate his/her support for religious freedom and gender equality
- Respect for women and children as well as domestic violence will not be allowed

- Stringent tests of English under which the applicant will have to undergo a test of their ability to read, write, speak and listen English.
- They will have to provide evidence of integration into the community like school enrolment, employment history or his/her membership of community organisations.
- The applicants will be allowed to apply only three times for the citizenship and those cheating during the test will be failed automatically.

India develops National Action Plan to combat Antimicrobial Resistance

The move comes two days after Australia unveiled stricter visa requirements for skilled workers from overseas. Earlier on 18 April 2017, the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at a press conference in Canberra announced that his government will abolish a temporary work visa facility of the country and replace it with a visa requiring better English language and work skills. This visa facility was popular among foreigners.

PM Turnbull said, the reforms will have a simple focus and that is Australian jobs and Australian values. The change was planned with an aim to attract better-skilled workers and Australians employed over cheap foreign workers brought in under the old 457 visa programme.

During the announcement, Turnbull said, people now in Australia on 457 visas will not be affected by the new arrangements.

He said, the 457 visa will be replaced by a new temporary visa and the list of occupations that qualify for a visa will be reduced from more than 200. The new visa will be limited to a two-year period and a second four-year visa will require a higher standard of English language.

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Former Iranian President Ahmadinejad disqualified from running for president

Former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been disqualified from running in next month's presidential elections. His name was left out of the final list of approved candidates that was announced on 20 April 2017.

The decision was taken by the Guardian Council, a group of influential jurists and clerics that was charged with the responsibility of screening the candidates for the upcoming elections, which are scheduled to be held on 19 May 2017.

Key Details

- The council has approved six politicians to run in the race including current President Hassan Rouhani, Ebrahim Raisi, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, Eshaq Jahangiri, Mostafa Agha Mirsalim and Mostafa Hashemi-Taba.
- The list has, however, excluded more than 1,600 other nominees who had applied for the presidential race, including all 137 female candidates.
- Former President Ahmadinejad had registered himself as a candidate last week, in spite of saying previously that he would not stand.
- In fact, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had also previously urged him not to run.

[Australia unveils major changes to citizenship process](#)

[India contributes USD 250000 to United Nations election assistance programme](#)

Background

- Ahmadinejad had left office in August 2013 after serving for two turbulent terms, each of which was four years long.
- His re-election in 2009 had triggered widespread protests, the largest since the Islamic Revolution three decades earlier.
- His re-election plunged the country into deep crisis and when he left in 2013, Iran was divided internally, economically weakened and isolated from the International scene.
- Ahmadinejad still enjoys support among the conservatives in the country.

With this development, Ahmadinejad joins the long list of former Iranian presidents who have had fall outs with the Iranian establishment post their departure from office.

His exclusion now indicates that the final fight would be a three-man race most probably between Rouhani, Raisi and Ghalibaf.

Eshaq Jahangiri, current Vice President has already announced his intention to drop out eventually in favour of Rouhani. He has reportedly entered the race to make Rouhani's bid for Presidency stronger by buying more airtime in presidential debates and media opportunities.

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Royal agencies of Thailand brought under control of King Vajiralongkorn

The Parliament of Thailand on 20 April 2017 agreed to transfer control of royal agencies from the government to the new King Maha Vajiralongkorn. Members of the military-appointed legislature said that the decision was taken in a confidential session. The session was not broadcasted in public.

As per information, the organisations that will be transferred include the Royal Aide de Camp Department, the Bureau of the Royal Household, the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary, the Royal Guard Command and the Royal Court Security Police.

[Thai king Maha Vajiralongkorn signs new Constitution](#)

This step is being seen as another step to provide greater say to the King, who has been reshaping the palace and has also shown himself increasingly assertive on other fronts. The fronts include transfer of agencies that work for the monarch so that they are grouped together and report to the king. Earlier, these agencies were working under the prime minister and defence ministry.

Paul Chambers, a lecturer at Naresuan University in the northern Thai province of Phitsanulok said, "The transferring of these agencies to be under the monarch's direct supervision is another sign of an increasingly absolutist monarch, following the pattern of the new constitution, which similarly was amended to legally enshrine more royal assertiveness".

"In addition, placing security agencies under the sovereign's direct control allows him to place those he trusts the most in charge of protecting him."

[Thailand officially named its new King](#)

Background

King Vajiralongkorn inherited the throne in 2016 following the death of his revered father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej. His father reign spanned seven decades and was punctuated by political turbulence.

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy, but King Bhumibol wielded great influence. His son has shown himself to be increasingly assertive with the generals who wrested power from an elected civilian government in a 2014 coup.

Earlier in January 2017, King Vajiralongkorn ordered sections of the country to draft or rewrite a constitution in a way which was never seen by a monarch in decades. The newly drafted constitution was voted overwhelmingly in the Parliament.

Parliament of Thailand invites Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn to become king

Reports suggest that King Vajiralongkorn will be crowned by the end of 2017 following cremation of his father. His father will be created in October 2017.

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1st India-Indonesia Energy Forum held in Jakarta

The First Indian-Indonesia Energy Forum was held on 20 April 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines Piyush Goyal and Indonesia's Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Ignasius Jonan participated in the forum.



Highlights of 1st India-Indonesia Energy Forum

- The Energy Forum was preceded by 2nd Joint Working Group (JWG) on Oil and Gas, 4th Joint Working Group on Coal and 1st Joint Working Group on New and Renewable Energy.
- The reports of three Joint Working Groups were presented to two Ministers during the Energy Forum.
- The 2nd JWG on Oil and Gas discussed the policy framework of India and Indonesia, oil and gas infrastructure development, cooperation opportunities in capacity building and business opportunities in oil and gas sector in both countries.
- Representatives of major Indian companies in oil and gas sector, such as ONGC Videsh Limited, Petronet LNG Limited, Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) participated in the JWG.
- Indonesian companies such as PT Pertamina, PT Triputra, PT Nusantara Regas, Medco Energy and PT PGN were also represented.

- The 4th JWG on Coal has five sessions dedicated to the policy framework, coal resources development, capacity building, research and development issues and concerns of private sector.
- Indian companies such as Coal India Limited, Adani Enterprises, Tata Power Company, PT Adani Global, PT Core Mineral Indonesia, PT BaramultiSuksessarana, PT Barasentosa Lestari and PT Jindal Overseas also participated in the JWG.
- The 1st JWG on New and Renewable Energy was held through video-conferencing.
- The two sides discussed policy framework and investment opportunities in India and Indonesia.
- Both sides agreed to focus on capacity building, exchange of scientific and technological information and data and transfer of technology on non-commercial basis in biofuel and geothermal area.
- A Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India and the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources of the Republic of Indonesia on cooperation in the field of oil and gas was signed on the occasion.
- • The MOU seeks to establish a cooperative institutional framework to facilitate and to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of oil and gas sectors on the basis of equality and mutual benefit.

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India, South Korea signed MoU for Defence Industry Co-Operation in Shipbuilding

India and South Korea on 21 April 2017 signed a inter-governmental Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for defence industry co-operation in shipbuilding.

The MoU was signed by Secretary (Defence Production), Ashok Kumar Gupta from the Indian side and Minister of Defence Acquisition and Programme Administration (DAPA), Chang Myoung-Jin from Korea's side.

Salient features of the India-South Korea MoU

- The MoU seeks to develop and strengthen defence industry co-operation between India and South Korea.

- As part of the MoU, the two sides will recommend the organisations for collaborating in the implementation of specific projects.
- The organisations recommended for co-operative projects may conclude separate agreements (contracts) between them to implement the specific projects.
- The MoU will be initially valid for a period of five years and would be automatically extendable for further successive five year at a time.

Background

- The Inter-Governmental Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was conceived under the overall umbrella of the 'Special Strategic Partnership' between India and South Korea.
- The Special Strategic Partnership was mentioned for the first time in the Joint Statement of the Prime Minister of India and the President of South Korea in May 2015.
- To substantiate the 'Special Strategic Partnership', the two sides had inter-alia agreed to encourage greater co-operation between their shipyards in the defence sector.
- Accordingly, it was decided to sign an inter-governmental MoU on 'Defence Industry Co-operation in Shipbuilding'.
- The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), headed by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has accorded its approval for signing the above MoU with South Korea.
- The CCS also gave its nod for the nomination of Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam from the Indian side for the collaboration.
- South Korea will indicate the name of its recommended organisation for the collaboration in due course of time.

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SUMMIT | CONFERENCE

3rd G20 Framework Working Group meet concluded in Varanasi

The third meeting of the G20 Framework Working Group concluded on 29 March 2017 in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

The meet witnessed discussions on the current global economic conjecture as well as deliberations on the policy options that countries can pursue to counter the challenges.

Highlights of 3rd G20 Framework Working Group Meet

- The focus of the meeting was to deliberate on the inclusive growth agenda of the G20 and formulation of a framework for country specific inclusive growth policies.

FIFA suspended Lionel Messi for four matches

- In the two-day meeting, officials from more than 30 countries discussed the growth strategy to raise the world GDP by 2 per cent till 2018.
- Since the inception of the Framework Working Group in 2009, this is the fourth occasion India is hosting this meeting.
- The meeting was co-hosted by the Union Ministry of Finance and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Hosting of the event assumes significance, as the G20 group is helping India to enhance the production from the manufacturing capacity to the tune of Rs 2 lakh crore under the Make In India initiative.
- Besides, the delegates were also taken to the banks of river Ganga to witness the famous Ganga Aarti. The delegates were also given exposure to the rich culture and cuisine of Kashi.
- It was also the most-sought after theatres for red carpet premieres of Hollywood and Bollywood movies.
- The Clarke Gable-starrer film 'Gone with the Wind' that swept the Oscars had its India premiere at Regal in 1940.
- The corridors and the staircase of the theatre are lined with black and white photographs of actors Dev Anand, Meena Kumari, Nargis, and Raj Kapoor.
- The cinema hall also had a great association with Prithviraj Kapoor. He used to perform all his plays in the theatre.

The Makeover

- According to one of the theatre owners, Vishal Choudhary, the talks are still on for its makeover and it may take them a year or so to start the renovation work.
- They have received a no-objection certificate for the project from the fire department as well as the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) as it is a heritage site.
- Their designs have also been approved by the Delhi Urban Arts Commission.
- Elaborating more on the subject, Choudhary stated that though they have acquired 60 per cent of the permissions required, they are still yet to finalise a deal with any of the multiplex chains.
- He added that the building being a heritage structure will not see much change from the outside but inside it will include a new hall, better seats, new toilets and canteen.

Explaining the main reason behind the theatre's shutting down, Choudhary stated that they had not been making money for many years now. The business had been down for almost a decade and even last month's release, Badrinath Ki Dulhaniya could not help the theatre perform well, he added.

Another major reason was the building's old structure. With the collapse of some buildings in Connaught place recently, the owners were unwilling to take any more chances.

While it may or may not be re-born as a multiplex, the old theatre as Delhiites remember it will be gone forever.

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2nd Annual Meeting of New Development Bank begins in New Delhi

The second Annual Meeting of the New Development Bank began on 31 March 2017 in New Delhi. The meeting will be held for three days till 2 April 2017.



Highlights of the meeting are –

- **Main event:** The opening ceremony of the NDB Second Annual Meeting will be held at Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi on 1 April 2017.

- It will be followed by the singing ceremony, the Second Annual Meeting of the NDB Board of Governors and Press Conference.
- **Seminars:** The first seminar will be held under the theme of “Financing Sustainable Development.” It will address the role of governments in financing development and, in particular, sustainable infrastructure.
- The second seminar will be held under the theme of “Urban Planning and Sustainable Infrastructure Development.”
- During the seminar, the participants will look into how the urban development could improve the lives of people.

About New Development Bank

- The New Development Bank was created with an objective of financing infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries.
- The Bank seeks to complement the efforts of other multilateral development institutions. And, it also seeks to establish a network of global, regional and local partnerships with multilateral and national development banks as well as other institutions and market players.
- The NDB intends to be fast, flexible and efficient, without sacrificing quality.
- The Bank uses different financial instruments to efficiently meet the demands of the member states and clients.
- Former ICICI Bank Chairperson K V Kamath is the President of the bank.

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G20 Digital Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy held in Germany

The G20 Digital Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy concluded on 7 April 2017 in Dusseldorf, Germany. The meeting was attended by the G20 Ministers in charge of digitalization, including the Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology



and Law and Justice Ravi Shankar Prasad.

Highlights of the Minister's speech

- Primarily, Ravi Shankar Prasad shared India's experience in carrying out digital India initiatives with other digital economies.
- He stressed that India supports better international cooperation in cyber security to fight against growing cybercrime and cyber terrorism.
- He said that India is also of the view that multi stakeholder model is the best option for the spread of digitalization.
- He added that the borders should not be an impediment in the way of mobility of professionals and information.
- He also offered to share India's experience in carrying out digital India initiatives with other digital economies.
- He also highlighted Digital India's unprecedented effort to drive affordability in digital technologies, including creation of low cost digital identity infrastructure called AADHAR.
- He stressed the significance of the creation of optical fibre infrastructure to reach all Gram Panchayats under BharatNet, developing Apps and solutions for digital payments and ensuring participative Governance through MyGov.

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ART & CULTURE

Delhi's 85-year-old Cinema Theatre bids adieu with Raj Kapoor's Mera Naam Joker

Delhi's iconic theatre, Regal cinema hall has decided to bring its curtain down after a golden run of 85 years. The hall will close its doors today, on 30 March 2017.

Heeding to the request of the fans, the owners of the hall decided to screen Raj Kapoor's classics Mera Naam Joker and Sangam as its closing shows.

The hall was reported to be one of the favourites of the legendary actor. He is said to have visited the theatre regularly and even hosted several premiers released under the RK films banner including Sangam and Mera Naam Joker, which released in 1964 and 1970 respectively.



Key Highlights

- The theatre that is currently playing Anushka Sharma- starrer "Phillauri" will be screening "Mera Naam Joker" in the evening at 6 pm and "Sangam" at 9 pm.
- The theatre owners are planning to give it a makeover and return with a four-auditorium multiplex.
- Over 80 per cent of the seats have already been booked for the theatre's last two shows.
- The 231 seats out of the 658 that were put up for sale online were booked within 24 hours.
- The last time the theatre had a full house was during the release of Aamir Khan's Dangal and Salman Khan's Sultan.
- Overall, the cinema hall has 154 balcony seats, 285 rear star, 40 box and 179 front seats.

About the Iconic theatre

- Built by Sir Sobha Singh in 1932, it was New Delhi's biggest and grandest theatre, a much-preferred venue for ballets, plays and talkies
- It was called the New Delhi Premier Theatre in its initial days.

- The theatre was decorated and rituals were performed there before the start of every film.
- Every show screened then was house full in advance for at least a week.

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Union Government releases Postage Stamp on Cub Scouts

Union Minister of Communications Manoj Sinha on 30 March 2017 released a Postage Stamp on Cub Scouts to commemorate Centenary year of Cub Scouts in India and abroad. Scouting aims to support young people in their physical, mental and spiritual development.

Bharat Scouts Guide not only play an important role in the overall development of the country but also work for road and rail safety, Swachh Bharat Mission apart from many developmental activities.

Background

- Cub Scouting is meant for children of age group between 8 to 11 years and Cubbing involves games, stories, play acting, handicrafts and also work through the Star tests and Badges.
- On the other hand, Scouting was developed for youth between the ages of 11 and 17 to engage in activities in public parks, open spaces and wherever they found a suitable place.
- The aim of Scouting is to contribute to the education of young people through a value system based on the 'Scout Promise and Law' to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals.

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Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated Namami Brahmaputra Festival

The President Pranab Mukherjee on 31 March 2017 inaugurated the Namami Brahmaputra festival in Guwahati, Assam.

The event took off in the form of a spectacular opening ceremony at the riverfront of Bharalumukh, Guwahati.

Highlights of Namami Brahmaputra

- The Namami Brahmaputra festival was conceived by the Government of Assam to strengthen the bonds among various communities of the State.
- The festival will be celebrated in 21 districts of the State that are located along the Brahmaputra in its entire stretch from Sadiya to Dhubri.
- During the festival, Assam's potential in trade, tourism and cultural opportunities will be showcased to the outside world.

BHEL commissioned 800 MW Supercritical Thermal Power Plant in Karnataka

- The 5-day long festival includes a soulful veneration of river Brahmaputra along with other attractions like indigenous sports, local food, exhibition of organic tea, display of handloom and handicrafts, cultural evenings, film festival, business meetings and symposium among others.
- The conclusion of the event will be equally spectacular with a grand closing ceremony on 4 April 2017.

Economic significance of Brahmaputra River to Assam

- Brahmaputra, which is also called as the Lifeline of Assam, presents incredible business opportunities.
- The National Waterways, especially NW 2 and NW16, are the drivers of economic development and prosperity.
- National Waterways 2 (NW-2) from Dhubri to Sadiya is a bridge to drive economic progress in the Southeast Asian markets, as part of India's 'Act East Policy'.
- These waterways will not only make Assam the centre of India-ASEAN collaboration, but also attract major investments from around the world.

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Pune director's film 'Avyakta' makes it to Cannes

26-year-old Omkar Modgi's maiden short film 'Avyakta' (Unexpressed) has been shortlisted for the 2017 Cannes Film Festival.

The film underlines the journey of Modgi's own relationship with his father, how it went from being an unexpressed obligation to a love-filled one without the need of speaking regularly.

About the film

- It is an 11 minute 42 second short film.
- It was made on a budget of little more than ₹1 lakh and was shot in Rajgurunagar, on the outskirts of Pune.
- It chronicles the evolution of a father-son relationship after Aarti, the mother of a teenager-Aditya, passes away suddenly.
- The mother's passing not only leaves a void in both the boy and the father's lives but it also puts them at an awkward point, making them realise that she had been the bridge between them in the house.
- While noted theatre actor Aniruddha Khutwad essays the role of the father, child actor Paarth Bhalerao of Bhootnath Returns fame plays the son.

Idealisation

Modgi explains that the idea of making such a film occurred when he put himself in the young boy's shoes and recalled the moments in his life and the relationship with his father whenever his mother went away.

Other Details

- The film will be screened at Cannes in May 2017.
- It took Modgi 10 months to write the first draft of the script.
- In fact, noted Marathi filmmaker Umesh Kulkarni helped the young writer immensely in the process, pointing out the inadequacies in his research.
- While initially Modgi's story was set in a village, on Kulkarni's advice he relocated the setting to a more familiar urban set up.
- Prior to making his own film, Modgi had worked as an assistant director with many established Marathi filmmakers.
- Modgi chose to pursue his career in cinema four years ago after quitting Chartered Accountancy (CA) course, despite scoring well in the first two parts.
- His first taste of success comes with the selection of 'Avyakta' at the much-acclaimed international film festival.
- The selection was confirmed through a congratulatory mail sent from Cannes.

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Padma Shri Awardee Sudarsan Pattnaik to compete in Moscow Championship



World-renowned sand artist, Sudarsan Pattnaik has been selected as the Indian representative in the 10th edition of Moscow Sand Art Championship, to be held later in April 2017.

The theme selected for this year's championship is 'The World Around us'. It would be held from 22 April to 28 April at Kolomenskoye in Moscow, Russia.

Key Highlights

- The event is going to witness participation from noted sand sculptors from across the world.
- Pattnaik had won the gold medal in the championship's 9th edition in 2016 for his sculpture of Mahatma Gandhi on World peace.
- He was also recently honoured with a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for creating the world's tallest sand castle at Puri beach in Odisha.
- The sand artist has participated in over 50 international sand sculpture championships across the world and won several awards.

About Sudarsan Pattnaik

- Born on 15 April 1977 in Puri, Odisha, Pattnaik learned the art of creating sand sculptures himself. He started sculpting images on sand since the age of seven.
- He was awarded the Padma Shri by Government of India in 2014.
- He established "The Golden Sand Art Institute", the first of its nature in India.
- The artist has won over 27 prizes including the World champion title at the USF World sand sculpture championship, which was held in Berlin, Germany in 2008.
- He is also a 5-time winner of people's choice award at Berlin.
- His sand sculpture, titled Black Taj Mahal gained him world recognition.
- His sculptures cover various issues including environmental crisis, peace, religious intolerance, corruption, political discord, health, national integrity and also famous leaders and religious festivals.

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India's first ever micro-drama festival held in Delhi

India's first ever micro-drama festival, named Thespis, was held on 9 April 2017 in New Delhi.

The longest play of the festival ran for not more than 10 minutes and the shortest one lasted for only 42 seconds.

The day-long event saw screening of 28 independent plays at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Art.

Named after **Thespis of Icaria**, the festival was organised by theatre group 'Vriksh'.

Key highlights of the play

- The inaugural play of the festival was titled *Chamaeleonidae*. The act showed a chameleon shedding his skin after getting disgusted by the hypocritical nature of humans.
- The plays were conceptualised in 10 different languages, including Rajasthani, Urdu, Oriya, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi and English.
- A Malayalam drama titled *Black* depicted the tensions and frustrations of a father with a teenage daughter.

- *Floating leaves of Chinaar* described the agony and suffering of Kashmiri pandits settled in Delhi.
- The plays were also awarded in several categories including 'Best Drama', 'Best Drama (Audience Poll)', 'Best Director, Script, Actor, Actress and Technician'.

About Thespis of Icaria

- Certain Ancient Greek sources and especially Aristotle describes Thespis of Icaria as the first person ever to appear on stage as an actor playing a character in a play.
- In other sources, Thespis introduced the first principal actor in addition to the chorus.
- Thespis was a singer of dithyrambs (songs about stories from mythology with choric refrains).
- He is credited with introducing a new style in which one singer or actor performed the words of individual characters in the stories. This new style was called tragedy.

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Maharashtra government sends three Marathi films to Cannes, again

The Maharashtra government has entered three Marathi films for screening at Cannes 2017, one of the biggest film festivals in the world.

The films have been chosen to promote Marathi Cinema internationally and to open the doors of the global market for Marathi filmmakers.

Key Highlights

- The Cannes film festival will be held from 17 May to 26 May 2017.
- It is the biggest film market in the world with more than 12000 participants and the showcase of over 1400 films.
- The selected Marathi films include *Dashakriya* (Tenth Day Ritual) directed by Sandeep Bhalachandra Patil, *Cycle* by Prakash Kunte and *Take Care Good Night*, which has been directed by Girish Joshi.

- Among the selected films, Dashakriya won the National Film award for best Marathi film, best screenplay and best-supporting actor and Cycle won the National award for best costume design.
- This is the second consecutive year that Maharashtra is sending award-winning films to the festival.
- All the three films will have two industry screenings each at Cannes.
- Two members from each of the film's team will be accompanying the films to the esteemed festival.

[Saira Banu, Jackie Shroff gets Raj Kapoor awards](#)

Background

- Every year, the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting sets up an India Pavilion at the festival to represent Indian cinema on the International stage.
- However, Maharashtra is the only Indian state, which sets up its own booth at Cannes.
- The decision was taken last year at the order of Vinod Tawde, the Minister of State for School Education, Higher and technical education, Sports and Youth welfare, Minority development as well as Marathi language and culture.
- The three Marathi films that were showcased in 2016 include Ringan by Makarand Mane, Halal directed by Shivaji Lotan Patil and Punarvasu Naik's Vakratunda Mahakaya.

With the coming of contemporary writers and filmmakers, Marathi cinema has witnessed a huge transformation from its earlier declining stage. The Industry has managed to produce many films that are not only critically acclaimed but are commercially successful as well. In fact, Marathi film Shwaas was India's official entry to the 77th Academy Awards. The film was also awarded the President's medal for best film, becoming the only second Marathi film to achieve the feat.

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AWARDS | HONOURS

President Pranab Mukherjee presents Dr. B. C. Roy National Awards

Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India, on 28 March 2017 presented Dr. B. C. Roy National Awards for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016 at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.

President Mukherjee also presented the Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Awards for the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

List of awardees for the year 2014

| Name | Category |
|----------------------|---|
| Dr Arvind Kumar | Eminent Medical Person |
| Prof Randeep Guleria | Eminent Medical Person |
| Dr Ravi Kant | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr Ashwini Kumar | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr Rajesh Malhotra | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| DR P V L N Murthy | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr Janak D Desai | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Rajesh Upadhyay | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Binak Karak | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Ashok Rajgopal | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr D S Rana | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Sudipto Roy | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr Rama Reddy Karri | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr Jitender B Patel | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |

List of awardees for the year 2015

| Name | Category |
|-----------------------|---|
| Dr C Palanivelu | Eminent Medical Person |
| Dr Ashok Seth | Eminent Medical Person |
| Dr N Sanjeeva Redy | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr C S Yadav | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr A K Bisoi | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr D J Borah | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr Arun Kumar Thakur | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr H P Bhalodiya | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Parimal M Desai | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Anand K Khakhar | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Amrish Mithal | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Amlesh Seth | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr A Marthanda Pillai | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr John Ebnezar | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr A Arulvisagan | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr J B Sharma | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |

List of awardees for the year 2016

| Name | Category |
|----------------------------|---|
| Dr Vipul R Patel | Eminent Medical Person |
| Dr Anil Kumar Chaturvedi | Eminent Medical – Literature |
| Dr Daljit Singh | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Prof (Dr) Prem Nath Dogra | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr M Unnikrishna | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr G S Umamaheswara Rao | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr Ved Prakash Mishra | To recognize the merit of an Eminent Medical Teacher |
| Dr Sanjay Balwant Kulkarni | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr O P Yadava | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr Pawanindra Lal | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr D Raghunadha Rao | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Prof Pradeep Tandon | To recognize the best talents in encouraging the development of specialities in different branches in medicines |
| Dr T Rajgopal | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr Satchit Balsari | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Prof (Dr) S Geethalakshmi | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Dr Devraj Rai | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |

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|---------------------------|--|
| Dr Pallarisetti Raghu Ram | To recognize the outstanding services in the field of socio medical relief |
| Prof (Dr) Punit Gupta | Aid or assistance to research project |

Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Awards for the year 2008

| Name | Category |
|------------------|--|
| Dr S Rajasekaran | To recognize the applied research at field level |

Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Awards for the year 2010

| Name | Category |
|-----------------|---|
| Dr P Sundaresan | To recognize the basic research in medical sciences |

Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Awards for the year 2015

| Name | Category |
|-----------------|--|
| Dr Rakesh Kumar | To recognize the applied research at field level |

Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Awards for the year 2016

| Name | Category |
|---------------------|---|
| Dr Neena Srivastava | To recognize the basic research in medical sciences |

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Pranab Mukherjee conferred Padma awards at Rashtrapati Bhavan

The President of India, Pranab Mukherjee presented the prestigious Padma awards to dignitaries belonging to various fields at a Civil Investiture Ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 30 March 2017.

Among those present at the occasion were the Vice President of India, Mohammad Hamid Ansari, Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan and Union Minister of Home Affairs Rajnath Singh.

The President this year conferred 7 Padma Vibhushan awards (second highest civilian award), of which two were conferred posthumously, 7 Padma Bhushan awards, of which

one was given posthumously and 75 Padma Shri awards, among which 3 were conferred posthumously.

Among the awardees, 19 were women, 5 were from the category of foreigners, NRIs, PIOs and 6 posthumous awardees.

List of Padma Vibhushan Awardees

| Sl. No | Name | Field | State |
|--------|--|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Shri K J Yesudas | Art-Music | Kerala |
| 2. | Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev | Others-Spiritualism | Tamil Nadu |
| 3. | Shri Sharad Pawar | Public Affairs | Maharashtra |
| 4. | Shri Murli Manohar Joshi | Public Affairs | Uttar Pradesh |
| 5. | Prof. Udipi Ramachandra Rao | Science & Engineering | Karnataka |
| 6. | Late Shri Sunder Lal Patwa (Posthumous) | Public Affairs | Madhya Pradesh |
| 7. | Late Shri PA Sangma (Posthumous) | Public Affairs | Meghalaya |

List of Padma Bhushan Awardees

| Sl. No. | Name | Field | State |
|---------|---|--|---------------|
| 8. | Shri Vishwa Mohan Bhatt | Art-Music | Rajasthan |
| 9. | Prof. (Dr.) Devi Prasad Dwivedi | Literature & Education | Uttar Pradesh |
| 10. | Shri Tehemton Udwadia | Medicine | Maharashtra |
| 11. | Shri Ratna Sundar Maharaj | Others-Spiritualism | Gujarat |
| 12. | Swami Niranjana Nanda Saraswati | Others-Yoga | Bihar |
| 13. | H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn (Foreigner) | Literature & Education | Thailand |
| 14. | Late Shri Cho Ramaswamy (Posthumous) | Literature & Education – Journalism | Tamil Nadu |

To view the complete list of 2017 Padam Awardees, click [here](#)

About the Awards

- The Padma awards were introduced in 1954.
- Since their institution, apart from the brief interruption during the years 1977-80 and 1993-97, the awards have been conferred every single year. They are announced on the Republic Day.
- The awards are conferred in three categories, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri in decreasing order of importance.
- While the Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service, Padma Bhushan is given for distinguished service of a high order and Padma Shri for distinguished service.
- The awards are conferred to recognize exceptional achievements in all fields of activities including art, literature and education, sports, medicine, social work, civil service, science and public affairs.

Further, not all awardees received the honour on 30 March, the remaining would be conferred the awards at a ceremony that is likely to be held on 13 April at Rashtrapati Bhavan itself.

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Dawit Isaak awarded 2017 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

Dawit Isaak, an imprisoned Eritrean-Swedish journalist, on 30 March 2017 was chosen to receive the 2017 UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

Isaak was chosen for the prestigious award in recognition of his courage, resistance and commitment to freedom of expression.



The journalist was arrested in a crackdown on the media that occurred in September 2001. His present location is unknown.

The Prize will be awarded on 3 May 2017, World Press Freedom Day, to be hosted in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Who is Dawit Isaak?

- Born on 28 October 1964, Dawit Isaak is a Swedish-Eritrean playwright, journalist and writer.
- He moved to Sweden in 1987, where he later became a citizen and went into self-imposed exile.
- After the independence of Eritrea, he returned to his homeland to become one of the founders and reporters of Setit, the first independent newspaper in the country.
- He has been held in prison in Eritrea since 2001 without trial and is considered a traitor by the Eritrean government.
- Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience and has called for his immediate and unconditional release.

About UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

- The UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was created by UNESCO's Executive Board in 1997.
- The award honours a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defence and, or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, and especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger.
- The Prize is named in honour of Guillermo Cano Isaza, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in 1986.

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Tim Berners-Lee wins 2016 ACM A M Turing Award

Sir Tim Berners-Lee in the first week of in April 2017 was honoured with the 2016 ACM A M Turing Award.

Berners-Lee received the 2016 Turing Award "*for inventing the World Wide Web, the first web browser, and the fundamental protocols and algorithms allowing the Web to scale*".

The computer scientist is one of the world's most influential voices for online privacy and government transparency.



About Tim Berners-Lee

- Sir Timothy John Berners-Lee is an English computer scientist.
- He is best known as the inventor of the World Wide Web.
- In November 1989, he implemented the first successful communication between a Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) client and server via the Internet.
- He is the holder of the founders chair at the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL).
- In 2004, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II for his pioneering work.
- He has also been named in Time magazine's list of the 100 Most Important People of the 20th century.

About ACM A.M. Turing Award

- The ACM A.M. Turing Award is an annual prize given by the Association for Computing Machinery to "*an individual selected for contributions of a technical nature made to the computing community*".
- It is generally recognized as the highest distinction in computer science and the "Nobel Prize of computing".
- The honour is named after Alan Turing, a British mathematician and reader in mathematics at the University of Manchester.
- From 2007 to 2013, the award was accompanied by a prize of USD 250000 with financial support provided by Intel and Google. Since 2014, the award has been accompanied by a prize of USD 1 million, with financial support provided by Google.
- The first recipient of the award was Alan Perlis. The first female recipient was Frances E. Allen, who was honoured in 2006.

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National Hindi Sevi Samman Awards for the year 2015 announced

N.K. Pandey, Director of the Central Hindi Institute, on 10 April 2017 announced the names of 26 writers from different categories for the prestigious Hindi Sevi Samman Awards for the year 2015.

The Hindi Sevi Samman Awards were instituted by Central Hindi Institute, Agra in 1989.

The awardees in different categories include:

Ganga Sharan Singh Award: For work in the field of promotion and training of Hindi

- S. Shesharatnam
- M. Govind Rajan
- Harmahendra Singh Bedi
- H. Subadani Devi

Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi Award: For work in the field of journalism and creative literature

- Baldev Bhai Sharma
- Rahul Dev

Atmaram Award: For work in the field of Science and Technology literature and Machinery growth

- Girish Chandra Saxena
- Phani Bhushan Das

Subramanyam Bharti Award: For work for promotion of Hindi in constructive or criticism way

- Surya Prasad Dixit
- Chandrakanta

Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan Award: For work in the field exploration and research as well as for description on its journey

- Chitra Mudgal
- Jai Prakash Kardam

Dr. George Grierson Award: Awarded to people of foreign origin for promotion and training of Hindi outside India

- Fujii Takeshi (Japan)
- Gabriela Nik Ilieva (New York)

Padmabhushan Dr. Moturi Satyanarayan Award: Awarded to people of Indian origin for promotion and training of Hindi outside India

- Pushpita Avasthi (Netherlands)
- Padmesh Gupt (London)

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Colson Whitehead's "Underground Railroad" wins Pulitzer



2017 Pulitzer Prizes were announced on 10 April 2017 by Pulitzer Prize Administrator Mike Pride in at Columbia University in New York. The announcement marks the 101st year of prizes.

The awards were announced in 21 categories and they include Letters, Drama & Music and Journalism.

The novel titled The Underground Railroad authored by Colson Whitehead won the Pulitzer Prize in the fiction segment. In 2016, the novel had received the National Book Award of the US. This is for the first time in more than 20 years that the same work won the Pulitzer and National Book Award for fiction.

64th National Film Awards announced

The novel Underground Railroad is about an escaped slave that combined liberating imagination and brutal reality.

Complete list of winners 2017 Pulitzer prizes for Journalism

| CATEGORY | WINNERS |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Public Service | New York Daily News and ProPublica: was awarded for uncovering, primarily through the work of reporter Sarah Ryley, widespread abuse of eviction rules by the police to oust hundreds of people, most of them poor minorities. |
| Breaking News Reporting | Staff of East Bay Times, Oakland, CA: was awarded for relentless coverage of the "Ghost Ship" fire, which killed 36 people at a warehouse party, and for reporting after the tragedy that exposed the city's failure to take actions that might have prevented it. |
| Investigative Reporting | Eric Eyre of Charleston Gazette-Mail, Charleston, WV: was awarded for courageous reporting, performed in the face of powerful opposition, to expose the flood of opioids flowing into depressed |

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| | West Virginia counties with the highest overdose death rates in the country. |
| Explanatory Reporting | International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, McClatchy and Miami Herald: was awarded for the Panama Papers, a series of stories using a collaboration of more than 300 reporters on six continents to expose the hidden infrastructure and global scale of offshore tax havens. (Moved by the Board from the International Reporting category, where it was entered.) |
| Local Reporting | The Salt Lake Tribune Staff: was awarded for a string of vivid reports revealing the perverse, punitive and cruel treatment given to sexual assault victims at Brigham Young University, one of Utah’s most powerful institutions. |
| National Reporting | David A. Fahrenthold of The Washington Post: was awarded for persistent reporting that created a model for transparent journalism in political campaign coverage while casting doubt on Donald Trump’s assertions of generosity toward charities. |
| International Reporting | The New York Times Staff: was awarded for agenda-setting reporting on Vladimir Putin’s efforts to project Russia’s power abroad, revealing techniques that included assassination, online harassment and the planting of incriminating evidence on opponents. |
| Feature Writing | C. J. Chivers of The New York Times: was awarded for showing, through an artful accumulation of fact and detail, that a Marine’s postwar descent into violence reflected neither the actions of a simple criminal nor a stereotypical case of PTSD. |
| Commentary | Peggy Noonan of The Wall Street Journal: was awarded for rising to the moment with beautifully rendered columns that connected readers to the shared virtues of Americans during one of the nation’s most divisive political campaigns. |
| Criticism | Hilton Als of The New Yorker: was awarded for bold and original reviews that strove to put stage dramas within a real-world cultural context, particularly the shifting landscape of gender, sexuality and race. |
| Editorial Writing | Art Cullen of The Storm Lake Times, Storm Lake, IA: was awarded for editorials fueled by tenacious reporting, impressive expertise and engaging writing that successfully challenged powerful corporate agricultural interests in Iowa. |
| Editorial Cartooning | Jim Morin of Miami Herald: was awarded for editorial cartoons that delivered sharp perspectives through flawless artistry, biting prose and crisp wit. |

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| Breaking News Photography | Daniel Berehulak, freelance photographer: was awarded for powerful storytelling through images published in The New York Times showing the callous disregard for human life in the Philippines brought about by a government assault on drug dealers and users. (Moved into this category from Feature Photography by the nominating jury.) |
| Feature Photography | E. Jason Wambsgans of Chicago Tribune: was awarded for a superb portrayal of a 10-year-old boy and his mother striving to put the boy's life back together after he survived a shooting in Chicago. |

2017 Pulitzer prizes for Letters, Drama & Music

| CATEGORY | WINNERS |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Fiction | The Underground Railroad, by Colson Whitehead (Doubleday): was awarded for a smart melding of realism and allegory that combines the violence of slavery and the drama of escape in a myth that speaks to contemporary America. |
| Drama | Sweat, by Lynn Nottage: was awarded for a nuanced yet powerful drama that reminds audiences of the stacked deck still facing workers searching for the American dream. |
| History | Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy, by Heather Ann Thompson (Pantheon): was awarded for a narrative history that sets high standards for scholarly judgment and tenacity of inquiry in seeking the truth about the 1971 Attica prison riots. |
| Biography or Autobiography | The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land in Between, by Hisham Matar (Random House): was awarded for a first-person elegy for home and father that examines with controlled emotion the past and present of an embattled region. |
| Poetry | Olio, by Tyehimba Jess (Wave Books): was awarded for a distinctive work that melds performance art with the deeper art of poetry to explore collective memory and challenge contemporary notions of race and identity. |
| General Nonfiction | Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, by Matthew Desmond (Crown): was awarded for a deeply researched exposé that showed how mass evictions after the 2008 economic crash were less a consequence than a cause of poverty. |
| Music | Angel's Bone, by Du Yun Premiered on January 6, 2016, at the Prototype Festival, 3LD Arts and |

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| | Technology Center, New York City, a bold operatic work that integrates vocal and instrumental elements and a wide range of styles into a harrowing allegory for human trafficking in the modern world. Libretto by Royce Vavrek. |
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Pulitzer Prize

- The Prize established in 1917 is awarded for achievements in newspaper and online journalism, literature, and musical composition in the United States.
- It was established by provisions in the will of Joseph Pulitzer who had made his fortune as a newspaper publisher and is administered by Columbia University in New York City.
- Prizes are awarded yearly in twenty-one categories of which 20 winners are awarded a certificate and a cash award.
- The winner in the public service category of the journalism competition is awarded a gold medal.

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President Pranab Mukherjee presents SCOPE Awards

President Pranab Mukherjee on 11 April 2017 presented the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) Awards during the 8th Public Sector Day function that was held in New Delhi.

SCOPE Awards for Excellence and Outstanding Contribution to the Public Sector Management were instituted in the year 1996-97 and are given in the Institutional & Individual Categories.

Winners of the SCOPE Excellence Awards 2014-15

| Award | Winner |
|---|--|
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Individual Leadership Category-I (Maharatna/Navratna PSEs) | Anoop Kumar Mittal, CMD, NBCC (India) Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Individual Leadership Category-II (Miniratna I & II PSEs) | A.K. Jain, MD, Rajasthan Electronics & Instruments Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Individual | K.S. Popli, CMD, Indian Renewable Energy Dev. |

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| Leadership Category-III (Other Profit Making PSEs) | Agency Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award for Outstanding Woman Manager in PSEs | Pooja Kapoor, Head, Business Development, WAPCOS Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Institutional Category I (Maharatna & Navratna PSEs) | Rural Electrification Corporation Limited & National Aluminum Company Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Institutional Category II (Miniratna I & II PSEs) | ONGC Videsh Limited & Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Institutional Category III (Other Profit Making PSEs) | Electronics Corporation of India Limited |
| SCOPE Excellence Award – Special Institutional Category (Turnaround) | Goa Shipyard Limited |

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President Pranab Mukherjee conferred National Geoscience Awards 2016

Pranab Mukherjee, the President of India, on 12 April 2017 conferred the National Geoscience Awards 2016 in Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi.

A total of twenty-seven geoscientists received the prestigious National Geoscience Awards 2016, as individuals or team, for meritorious contributions in twelve fields of geosciences.

Dr Abhishek Saha from National Institute of Oceanography was honoured with the Young Scientist Award.

The National Geoscience Awards was previously known as the National Mineral Awards. The awards were instituted by the Union Ministry of Mines in 1966. It was instituted to honour individuals and teams of scientists for their extraordinary achievements and outstanding contributions in fundamental and applied geosciences and mining and allied fields.

The National Geoscience Awards includes one Award for Excellence, one Young Scientist Award and nineteen individual and/or team awards in 16 fields of geosciences.

Complete list of awardees

| Award | Winner | Type of Awards |
|---|---|----------------|
| Mineral Discovery & Exploration (excluding fossil fuels) of | Chittaranjan Dash Dinesh Kumar Thawait | Team Award |

| | | |
|--|---|------------------|
| economic and/or strategic importance and application of innovative techniques | Rohan Das Shamiuddin Ahmad | |
| Coal, Lignite and Coal Bed Methane Discovery & Exploration of Economic and/or strategic importance and application of innovative techniques | Amit Soni Manju S Kailash Chandra Sahoo Sayam Kahali | Team Award |
| Groundwater Exploration (including project development, hydrogeological studies and management of groundwater resources) | Dr. Pradeep Kumar Naik | Individual Award |
| Mining Technology (including development and application of new methods and technologies, research & development, conservation of mineral resources, systematic mine planning, mine safety, mine fires, mine hazards, mine reclamation & rehabilitation) | Laxman Singh Shekhawat, Hindustan Zinc Limited, Udaipur Dr. Santosh Kumar Ray, CSIR- Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research, Dhanbad | Individual Award |
| Sustainable Mineral Development (including mine closure, project development, institutional development and capacity building) | Dr. Ebhin Reginald Masto, CSIR- Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research, Dhanbad | Individual Award |
| Basic Geo-sciences (including Stratigraphy, Structural Geology, Palaeontology, Geomorphology, Economic Geology, Geodynamics, Petrology and Geochemistry including Mineralogy, Geochronology and Isotope Geology) | Dr. Santanu Banerjee, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay | Individual Award |
| Applied Geology: Engineering Geology, Geo-thermal Energy, Seismotectonics, Geo-statistics, Photo-geology and Remote Sensing and Geo-Information System(including spatial data | Dr. Atul Nanda, Engineers India Ltd. Dr. Ranjit Rath, Engineers India Ltd. Saikat Pal, Engineers India Ltd. Gopi Kannan, Engineers India | Team Award |

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| management applications and data integration) | Ltd. Prof. Supriyo Mitra, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Kolkata | Individual Award |
| Geophysics / Applied Geophysics: New Technologies in geophysical exploration, application of geophysical methods, geo-magnetism, geophysical survey techniques and instrumentation | Dr. N. Purnachandra Rao, CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad Dr. Anand Kumar Chaturvedi, AMDER, Hyderabad Markandeyulu Amulothu, AMDER, Hyderabad Dr. Veldi Ramesh Babu, AMDER, Hyderabad Shailesh Tripathi, AMDER, Hyderabad | Individual Award Team Award |
| Geo-Environmental Studies relating to mining, urban, industrial, coastal and desert management, paleoclimate, paleoenvironment, medical geology, climate change and studies related to their impact on ecosystem | Aradhi Keshava Krishna, CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute, Hyderabad | Individual Award |
| Disaster Management including scientific studies related to natural hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, floods and tsunamis | Prof. Javed Husain N. Malik, IIT, Kanpur | Individual Award |
| Ocean Development: Oceanography and Marine Geology | Dr. Pratima Mohan Kessarkar, CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Goa | Individual Award |
| Young Scientist Award | Dr. Abhishek Saha, NIO, Goa | |

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Pranab Mukherjee honours freedom fighters on centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha

The President of India Pranab Mukherjee on 17 April 2017 honoured freedom fighters at an event to commemorate the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha at Patna, Bihar.



At the event, the President acknowledged the Government of Bihar for commemorating the centenary of the Champaran Movement. He also praised the government for organising the event to felicitate the freedom fighters of India.

About Champaran Satyagraha

- The first Satyagraha movements inspired by Mohandas Gandhi occurred in Champaran district of Bihar and the Kheda district of Gujarat from 1917 to 1918.
- Champaran Satyagraha was the first to be started. However, the word Satyagraha was used for the first time in Anti Rowlatt Act agitation.
- Under Colonial era laws, many tenant farmers in Champaran were forced to grow indigo on a portion of their land as a condition of their tenancy.
- Many tenants alleged that landlords had used strong-arm tactics to exact illegal cesses. This issue was highlighted by a number of lawyer and politicians.
- A money lender named Raj Kumar Shukla persuaded Mahatma Gandhi to go to Champaran.
- Gandhi arrived in Champaran on 10 April 1917 with a team of eminent lawyers and thus, the Champaran Satyagraha began.

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Historian A V Narasimha Murthy honoured with Gururaja Bhat Award

Eminent historian Professor A V Narasimha Murthy on 17 April 2017 was presented with Dr. Paduru Gururaja Bhat Award 2017.

The award was presented to Murthy by D V Sadananda Gowda, Union Minister for Statistics and Programme Implementation.



Murthy was chosen for the prestigious award in consideration of his contribution to Indian Archaeology, Ancient History and Numismatics.

Murthy is the Chairman of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (BVB), Mysuru. He also served as the Head of the Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Mysore.

Who was Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat?

- Paduru Gururaja Bhat was a teacher, historian and researcher par excellence.
- He studied and researched history of Tulu Nadu for over 20 years. He also observed different aspects of culture by travelling to most of the villages in Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts and visiting temples and other places studying inscriptions.
- He is remembered for providing cultural identity to the region of Tulu Nadu.
- On the basis of his extensive research, Bhat published his magnum opus, Studies in Tuluva History and Culture, in 1975.

About Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat Award 2017

- The prestigious award was instituted in 2010 by Udupi-based Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat Memorial Trust.
- The award carries a citation and a purse of Rs. 50000.
- The award recognises outstanding contributions in the field of history, archaeology, sociology, and other social sciences.

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Saira Banu, Jackie Shroff gets Raj Kapoor awards

Veteran actress Saira Banu and actor Jackie Shroff were named for the prestigious Raj Kapoor awards of the Maharashtra Government. The names of the duo were announced on 19 April 2017 by the State Cultural Affairs Minister Vinod Tawde in Mumbai.

Saira Banu (72) will be awarded with the prestigious Raj Kapoor Lifetime achievement award, while Jackie Shroff (60) was selected for the Raj Kapoor Special contribution award. They will be awarded for their cinematic journey and contributions to the Indian cinema respectively.

Prominent films of Saira Banu includes "Junglee" (1961), "Purab aur Paschim" (1970), "Victoria No. 203" (1972), "JwarBhata", "Padosan" and "Bairag" (1976).

Prominent films of Shroff include "Hero" (1983), "Teri Meherbaniyan" (1984), "Sazish". He had won the Filmfare best actor award for his role in the film "Parinda" (1990).

[Pranab Mukherjee honours freedom fighters on centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's Champaran Satyagraha](#)

Other awards announced on the occasion were

- V. Shantaram Lifetime Achievement award: Noted Marathi actor Vikram Gokhale
- V. Shantaram Special Contribution annual award: Noted Marathi actor Arun Nalawade

Gokhale and Nalawade will be awarded for their achievements and contributions to the film industry.

Both the lifetime achievement awards carry a citation and cash of Rs five lakh each, while both the special contribution awards carry a citation and Rs three lakh cash.

[Historian A V Narasimha Murthy honoured with Gururaja Bhat Award](#)

The awards will be presented at the upcoming 54th Maharashtra State Marathi Film Festival.

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Victoria Beckham appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire

Victoria Beckham on 19 April 2017 was appointed the Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the fashion industry.

Prince William presented the honour to the pop singer turned fashion designer at the Buckingham Palace in London.

About Victoria Beckham

- Born on 17 April 1974, Victoria Caroline Beckham is an English businesswoman, fashion designer, model, and singer.

- She rose to fame in the late 1990s with the all-female pop group Spice Girls. After the Spice Girls split, she was signed to Virgin Records and Telstar Records and had four UK Top 10 singles.
- She is also an internationally recognised style icon and fashion designer. The Victoria Beckham label was named designer brand of the year in the UK in 2011.
- She is married to soccer icon David Beckham.

About Officer of the Order of the British Empire

- The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire is a British order of chivalry.
- It rewards contributions to the arts and sciences, work with charitable and welfare organisations, and public service outside the Civil Service.
- King George V established the honour on 4 June 1917.
- It comprises five classes, in civil and military divisions, the most senior two of which make the recipient either a knight if male, or dame if female.
- Recommendations for appointments to the Order of the British Empire were at first made on the nomination of the United Kingdom.

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Vasudevan's One Part woman wins Sahitya Akademi Award for translation of Mathorubhagan

One Part Woman, a translation work of Perumal Murugan's controversial Tamil novel Maadhhorubaagan, by Aniruddhan Vasudevan on 19 April 2017 was chosen for 2016 Sahitya Akademi's award for translation in English.

The translation work by Aniruddhan Vasudevan and published by Penguin and has already won the Canada Ilakkiya Thotta Virudhu award.

[Saira Banu, Jackie Shroff gets Raj Kapoor awards](#)

As per reports, the award that includes a casket containing an engraved copper plaque and a cash component of Rs 50000 would be presented to Vasudevan at a ceremony in June 2017. Vasudevan will be felicitated with the award along with the winners of the Sahitya Akademi award in 23 languages.

About One Part Woman

The book, One Part Woman, is a novel based on a possible ancient cultural practice among people living around Tiruchengode. It is the story of a childless couple, Kali and

Ponna, with a strong desire of having a child. Hounded by the taunts and insinuations of others, all their hopes come to converge on the chariot festival in the temple of Ardhanareeswara, the half-female god. Everything hinges on the one night when rules are relaxed and consensual union between any man and woman is sanctioned. This night could end the couples suffering and humiliation. But it will also put their marriage to the ultimate test.

Earlier, the book was written in Tamil under the name Madhorubagan by Perumal Murugan. The Tamil version of the book came into controversy.

Tamil Novel Madhorubhagan written by Perumal Murugan

About the controversy

The title Madhorubagan describes Lord Shiva in his Ardhanari avatar, which is a combination of a man and woman, came into debate/controversy after few groups alleged that the book was portraying the Kailasanathar temple in Tiruchengode and its women devotees in a bad light. They demanded that the book be should be banned. The controversy came to an end after the 2016 Madras High Court judgement, which favoured Murugan.

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Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu chosen for Krishi Karman Awards 2015-16

The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare in April 2017 selected Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu for the Krishi Karman Awards 2015-16.

On the other hand, Meghalaya was chosen for commendation prize for total food grain production. The state would also be given a cash award of Rs 1 crore.

Tripura is selected for the Krishi Karman Award 2015-16 in small category (less than 1 million tonnes). It is honoured for a commendable increase in food grain production in small category states. The north-eastern state produced 825000 tonnes of food grain in the year 2016. The state would also be given a cash award of Rs 5 crore. Tripura is being honoured with the award for the second time.

Himachal Pradesh is chosen for the award in medium category (1 to 10 million tonnes). During the last five years, the state's total food grains production has increased from 14.94 lakh tone to 16.34 lakh tone. Himachal Pradesh was also conferred the Krishi

Karman Award for 2011-12 for increase in wheat production and in 2014-15 for increasing food grains production.

Tamil Nadu has been chosen for the prestigious award in large category (production more than 10 million tonnes). The state produced 130 lakh tonnes of food grains in 2015-16, which is the highest in the last five years. In terms of yield in food grains, the state managed to get a yield of 3.38 tonnes per hectare as against the all-India average of 2.028 tonnes per hectare, which is 67% more than the national average. Tamil Nadu will also be given a sum of Rs 5 crore. The state had already bagged the award thrice in 2011-12 for highest food grains production, in 2013-14 for highest pulses production and in 2014-15 for highest coarse cereals production.

About Krishi Karman Awards

- Krishi Karman Awards were instituted in the year 2010-11.
- It was instituted to reward the best performing States in food grains and individual crops of Rice, Wheat, Pulses and Coarse Cereals.
- The awards are given to Best Performer States for raising India's food grain production.

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Italian mayor Giuseppina Nicolini wins UNESCO Peace Prize

The UNESCO on 19 April 2017 awarded the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize to Giuseppina Nicolini, the mayor of the Italian island of Lampedusa and to the nongovernmental organization SOS Méditerranée (France).

Nicolini has been bestowed for the award for her commitment to saving the lives of migrants and refugees.

Joaquim Chissano, the acting President of the Jury of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize declared, *"After examining conditions around the world, the Jury of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize determined that refugees and migrants constitute one of the crucial issues of our day, notably in the Mediterranean where nearly 13,000 men, women and children have perished in shipwrecks since 2013."*

Since becoming mayor in 2012, Nicolini has been recognized for her boundless humanity and unwavering commitment to refugee crisis management and integration in response to the arrival of thousands of refugees on the shores of Lampedusa and elsewhere in Italy.

SOS Méditerranée is a European organization working for the rescue of people in distress in the Mediterranean.

About Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize

- The Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize was established in 1989 by a resolution supported by 120 countries. The resolution was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 25th session.
- The Prize is intended to honour living individuals and active public or private bodies or institutions that have made a significant contribution to promoting, seeking, safeguarding or maintaining peace, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and the Constitution of UNESCO.
- Past laureates of the Prize included French President François Hollande, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter and others.

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First female MBBS doctor from Indore presented with Padma Shri

The 91-year-old gynaecologist, Dr. Bhakti Yadav was presented with the Padma Shri award at her residence on 20 April 2017.

The award was presented to her by district collector P Narahari in the presence of the state's Finance Minister Jayant Malaiya and Mayor Malini Gaud, as she was unable to attend the function organised in New Delhi on 13 April where the President of India, Pranab Mukherjee had given away the prestigious civilian awards to the recipients.

Key Highlights

- The award aims to recognize her selfless service towards her patients, especially the ones from a poor background.
- The nonagenarian doctor has been treating her patients for free since 1948.
- In her 68-year-long career, Dr. Yadav has helped deliver more than a thousand babies.
- She has also treated over one lakh poor women free of cost during her medical practice.

[President Pranab Mukherjee confers Padma awards to eminent personalities](#)

About Bhakti Yadav

- Born on 3 April 1927, she completed her primary education in Garoth town.

- She completed her schooling from Ahilya Ashram School in Indore.
- She is the first female MBBS doctor from Indore. She is popularly referred to as 'Doctor Didi'.
- She was the only female student in the 1948-1953 batch of MBBS course in Indore's Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College.
- Even though now, Dr. Bhakti Yadav is not able to treat many patients due to her age, her advice itself is deemed as valuable by patients from far and wide.

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Golfers Aditi Ashok, SSP Chawrasia and Ali Sher win Golf Industry Association Awards 2017

Golfers Aditi Ashok, S.S.P Chawrasia and Ali Sher on 20 April 2017 won the second edition of the Golf Industry Association (GIA) Awards 2017.

Aditi Ashok bagged the award for Outstanding Achievement. Aditi finished second in the Ladies European Tour (LET) order of merit in 2016.

SSP Chawrasia bagged the award for the Men's Player of the Year (2016). He successfully defended his Indian Open title and had two victories on Golf Tour when he also won his first overseas title at the Resorts World Manila Masters.

While, Golfer Ali Sher was awarded for his outstanding playing career. His victory in the Indian Open back in 1991, was not only the first by an Indian professional golfer, but it completely changed the game in the country, with many Indian golfers tasting international success after him. He won an Arjuna Award in 1991 and then went on to win the Indian Open again in 1993.

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TripAdvisor presents Bali with 2017 Travelers' Choice Awards

US-based travel reviewer website TripAdvisor on 20 April 2017 presented its 2017 World's Best Destination Award to Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

TripAdvisor's 2017 World's Best Destination Award for Bali was announced in March 2017, resulting from its traveller choice programme conducted in a 12-month period.

With this, Bali became the first Asian destination to earn the title.

In addition, TripAdvisor also put Lombok, a destination near Bali, as one of the best 10 Asian destinations for the year.

The 2017 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards were determined using an algorithm that took into account the quantity and quality of reviews and ratings for hotels, restaurants and attractions in destinations worldwide. The website gathers the information for over a 12-month period. As per the TripAdvisor, Bali improved in three main categories from 2015 to 2016. They are accommodation, tour attractions and restaurants.

TripAdvisor's 25 World's Best Destinations are:

1. Bali, Indonesia
2. London, United Kingdom
3. Paris, France
4. Rome, Italy
5. New York City, USA
6. Crete, Greece
7. Barcelona, Spain
8. Siem Reap, Cambodia
9. Prague, Czech Republic
10. Phuket, Thailand
11. Istanbul, Turkey
12. Jamaica
13. Hoi An, Vietnam
14. St. Petersburg, Russia
15. Roatan, Bay Islands
16. Marrakech, Morocco
17. Ambergris Caye, Belize Cayes
18. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
19. St. Maarten-St. Martin
20. Playa del Carmen, Mexico
21. Dubai, United Arab Emirates
22. Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands
23. Kathmandu, Nepal
24. Bora Bora, Society Islands
25. Cusco, Peru

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Kailash Satyarthi honoured with P C Chandra Puraskar 2017

Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi on 23 April 2017 was presented the P C Chandra Puraskar.

Satyarthi was honoured with the award for his global crusade against child slavery and exploitative child labour.

The 63-year-old Satyarthi was handed over a citation, a trophy and a cheque of Rs 10 lakh at an awards ceremony in Kolkata.

About Kailash Satyarthi

- Born on 11 January 1954, Kailash Satyarthi is an Indian children's rights and education advocate.
- In 1980, he gave up his career as an engineer and founded the *Bachpan Bachao Andolan*.
- He has acted to protect the rights of more than 83000 children from 144 countries.
- It is mainly because of his work and activism that the International Labour Organization adopted Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, which is now a principal guideline for governments around the world.
- In 2014, he was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize, which he shared with Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan. He is the fifth Nobel Prize winner for India and only the second Indian winner of the Nobel Peace Prize after Mother Teresa in 1979.

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SPORTS

India won 73 medals in 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games



India's special athletes won 73 medals in the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games. The games were held between 18 March and 25 March 2017 in Austria.

India's performance in 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games

- India dominated in three team events - Floor Hockey (male), Unified Floorball and Traditional Floorball.
- Cumulatively, Indian athletes won 30 medals in these three games, which was also the highest tally in a single day. Along with this, the special women team also won 16 bronze medals.
- An important gold medal came in the Unified Floorball (Male) event, where India defeated Nigeria, while the Floor Hockey team crushed Lithuania 7-2.
- At the end of the tournament, India took its tally to 73 medals by winning 8-0 against Austria.
- India also won 10 medals in Alpine skiing, including 3 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze medals.

World Conference on Environment 2017 concluded

- The snowboarding team bagged 8 medals that included 4 gold, 2 silver and 2 bronze medals.
- 5 more medals came in Snow Shoeing and 4 medals were won in Speed and figure skating.
- In the process, Himachal's Megha became the first Indian to win a gold medal in the games.

About 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games

- It included seven disciplines including Alpine Skiing, Snow Boarding, Snow Shoeing, Figure Skating, Speed Skating, Floor Hockey and Floor Ball (and Unified floor Ball).
- It witnessed 2,600 athletes from over 105 countries competing with each other.
- The games were held in four cities of Austria, namely, Graz, Schladming, Styria and Ramsau.
- While the opening ceremony was held at Planai Stadium in Schladming, the closing ceremony was held at Merkur Arena in Graz.
- Besides the competitions, the event included culture and art programs, health programs, symposia and congresses.

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Sebastian Vettel won Australian Grand Prix

Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel on 26 March 2017 defeated Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton to clinch the 2017 Australian Grand Prix.

It was Vettel's first win since the Singapore Grand Prix in September 2015.

About Sebastian Vettel

- Born on 3 July 1987, Sebastian Vettel is a German racing driver.
- At present, he is driving in Formula One for Scuderia Ferrari.
- He is a four-time Formula One World Champion. He won the championship in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 with Red Bull Racing.



- He has held numerous "youngest" Formula One records. A few of them are: the youngest driver to have taken part in an official practice session of a Grand Prix (until Max Verstappen at the 2014 Japanese Grand Prix), to score championship points (until Daniil Kvyat at the 2014 Australian Grand Prix), to lead a race (until Max Verstappen at the 2016 Spanish Grand Prix), and others.
- At present, he is in fourth place among all time race winners.

About Australian Grand Prix

- The Australian Grand Prix is a motor race held annually in Australia.
- The Grand Prix is the oldest surviving motor racing competition held in Australia. The race has been held 79 times since it was first run at Phillip Island in 1928.
- At present, the race is held at the Melbourne Grand Prix Circuit at Albert Park in Melbourne.
- The Australian Grand Prix is the first round of the Championship, having been the first race of each year, excluding 2006 and 2010.
- Australian driver Lex Davison and German driver Michael Schumacher are the most successful drivers in this race.
- The winner of the 2016 Australian Grand Prix was Nico Rosberg.

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West Bengal won 2016-17 Santosh Trophy

West Bengal on 26 March 2017 lifted the Santosh Trophy for the 32nd time at the GMC Stadium, Bambolim, Goa. West Bengal's Manvir Singh struck in the 119th minute for a 1-0 win over Goa.

With the win, West Bengal ended a six-year wait having last won the title in 2011. Goa last won the title in the year 2009.

About Santosh Trophy

- The Santosh Trophy is an association football knock-out competition.
- It is contested by the regional state associations and government institutions under the All India Football Federation (AIFF).
- Before the start of the National Football League in 1996, the Santosh Trophy was considered the top domestic championship in the country.

- The competition is held every year with 31 teams who are divided into groups and who must qualify for the tournament proper through the preliminary round.
- The competition was started in 1941.
- The tournament is named after the president of the Indian Football Association (West Bengal's football association) at the time, Sir Manmatha Nath Roy Chowdhary of Santosh.
- The 2015–16 edition of the tournament was won by Services.

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COA issued seven-point instruction for BCCI office bearers

The Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators (COA) on 26 March 2017 issued a seven-point instruction for the three existing BCCI office bearers, namely Vice President CK Khanna, Joint Secretary Amitabh Chaudhary and Treasurer Aniruddh Chaudhry.

The Administrators have summoned Amitabh and Aniruddh at the BCCI headquarters to make it clear that they should follow every instruction given by the committee.

The instructions will also apply on Chief Executive Officer Rahul Johri and Chief Financial Officer Santosh Rengnekar.

Besides, it also states that if COA wants to communicate anything to office bearers, they would do so through the CEO. In addition, all legal documents would be cleared by the COA.

It states that all payments will be jointly cleared by joint secretary and CEO. In the case of disagreement over a particular payment, COA's decision will be final. The COA will have the final say in rules that are applicable.

These instructions were issued two days after the Supreme Court asked the Committee of Administrators appointed by it to release funds to state cricket associations, including HPCA, the body that is holding the last India-Australia test.

On the other hand, a bench headed by Justice Dipak Misra also considered the plea of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Jharkhand state cricket associations, which have organised the last three test matches of the ongoing series, and asked the CoA to release funds to them in accordance with the terms of the contract.

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FIFA suspended Lionel Messi for four matches

The FIFA Disciplinary Committee on 28 March 2017 suspended Argentina football player Lionel Messi for four matches. The committee reached the decision in application of articles 77 (a) and 108 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code (FDC).

Further, the committee took this decision as Messi was found at fault in relation to an incident during the match between Argentina and Chile on 23 March 2017.

In the qualifying competition for the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, Lionel Messi directed insulting words at an assistant referee.

As a result, Messi was suspended for four official matches and sanctioned with a fine of CHF 10,000. The first match for which the sanction was applied was the preliminary competition of the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia, which was played between Bolivia and Argentina on 28 March 2017.

The remainder of the sanction will be served over Argentina's subsequent FIFA World Cup qualifying matches.

Who is Lionel Messi?

- Lionel Messi is an Argentine professional footballer.
- He plays as a forward for Spanish club FC Barcelona.
- He is the captain of the Argentina national team.
- He is the only footballer in history to win five FIFA Ballons d'Or, four of which he won consecutively.

[Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems inaugurated at INS Rajali](#)

- He is also the first player to win three European Golden Shoes.
- He holds the records for most goals scored in La Liga, a La Liga season and a football season. He has scored over 500 senior career goals for club and country.
- Messi is often considered as the best player in the world and rated by many in the sport as the greatest of all time.
- With Barcelona he has won eight La Liga titles, four UEFA Champions League titles, and four Copas del Rey, among other trophies.



Tamil Nadu beat India 'B' to win Deodhar Trophy

Tamil Nadu on 29 March 2017 defeated India 'B' by 42 runs in the final to clinch the Deodhar Trophy.

The final of the 50-overs cricket tournament was played at the ACA-VDCA stadium in Vishakhapatnam.

Tamil Nadu's Dinesh Karthik shared a 136-run stand with Narayan Jagadeesan (55) for the fourth wicket which drove Tamil Nadu to 303/9 in 50 overs.

With the victory, Tamil Nadu became the first state side to win the three-team one-day tournament.

About Deodhar Trophy

- The Deodhar Trophy is a List A cricket competition in Indian domestic cricket.
- The tournament is named after Professor D. B. Deodhar, who is known as the Grand Old Man of Indian cricket.
- It is a 50-over knockout competition played on an annual basis.
- The competition was introduced in 1973-74 season and was realigned in the 2015-16 season with the winners of Vijay Hazare Trophy playing two teams India A and India B selected by the BCCI.
- From 2015-16, three Teams play each other in league matches and the top two of the three teams after the league stages clash in the finals.

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Turkey's Elvan Abeylegesse stripped of Olympic medals

Turkish runner Elvan Abeylegesse on 29 March 2017 was stripped of two Olympic silver medals and one world silver.

The decision was taken after a re-analysis of an in-competition doping test dating back to 2007.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) in a statement stated that Abeylegesse's "results from August 25, 2007, to August 25, 2009, have been removed, with the 34-year-old retrospectively banned from September 29, 2015, to September 28, 2017."

Abeylegesse tested positive on 25 August 2007 after



winning silver at the 2007 World Athletics Championships in Osaka. It also signifies that she is set to be stripped not only of that world silver but also the 5000m and 10000m silver medals she won at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The runner reportedly tested positive for stanozolol, a steroid.

About Elvan Abeylegesse

- Elvan Abeylegesse is an Ethiopian-born Turkish middle and long-distance running athlete.
- She competes over distances from 1500 metres up to the marathon, and also in cross country.
- She is the former world record-holder for the 5000 metres.
- In August 2015, the Turkish Athletics Federation confirmed that an anti-doping test taken during the 2007 World Championships in Athletics had been retested and found to be positive for a controlled substance. Following the result, she was temporarily suspended pending retesting of her 'B-sample'.

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Indian forward SV Sunil named Player of the Year in Asian Hockey Awards

Indian forward S V Sunil on 30 March 2017 was named the Asian Player of the Year 2016 by the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF).

On the other hand, drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh was named the Asian Promising Player of the Year.

Sunil played a vital role in India's successful outing at the FIH Champions Trophy in London where the team grabbed a silver medal.



While Harmanpreet won the award in the junior men's category, Sunil has been honoured in the senior men's section.

About S V Sunil

- Born on 6 May 1989, Somwarpet Vittalacharya Sunil is an Indian professional field hockey player.
- He made his senior international debut in the 2007 Asia Cup in Chennai.

- He was also a part of the team that won the silver at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in 2008.
- In the 2011 Champion's Challenge, he scored four goals, the most by an Indian forward.
- He is regarded as one of the fastest player in the game.
- In the 2016 Champions Trophy, in which the Indian team managed to win silver medal for the first time, he scored some vital goals and made others for his strikers.
- In the inaugural auctions of the Hockey India League, he was bought by the Punjab franchise for USD 42000.

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Roger Federer defeats Rafael Nadal to clinch 2017 Miami Open Men's Singles title

Roger Federer on 2 April 2017 outclassed Spain's Rafael Nadal to win the 2017 Miami Open Men's Singles title.

Eighteen-time Grand Slam champion defeated Nadal in straight sets 6-3, 6-4 to win his third Miami Open title.

About Roger Federer

- Born on 8 August 1981, Roger Federer is a Swiss professional tennis player.
- At present, he is ranked world No. 4 by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP).
- He turned professional in 1998.
- From October 2002 to November 2016, he continuously ranked in the top 10.
- He held the No. 1 spot in the ATP rankings for a total of 302 weeks.
- He has won 18 Grand Slam singles titles, the most in history for a male tennis player.



- In majors, he has won seven Wimbledon titles, five Australian Open titles, five US Open titles and one French Open title.

About Miami Open

- The Miami Open is an annual tennis tournament for men and women.
- The tournament is also known as the Miami Masters.
- It is an ATP World Tour Masters 1000 event on the men's tour and a Premier Mandatory event on the women's tour, played on hard courts.
- In 2010, a record 300000 visitors attended matches at the 12-day Sony Ericsson Open, making it one of the largest tennis tournaments outside the four Majors. In 2011, 316,267 visitors attended the Open.
- The 2017 Miami Open Women's Singles title was won by United Kingdom's Johanna Konta.
- Lukasz Kubot and Marcelo Melo won the 2017 Miami Open Men's Doubles title.
- Gabriela Dabrowski and Xu Yifan won the 2017 Miami Open Women's Doubles title.

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Leander Paes and Adil Shamasdin win Men's Doubles title at Torneo Internacional Challenger Leon

Leander Paes on 2 April 2017, combining with Canadian Adil Shamasdin, lifted the Leon Challenger Tour tennis tournament's Men's Doubles trophy at Leon, Mexico.

Paes and Shamasdin defeated Switzerland's Luca Margaroli and Caro Zampieri of Brazil 6-1 6-4 in the title clash at the USD 75000 hard court event.



With this win, Paes grabbed his 20th ATP Challenger title. The Indian player has now won at least one title every year for the past 26 years.

About Leander Paes

- Born on 17 June 1973, Leander Adrian Paes is an Indian professional tennis player.
- He is considered to be one of the best doubles and mixed doubles players of all time.

- He has achieved a career Grand Slam in each discipline.
- In 2010, his mixed doubles Wimbledon title made him the second man, after Rod Laver, to win Wimbledon titles in thirty years.
- In 1996-97, he received the Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna award, India's highest sporting honour.
- In 2001, he was honoured with the Padma Shri.
- In 2014, he received the Padma Bhushan for his outstanding contribution to tennis in India.
- He competed in consecutive Olympic appearances from 1992 to 2016, making him the first Indian and only tennis player to compete at seven Olympic Games.

About Torneo Internacional Challenger Leon

- The Torneo Internacional Challenger Leon is a professional tennis tournament.
- It is played on outdoor hard courts.
- At present, it is a part of the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) Challenger Tour and the International Tennis Federation (ITF) Women's Circuit.
- Spain's Adrian Menendez-Maceiras won the 2017 Torneo Internacional Challenger Leon Men's Singles trophy.

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P V Sindhu defeats Carolina Marin to win India Open Super Series title

P V Sindhu on 2 April 2017 defeated reigning Olympic champion Carolina Marin of Spain to lift her maiden India Open Super Series title.

Third seeded Sindhu defeated Marin 21-19, 21-16 at the Sirifort Sports Complex. The Indian badminton player had last defeated Marin in the BWF Super Series in Dubai in the year 2016.

About P V Sindhu

- Born on 5 July 1995, Pusarla Venkata Sindhu is an Indian professional badminton player.



- At the 2016 Summer Olympics, she became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic silver medal.
- In 2013, she became the first ever Indian women's singles player to win a medal at the Badminton World Championships.
- In March 2015, she was conferred with the Padma Shri.

About India Open Super Series

- The India Open is officially titled as the Yonex-Sunrise India Open.
- It is an annual badminton event, which has been held in India since 2008.
- Its inaugural edition was to be held in Hyderabad in 2007; however, it was cancelled due to the 25 August 2007 Hyderabad bombings.
- Its first three editions were designated as Grand Prix Gold events.
- In 2011, the tournament was upgraded to the BWF Superseries tournament. Since then, the competition has been held annually at the Siri Fort Sports Complex in New Delhi.
- The Men's singles title of the 2017 India Open was won by Viktor Axelsen.
- The Men's Doubles title of the 2017 India Open was won by Marcus Fernaldi Gideon and Kevin Sanjaya Sukamuljo.
- The Women's Doubles title of the 2017 India Open was won by Shiho Tanaka and Koharu Yonemoto.
- The Mixed Doubles title of the 2017 India Open was won by Lu Kai and Huang Yaqiong.

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Pakistani cricketer banned for one year for failing to report approach

Pakistani pacer Mohammad Irfan was slapped with a one-year ban and a fine of \$ 1000 on 29 March 2017 after he admitted to his fault of failing to report a spot-fixing approach by bookmakers during the Pakistan Super League (PSL).



Irfan confirming his suspension stated that he was aware that it was his fault that he failed to notify the board when the bookies approached him, especially when the Pakistan Cricket Board's code of conduct makes it very clear that any such interaction should be reported immediately. The pacer further requested for the nation's forgiveness and hoped that he will be pardoned.

Key Highlights

- The decision to suspend Irfan's contract for one year will be reviewed after six months, after which it may get restored.
- Irfan had been suspended earlier on 14 March after he appeared before the PCB's Anti-Corruption Unit after the final match of the Pakistan Super League in Lahore.
- PCB's senior officials were reported to be satisfied that Irfan had not engaged in any malpractice and that his suspension was just a result of him failing to report the approach made towards him.
- It is also reported that there is a possibility that Irfan has reached an agreement with the Anti-corruption unit, in which he has shown willingness to share details about the spot-fixing scandal in the PSL and also reveal the names of players and bookies involved in it.
- However, neither the board nor Irfan has commented to confirm these reports.

Explaining his reason for not reporting the approach earlier, Irfan said that he was mentally disturbed after the death of his mother, who passed away while he was in Australia. Irfan's father also passed away a few months back.

[Turkey's Elvan Abeyegesse stripped of Olympic medals](#)

[Indian forward SV Sunil named Player of the Year in Asian Hockey Awards](#)

Other Details

- The PCB has created a tribunal comprising three members to hear the case against batsmen Khalid Latif and Sharjeel Khan. Both Latif and Khan were charged with spot-fixing in the league as well as for trying to coax other players into it.
- All three, Irfan, Khalid and Sharjeel played for Islamabad United in the PSL.
- Irfan made his international debut in 2010 and his seven feet height made him the tallest player ever to play international cricket.

- He has so far played four Tests, 20 Twenty20 format matches and 60 one-day internationals, where he grabbed 83 wickets at an average of 30.71.
- In the Indian Premier League, he represented the Kolkata Knight Riders team.

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FIFA banned Brayan Jimenez, former President of Guatemalan Football Association, for life

The adjudicatory chamber of the independent Ethics Committee of the FIFA on 3 April 2017 banned Brayan Jimenez, the former President of the Guatemalan Football Association (FENAFUTG) for life.

Jimenez, also a former member of the FIFA Committee for Fair Play and Social Responsibility, was banned from all football-related activities at both national and international level.

Timeline

- The investigation against Jimenez was opened on 4 December 2015.
- The investigation was conducted by Dr Cornel Borbely, the chairman of the investigatory chamber of the Ethics Committee, based on a press release from the United States Department of Justice on 3 December 2015.
- On 29 July 2016, Jimenez pleaded guilty to one count of racketeering conspiracy and two counts of wire fraud conspiracy. His guilty plea related to two schemes by means of which he asked for and received bribes from sports marketing companies in relation to the awarding of marketing rights for World Cup qualifiers in the UNCAF region and for agreeing to the Guatemalan national team taking part in UNCAF region friendlies.
- The adjudicatory chamber, chaired by Hans-Joachim Eckert, found Jimenez guilty of having violated Articles 13 (General rules of conduct), 15 (Loyalty), 18 (Duty of disclosure, cooperation and reporting), 19 (Conflicts of interest), and 21 (Bribery and corruption) of the FIFA Code of Ethics (FCE).

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WADA publishes 2015 Anti-Doping Rule Violations Report

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on 3 April 2017 published its third annual Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) Report.

The Report is the first set of Anti-Doping Rule Violation statistics under the revised World Anti-Doping Code.

An ADRV is a doping offence committed by an athlete or athlete support person, which results in certain consequences or sanctions.



Key highlights of the Report

- The Report elucidates doping offences committed in global sport during the year 2015.
- It shows that there was a total of 1929 ADRVs recorded in 2015, involving individuals from 122 nationalities and across 85 sports.
- It goes on to illustrate that 1649 of the ADRVs were derived from adverse analytical findings (AAFs), commonly known as 'positive' results. These 1649 ADRVs signified 65 per cent of the total 2522 AAFs that were reported by WADA-accredited laboratories.
- The remaining 280 non-analytical ADRVs were issued as a result of evidence-based intelligence. Out of them, 252 were committed by athletes and 28 by athlete support personnel.

About World Anti-Doping Agency

- The World Anti-Doping Agency is a foundation initiated by the International Olympic Committee.
- It promotes, coordinates and monitors the fight against drugs in sports.
- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code.
- The provisions of the World Anti-Doping Code are enforced by the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport.
- The Agency is headquartered at Montreal, Canada.

PV Sindhu reaches career-best World No.2 ranking

The Indian Rio Olympics silver medallist, PV Sindhu reached her career-best ranking of World no.2 in the latest Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings, which were released on 6 April 2017.



The 21-year-old's new rank is just second to Saina Nehwal, who was named World No. 1 in 2015. This feat also makes her the second Indian woman after Nehwal to break into the top five of world rankings of women's singles.

Key Highlights

- Sindhu recently clinched the India Open title after defeating her Olympic final rival Carolina Marin of Spain in the final clash.
- However, she lost in the opening round of the ongoing Malaysia Open Super Series in Kuching to her unseeded Chinese opponent Chen Yufei.
- But the shuttler was rewarded with the No. 2 ranking for her overall performance in 2016 and this year.
- She climbed up three spots with 75759 points, superseding Japan's Akane Yamuguchi who moved back few places from Rank 2 to Rank 4.
- Carolina Marin with 75664 points remained in the third spot.
- Saina Nehwal with 64279 points dropped a place to rank 9 after losing in the first round of Malaysian Open.
- The top rank in the women's singles chart is being currently held by Tai Tzu Ying of Chinese Taipei with 87911 points.
- None of the Indian male shuttlers have figured in the top 10 rankings list.
- Ajay Jayaram, who holds rank 20, is the highest ranked Indian shuttler in men's singles.

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Sports Minister Vijay Goel approved appointment of Foreign Coaches in Athletics



Union Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports Vijay Goel on 6 April 2017 approved the appointment of two foreign coaches and two support staff in the discipline of athletics. The appointed people include Dave Smith, Galina P. Bukharina, Dmitry Kislev and Elmira Kisleva.

The appointments of foreign coaches and support staff have been made up to 2020 Olympics and they will be subject to performance review annually.

The approved appointments were recommended by the Foreign Coach Selection committee which was chaired by Secretary, Sports. Approved appointments and associated events

| Coach/ Masseur/ Masseuse | Event |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Dave Smith, Australia | Race Walking |
| Galina P. Bukharina, USA | 400 M & 400M Relay |
| Dmitry Kislev, Russia | Masseur |
| Elmira Kisleva, Russia | Masseuse |

After approving these appointments, Goel said that his ministry is committed to provide best possible help and support, sports infrastructure and equipments to athletes.

Dave Smith

Dave Smith, 61, is a former top race walker who competed in 1980 and 1984 Olympics. He will work alongside Alexander Artsybashev of Russia who has been associated with the national team as the foreign coach since 2011. As per reports, Smith is expected to reach India in few days and after arrival he will take charge of the national camp at NIS Patiala.

Reason behind Smith's appointment

Smith's appointment was largely influenced by the impressive number of top-class Indian race walkers in 20km and 50km events. Earlier, some seven 20km race walkers of India were able to qualify for the 2016 Rio Olympics but only three took part in the events as that was the maximum number a country can send.

Galina P Bukharina

Bukharina who represented the erstwhile USSR in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, claiming a bronze medal in the 400 meter relay race will be coaching the national teams in 400m and 400m relay. She was a former head coach of Texas State track and field.

Bukharina will succeed Ukrainian coach Yuri Ogorodnik whose contract as the coach of 400m national camp was not renewed by the Sports Ministry. He coached the Indian national team till the Rio Olympics.

Credits that Bukharina carries in her bag includes

- She coached the former Soviet Union's sprint and hurdle athletes for over 14 years.
- During her stint as a coach, she coached the world record-breaking women's 1600 meter relay team that captured the gold medal at the 1988 Olympics.
- Post 1988 Olympics, She coached four Olympic individual gold medallists, two Olympic gold medal relay teams and seven European and World Championships gold medal performers.
- She is also credited for developing four of the most internationally successful athletes from the former Soviet Union
- She also bags the credit of developing the three top finishers in the 400 meters in the 1983 Helsinki World Championships.
- From 1980 to 1988, she was named the USSR's National Track and Field Olympic Coach of the Year three times.

Comment: The appointments were made by keeping the 2020 Tokyo Olympics in mind as well as the multi-sporting events of 2018. The appointments were cleared with an aim to create a benchmark in the discipline at the international events.

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Misbah-ul-Haq announces international retirement post West Indies series

The Pakistan Test captain, Misbah-ul-Haq, on 6 April 2017 announced that he would be retiring from international cricket after the end of the Test series in West Indies.

However, the cricketer will continue to play cricket at the domestic level.



Pakistan is scheduled to play three Test matches against West Indies, the first of which will start on 21 April 2017 in Jamaica.

Misbah had taken over the captaincy of the Test team in the wake of the spot-fixing controversy in 2010 in which Salman Butt, the captain then, was banned for five years alongside Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir.

About Misbah-ul-Haq

- Born 28 May 1974, Misbah-ul-Haq Khan Niazi leads the Test Pakistan national cricket team.
- He also served as the One Day International (ODI) captain until his retirement from ODI cricket after the 2015 Cricket World Cup.
- He is a middle-order batsman.
- He made his Test debut in March 2001, and has so far aggregated 4951 runs in 72 games at an average of 45.84.
- He holds the world record of scoring most runs without century in ODI career.

- He also holds the record of the fastest test half century and shared the record for fastest test century with Sir Vivian Richards, which was later broken by Brendon McCullum.
- He was one of the five Cricketers of the Year, alongside compatriot Younis Khan, chosen by the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack for 2016.

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Indian Olympic Association grants affiliation to Boxing Federation of India

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has granted affiliation to the Boxing Federation of India (BFI). The affiliation that ended the long-standing impasse between the two bodies was granted after months of discussions.



This affiliation was informed to the BFI President Ajay Singh via letter on 8 April 2017. The letter read, "As per the directives of the International Olympic Committee vide their letter dated February 7, the IOA grants affiliation to the BFI subject to ratification by the Executive Council/General Body of the IOA".

Impasse between BFI and IOA

The two bodies had been at an impasse since the BFI took charge of the Boxing after elections which were conducted in the presence of individuals from International Boxing Association and the sports ministry.

[WADA publishes 2015 Anti-Doping Rule Violations Report](#)

The now resolved issue started in September 2016 when IOA had initially refused to grant recognition to BFI stating that it still considered the now-defunct Indian Amateur Boxing Federation as the official national body for the sport. It later referred the matter to the affiliation committee following persistent requests from the BFI.

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Lewis Hamilton wins 2017 Chinese Grand Prix

Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton on 9 April 2017 won the 2017 Chinese Grand Prix ahead of Sebastian Vettel and Max Verstappen.

Ferrari driver Vettel came second, while Red Bull's Max Verstappen stood third in the race.

About Lewis Hamilton

- Born on 7 January 1985, Lewis Hamilton is a British Formula One racing driver.
- At present, he is racing for the Mercedes AMG Petronas team.
- He is a three-time Formula One World Champion.
- He won his first title with McLaren in 2008 before moving to Mercedes, where he won back-to-back titles in 2014 and 2015.
- His 54 Grand Prix victories is the second highest of all-time, behind only Michael Schumacher at 91.



About Chinese Grand Prix

- The Chinese Grand Prix is a round of the Formula One World Championship.
- It is currently held at the Shanghai International Circuit in Shanghai. The circuit is designed by Hermann Tilke.
- When completed in 2004, the circuit was the most expensive Formula One circuit facility, costing USD 240 million. Abu Dhabi became the most expensive at USD 6 billion when it opened in 2009.
- In 2016, the race was won by Nico Rosberg.

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India's Harbhajan among 8 ambassadors for ICC Champions Trophy

Harbhajan Singh, the veteran Indian bowler was on 12 April 2017 named as one of ICC's eight ambassadors for the Champions Trophy tournament, which is scheduled to be held in England from 1-8 June 2017.

He will be joining other ambassadors including Shahid Afridi, the legendary Pakistani all-rounder, Ian Bell from England, Australia's Mike Hussey, New Zealand's Shane Bond, Graeme Smith, former captain of South Africa, Habibul



Bashar from Bangladesh and Kumar Sangakkara, former captain of the Sri Lankan national cricket team.

Key Highlights

- The announcement comes around 50 before the opening match of the tournament, which is scheduled to take place between England and Bangladesh at the Oval.
- Harbhajan was the member of the Indian team that shared the 2002 ICC Champions Trophy with Sri Lanka in Colombo.
- All the eight ambassadors together have played 1774 One-Day Internationals in total, scoring 51906 runs with 48 centuries and taking 838 wickets.
- The ambassadors will also be involved in the Champions Trophy Tour and will be making appearances in the UK.
- Besides this, the chosen cricketers will also contribute to the ICC editorial team, where they will be providing match previews and analysis through their exclusive columns, which would be published on the ICC's official website.

[US, Canada & Mexico make a joint bid for 2026 FIFA World Cup](#)

[Indian Olympic Association grants affiliation to Boxing Federation of India](#)

Speaking of his selection, Harbhajan stated that he was really proud of his selection as an Ambassador for a global event where his team will be the defending champion. He also added that he is confident that team India will achieve great heights.

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Sagar Baheti becomes India's first visually impaired runner to complete Boston Marathon

India's Sagar Baheti on 17 April 2017 became the first visually impaired Indian runner to complete the historic Boston Marathon.

Supported by the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI), Baheti completed a distance of 42.16 kilometres in just over four hours.

The 31-year old runner finished the 121st Boston Marathon as one of 30000 runners.

Baheti is a businessman by profession. In 2013, he was diagnosed with Stargardt's disease, a type of macular degeneration that eventually leads to blindness.

About Boston Marathon

- The Boston Marathon is an annual marathon hosted by several cities in greater Boston in eastern Massachusetts, United States.
- It is always held on Patriots' Day, the third Monday of April.
- The marathon first began in 1897.
- It is the world's oldest annual marathon and ranks as one of the world's best-known road racing events.
- It also is one of six World Marathon Majors.
- The 2017 Boston Marathon has been recorded as the second hottest in a decade.

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ICC names Ganguly and Ponting as commentators for upcoming Champions Trophy

The International Cricket Council has named former Indian International cricket captain Saurav Ganguly as one of the commentators in their stellar line up for the upcoming ICC Champions Trophy.

Other International cricketers named in the commentary panel include Ricky Ponting, Shane Warne, Michael Slater, Nasser Hussain, Michael Atherton, Shaun Pollock, Sanjay Manjrekar, Ian Bishop, Ramiz Raja, Simon Doull and Athar Ali Khan.



The event would also see the ICC TV debut of former International captains including Ricky Ponting of Australia, Graeme Smith of South Africa, Brendon McCullum of New Zealand and Kumar Sangakkara of Sri Lanka.

Besides this, the International cricketing body revealed their detailed broadcast production plans of the tournament. For the first-time ever, ICC has introduced player tracking for Champions trophy, which will be held from 1 June to 18 June in England and Wales.

[India's Harbhajan among 8 ambassadors for ICC Champions Trophy](#)

Speaking on his inclusion in the Champions Trophy, Ricky Ponting stated that though as a player, he has always looked forward to the tournament, this year he is really looking forward to it being staged in England and being a part of the commentary team.

Brendon McCullum too spoke about his inclusion as a commentator by saying that he is really looking forward to being in the commentary box of such a prestigious tournament and working with names like Ponting, Ganguly and Smith.

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Esports to be a medal event at 2022 Asian Games

The Olympic Council of Asia in April 2017 announced a partnership with Alisports to introduce esports as a demonstration sport at 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia, with full-fledged inclusion in the official sporting programme at the Hangzhou Games in 2022.

Alisports is the sports arm of Chinese online retail giant Alibaba.

The decision signifies that esports are one step closer to being featured in the Olympic Games.

The Asian Games in 2022 will be the first time that esports competitors can receive medals at an officially recognized Olympic event.

Esports will also be as a demonstration sport at the Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in September 2017. The Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games will feature Fifa 2017, MOBA games and real-time action games like StarCraft or Civilization.

However, the Olympic Council of Asia has not yet announced the specific video games that will be a part of the next two Asian Games.

About Asian Games

- The Asian Games is a Pancontinental multi-sport event.

- It is held every four years among athletes from all over Asia.
- The first Asian Games were held in New Delhi, India in 1951.
- Since the 1982 Games, they have been organized by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).
- The Games are recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- It is described as the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympic Games.
- The most recent games was held in Incheon, South Korea from 19 September to 4 October 2014.
- The next games will be held in Jakarta and Palembang, Indonesia from 18 August to 2 September 2018.
- The 2022 Asian Games will be held in Hangzhou, China from 10 September to 25 September 2022.

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PERSON APPOINTED

Carrie Lam to be Hong Kong's first female Chief Executive

Carrie Lam, a Beijing-backed civil servant, was on 26 March 2017 chosen as the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong. With this, Lam becomes the first women to be named as the women chief of the financial hub.

Lam will become the Chief Executive of Hong Kong on 1 July 2017. She was chosen for the post with 777 votes while her closest rival John Tsang, the former financial secretary, was able to secure 365 votes.



[Hong Kong withdraws visa-free facility for Indians](#)

She was chosen for the post amid protests and accusations that Beijing is denying a more populist leader to the city. Accusations say, 7.3 million people of the city has no say in deciding their leader in the China-ruled city. The leader of the city is chosen from among several candidates by a 1200-people election committee, which is stacked with pro-Beijing and pro-establishment loyalists.

Victory speech of Carrie Lam

Lam in her victory speech pledged to follow the election promises that includes reducing tax to encourage research and development, the introduction of a two-tier profits tax, boost in educational spending and tackling the high cost of housing by increasing land supply among others.

She also said that her priority will be to heal the social divide of the city and unite the society to move forward. At present, the city of Hong Kong is suffering from a serious divisiveness.

[UNCAT called on China to halt oppression of Human Rights Activists](#)

Carrie Lam

- Carrie Lam, the Chief Executive-designate of Hong Kong, has earlier served as the chief secretary for Administration of Hong Kong SAR Government, the most senior rank of principal officials of Hong Kong, from 2012 to 2017.
- A graduate of the University of Hong Kong, Lam joined the civil service in 1980 and has served in various bureaux and departments.
- Her handling of the demolition of the Queen's Pier helped her to earn the reputation as a tough fighter.

- Earlier, she had headed several projects including the Task Force on Constitutional Development on the political reform (2013 to 2015) and she also held talks with the student leaders during the large-scale protests in 2014.
- Earlier in January 2017, she resigned as the Chief Secretary to enter the 2017 Chief Executive election.

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Randeep Guleria appointed as Director of AIIMS, New Delhi

Renowned pulmonologist Randeep Guleria on 24 March 2017 was the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

The appointment was made by the Appointment Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Dr Guleria has been appointed as Director, AIIMS, for five years.

Dr Guleria will succeed Dr M C Mishra, who retired in January 2017 after serving for over three years.

About Randeep Guleria

- Dr Guleria is the first Indian to get a Doctorate of Medicine in Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine.
- He has been working with AIIMS for the last 23 years.
- He had joined AIIMS in 1992 as Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine.
- He is credited with establishment of India's first centre for pulmonary medicine and sleep disorder at AIIMS in 2011.
- From 1998 to 2004, he served as the personal physician to former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- In 2015, he was conferred with the Padma Shri by the President of India.

About All India Institute of Medical Sciences

- The All India Institutes of Medical Sciences are a group of autonomous public medical colleges of higher education.
- These institutes have been declared as institutions of national importance by Act of Parliament.
- AIIMS New Delhi was established in 1956.

Rana Kanwar Pal Singh elected as Speaker of Punjab Legislative

Rana Kanwar Pal Singh was on 27 March 2017 elected as the Speaker of the Punjab Legislative Assembly. His name was proposed for the office by the Leader of the House and Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh.



Who is Rana Kanwar Pal Singh?

- Rana Kanwar Pal Singh, the 59-year-old, is a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) of Punjab.
- He belongs to the Indian National Congress. So far, he was elected as an MLA for three times from the Congress party.
- In the 2017 general elections, he won as an MLA from the Anandpur Sahib electoral constituency.

Some of the Constitutional provisions related to Assembly Speaker are –

- Article 178: It states that the Legislative Assembly of a State shall have a Speaker.
- Article 179 (a): It states that the speaker shall vacate his office if he ceases to be a member of the Assembly.

Satwiksairaj & Chirag won Vietnam Open International Challenger Badminton Doubles title

- Article 179 (b): The Speaker should hand over his resignation to the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly.
- Article 179 (c): The Speaker may be removed from his office by a resolution of the Assembly, which is passed by a majority of all the then members of the Assembly. And, this resolution must be moved only after a fourteen days' notice.
- Article 181: The Speaker should not preside while a resolution for his removal from his office is under consideration.

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Vanita Gupta appointed president of 'Leadership Conference'

Indian-American Vanita Gupta was appointed as president and CEO of 'The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights'. With this, Gupta, who earlier headed civil rights division in the Department of Justice in the Obama Administration, also became the first woman to head the prestigious organisation.

In addition to this, Gupta will also lead its sister organisation 'The Leadership Conference Education Fund'. Her role in the two organisations will begin on 1 June 2017.

Gupta, 41, will succeed Wade Henderson who is stepping down after more than two decades of service in the organisation.

Vanita Gupta

- She is known for her fearless advocacy of all human beings.
- As the head of the civil rights division, Gupta oversaw a number of criminal and civil enforcement efforts, which would help in ensuring equal justice and protect the equal opportunity for all during one of the most consequential periods of the division.
- She performed critical work in a number of areas like prosecuting hate crimes and human trafficking; advancing constitutional policing and criminal justice reform; promoting disability rights; ensuring voting rights for all; protecting the rights of LGBTQ individuals and combating discrimination in education, housing, employment, lending and religion.
- Before joining the Justice Department, she served a Deputy Legal Director and the Director of the Center for Justice at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).
- Gupta joined ACLU in 2006 as a staff attorney. During her tenure in the union, she secured a landmark settlement on behalf of immigrant children from around the world detained in a privately-run prison in Texas that ultimately led to the end of "family detention" at the facility.



Henderson, who will step down from the office after 21 years, said leaders had the responsibility to cultivate, encourage and make paths for the next generation to lead and to thrive.

On the other hand, Vanita Gupta who will take the charge on 1 June 2017 said "at a time when our nation's ideals and progress are being threatened in such fundamental ways, The Leadership Conference is a vital nerve center of the broad swath of civil and human rights organisations that are fighting for justice, fairness, and equality around the country".

Gupta also said that "civil and human rights work has never been easy, and these unprecedented times demand clarity of vision, strategy, and solidarity that the Leadership Conference coalition is uniquely positioned to champion".

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United Nations appoints David Beasley to run World Food Programme

Antonio Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), appointed former South Carolina Governor David Beasley to run the World Food Programme (WFP).



The WFP executive board noted Beasley's appointment in a letter to Guterres on 28 March 2017.

Beasley will replace Etharin Cousin, who has been serving as the Executive Director of the WFP since 2012.

Beasley was among 23 applications/nominations for the job.

Who is David Beasley?

- Born on 26 February 1957, David Muldrow Beasley is an American politician.
- From 1995 to 1999, he served one term as the 113th Governor of South Carolina, as a member of the Republican Party.
- He began his political career as a member of the Democratic Party, but switched to the Republican Party in September 1991.

About World Food Programme

- The World Food Programme is the food-assistance branch of the UN.
- It is the world's largest humanitarian organization addressing hunger and promoting food security.
- It provides food assistance to an average of 80 million people in 75 countries each year.
- It is headquartered in Rome.
- It is a member of the United Nations Development Group and part of its Executive Committee.

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Vipul took the charge of Consul General of Dubai

Diplomat Vipul on 3 April 2017 took charge as the new Consul General of Dubai. Vipul is a 1998 batch Indian Foreign Service officer.

Vipul succeeds Anurag Bhushan, who returned to New Delhi to take up his assignment at the Headquarters after a successful term of three years in Dubai.

Before joining the Consulate at Dubai , Vipul was working in the office of Union External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj. Earlier, he served India's diplomatic missions in Sri Lanka and Egypt. He has a good command over the Arabic language.

India-UAE Relations

Dubai is recognized as the commercial capital and tourism centre of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Indians in UAE constitute one of the largest migrant populations as around 2.6 million Indians live in UAE.

UAE is a strategically important country for India in the Gulf region. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to UAE in 2015 and Crown Prince Sheikh Zayed's visit to New Delhi as the Chief Guest during the 2017 Republic Day ceremony represent a common desire to enhance the existing bilateral relations.

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Actor Vishal elected as President of TN Film Producers Council

Renowned actor Vishal was on 2 April 2017 elected as the President of the Tamil Nadu (TN) Film Producers Council. Vishal bagged a total of 476 votes out of the 1059 votes polled.

He won by a margin of 144 votes defeating Radhakrishnan, who garnered 332 votes in the polls that were held for the film body. Another contestant Keyar secured 224 votes.



Former High Court Judge Rajeswaran was appointed as the Election Officer of the Tamil Nadu (TN) Film Producers Council. Vishal is also the General Secretary of the South Indian Film Artistes Association. He owns a production house Vishal Film Factory.

Background

Vishal was suspended by the council in November 2016 for allegedly criticising the functioning of some of its office-bearers.

Subsequently, the actor moved the Madras High Court challenging the suspension order, which was rescinded by the council after he apologised for his purported remarks.

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Justice Indira Banerjee appointed as Chief Justice of Madras High Court

Justice Indira Banerjee was on 31 March 2017 appointed as the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. Presently, she is serving as the judge of the Delhi High Court.

She succeeds Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, who was transferred to the Supreme Court in February 2017.

With this, Justice Banerjee became the second woman to head the Madras High Court. Justice Kanta Kumari Bhatnagar was the first lady to head the chartered court in 1992.

About Justice Indira Banerjee

- Born in September 1957, Justice Banerjee enrolled as an advocate in 1985.
- She practiced both in the original and appellate sides of Calcutta High Court.
- She was appointed as permanent judge of the Calcutta High Court in February 2002.
- She was transferred to Delhi High Court in August 2016.

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Geetha Johri taken over as first woman head of Gujarat's police force

Indian Police Service officer Geetha Johri was appointed as the first woman Director General of Police (DGP) of Gujarat on 4 April 2017. She will be taking over this position in addition to her present post as Managing Director of Gujarat Police Housing Corporation.

The announcement was made by the Minister of State for Home, Pradeepsinh Jadeja who stated that the decision to give Johri the additional charge was taken as she is the senior-most IPS officer in the state.

Key Highlights

- The decision of Johri's appointment comes in the wake of resignation by her predecessor P P Pandey.
- Pandey's resignation was accepted by the state government on 3 April 2017. He was earlier given a three-month extension in the post after his retirement in January 2017.

- A petition in the Supreme Court had, however, challenged the extension given to him, as his name featured in the top accused list in the controversial fake encounter of Ishrat Jahan and three others.
- With this move, Johri, who is the first woman IPS of Gujarat cadre, has become the first woman to head the Gujarat's police force.

About Geetha Johri

- Johri has previously served in several important positions including that of Police Commissioner of Rajkot and Head of State CID (Crime).
- Supreme Court had also appointed her to probe into the 2005 fake encounter cases of Sohrabuddin and Tulsiram Prajapati. However, later on court's order, the cases were handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation.
- Though the central investigation agency initially chargesheeted her for allegedly botching up the investigation, she was subsequently discharged from it in 2015.
- The Sohrabuddin fake encounter case, in fact, had high-profile accused including top IPS officers of Gujarat and Rajasthan along with the then Home Minister of Gujarat, Amit Shah who was also later discharged from the case.

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B P Kanungo takes over as Deputy Governor of Reserve Bank of India

B P Kanungo on 3 April 2017 took over as the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Kanungo was appointed to the position of the Deputy Governor for a period of three years by the Union Government on 11 March 2017. Prior to that, he was holding the position of Executive Director of RBI.

Kanungo will look after the departments of currency management, external investments and operations, government and bank accounts, and information technology, payment and settlement systems. He will also supervise foreign exchange department, legal department, premises department and internal debt management department.

Three other Deputy Governors of the Reserve Bank of India are S S Mundra, N S Vishwanathan and Viral V Acharya.

About B P Kanungo

- B P Kanungo had joined the Reserve Bank of India in September 1982.
- He has worked in several functional areas of the banks such as banking and non-banking supervision, currency management, foreign exchange management and more.

- He also served as the head of regional offices of RBI at Jaipur and Kolkata. He has also served as Banking Ombudsman for Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

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Raman Roy appointed Chairman of NASSCOM for 2017-18

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) on 5 April 2017 announced the appointment of Raman Roy its Chairman for 2017-2018. He will take on the new role from 6 April 2017.

Roy takes over the position from C P Gurnani, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Tech Mahindra.

Roy is the Chairman and Managing Director of Quattro.

Raman Roy has been a member of NASSCOM's Executive Council and was the vice-chairman for 2016-17.

In addition, NASSCOM also announced the appointment of Rishad Premji, Chief Strategy Officer & Member of the Board, Wipro as the Vice Chairman of NASSCOM for 2017-18.



About National Association of Software and Services Companies

- The NASSCOM is a trade association of Indian Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing industry.
- It was established in 1988.
- The association is registered under the Indian Societies Act, 1860.
- It is a global trade body with over 2000 members.
- It facilitates business and trade in software and services and encourages the advancement of research in software technology.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi.

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Mukta Dutta Tomar appointed as India's Ambassador to Germany

Mukta Dutta Tomar was on 7 April 2017 appointed as India's Ambassador to Federal Republic of Germany. She is expected to take up the assignment shortly.

Tomar succeeds Gurjit Singh who was holding the post till March 2017.

About Mukta Dutta Tomar

- Tomar is a 1984 batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer.
- She is presently working as the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

- Tomar also served as the Consul General of India in Chicago.

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Indian-origin Anuja Ravindra Dhir becomes first non-white judge at London Court

Indian-origin Anuja Ravindra Dhir on 9 April 2017 became the first non-white judge of the Old Bailey Court of London. She is also the youngest circuit judge currently to sit at the court.

The Old Bailey Court of London is the Central Criminal Court of London. It houses 15 judges including 10 men and five women.

About Anuja Ravindra Dhir

- Dhir was born in Dundee, Scotland to Indian immigrant parents and studied at Harris Academy before studying English and Scots law at Dundee University.
- During the schooling days, she was gulped-down up by dyslexia making it difficult for her to read and write.
- After winning a Gray's Inn scholarship in London, she began practicing law in 1989 where she practised for 23 years as both prosecutor and defence counsel.
- She was made a Queen's Counsel in 2010.

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Mukulita Vijayawargiya takes charge as Whole Time Member of IBBI

Mukulita Vijayawargiya on 13 April 2017 took charge as Whole Time Member of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) in New Delhi.

Vijayawargiya will look after Administrative Law Wing of IBBI. She will also look after Information Technology, Limited Insolvency Examination, National Insolvency Examination, Finance and Accounts and Communication.

About Mukulita Vijayawargiya

- Vijayawargiya has vast experience of 35 years in various fields of law. She has been associated with drafting/vetting of more than 100 legislative proposals in the legislative department.

- Earlier, She was a member of Bankruptcy Law Reforms Committee (BLRC). It was BLRC itself based on which, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 was framed.
- She played a key role in drafting the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 as Additional Secretary in the Legislative Department of the Union Ministry of Law & Justice.
- She also served as a member of Indian Legal Service.

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Devendra Kumar Sharma appointed as Chairman of BBMB

Devendra Kumar Sharma was on 18 April 2017 appointed as the Chairman of Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB) for a period of three years. His appointment was approved by the Appointment Committee Of Cabinet.

BBMB manages the release of water in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan as it controls Bhakra, Pong and other dams.

About Devendra Kumar Sharma

- Presently, Sharma is serving as the Managing Director of Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited where he was instrumental in implementing and commissioning Tata Hydro Power Station in Bhutan.
- He has been associated with the power sector for over 30 years.
- He was also associated with the industrial giant Larsen & Toubro for a long time in its infrastructure development projects.

Background

The post of Chairman of BBMB had been lying vacant since September 2015. Its temporary charge was given to SK Sharma, Member of Irrigation under BBMB.

Punjab had been demanding a regular appointment on the post of BBMB Chairman for its smooth functioning.

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PERSON DIED

Former Punjab minister Gurdev Singh Badal passes away

Gurdev Singh Badal, former Punjab minister and senior Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader passed away at Dayanand Medical College and Hospital in Ludhiana on March 28, 2017, following prolonged illness. He was 85.



According to cardiologist Vishwmohan, Gurdev was a chronic cardiac patient and he was admitted to the hospital on 9 March with multiple problems. He is survived by two sons and a daughter.

About Gurdev Singh Badal

- He was a senior member of Shiromani Akali Dal. He had also served as the party's Vice President.
- He was a five-time Member of Punjab Legislative Assembly, representing the Panjgrain constituency in Jalandhar district.
- He was also known as a close aide of former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal.
- He contested his first election in 1977 and went on to win the following 1980 and 1985 assembly elections as well.
- He boycotted the assembly elections in 1992 along with the SAD.
- He won again from the Panjgrain seat in 1997 and 2002.
- However, in 2007 he lost for the first time to Congress candidate Joginder Singh, who was a new face at that time.
- He faced political challenges post-delimitation in 2012 after Jaitu was declared as the new seat in place of Panjgrain.
- One of his sons, Suba Singh Badal contested from the new Jaitu seat in 2017 assembly elections but lost subsequently.

To pay last respect to the former Agriculture Minister, the Punjab government has declared a half-day holiday in all offices, educational institutions, corporations and boards throughout the state as well as in Chandigarh.

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Renowned Hindustani classical vocalist Kishori Amonkar passes away

Kishori Amonkar, the renowned Hindustani classical vocalist, passed away in Mumbai on 3 April 2017. She was 84.

Amonkar, one of the foremost singers in the Hindustani tradition, was an innovator of the Jaipur Gharana. The Jaipur Gharana is a community of musicians sharing a distinctive musical style



Kishori Amonkar

- Born on 10 April 1932 in Bombay (now Mumbai), Kishori began receiving vocal lessons in Hindustani classical music from several Gharanas along with her mother Mogubai Kurdikar.
- Trained under her mother, classical singer Mogubai Kurdikar of the Jaipur Gharana, Kishori was a performer of the classical genre khyal and the light classical genres of bhajan and thumri.
- In 1964, she turned towards the film music and sang playback for Geet Gaya Patharon Ne (1964) but returned to classical music.
- Later in 1990, she sang for the film Drishti.
- She received a plethora of awards, **including**
 - a) The Padma Bhushan in 1987
 - b) The Padma Vibhushan in 2002
 - c) Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1985
 - d) Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 2009
 - e) Dr TMA Pai Outstanding Konkani Award in 1991

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Literary critic M Achuthan passes away

Literary critic M Achuthan passed away on 9 April 2017 following age-related illness at a private hospital in Kochi. He was 87. He is survived by his wife and daughters.

About M Achuthan

- Achuthan began his career as a critic by challenging the views of literary stalwarts Kuttikrishna Marar and Joseph Mundassery.

- Achuthan had 10 works to his credit. His book on the poems of Edassery is one of his noted works.
- His works include 'Swathanthrya Samaravum Malayala Sahithyavum', 'Paschathya Sahitya Darshanam' and 'Cherukadha Innale Innu' among others.
- He had also served various stints in his career including his term as the Chief Public Relations Officer of the state, as the Director of State Institute of Publications, as the President of Sahithya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangham and as the President of Samastha Kerala Sahithya Parishat.
- He translated Thousand and One Nights into Malayalam.
- He was awarded with the Sahitiya Akademi award in 1976 for his literary works.
- Born in June 1930, Achuthan completed his MA in Malayalam Literature with first rank.

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Congress leader Akhilesh Das Gupta passed away

Former Union Minister, Akhilesh Das Gupta passed away in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on 12 April 2017, after suffering from a heart attack. He was 56.

Gupta was rushed to Lari Cardiology Centre post his attack where he passed away in the wee hours. He is survived by his wife, daughter and son.

Facts about Akhilesh Das Gupta

- His father was Banarsi Das Gupta, a freedom fighter and former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh.
- He was a member of Indian Parliament's upper Rajya Sabha for almost 18, serving three consecutive terms of 6 years from November 1996 to November 2014.
- He also served as the Minister of State for Steel under the Manmohan Singh-led UPA-I government from January 2006 to May 2008.
- He also served as the Secretary of Congress Parliamentary Party from 2003 to 2006 under the leadership of the party president Sonia Gandhi.
- His association with the Congress party lasted for almost three decades.
- Prior to this, he had been the Mayor of Lucknow from May 1993 to November 1996.

- In 2012, Gupta was elected as the President of the Badminton Association of India (BAI) following the arrest of former chief V K Verma over corruption charges during the 2010 Commonwealth Games.
- In 2014, he was unanimously re-elected to the post for four more years.
- In 2016, he elected as the Vice-President of the Badminton Asia Confederation (BAC) for a term of four years.
- He had also played a pivotal in the launching of the Indian Badminton League in August 2013, which is now known as Premier Badminton League.

[Parliament passes HIV and AIDS
\(Prevention and Control\) Bill, 2017](#)

[Gandhi in Champaran, authored by DG Tendulkar, launched](#)

However, he and other top officials of the BAI were facing investigation by the CBI for favouring their children and posing them as professional badminton players, sending them to a Japanese government-sponsored Badminton tournament in Tokyo. Cases of fraud and nepotism were registered against them.

Though the CBI had completed its investigation and sent the report to the Sports Ministry, Government of India, no action had been taken so far.

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Pioneering HIV/AIDS researcher Mark Wainberg passes away

Renowned Canadian AIDS researcher and social activist Dr Mark Wainberg passed away on 11 April 2017 in Florida, USA. He was 71.

Wainberg is believed to have drowned while on holiday with his family in Miami.

About Mark Wainberg

- Mark A. Wainberg was a Canadian HIV/AIDS researcher and HIV/AIDS activist.
- He was the Director of the McGill University AIDS Centre at the Montreal Jewish General Hospital and Professor of Medicine and of Microbiology at McGill University.
- In 1989, he and his collaborators were the first to identify the antiviral capabilities of 3TC (also called also called lamivudine) and test the drug in patients. 3TC became one of the first effective treatments for people who contracted HIV.



- In 1966, he obtained a BSc from McGill University.
- In 1972, he earned a PhD from Columbia University. He did his post-doctor

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Former Jammu and Kashmir Governor Girish Chandra Saxena died

Girish Chandra Saxena passed away on 14 April 2017 at the age of 90. He was the former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir.

About Girish Chandra Saxena

- Born in Agra in 1928, he joined the Indian Police Service (IPS) and held many positions.
- He retired as the Director of India's external intelligence agency - the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- He served in the RAW for 16 years and headed it between 1983 and 1986.
- He was chief of the agency during the Kanishka Bombing and Operation Blue Star.
- Later, he remained as an advisor to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for about two years till 31 January 1988.
- Saxena's main areas of specialization were international affairs, national security and intelligence matters.
- He attended international Conferences in India and abroad on these subjects, gave talks and participated in many seminars and panel discussions.
- He also addressed the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in 1998. The LBSNAA is the premier agency to train Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers.
- For his contributions to the nation, the Union Government honoured Saxena with the prestigious Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian honour, in 2005.



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Top Maoist leader Narayan Sanyal passes away

Narayan Sanyal, a top leader of the outlawed Communist Party of India-Maoist [CPI-Maoist], passed away on 17 April 2017 following a prolonged illness in a South Kolkata hospital. He was 78.

Famously known as Bijoy-da, Narayan Sanyal joined the Maoist politics in 1967.

About Narayan Sanyal

- Born in undivided Bengal's Bogra district, now in Bangladesh, Sanyal was known for his keen interest in football.
- Sanyal and his family shifted to West Bengal in the 1940s where he got a job in a bank.

However, he soon left the job to join the CPI-Marxist-Leninist (ML) in the 1960s.

- Sanyal was among the last links between CPI(ML), considered as the father of leftwing insurgency in India and its offshoot CPI(Maoist), which is perceived as India's gravest internal security threat.
- In December 2005, Sanyal was arrested from Raipur in Chhattisgarh when he was serving as a member of the banned CPI (Maoist)'s politburo, the highest decision-making body.
- He was released from jail in 2014 due to failing health and had been living in Kolkata since.

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STATES

ESIC launches Mobile Clinic Services in AP, Telangana

The Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) on 26 March 2017 launched Mobile Clinic Services for Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

With this, workers, who are covered by the ESI facility but unable to access the medical services due to location problems, can now easily avail the services through these Mobile Clinics.

ESI services cover around 48 lakh beneficiaries through 12 lakh insured persons in Telangana. There are a total of six ESI hospitals, 70 dispensaries, 149 panel clinics and two diagnostic centres in the state.

Highlights of the Mobile Clinic Services

- Telangana and Andhra Pradesh became the first states in the country to offer the facility of mobile clinics. Later, the service will be made available in other parts of the country as well.
- These mobile clinics will serve the areas which are not covered by ESI Dispensaries in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- 13 mobile clinics were launched initially and among them 8 clinics would serve in Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam, Nalgonda and Nizamabad districts in Telangana.
- While, five clinics will serve Chittoor, Prakasam, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, West Godavari, Nellore and Anantapur districts in Andhra Pradesh.
- Each clinic will have a vehicle with a doctor, pharmacist, attendant, driver and the necessary equipment and medicines.
- The vehicle will visit two locations in a day for three hours each and conduct basic investigations.
- Each location will be covered twice a week.
- The annual expenditure for these mobile clinics will be around Rs 30 crore.

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AAI, DRDO and Jharkhand Government signed a Tripartite MoU for Development of Deoghar Airport in Jharkhand

Airports Authority of India (AAI), Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and Jharkhand Government on 28 March 2017 signed a tripartite MoU for development of Deoghar Airport in Deoghar district of Jharkhand. The MoU was signed in Ranchi in a ceremony held at the residence of Chief Minister Raghubar Das.



As per the signed MoU, the existing Deoghar airport will be developed for operations of A-320 and C-130 Aircraft.

Key highlights of the MoU on Deoghar airport

- **Land:** The Jharkhand Government will hand over 600.34 acres of land to AAI apart from the existing 53.41 acres of land of Deoghar airport. These 600.34 acres of land was acquired by the state government in recent past.
- **Financial provisions:** DRDO, Jharkhand Government and AAI will provide Rs 200 crores and Rs 50 crores respectively to develop, operationalise and maintain the airport.
- **Time Frame:** As expected or decided, the Deoghar airport will be developed and operationlised in two years.

The MoU for development of Deoghar airport was inked in presence of Chief Minister of Jharkhand Raghubar Das, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Jayant Sinha, Minister of Transport, Government of Jharkhand CP Singh, Member of Parliament Ram Tahal Chaudhary and Member of Parliament P Nishikant Dubey.

Deoghar

Deoghar is the main city of the Deoghar District in the Santhal Parganas division of Jharkhand, India. Deoghar is a Hindi word and its literal meaning is adobe (ghar) of the Gods and Goddesses. It is also known as "Baba Dham" and "Baidyanath Dham".

In short, the city with 12 'Shiva Jyothirlingams' is a major Hindu pilgrimage center. It is also a home of also one of the 51 saktipeeths in India.

Deoghar is located at 24.48°N 86.7°E at an average elevation of 254 metres (833 feet). According to 2011 Census, Deoghar has a population of about 2 lakh people of which around 17.62 per cent is under 6 years of age.

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Bihar to pay power bill subsidy to consumers

The Chief Minister of Bihar Nitish Kumar announced on 31 March 2017 that the state government would be providing a subsidy on power bill to the consumers instead of power companies from the 2017-18 fiscal year.

The announcement was made in the state assembly in the presence of Energy minister Bijendra Prasad Yadav. The move comes six days after Bihar Electricity Regulatory Commission (BERC) introduced an unprecedented hike of 55 per cent in power tariff that sparked protests all across the state.

Key Highlights

- The basic aim is to help the consumers understand at which rate electricity has been made available to them and how much subsidy is being given to them by the state government for their consumption.
- The subsidy amount would be spelled out clearly in order to ensure that the consumer understands it properly.
- According to the state's CM, the state with this move has become the first one to experiment this policy of providing power subsidy straight to the consumers.
- Besides this, the state also announced major rationalisation of power tariff for different categories of consumers:

- For below poverty line households with a limit of 50 units, the BERC had announced Rs 6.08 per unit rate. After government's subsidy rate of Rs 3.58 per unit the final rate would come down to Rs 2.50 a unit.

- In the case of the domestic consumer in rural areas, the Commission had proposed a rate of Rs 6.45 per unit, which after the state-provided subsidy of Rs 3.10 per unit would come down to Rs 3.35 per unit.

- For the Urban domestic consumer, the BERC rate was Rs 6.48 per unit and after subsidy of Rs 1.48 a unit, the final charge would come about Rs 5 per unit.

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Centre sanctions Rs 98 Cr for development of tourism sector in Assam



The Union Government has sanctioned Rs 98.35 Cr for the development of a Heritage Circuit in Assam.

The announcement was made by the Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture, Mahesh Sharma while meeting the state's Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

Key Highlights

- The amount has been sanctioned for the development of Tezpur, Majuli and Sivasagar circuit under the scheme of Swadesh Darshan.
- It includes the development of a composite tourist infrastructure in Majuli, which will comprise an interpretation centre near Kamalabari ghat, log huts, watch towers, cafeteria, elevated walkway, solar illumination and landscaping.
- The infrastructure at Majuli itself is expected to cost around Rs. 61.26 Cr.
- Besides this, the plan includes the development of Ranghar, Joy Sagar and Talatal Ghar in Sivasagar and the development of Kanaklata Udyan and Bamuni Hills in Tezpur.
- The Government of India released the first instalment of Rs 19.67 Cr against the total sanctioned amount on 31 March 2017.

The development of this heritage circuit will give a huge boost to Assam tourism, adding up to the publicity it has received during the Namami Brahmaputra festival.

Further, the Tourism Ministry has also decided to transfer the rights of Brahmaputra Ashok Hotel from the Indian Tourism Development Corporation to the Government of Assam. All necessary processes to formalise the transfer will be completed within the next 15 days.

The ministry is also focused on working towards getting Majuli enlisted in the coveted list of World Heritage sites. The Archaeological Survey of India will be preparing a dossier for the same, which will then be submitted to UNESCO.

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J&K bans polyethene manufactured below 50 microns

Jammu and Kashmir government on 3 April 2017 imposed a blanket ban on the use of polyethene bags manufactured below fifty (50) microns.

Choudhary Lal Singh, the Minister for Forest, Environment and Ecology of Jammu and Kashmir, said that the government is taking all the possible measures to prevent the state's environment and ecology from being polluted.

The Minister said new guidelines and regulations, would facilitate proper recycling of plastic waste, reducing its impact on the ecology.

[PM Narendra Modi inaugurates India's longest Chenani-Nashri tunnel](#)

Highlights of the decision

- The manufacturer's name and address will now be required to be printed on the bags, failing to which, strict action will be taken against them.
- Producers of the plastic carry bags will have to obtain registration from the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), in the case of absence of registration, no person will be allowed to manufacture these carry bags.
- The brand owner or the producer of these plastic carry bags will have to submit its action plan for buyback/waste collection system based on extended producer responsibility to the Board.
- The guidelines state that every street vendor will have to get him/herself registered with the concerned Municipal body for trading in the products of polyethene. For this purpose, the vendor will have to pay a fee of Rs 48000 annually.

[First smart tribal village Habbi inaugurated in Jammu and Kashmir](#)

- Local bodies will be responsible for segregation, collection, processing and disposal of plastic waste in urban areas either on its own or by engaging agencies or producers.
- Directions have been passed to all allied departments for successful and strict implementation of this order.
- The government will also organise awareness camps to educate masses about ill effects of non-biodegradable products.

Reason behind the decision on a blanket ban on the use of polyethene bags

The minister informed that unnecessary or wanton use of polyethene and its unscientific disposal has posed a serious threat to the environment as it takes a long time to degrade. It also poses a serious threat to the lives of wildlife.

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UP to set up 6 AIIMS like institutes, 25 medical colleges in next 5 years

The new Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath announced on 5 April 2017 that the BJP government in the state would be focussed on setting up 6 AIIMS like institutes in the state along with 25 new medical colleges in the next five years.



The Minister gave the statement while addressing a function at King George Medical University (KGMU) in Lucknow. Post the inauguration of 56 ventilators at the University, the Minister stated that while all the state governments share a similar concern of how to make new doctors available, it is more important to inculcate the feeling of sensitivity in them towards their patients.

Citing some incidents in his hometown Gorakhpur, he also noted the gradual rise of commercialism in the sector.

The Chief Minister also pointed out the insufficiency in the availability of doctors and medical institutions in the state. He directed the state officials to ensure the presence of doctors at all district hospitals, primary and community health centres. He also appealed to

medicos to come forward and work in rural areas that have poor medical facilities, at least in the early days of their careers.

Further, highlighting the contribution made by KGMU in the field of medicine, the CM stated that his government will provide all possible aid to the university to upgrade it to an AIIMS like institution.

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MP Govt to launch a Yojana to provide subsidised food to the poor

The Madhya Pradesh government is all set to launch Deendayal Antyodaya Rasoi Yojana in its districts on the evening of 7 April 2017.

The scheme named after late political leader Deendayal Upadhyaya aims to provide food to the poor in urban areas at a subsidised rate. It would be launched in 51 district headquarters across the state in the first phase.

The yojana will be inaugurated by the state's Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Gwalior.

Key Highlights

- The scheme involves opening of canteens that will provide a full meal at Rs 5.
- The meal would include four rotis, one sabzi, and dal.
- The Thali would be made available from 11 am to 3 pm.
- Aside from this, wheat and rice would also be made available at the canteens at Rs one each through fair price shops.
- Local municipal bodies will ensure availability of water and electricity completely free of cost.
- The funds required for the setting up of these centres would be provided under the Chief Minister's Urban Infrastructure Scheme.
- The arrangement is aimed to feed at least 2000 people at a time.
- More centres will be opened in the big cities depending upon the need.

According to the Urban Development Minister Maya Singh, the Deendayal Rasoi Yojana will be implemented in at least one place in every district headquarters. Along with this, the Minister assured that though the food would be cheap, it would be delicious, nutritious and of a very good quality.

The scheme's smooth implementation would be monitored by the District Level Coordination and Monitoring Committee.

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Manipur govt to hold People's Day on 15th of every month

The new BJP-led government in Manipur state has decided to hold People's Day on the 15th of every month.

The announcement was made by the state's Chief Minister, N Biren Singh during a function held at Khwairamband Bazar in Manipur's capital city, Imphal on 9 April 2017.

The CM in his address announced that the move will enable the common public of the state to get easy access to the state's top elected leaders including himself and other Ministers, Commissioners, Secretaries, Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police.

Through the establishment of the day, the public would be able to give suggestions and lodge complaints on public grievances on the 15th of every month. Formal official order confirming the same will be issued in the coming days.

Besides this, the CM listed out his top priorities as the new head of the state, which includes ending the economic blockade sponsored by the United Naga Council(UNC), revamping the Imphal-Jiribam Road of National Highway-37 and resolving the Churachandpur issue.

Further continuing on the same, the minister stated that while the first round of talks with Churachandpur Joint Action Committee ended on a positive note, he hoped that the issue would be resolved within a few days.

He also stated that an independent body will be probing into the matter of the question paper leakage of Physics subject in the Class XII examinations organised by the Council of Higher Secondary Education Manipur and strict action would be taken against those proven guilty.

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Haryana government launched 'Operation Durga' for women's safety

On the lines of the Anti-Romeo Squad of Uttar Pradesh, the Haryana Government on 13 April 2017 launched 'Operation Durga' to ensure women safety in the state.

On the first day of its launch itself, the police teams nabbed 72 people from all the districts for allegedly indulging in crimes against women including eve teasing.

Key Highlights

- The Flying Squad of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar formed twenty-four teams for carrying out the Operation Durga.

- The teams comprise woman personnel, including nine Sub- inspectors of Police, 14 Assistant Sub-inspectors, six Head Constables and 13 constables, besides other police officers from each district.
- The teams will visit public places such as schools, colleges, bus stands and railway stations.

Background

Earlier, the Haryana government constituted women police stations in all districts to ensure safety of women and provide them with a safe place for lodging complaints.

However, to the contrary, it was observed that women hesitated in reporting incidents involving such anti-social elements.

Therefore, the campaign Operation Durga was undertaken after identifying places where such anti-social elements were indulging in eve teasing, vulgar comments, stalking and other similar activities.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi launches projects related to SAUNI Yojana at Botad

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 17 April 2017 dedicated Phase 1 (Link 2) of the Saurashtra Narmada Avtaran Irrigation (SAUNI) Yojana to the nation.

PM Modi also laid the Foundation Stone of Phase 2 (Link 2) of the SAUNI Yojana.

The design of Phase 2 is to pump Narmada water in 17 dams spread across Botad, Bhavnagar

and Amreli districts of Gujarat. This is considered as a second milestone of the Rs 12000 crore projects to pump Narmada water to the arid Saurashtra region.

SAUNI Yojana's Link 1 canal will take water to 30 dams in Jamnagar and Devbhoomi Dwarka districts. In August 2016, PM Modi had dedicated Phase-I of the Link-I canal to the nation.



About SAUNI Project

- The Saurashtra-Narmada Avataraan Irrigation Yojana has been launched to divert one one million acre feet (MAFT) excess over flowing flood water of Narmada allocated to Saurashtra Region.
- The excess over flowing flood water of Narmada will be distributed to 115 reservoirs of eleven districts of Saurashtra through total 1126 km long four link pipelines benefitting 10.22 lakh acres of land.
- The project aims to utilize the floodwater, which otherwise overflows the Narmada dam during monsoon and drains into the sea.

The four link pipelines are:

Link 1: It will run from Machhu-II dam of Morbi district to Sani Dam of Jamanagar District. It will have a carrying capacity of 1200 cusecs. 30 reservoirs of Rajkot, Morbi, Devbhoomi Dwarka and Jamanagar districts will be filled and 202100 acre area will be benefitted.

Link 2: It will run from Limbdi Bhogavo-II Dam of Surendranagar district to Raidi Dam of Amreli district. It will have a carrying capacity of 1050 cusecs. 17 reservoirs of Bhavnagar, Botad and Amreli Districts and area of 274700 acres will be benefitted.

Link 3: It will run from Dholidhaja Dam of Surendranagar District to Venu-I Dam of Rajkot District. It will have a carrying capacity of 1200 cusecs. 28 reservoirs of Rajkot, Jamanagar, Dev bhoomi Dwarka, Porbandar, Morbi and Surendranagar Districts and 198067 acre area will be benefitted.

Link 4: It will run from Limbdi Bhogavo-II Dam of Surendranagar district to Hiran-II Irrigation scheme of Junagadh. It will have a carrying capacity of 1200 cusecs. 40 reservoirs of Rajkot, Surendranagar, Junagadh, Porbandar, Gir Somnath, Amreli and Botad Districts and area of 347722 acre will be benefitted.

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Kerala Government allocates sum for former circus artistes

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) led coalition in Kerala, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) has decided to provide pension to former circus artistes in the state.

The decision was taken up after a group of circus artistes met Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan while he was visiting the state's Kannur district and conveyed their plight to him.

The government has allocated a sum of Rs 1.13 Cr for the same. Thalassery in Kannur district is considered to be the cradle of Indian circus.

Background

- Earlier in February 2017, the Society for Promotion of Art and Circus had submitted a memorandum to the Member of Parliament from Kozhikode, M.K. Raghavan, seeking pension for circus artistes all across the country.
- Kerala was previously giving a nominal pension of Rs 1200 to all circus artistes who had a ration card and had been working in the State for at least 30 years.
- However, this pension was available only to those working in the State.

[‘Advanced Farming – Enriched Farmer’ scheme announced in Maharashtra](#)

[Haryana government launches Operation Durga for women's safety](#)

Hence, this new decision will definitely address some of the grievances of the circus artists.

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UP Government renames Gorakhpur and Agra Airports

In the third meeting of the Uttar Pradesh cabinet, the state government renamed the Gorakhpur and Agra Airports as well as the name of the Department of Welfare of the Differently-abled.

The Gorakhpur Airforce Station was renamed after the name of **Mahayogi Gorakhnath**, the founder of Nath monastic movement. Interestingly, the newly-appointed Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is the Head Priest of the Gorakhnath Mutt, which is a leading centre of the Nath monastic order.

Likewise, the Agra Airport was renamed after RSS ideologue **Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay** airport.

On the other hand, the Department of Disabled Welfare will now be known as Divyang Jan Vikas Empowerment. Divyang is a term used for the differently-abled.

During the meeting, the cabinet also approved the decision to open 20 new agricultural centres.

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West Bengal's new social security Yojana combines 5 old beneficiary schemes

The State government of West Bengal has introduced the Social Security Yojana by combining five separate beneficiary schemes for workers in the unorganised sectors and for self-employed people.

The decision was taken during a Cabinet meeting held on 17 April 2017. The meeting was led by the state's Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Key Highlights

- The Yojana is expected to benefit around 5 Cr people, with around 1 Cr getting direct benefits.
- The five earlier schemes include:
 - State Assistance Scheme for Provident Fund for Unorganised Sector
 - West Bengal Unorganised Sector Workers' Health Security Scheme
 - Social Security scheme for Construction Workers
 - West Bengal Transport Workers Social Security Scheme
 - West Bengal Bidi Workers Welfare Scheme
- The Trinamool Congress-led state government has spent around Rs 880 Cr between 2011 and 2016 to bring more than 85 lakh people under the schemes.

According to the state's Finance Minister, Amit Mitra, workers from over 46 unorganised sectors including bidi workers, book-binding workers, motor mechanics, boatmen and ICDS workers, as well as self-employed people from 15 sectors including the jewellery manufacturing sector, will stand to benefit from the all-encompassing new scheme.

Overall, people will be able to derive more benefits from the new scheme in comparison to the five earlier ones.

Besides this, the state government has also introduced another scheme- State Nutrition Mission, which is aimed at ensuring distribution of nutritious food among pregnant women, lactating mothers, children under the age of six years and adolescent girls.

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Palladium Cinema site to be developed as heritage museum in Srinagar

The Palladium Cinema site at Lal Chowk of Srinagar will be developed as a heritage museum soon. The cinema was once a popular hangout for movie buffs but fell victim to militancy.

Palladium Cinema, which is located at the historic Lal Chowk, was closed down in 1989 after the eruption of militancy in the state. Later in 1990, the cinema was gutted in a fire and it has also seen two fidayeen attacks. At present, the cinema is occupied by security forces.



[Jammu and Kashmir State Budget 2017-18 presented](#)

The decision was taken on 18 April 2017 at a meeting chaired by Divisional Commissioner (Kashmir) Baseer Ahmad Khan. The meeting was held to review the progress of various developmental activities being carried out by the Srinagar Development Authority (SDA).

Other highlights of the meet

- The Divisional commissioner was informed that SDA has acquired 4200 kanals of land at Rakh Gund Aksha. The land will be converted into Satellite colony.
- It was informed that work on multi-level parking at Press Colony and Sheikhbagh is being carried at a good pace. Both projects are being developed at an expense of Rs 26.91-crore and Rs 22.50-crore respectively.
- Besides, the divisional commissioner also reviewed preparation of Srinagar Master Plan and status of the parking site at Pantha Chowk. He also reviewed the work on food court and Children Park at Sangarmaal Complex and construction of proposed Shehjar Apartments.

[J&K bans polyethene manufactured below 50 microns](#)

[Lanura becomes first village to go cashless in J&K](#)

Lal Chowk

- It is a city square (literally Red Square) in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir.

- It was named so by Left-wing activists inspired by the Russian Revolution as they fought Maharaja Hari Singh.
- It is a traditional place for political meetings as people like Jawaharlal Nehru, the former Prime Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah and various other Kashmiri leaders.
- It is a place where the first Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the national flag in 1948 and promised a referendum to Kashmiri's under which they were free to choose their political future. The pledge was supported by Maharaja Hari Singh. However, the pledge was conditional under which Pakistan was supposed to withdraw its troops from the then-Princely state.

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No red beacon on Delhi HC judges cars

Following Union government's decision of barring the use of red beacons atop VVIP cars including the ones belonging to the President of India, the Prime Minister and the Chief Ministers from 1 May 2017, the Delhi High Court judges decided to give it up from the afternoon of 20 April itself.



The decision was taken during a pre-lunch meeting where all the judges of the high court were present. In fact, the judge's vehicles parked at the high court were seen without the red beacon.

The Acting Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice S Muralidhar have never used the red light and nor have they ever taken Personal Security Officers, which they are entitled to. Currently, there are 34 judges in the state's high court.

Background

- The Union Cabinet on 19 April 2017 decided to ban the use of red beacons on all VIP vehicles including the ones belonging to the President, Vice-President and the Prime Minister from 1 May 2017.

- Only emergency services including the ambulance and fire brigade would be allowed to use the beacon light but it would be blue in colour instead of red.
- The Union government, hailing the decision as symbolic, stated that the beacon lights are perceived as symbols of VIP culture and thus have no place in a democratic country.

[Supreme Court approves e-auction of Taj Mansingh Hotel in Delhi](#)

Currently, besides the heads of the government, many other dignitaries including the Lok Sabha Speaker, Chief Justice of India, Chief Justices of High Courts, Supreme Court judges, State Governors and Chief Ministers and the Leader of Opposition are allowed to use red beacons on their vehicles.

However, some state governments had already given up the practice of using beacon lights including Punjab, where CM Amarinder Singh ordered the removal of red beacons from all government vehicles, including those of the chief minister and other state ministers right after winning the polls.

The new Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath had also passed a similar order after his appointment. In Delhi too, CM Arvind Kejriwal had announced right after his appointment that no state minister or official would use red beacons.

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Union Government and Naga rebel groups agree to extend ceasefire till April 2018

The Union Government and two Naga armed factions, namely National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Reformation (NSCN-R) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Neakpao-Kithovi (GPRN/NSCN), have agreed to extend the ceasefire till 27 April 2018.

The decision over extension of ceasefire was taken at a meeting held between the officials of the Union Home Ministry and the Ceasefire Supervisory Board of Naga armed factions on 17 April 2017 in New Delhi.

The Union Government was represented by Satyendra Garg, Joint Secretary of Union Ministry of Home Affairs, North East Division. GPRN/NSCN was represented by Jack Zhimomi and Chenyum Konyak.

A ceasefire between the Union Government and NSCN-R and NSCN-NK is already in operation.

Background

- The Naga rebels have been insisting on their sovereignty and demanding creation of a 'Greater Nagaland' or Nagalim, which consists all the Naga-inhabited areas of neighbouring Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and some portions Myanmar.
- Insurgency in Nagaland began in 1947 when the Naga National Council (NNC) demanded independence. However, NNC was sidelined after the formation of the NSCN in 1980.
- The NSCN brought with itself a section of Myanmarese Nagas headed by S S Khaplang into the organisation. However eight years later, the NSCN was divided into the Khaplang and Isak-Muivah factions.
- In 1997, a ceasefire was declared between the Union government and the Isak-Muivah group and a dialogue was initiated for a negotiated settlement.
- Five years down the line, Khaplang followed suit by declaring cessation of hostilities with the Union Government, which led to an agreement.
- In April 2012, a ceasefire agreement was concluded with NSCN(K).

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DAY | WEEK | YEAR

Earth Hour observed on 25 March 2017

The eleventh edition of the Earth Hour was observed globally, including India, on 25 March 2017 from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm local time. The focus of the global event was to engage people in critical climate conversations and solutions.

Highlights of Earth Hour 2017

- From New York to New Zealand, Paris to Paraguay millions of citizens came together to celebrate the event.
- 187 countries and territories celebrated the Earth Hour 2017. And, more than 3,000 landmarks switched off their lights and millions of individuals, businesses and organizations across seven continents stepped forward to change climate change.
- More than 350 ambassadors and influencers joined the Earth Hour 2017.
- Around 18,000 people donated their facebook feed that has a potential reach of 12 million users.
- To mark the occasion, iconic monuments, including India Gate, Rashtrapati Bhawan, Red Fort, Akshardham Temple, Qutab Minar, Safdarjung Tomb and Lotus Temple switched off their lights.

About Earth Hour

- It is a global environmental movement with a message to switch off non-essential lights for one hour. Every year, the event is observed on the last Saturday of March between 8:30 and 9:30 pm.
- Globally, it is being organised by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in association with the government, non-governmental organizations and individuals.
- The Earth Hour 2017 was the eleventh edition of the global celebration that started off as a one city event in Sydney, Australia in 2007.
- In 11 years, it has grown to become the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment, inspiring individuals, communities, businesses and organizations in over 180 countries and territories to take tangible climate action.

[India won 73 medals in 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games](#)

About World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

- It is considered as one of the world's largest and independent conservation organizations.
- The WWF has over 5 million supporters in over 100 countries.

- Its primary objective is to stop the degradation of the earth's natural environment and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.
- It seeks to achieve this objective by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful.
- It was established on 29 April 1961 with the slogan - For a Living Planet.

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World Theatre Day celebrated on 27 March 2017

27 March: World Theatre Day



The World Theatre Day was celebrated on 27 March 2017 across the globe. To mark the occasion, various national and international theatre events were organised by the International Theatre Institute (ITI) Centres and the international theatre community.

The message author of 2017 is Isabelle Huppert, the theatre and cinema actress from France.

About World Theatre Day

- Since 1962, World Theatre Day has been celebrated by ITI Centres, ITI Cooperating Members, theatre professionals, theatre organizations, theatre universities and theatre lovers all over the world on the 27th of March.
- This day is a celebration for those who can see the value and importance of the art form "theatre".

- The day acts as a wake-up-call for governments, politicians and institutions which have not yet recognised its value to the people and its potential for economic growth.
- While the Russian Dramatist Anatoly Vasiliev was the World Theatre Day International Message Author 2016, Krzysztof Warlikowski was the International Message Author for the 2015 celebrations.

About International Theatre Institute (ITI)

- The International Theatre Institute (ITI) was created by theatre and dance experts, with the assistance of UNESCO, in 1948.
- It has developed into the largest organization for the performing arts with over 100 Centres and Cooperating all over the world.
- ITI organizes the International Dance Day and World Theatre Day every year at the UNESCO, Paris.

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World Autism Awareness Day 2017 observed across the world

2 April: World Autism Awareness Day

The World Autism Awareness Day 2017 was observed across the world on 2 April 2017. The 2017 theme for the day is *Toward Autonomy and Self-Determination*.

World Autism Awareness Day is an internationally recognised day, encouraging Member States of the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about children with autism throughout the world.

It was designated by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 62/139. World Autism Awareness Day, passed in council on 1 November 2007 and adopted on 18 December 2007.

This resolution was passed and adopted without a vote in the UN General Assembly, mainly as a supplement to previous UN initiatives to improve human rights.

World Autism Day is also one of only four official health-specific UN Days.

What is Autism?

- Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that manifests itself during the first three years of life.



- It results from a neurological disorder that affects the functioning of the brain, mostly affecting children and adults in many countries irrespective of gender, race or socio-economic status.
- Autism is characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and non-verbal communication and restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests and activities.

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International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action 2017 observed

April 4: International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action

International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action was observed on 4 April 2017 across the world. The theme of the year 2017 is Needs driven. People Centred.

Mine action ensures that landmines and explosive hazards in war-torn areas are found and destroyed, making possible the delivery of humanitarian assistance so that people and supplies reach those most in need. The United Nations Mine Action Strategy (UNMAS) coordinates teams to clear roads and runways of explosives, to block off weapons contaminated areas, and to train local people to demine and dispose of explosives.

About United Nations Mine Action Strategy (UNMAS) 2006-2010

The United Nations mine action activities are guided by four strategic objectives identified in the United Nations Mine Action Strategy (UNMAS) for 2006-2010. They are:

- For reduction of death and injury by at least 50 per cent;
- To mitigate the risk to community livelihoods and expand freedom of movement for at least 80 per cent of the most seriously affected communities;
- For integration of mine action needs into national development and reconstruction plans and budgets in at least 15 countries;
- To assist the development of national institutions to manage the landmine/explosive remnants of war threat, and at the same time prepare for residual response capacity in at least 15 countries.

Background

The UN General Assembly on 8 December 2005 declared that 4 April every year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

It was to foster the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the civilian population, or an impediment to social and economic development at the national and local levels.

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National Maritime Day observed in India

5 April: National Maritime Day

India on 5 April 2017 observed the 54th edition of the National Maritime Day.

At the inaugural function at the Tuticorin Port, Port Trust chairman S Anantha Chandra Bose placed a wreath on the memorial for sailors who sacrificed their lives at sea.

Significance of the day

- On this day in 1919, navigation history was created when SS Loyalty, the first ship of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, journeyed to the United Kingdom.
- It was a crucial step for India shipping history when sea routes were controlled by the British.

About National Maritime Day

- The National Maritime Day was first celebrated on 5 April 1964.
- India is strategically located in the Indian sub-continent and has about 7516 kilometres of coastline.
- The long coastline is serviced by a total of 182 ports, 12 of them under a special status as Major Ports.
- At present, 90% of India's international trade in terms of volume and 77% in terms of value is moved by sea.

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International Day of Sport for Development and Peace observed

6 April: International Day of Sport for Development and Peace

International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP) was observed across the world on 6



April 2017. The date commemorates the inauguration of the first Olympic games of the modern era, in Athens (Greece) in 1896.

The United Nations General Assembly on 23 August 2013 through its resolution A/RES/67/296 decided to proclaim 6 April as the International Day of the Sport for the Development and the Peace. The day has been celebrated each year since 2014.

The adoption of the day for sports signifies that sports can have a positive influence on the advancement of human rights and economic development.

Besides, the United States has also emphasised on the role of sports for social progress in its Declaration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It says, "Due to its vast reach, unparalleled popularity and foundation of positive values, sport is ideally positioned to contribute towards the United Nations' objectives for development and peace".

It says that sports is an important enabler of the sustainable development and recognises the growing contribution of sport to the realisation of development and peace in its promotion of tolerance and respect. Sports also contributes in empowering women and young people, communities and individuals as well as the health, education and social inclusion objectives.

In addition to this, the UNSC during its fifty-eighth session proclaimed 2005 as the International Year for Sport and Physical Education to promote education, health, development and peace.

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World Health Day is being observed with theme Depression: Let's Talk

7 April 2017: World Health Day

World Health Day is being observed on 7 April 2017 with theme 'Depression: Let's Talk'. On this occasion, the World Health Organization (WHO) is leading a one-year global campaign on depression which is the leading cause of ill-health and disability worldwide.

The goal of the campaign is that more people with depression, everywhere in the world, both seek and get help. Depression is the leading cause of ill-health and disability worldwide.



National Maritime Day observed in India

As per a report of WHO, more than 300 million people are now living with depression, which is an increase of more than 18 per cent between 2005 and 2015. At worst, depression can lead to suicide, now the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year olds.

The World Health Day is being celebrated annually on 7th of April to mark the anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organization. The day also provides with a unique opportunity to mobilise action around a specific health topic of concern to people all over the world.

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International Day of Human Space Flight observed on April 12

12 April: International Day of Human Space Flight

International Day of Human Space Flight was observed on 12 April 2017. The day is an annual celebration of the anniversary of the first human space flight undertaken by Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet citizen.

Yuri Gagarin carried out Vostok 1 space flight on 12 April 1961, making one orbit around the Earth over 108 minutes in the Vostok 3KA spacecraft. The spacecraft was launched by Vostok-K launch vehicle. This historic event opened the way for space exploration for the benefit of all humanity.

The day is also observed as the Cosmonautics Day in Russia and some other countries.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through its resolution A/RES/65/271 on 7 April 2011 during its 65th session proclaimed that International Day of Human Space Flight will be observed annually on 12 April.

In its proclamation, the general assembly said, "The day will be celebrated at the international level to reaffirm the important contribution of space science and technology in achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the well-being of States and peoples. It said that the day will help in ensuring the realisation of their aspiration to maintain outer space for peaceful purposes."

Background

On 4 October 1957 the first human-made Earth satellite Sputnik I was launched into outer space, thus opening the way for space exploration. On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth, opening a new chapter of human endeavour in outer space.

First in the space

- 12 April 1961: Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth.

- 16 June 1963: Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to orbit the Earth.
- 20 July 1969: Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the surface of the Moon.
- 17 July 1975: Docking of Apollo and Soyuz spacecraft in space was the First international human mission to space.
- 1984: Rakesh Sharma, the former Indian Air Force pilot, became the first person of Indian origin to travel in space. He flew in the space aboard Soyuz t-11, which was launched on 2 April 1984. He flew as part of the Intercosmos programme.
- 1997: Kalpana Chawla, an Indian American astronaut, became the first woman of Indian origin to be in space.

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The World Hemophilia Day observed across the world on 17 April

The World Hemophilia Day was celebrated across the world on 17 April 2017 with the theme “Hear Their Voices”. The main aim of this campaign is to unite the community and show support for the millions of women and young girls affected by bleeding disorders.



The campaign urges women to join the conversation by sharing their story about how the bleeding disorder affected their lives so that others can learn about the condition.

Background

- The day was first established in 1989 with support of the World Federation of Hemophilia (WFH).
- The date 17 April was chosen to honor the founder of WFH, Frank Schnabel, as his birthday falls on the same day.
- Hemophilia is a rare disease. About 1 in 10,000 people are born with it.
- It is generally an inherited condition in which bleeding is prolonged.
- In rare instances, the condition may develop later in life, affecting people above the age of 50 years.

- Hemophiliacs have lower levels of clotting factor in the blood and so, the bleeding continues for longer periods unlike in case of a normal person where normal levels of clotting factor causes the blood to clot and stop the bleeding.
- It is observed every year to improve and sustain care for people with the inherited condition across the world.

[World Health Day is being observed with theme Depression: Let's Talk](#)

About Hemophilia

- There are two types of hemophilia:
 - Hemophilia A: It is a more common type and is linked to low levels of clotting factor VIII.
 - Hemophilia B: It is rare and is linked with low levels of clotting factor IX.
- The condition is diagnosed by taking a blood sample and testing the levels of clotting factor VIII & IX.
- The main symptom of the disorder is prolonged bleeding and it can range from mild to severe.
- The bleeding is often internal but it can happen externally as well.
- Other symptoms include spontaneous bleeding, bleeding into the muscles or joints, bleeding for a prolonged period after having surgery, having a cut or dental work and big bruises.
- In very mild cases, bleeding may be for a shorter duration, arising only after an injury or surgery.
- In severe cases, bleeding will be spontaneous, with more frequency and no obvious cause. It may go into the joints and muscles of the body and cause swelling, pain, stiffness or an ache in using the muscle or joint.
- Repetitive bleeding into a joint can also cause arthritis.
- If left untreated, severe cases of hemophilia can lead to a shorter lifespan.
- The treatment for the condition involves injecting the missing clotting factor into the bloodstream.

Thus, this campaign is not only educating more women about the rare disorder but it is also creating a common united platform where people can interact, share stories and support each other.

World Heritage Day observed with theme Cultural Heritage & Sustainable Tourism

World Heritage Day: 18 April



The 2017 World Heritage Day was observed across the world on 18 April 2017. The theme for the year is ***Cultural Heritage & Sustainable Tourism***.

The theme for the 2017 World Heritage Day was chosen in relation to the United Nations International Year of

Sustainable Tourism for Development and in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The day aims at raising awareness of the importance of protecting and preserving various sites around the world that have achieved world heritage status.

World heritage in India

- As of July 2016, there are 27 cultural, 7 natural and 1 mixed World Heritage Sites in India that are recognised by the UNESCO.
- These sites are places of importance of cultural or natural heritage as described in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, established in 1972.
- India's first two sites inscribed on the list at the Seventh Session of the World Heritage held in 1983 were the Agra Fort and the Ajanta Caves.
- The latest three sites to be added in the list in July 2016 were "Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara (Nalanda University)" at Nalanda, Bihar, "Capitol Building Complex – The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier" in Chandigarh and "Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim."

About World Heritage Day

- On 18 April 1982, the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) organised a symposium in Tunisia. It was on that day the Council suggested a special day to be celebrated all through the world in the name of "International Day for Monuments and Sites" on the same day every year.

- The notion was also approved by the UNESCO General Conference who passed a resolution at its 22nd session in November 1983.
- The International Day for Monuments and Sites has been traditionally called the World Heritage Day.

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UN to celebrate International Yoga Day with special commemorative stamps

The United Nations will be issuing special commemorative stamps to celebrate the International Yoga Day this year. The day is celebrated across the world on 21 June.

The same was confirmed by India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin through a tweet on his social media account.



Key Highlights

- The UN postal agency, UN Postal Administration (UNPA) will issue the new special event sheet to commemorate Yoga Day that has been marked annually since 2015.
- The special sheet comprises stamps with images of the sacred Indian sound "Om" and various yogic asanas.
- The UN stamps are issued simultaneously at UN offices in New York, Geneva and Vienna.
- Each issue carries a design theme with different denominations for each office.
- Generally, six new commemorative issues are released each year and remain on sale for 12 months only.
- The stamps illustrate the aims and achievements of the United Nations and the other organisations affiliated to it.

[Malala Yousafzai designated youngest-ever UN Messenger of Peace](#)

[Russia vetoes UN resolution condemning Syria chemical attack](#)

Background

- The UN General Assembly had adopted the resolution to commemorate the International Day of Yoga every year on 21 June in December 2014.
- The resolution had been passed with the support of a record number of nations (177).
- The first International Yoga Day was commemorated at the UN in 2015.
- External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj had led the celebrations along with the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, spiritual yoga guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and US Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard.

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United Nations Chinese Day 2017 observed

The United Nations Chinese Day 2017 was observed globally on 20 April 2017. The Day is observed every year to promote the use of Chinese language in the United Nations.

The first United Nations Chinese Day was held on 12 November 2010 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Chinese language is one of the oldest languages in the world.

In the history of the United Nations, it was for the first time that the use of Chinese as the official language of the United Nations was promoted through this day so that people get to understand China's long civilization and splendid culture.

Background

In year 2010, the United Nations Department of Public Information launched the United Nations Language Day with an aim to celebrate the use of multilingualism and cultural diversity and to promote the equal use of the six official languages in the United Nations.

Under this new initiative, United Nations scheduled six celebrations to commemorate each of the working languages of the United Nations at United Nations duty stations around the world.

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International Mother Earth Day 2017 observed across the world

22 April: International Mother Earth Day



The International Mother Earth Day was observed on 22 April 2017 across the world.

The theme for the year is **Environmental & Climate Literacy**. This year's theme highlights the fact that education is the foundation for progress. The world today needs a global citizenry fluent in the concepts of climate change and aware of its unprecedented threat to the earth. In addition, environmental and climate literacy is the engine not only for creating green voters and advancing environmental and climate laws and policies but also for accelerating green technologies and jobs.

The International Mother Earth Day recognises that the Earth and its ecosystems provide its inhabitants with life and sustenance.

It also aims to raise awareness that humans have a collective responsibility to promote harmony with nature and to balance the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Background

Earth Day was first celebrated in the United States in 1970 and was organised by the Earth Day Network. Its mission was to broaden and diversify the environmental movement worldwide and to mobilize it as the most effective vehicle to build a healthy, sustainable environment.

However, in 2009 the United Nations General Assembly established the International Mother Earth Day under Resolution A/RES/63/278. The Resolution was introduced by The Plurinational State of Bolivia and was endorsed by over 50 member states.

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English Language Day observed across the world

23 April: United Nations English Language Day

The United Nations English Language Day 2017 was observed globally on 23 April 2017.

The Day is observed every year on the date that is traditionally observed as both, the birthday and the date of death of William Shakespeare, the greatest writer ever-known in English language.

Background

- The day was established in 2010 by the Department of Public Information, as a result of its efforts to establish language days for each of United Nation's six official languages.
- The other five official languages of the international body include Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.
- The main aim behind the move is to celebrate the multilingualism and cultural diversity of the UN and to promote equal use of all six official languages throughout the organization.
- Under the initiative, UN duty stations around the world have been dedicated to one of the organization's six official languages and hence, celebrate six separate days.

About English Language Day

- The day was first celebrated by the United Nations on 23 April 2010.
- It aims to entertain as well as inform people about the culture, history and achievements associated with the language.
- The day features book-reading events, English quizzes, poetry and literature exchanges and other activities that promote the language.
- Aside from being one of the UN's six official languages, English is one of the two working languages of the UN Secretariat.
- It is often referred to as a world language or the bridge language (common language used by speakers of different languages) of the modern era because of its widely spoken status.
- English has official or special status in at least 75 countries that have a total population of over two billion.

World Book and Copyright Day 2017 observed

23 April: World Book and Copyright Day

The World Book and Copyright Day was celebrated on 23 April 2017 across the globe. To mark the occasion, special events were organised to promote reading, publishing and copyright across the world including India.



The World Book and Copyright Day is an opportunity to highlight the power of books to promote UNESCO's vision of knowledge societies that are inclusive, pluralistic, equitable, open and participatory for all citizens. To mark the World Book and Copyright Day 2017, the UNESCO released three books – Reshaping Cultural Policies, Rethinking Education in a Changing World and Reading in a Mobile Era.

Background

- 23 April is considered as a symbolic date for world literature.
- In 1616, on this date, Cervantes, William Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega died.
- It is also the date of birth or death of other prominent authors such as Maurice Druon, Haldor K Laxness, Vladimir Nabokov and Manuel Mejia Vallejo.
- Against this backdrop, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) created the day in 1995 at its General Conference, which was attended by India.
- The World Book and Copyright Day pays tribute to books and authors by encouraging everyone to discover the pleasure of reading.

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Yogi Adityanath inaugurated National Panchayati Raj Diwas function

24 April: National Panchayati Raj Diwas

The National Panchayati Raj Diwas was observed across India on 24 April 2017. The day is observed every year to mark the passing of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, which came into effect on 24 April 1993.

The day would be commemorated with a function in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The function would be inaugurated by the UP CM Yogi Adityanath and presided over by Birender Singh, the Union Minister for Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking water.

Background

- The act helped in decentralization of political power to the grassroots level.
- It led to the institutionalisation of Panchayati Raj (PR) through the village, Intermediate and District level Panchayats.
- The Union Minister of Panchayati Raj organises a National Conference every year to commemorate the day.
- On the occasion, the best performing Gram Panchayats across the country are conferred with Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar by the Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

This year's event will see the following launches:

- The Ministry of Panchayati Raj would be launching their own You-Tube channel, which will feature short films on Best Practices and schemes of Government of India.
- Audio-visual capacity building content for Panchayati Raj Institutions would also be shared through smart phones to the elected members of Panchayats.
- A quarterly magazine titled 'Gramoday Sankalp', which is published and distributed by Ministry of Panchayati Raj on behalf of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Rural Development and Drinking Water and Sanitation, will also be released on the occasion.
- The magazine would be launched in English, Hindi and several other regional languages and is expected to act as a medium of direct communication between the Policy makers and Gram Panchayats.
- The Panchayati Raj Institutions would be able to access the same online through their mobile phones.

Besides this, national awards including Deendayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar, Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar would be conferred upon Panchayati Raj Institutions and e-Panchayat Puraskars to the State Governments.

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BOOKS | AUTHORS

Indian Railway-The weaving of a National Tapestry released

Indian Railway-The weaving of a National Tapestry: Bibek Debroy, Sanjay Chadha & Vidya Krishnamurthi

The Union Railways Minister Suresh Prabhu on 30 March 2017 released a book on the Indian Railways – 'Indian Railway-The weaving of a National Tapestry'.

The book was jointly authored by Bibek Debroy (Member, NITI Aayog), Sanjay Chadha (Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce) and Vidya Krishnamurthi.



About Indian Railway-The weaving of a National Tapestry

- The theme of this book is the historical development of railways in India.
- The book is divided into chapters dealing with different periods of development in chronological order.
- It builds its foundations from periods prior to 1853, when the first commercial passenger railway was inaugurated.
- The authors wanted to create a cross between an academic book and a coffee table book. The outcome is a narrative built around a series of anecdotes of railway history.
- The book manages to convey considerable amounts of information in a conversational manner.
- The story begins with the early plans for building railways in the Indian sub-continent in the 1830s, continues with the debates in the 1840s and the advent of the railways in the 1850s and 1860s.
- The penultimate chapter, which covers the period of consolidation and change during the 1870s onwards, is the most absorbing.
- The last chapter covers the period from the beginning of the 20th century until independence. The book is perhaps best characterised as Indian Railway History – An anecdotal version.

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Gandhi in Champaran, authored by DG Tendulkar, launched

Gandhi in Champaran: Dinanath Gopal Tendulkar

Venkaiah Naidu, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting, on 10 April 2017 released a book titled *Gandhi in Champaran* at National Mahatma Gandhi Museum in New Delhi.

The book was launched on the day that marks the 100th year of Champaran Satyagraha.

The book is authored by noted writer Dinanath Gopal Tendulkar. The book is printed by Publications Division.



In addition, the minister also released a book containing a collection of letters and articles of the correspondence between Nobel laureate Romain Rolland and Mahatma Gandhi as well as Tendulkar's eight-volume biography of Mahatma Gandhi, titled ***Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi***.

Also Read: [Prime Minister to inaugurate exhibition commemorating 100 years of Champaran Satyagraha](#)

Gandhi in Champaran offers a gripping account of Gandhi's first Satyagraha on Indian soil. The Satyagraha was his attempt to eliminate, by truthful and non-violent means, the grievances and sufferings of the peasants at the hands of the indigo planters.

About Dinanath Gopal Tendulkar

- Dinanath Gopal Tendulkar was an Indian writer and documentary film maker.
- Born in 1909 in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, he was educated first at University of Cambridge and then at Universities Marburg and Gottingen.
- His most noted work is his Gandhi biography which was first published in 1951 with a foreword by the then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.
- He was awarded the Padma Bhushan decoration by the then President of India, Rajendra Prasad. However, the author refused the award and asked for a watch instead.
- His other notable works are: Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan – Faith is a Battle, 30 months in Russia, Soviet Sanskriti, among others.

Hope in a Challenged Democracy: An Indian Narrative: Ashwani Kumar

A book titled Hope in a Challenged Democracy: An Indian Narrative was released on 10 April 2017 by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi.

Vice President of India M. Hamid Ansari received the first copy of the book, which is authored by Ashwini Kumar.

The book goes on to critically analyse the issues of fundamental importance in the framework of the “dignitarian goals of the republic, the role of a ‘living Constitution’, the necessity of equilibrium between executive, legislature and judiciary, the role of media, importance of equitable growth, a responsive justice system and a rising India’s engagement with the world.”

About Ashwani Kumar

- Ashwani Kumar is an Indian politician and attorney.
- He formerly served as Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha representing the state of Punjab.
- He formerly served as the Minister of Law and Justice and Minister of State in the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion and Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- At the age of 37, he was appointed one of the youngest Additional Solicitor General of India.
- As a legal counsel, he has argued important cases before the Supreme Court including the Bhopal Gas Tragedy case.

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EXAM BOOSTERS

- The Maoists attack in which 25 CRPF jawans were martyred happened at – **Sukma, Chhattisgarh**
- The theme of the 2017 International Mother Earth Day is - **Environmental & Climate Literacy**
- The child rights activist awarded with the P C Chandra Puraskar 2017 is - **Kailash Satyarthi**
- The winner of the Monte Carlo Masters Men’s Singles title is - **Rafael Nadal**
- The winners of the Monte Carlo Masters Men’s Doubles title are - **Rohan Bopanna and Pablo Cuevas**
- Person who won the UNESCO’s Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize - **Giuseppina Nicolini**
- City that was designated as UNESCO World Book Capital 2018 – **Athens**
- All India Radio (AIR) station that was honoured with the prestigious ‘Lelte Award’ - **AIR Aizawl**
- Earth Day is celebrated every year on - **22 April**
- This city has been designated UNESCO World Book Capital 2018 – **Athens**
- India’s first-ever “village of books” will open in this state to promote tourism – **Maharashtra**
- The function commemorating National Panchayati Raj Diwas was held in this Indian city – **Lucknow**
- This Indian Navy Ship is currently undertaking a hydrographic survey of Weligama Bay along with Sri Lankan Navy - **INS Darshak**
- Google on 24 April 2017 paid tribute to this legendary cultural icon in India with a special doodle – **Rajkumar**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and reaffirmed India's steadfast support to Afghanistan in - **fighting all forms of terrorism**
- Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has said that Indian economy will grow at a clip of 7.5 per cent this fiscal, up from - **7.1 per cent in the 2016-17**
- The first India-Indonesia Energy Forum was held in – **Jakarta**
- Indian who made it to the Times 100 Influential People list of 2017 - **Narendra Modi**

- Airline that became the world's first airline to adopt new satellite-based airplane tracking system - **Malaysia Airlines**
- Indian social activist who is one of the six winners of Goldman Environmental Award 2017 - **Prafulla Samantra**
- Winner of Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2016 - **Kasinathuni Viswanath**
- State that signed MoU with Indian Railways to expand green cover – **Maharashtra**
- Indian bank that won the 2017 Golden Peacock Innovative Product / Service Award - **Yes Bank**
- Country that was recently elected to Committee for Programme and Coordination – **India**
- Indian sprinter Man Kaur recently clinched the 100 metres sprint at the World Masters Games. The event was held at - **Auckland, New Zealand**
- He was recently appointed by Etihad as the Chief Executive Officer Airline Equity Partners - **Robin Kamark**
- The state declared as the overall winner of the National Youth Athletics Meet is – **Haryana**
- The Indian film that won the Jury Prize for Best Film at the Hong Kong International Film Festival is – **Newton**
- Two countries that recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to restore the diplomatic ties after a hiatus of 37 years are - **Cuba and Morocco**
- The Peshawar High Court recently allowed Pakistani Hindus to worship at a Shiva temple in – **Abbottabad**
- The President of United States, Donald Trump wants to send American astronauts to – **Mars**
- This NASA astronaut recently broke the previous US record for most time spent in space - **Peggy Whitson**
- This city will be hosting the 2017 United Nations Oceans Conference – **New York**
- This versatile playback singer was presented the Ghantasala national award instituted by the Ghantasala National Art Academy - **Vani Jairam**
- A set of four rare stamps auctioned in UK, featured portrait of - **Mahatma Gandhi**
- Report published by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to highlight that nearly 30% of World Heritage Sites are plagued by poaching, illegal logging and fishing - **Not For Sale**

- This country's former president has been disqualified from running in the upcoming presidential elections – **Iran**
- The high court judges of this state have decided to give up the red beacon lights much before the set deadline – **Delhi**
- The District administration of Indore recently presented the Padma Shri award on behalf of the Union Government to this 91-year old doctor- **Dr. Bhakti Yadav**
- This state government is planning to set up "Book Banks" in schools to provide old books to needy students – **Punjab**
- The theme of the 2017 International Mother Earth Day is - **Environmental & Climate Literacy**
- The Indian Navy Ship that is currently undertaking a hydrographic survey of Weligama Bay along with Sri Lankan Navy is - **INS Darshak**
- The winner of the UNESCO's Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize is - **Giuseppina Nicolini**
- The Aisan Games that will feature esports as a medal event, according to Olympic Council of Asia, is - **2022 Asian Games in China**
- The Chief Minister of this state has ordered a review of the prestigious Yash Bharti Awards that were started by the previous government - **Uttar Pradesh**
- Parliament of this country in April 2017 decided to transfer the control of royal agencies from the government to the new King Maha Vajiralongkorn – **Thailand**
- The Supreme Court (SC) in April 2017 set a benchmark for maintenance to be paid by a husband to his estranged wife. The percent of Alimony that should be paid to the estranged wife is - **25 per cent**
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Day of Vesak in Sri Lanka, which is celebrated annually on - **12 May**
- The English businesswoman and fashion designer who was recently appointed the Officer of the Order of the British Empire is - **Victoria Beckham**
- The amount contributed by India recently to the United Nations Election Assistance Programme is - **USD 250000**
- The state that has been chosen for the Krishi Karman Awards 2015-16 in medium category (1 to 10 million tonnes) is - **Himachal Pradesh**
- India's most-valued Public Sector Unit (PSU) in terms of market valuation - **State Bank of India (SBI)**
- Country that abolished its 457 Visa programme which is used largely by Indians – **Australia**

- City that will host the main event of the International Day of Yoga (IDY) celebrations in June 2017 – **Lucknow**
- Private sector company became India's most-valued in terms of market valuation - **Tata Consultancy Services**
- NGT has ordered this city to introduce destination buses to improve air quality – **Delhi**
- This e-tailer has acquired logistics start-up InLogg to smooth its delivery process – **Myntra**
- The Civil Services Day (CSD) is celebrated on this day in India – **21 April**
- The NGT has ordered for immediate closure of industries located around this lake in Bengaluru - **Bellandur Lake**
- She was chosen for the prestigious Raj Kapoor Lifetime achievement award of the Maharashtra Government - **Saira Banu**
- He was chosen for the Raj Kapoor Special contribution award in April 2017 - **Jackie Shroff**
- He is the author of the book One Part Woman that in recent past was chosen for Sahitya Akademi's award for translation in English - **Aniruddhan Vasudevan**
- Site of this cinema at Lal Chowk of Srinagar will be developed as a heritage museum soon - **Palladium Cinema**
- The historian who was recently conferred with Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat Award 2017 is - **A V Narasimha Murthy**
- The officer of Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) of 1980 batch appointed as the Financial Commissioner of Railways is - **B N Mohapatra**
- TAL Manufacturing Solutions recently unveiled India's first conceptualized, designed and manufactured articulated industrial robot. The robot is called as – **BRABO**
- The person appointed as the Chairman of the Police Complaint Authority of Chandigarh is - **Mahavir S Chauhan**
- This state government has introduced the Social Security Yojana combining five separate beneficiary schemes- **West Bengal**
- The largest Indian missile destroyer ship has been dedicated to this Indian port city- **Chennai**
- This former Indian cricketer has been named as one of the commentators for the upcoming Champions trophy - **Saurav Ganguly**

- This country is hosting the 3rd Edition of Global Exhibition on Services (GES – 2017) - **India**
- UN is going to issue special stamps to commemorate this International Day - **International Day of Yoga**
- Renowned computer pioneer who developed word processing program that became Microsoft Word - **Robert W Taylor**
- World's oldest person who passed away recently at age of 117 - **Emma Martina Luigia Morano**
- First-ever Nepal-China joint military exercise 'Sagarmatha Friendship-2017 began in - **Kathmandu**
- Food delivery and home services app was launched by Google for Indian market - **Areo**
- To tighten rules of H-1B visa rules, the US President Donald Trump has signed an executive order named - **Buy American, Hire American**
- The Mars orbiter that in recent past captured a region of Mars sprayed with strange-shaped secondary craters is - **Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter**
- The cinema at Lal Chowk of Srinagar whose site will be used for development of a heritage museum soon is - **Palladium Cinema**
- **The World Hemophilia Day was celebrated across the world on 17 April 2017 with the theme - Hear Their Voices**
- This state has become the first Indian state to launch a special awareness drive to ensure that transgenders in the state register as voters – **Maharashtra**
- This state government has recently launched 'unemployment allowance scheme' – **Himachal Pradesh**
- This state's government has decided to provide pension to former circus artistes - **Kerala**
- The Koradi thermal power station, which was recently inaugurated by the PM Narendra Modi, is located in – **Maharashtra**
- Girish Chandra Saxena, who was passed away recently, worked as the Governor of – **Jammu & Kashmir**
- The joint military exercise Sagarmatha Friendship-2017 has commenced between – **China and Nepal**
- This multilateral organisation released the report Globalisation Backlash – **World Bank Group**

- Bidya Devi Bhandari, who is on a State visit to India, is the President of - **Nepal**
- The Union Government recently launched a comprehensive module and a training program for capacity building of Elected Women Representatives of Panchayats at – **Ranchi, Jharkhand**
- The theme of the 2017 World Heritage Day is - **Cultural Heritage & Sustainable Tourism**
- The IIT that is all set to introduce a Vastu Shastra classes for its architecture students is - **IIT Kharagpur**
- The winner of the Arunachal Festival of Speed is - **Amanpreet Ahluwalia**
- Prisoners of this country in Israeli prisons have started a hunger strike - **Palestine**
- This country has said that it will abolish a temporary work visa popular with foreigners and replace it with a visa requiring better English language and work skills - **Australia**
- China have said that it was willing to work with all parties to achieve denuclearisation and stability on - **the Korean Peninsula**
- **Indian environmental engineer who won the 2017 Cartier Women’s Initiative Award - Trupti Jain**
- Countries that held their first-ever joint military exercise Sagarmatha Friendship-2017 - **China and Nepal**
- State that celebrated its 70th Foundation Day recently - **Himachal Pradesh**
- Number of CPSEs that were recently approved by CCEA for getting listed on stock exchange - **Eleven**
- The winner of the 2017 Singapore Open Men’s Singles title is - **B Sai Praneeth**
- The winner of the 2017 Bahrain Grand Prix is - **Sebastian Vettel**
- The winner of the Asian Billiards Championship is - **Pankaj Advani**
- The actor, best known for his roles as Sheriff J.W. Pepper in the James Bond movies, who dies recently is - **Clifton James**
- The progressive rock and jazz fusion guitar pioneer who passed away recently is - **Allan Holdsworth**
- NASA researchers have found evidence of ingredients needed for a habitable environment on these two planet’s moons - **Saturn & Jupiter**
- Recently released Indian Dhow was hijacked off the coast of this country’s island – **Yemen**
- Scientists have found a second Great Spot on this planet- **Jupiter**

- This country is going to launch its first cargo spacecraft into space- **China**
- This country's president has won the Time Magazine's Most Influential Person poll- **Philippines**
- The scheme that was launched by Maharashtra Government to help farmers in increasing their income by cutting production cost and increase in output is - **Advanced Farming – Enriched Farmer scheme**
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be launching its 'South Asia Satellite' in - **May 2017**
- Mining major Vedanta Resources got recently merged with - **Cairn India**
- The National Safe Motherhood Day (NSMD) is observed on - **11 April**
- India's largest e-commerce player Flipkart recently acquired - **eBay**
- Person appointed as the Whole Time Member of IBBI - **Mukulita Vijayawargiya**
- Chairman of committee which submitted its report on draft Ganga Act - **Girdhar Malviya**
- The United States recently dropped largest non-nuclear bomb ever an Islamic State tunnel complex in eastern Afghanistan. The bomb is called as - **Mother of All Bombs**
- Famous HIV/AIDS researcher Mark Wainberg passed away recently. He belonged to - **Canada**
- The committee constituted by the Union Government to examine the existing framework with regard to Virtual Currencies is - **Dinesh Sharma Committee**
- The Justice (Retd.) who will head the Committee constituted to prepare Draft Ganga Act that submitted its report to Union Water Resource Ministry is - **Girdhar Malviya**
- The country that won the 5th edition of Asian School Hockey Championship-2017 is - **India**
- Name the two countries that will hold a joint military exercise named 'Sagarmatha Friendship-2017' in mid April 2017 are - **Nepal and China**
- Gurudwara of a city has entered into the Guinness Book of Records for hosting Breakfast for people of 101 nationalities – **Dubai**
- PM Narendra Modi has dedicated to the nation various units of thermal power plants at Koradi, Chandrapur and Parli with a total capacity of - **3230 Mega Watts**
- Food Minister Ramvilas Paswan has said that the BCCI has agreed to allow sale of packaged drinking water bottles at the same MRP inside - **stadiums**

- Indian billionaire who became the second largest shareholder in Anglo American after acquiring 11.44 per cent of the British mining group is - **Anil Agarwal**
- The Union Cabinet gave its approval for setting up of Indian Institute of Petroleum and Energy. The institute will be set up in – **Visakhapatnam**
- The Union Cabinet recently approved signing of Framework of Understanding on Cooperation in the Hydrocarbon Sector. The Framework is signed with – **Bangladesh**
- The person honoured with Young Scientist Award of the National Geoscience Awards 2016 is - **Dr. Abhishek Saha**
- Person appointed as the Ambassador of India to Germany - **Mukta Dutta Tomar**
- NBFC Manappuram Finance launched its own prepaid cards in tie-up with - **Yes Bank**
- SCOPE Excellence Awards are presented for - **Excellence and Outstanding Contribution to the Public Sector Management**
- Nokia signed MoU to bring 5G network in India with - **Airtel and BSNL**
- This country has vetoed a UN draft resolution demanding the Syrian government cooperate with an investigation of a suspected chemical attack – **Russia**
- Youngest Nobel Peace laureate Malala Yousafzai became the sixth person to receive honorary citizenship of – **Canada**
- EC has thrown an open challenge to people to hack its EVM's. The challenge will be open for people in - **First week of May 2017**
- He was named as the new administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by the UN chief Antonio Guterres - **Achim Steiner, a German citizen**
- This country vetoed UN's resolution condemning the chemical attack in Syrian town – **Russia**
- This state's government has decided to increase the reservations of backward Muslim population and STs in the state – **Telangana**
- This world leader has become the most followed head of the state on Instagram with 7 million followers – **Narendra Modi**
- Congress leader and author M Veerappa Moily traces the life and journey of Draupadi through his book titled - **The Flaming Tresses of Draupadi**
- **Indian-origin personality that became the first non-white judge at the Old Bailey Court of London - Anuja Ravindra Dhir**

- World Homeopathy Day is celebrated every year on - **10 April**
- Carme Chacon, who passed away recently, was the Defence Minister of - **Spain**
- The Coptic Christians were in news recently. They belong to - **Egypt**
- The author of the book titled Hope in a Challenged Democracy– An Indian Narrative is - **Ashwani Kumar**
- The actor who was recently honoured with a Living Legend Lifetime Award from the Punjab Association is - **Dilip Kumar**
- It is in this North Eastern State, India-Mongolia joint military training exercise Nomadic Elephant – XII has begun recently – **Mizoram**
- The theme of the Civil Services Day 2017 will be - **Making New India**
- As per the Amnesty International, it is in this country, most executions took place in 2016 – **China**
- It is with this public sector undertaking, the Indian Railways entered into an agreement for Rooftop SPV Systems recently - **Bharat Heavy Electricals**
- This former Congress MP and Minister for Steel passed away at the age of 56 after suffering from a heart attack on 12 April 2017 - **Akhilesh Das Gupta**
- This country hosted the first-ever G20 Digital Ministerial Meeting on Digital Economy – **Germany**
- This G7 nation was the only one to call for sanctions on Russia for its support towards its war-torn ally Syria – **Britain**
- International Day of Human Space Flight is observed annually on 12 April 2017 to celebrate the anniversary of - **the first human space flight undertaken by Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet citizen**
- The two states that in April 2017 announced that it will impose liquor ban in the state in near future are - **Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh**
- Uttar Pradesh government scrapped the Samajwadi Pension Scheme, which was initiated by - **the previous Akhilesh Yadav government**
- A Delhi court issued an open ended non-bailable warrant against beleaguered businessman Vijay Mallya in a case of allegedly evading summons in - **a FERA violation matter**
- In a bid to take agitating Madhesi parties on board before May 14 local elections Nepal government has presented - **a new constitution amendment bill**

- The President of India Pranab Mukherjee presented the Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE) Awards at the 8th Public Sector Day function held in - **New Delhi**
- **The Lok Sabha recently passed the Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017. The Bill seeks to constitutional status to - National Commission for Backward Classes**
- The Nobel Laureate recently designated as a UN Messenger of Peace is - **Malala Yousafzai**
- India's first ever micro-drama festival, named Thespis, was held in - **New Delhi**
- This state's government has decided to increase the number of Science Clubs in its schools – **Haryana**
- The Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Harsh Vardhan launched this new web portal on the occasion of Survey of India's 250th anniversary - **Nakshe**
- The centre by releasing Rs 23443.09 Cr to the states, as the first budgetary installment for the FY 17-18 under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) aims to focus on this natural resource management activity – **Water Conservation**
- The Survey of India has proposed an Indo-Nepal joint scientific exercise along with the Survey department of Nepal to re-measure the height of –**Mount Everest**
- Colson Whitehead won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for his novel - **The Underground Railroad**
- India's first ever micro-drama festival, named Thespis, was held in - **New Delhi**
- The Indian national and navy veteran who was sentenced to death by a military court of Pakistan is - **Kulbushan Jadhav**
- The two-day National Convention on World Homoeopathy Day concluded in – **New Delhi**
- The person won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in investigative reporting section - Eric Eyre
- Repo Rate as per First Bi-Monthly Monetary Policy 2017-18 of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) - **6.25%**
- Mukta Dutta Tomar was appointed as the Ambassador of India to – **Germany**
- World's first country to allow legalized production, sale and consumption of marijuana – **Uruguay**
- Web portal inaugurated to enable the willing donors to contribute towards the family of soldiers who sacrificed life in line on duty - **Bharat ke Veer**

- The winner of the 2016 ACM A.M. Turing Award is - **Tim Berners-Lee**
- The winner of the 2017 Chinese Grand Prix is - **Lewis Hamilton**
- India's position in the 2017 edition of the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index, which was released recently by the World Economic Forum, is - **40th**
- The country that topped the 2017 edition of the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index, which was released recently by the World Economic Forum, is – **Spain**
- Astronomers have discovered a possible twin of this planet in our solar system – **Venus**
- This state's government has decided to hold People's Day on the 15th of every month – **Manipur**
- The month-long exhibition 'Swachhagraha – Bapu Ko Karyanjali – Ek Abhiyan, Ek Pradarshani' commemorating 100 years of Champaran Satyagraha will be held in – **New Delhi**
- This renowned Indian sand artist has been selected to represent India in the Moscow Sand Art Championship 2017 - **Sudarsan Pattnaik**
- India on 8 April 2017 signed 22 agreements with this nation to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two countries – **Bangladesh**
- Ending the long-standing impasse between the two sports bodies, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has granted affiliation to - **the Boxing Federation of India (BFI)**
- To allow consumers to place online orders at physical stores, the Digital wallet company Paytm announced the launch of new feature named - **QR code on its Paytm Mall application**
- Country that became the new member of South Asia Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program - **Myanmar**
- Person appointed the Vice Chancellor of Nalanda University - **Sunaina Singh**
- Union Government signed USD 350 million loan agreement with this financial organisation for road projects in Madhya Pradesh - **New Development Bank**
- The winner of the Women's Singles title at the 2017 India Open Super Series is - **P V Sindhu**
- The winners of the Leon Challenger Tour tennis tournament's Men's Doubles trophy are - **Leander Paes and Adil Shamasdin**
- The winner of the 2017 Miami Open Men's Singles title is - **Roger Federer**
- The winner of the 2017 Miami Open Women's Singles title is - **Johanna Konta**

- The Union Government has sanctioned Rs 98.35 Cr for the development of a Heritage Circuit in – **Assam**
- The Union government has launched a new comprehensive scheme to boost the development of – **Powerloom sector**
- This Indian Foreign Service Officer has been appointed as the new Indian-consul general in Dubai -**Vipul**
- One of the most prominent black activists of his generation in Britain who died in April 2017 after suffering from prostate cancer is - **Darcus Howe, a leader of the UK's little-chronicled black power movement**
- With this country's airport authorities India has taken up the matter of an Indian woman being asked to strip by the security officials during her travel on March 29 - **Frankfurt**
- India signed seven agreements including an air services agreement with this country on 1 April 2017 – **Malaysia**
- Under the GST regime, tax evasion of this sum would be considered as the non-bailable offence – **Rs 5 crore**
- The state that on 2 April 2017 became the 27th state to sign MoU with Union Government for Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) scheme – **Mizoram**
- This amount of fund was immediately sanctioned by the Uttar Pradesh government to provide drinking water during summer season in Bundelkhand region of the state - **Rs 47 crore**
- He took over as the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. His name is - **B. P. Kanungo**
- The former President of Guatemalan Football Association who was banned for lifetime by FIFA is - **Brayan Jimenez**
- The theme of the 2017 International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action that was observed recently is - **Needs driven. People Centred.**
- The educational institute declared the best in the overall India Rankings 2017 is - **Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Karnataka**
- The child rights campaign launched by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi in Dhaka recently is - **100 Million for 100 Million**
- He was nominated as the chairman of the Amateur Circle Kabaddi Federation of India for the next four years - **Ram Bilas Sharma**
- The state that signed two agreements with the Ministry of Power to enhance power supply in distribution network in April 2017 is - **Tripura**

- Namami Brahmaputra, the biggest river festival is being organized by the Assam government in - **21 districts**
- A 1982 batch senior IPS Officer who has been appointed as new Director General of Police of Gujarat is - **Geeta Johari**
- US President Donald Trump has signed a bill into law that could eventually allow internet providers to sell information about - **their customers' browsing habits**
- The US has ruled that being a simple computer programmer would no longer qualify as a specialist profession, which is a must for the issue of - **H-1B work visa**
- This person was elevated to the position of Chief Adviser (Cost) in the Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure w.e.f. 1 April 2017 - **Aruna Sethi, 1985 batch officer of Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICoAS)**
- US President Donald Trump's son-in-law who flew into Iraq with the top US military officer to get a first-hand assessment of the battle against Islamic State from US commanders on the ground and to meet Iraqi officials is - **Jared Kushner**
- This Nobel laureate will become the youngest person to address Canadian Parliament - **Malala Yousafzai**
- This war hero, the national flag carrier's former chief passed away in Karachi on 3 April 2017 - **Azim Daudpota**
- At least 11 people were confirmed to be dead and over 43 injured after a bomb blast ripped through a metro train carriage in - **Saint Petersburg, Russia**
- This short film made by 26-year-old Omkar Modgi has made it to the much-acclaimed Cannes film festival 2017 - **'Avyakta'**
- This 1982 batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer has been appointed as the first woman Director General of Police (DGP) of Gujarat- **Geetha Johri**
- Chairman of the newly constituted National Board for Electric Mobility - **Girish Shankar**
- Gilbert Baker, who passed away recently, was the creator of - **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rainbow Flag**
- Union Cabinet recently approved closure of - **Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana**
- This state's government is planning on setting up 6 AIIMS like institutes and 25 medical colleges in the next 5 years - **Uttar Pradesh**
- This country successfully test-fired a home developed ballistic missile recently that can hit any part of North Korea- **South Korea**

- NASA announced a three-month extension to the space term of this International space station crew member- **Peggy Whitson**
- The Union Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the signing of the Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and this country- **Georgia**
- Scientists recently discovered a new species of tree-dwelling crab named Kani Maranjandu in Western Ghats area of - **Kerala**
- The country that recently officially recognized bitcoin as legal money is – **Japan**
- The CMD of Quattro recently appointed as the Chairman of the National Association of Software and Services Companies is - **Raman Roy**
- The person who recently assumed the charge as the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of IDBI Bank is - **Mahesh Kumar Jain**
- The Union Cabinet in April 2017 approved the agreement for fairway development of Ashuganj-Zakiganj stretch of Kushiyara River with - **Bangladesh**
- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the agreement on Audio Visual Co-Production with - **Bangladesh**
- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the MoU on Cooperation in the field of Mass Media with - **Bangladesh**
- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved signing of MoU in the field of judicial sector cooperation with - **Bangladesh**
- International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (IDSDP) was observed across the world on - **6 April 2017**
- The three-member committee that in its report has pointed out gross abuse of power by the city government is – **Shunglu committee**
- The Pakistani cricketer who recently announced his retirement from the international cricket is - **Misbah-ul-Haq**
- The movie that won the 64th National Film Awards for the Best Feature Film is – **Kasaav**
- The film that won the 64th National Film Awards for the Best Hindi Feature Film is - **Neerja**
- World Health Day is being observed on 7 April 2017 with theme - **Depression: Let's Talk**
- Union Minister of State (I/C) for Youth Affairs and Sports Vijay Goel on 6 April 2017 approved the appointment of two foreign coaches and two support staff in the discipline of –**Athletics**

- King Maha Vajiralongkorn who signed a military-backed Constitution for his country into a law is the King of this country - **Thailand**
- The Supreme Court has sought response from these six states on a plea seeking a ban on cow vigilante groups there - **Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh**
- The Uttar Pradesh government has set up a high-level judicial committee to probe the alleged misuse of money and work being carried out on - **Gomati River Front Development project**
- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, TRAI, has ordered Reliance Jio Infocomm to withdraw its - **Summer Surprise plan**
- The Madhya Pradesh government is all set to launch this Yojana in its districts in order to provide subsidised food to the poor - **Deendayal Antyodaya Raso Yojana**
- The three-day National Children's Film Festival, also known as the largest film festival for children in the country was inaugurated by - **Union Minister Venkaiah Naidu**
- This Indian shuttle player reached career-best ranking of World no. 2 in the recently revealed Badminton World Federation (BWF) rankings – **PV Sandhu**
- This state's cabinet approved the draft of Bill prohibiting attacks on journalists – **Maharashtra**
- The person appointed as the new Executive Director of the Reserve Bank of India is - **Malvika Sinha**
- The cricketer who was named the Wisden's Leading Cricketer in the World for 2016 is - **Virat Kohli**
- The Union government has decided to revive 40-year-old North Koel Irrigation project to resolve water problems in these two states - **Bihar & Jharkhand**
- This Nobel Peace Prize winner is going to be appointed as the youngest United Nations Messenger - **Malala Yousafzai**
- The Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI) in Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh is going to set up a - **DNA bank for wildlife**
- This country will become the world's first country to neutralise gender pay gap - **Iceland**
- The second Annual Meeting of the New Development Bank began in – **New Delhi**
- The Union Cabinet approved the revised Air Services Agreement (ASA) with this country recently - **Malaysia**
- The Union Cabinet approved the signing of a new Air Services Agreement with this country recently – **Serbia**
- Amount of loan agreement was signed between India and New Development Bank for major district roads project in Madhya Pradesh - **\$350 million**

- Indian personality that was inducted into the international advisory board of Atlantic Council - **Anil Ambani**
- The Indian hockey player honoured with the Asian Player of the Year 2016 by the Asian Hockey Federation is - **S V Sunil**
- The first Muslim to join the Emergency Service Unit of the New York City Police Department is - **Sergeant Ali Javed**
- The theme of the 2017 World Autism Awareness Day is - "**Toward Autonomy and Self-Determination**"
- The tiger reserve became the first in India to officially introduce a mascot named Bhoorsingh the Barasingha is - **Kanha Tiger Reserve**
- This Indian cricketer was conferred with the Padma Shri by the President of India in 2017- **Virat Kohli**
- Union Minister for Transport, Nitin Gadkari inaugurated a new centre for child cancer patients in this city- **Mumbai**
- This country's recently impeached President became the first leader since the nation's transition to democracy to be sent to jail- **South Korea**
- This world leader stated that global warming is not mankind's fault and instead of trying to stop it we have to somehow adapt to it -**Vladimir Putin**
- This bank has been adjudged the 'Best Small Bank for 2016' - **Karur Vysya Bank**
- This bank recently opened 40 'Ananya' transformed branches - **Syndicate Bank**
- It is in this State, the BHEL commissioned a 800 MW supercritical thermal power plant recently – **Karnataka**
- He wrote the book – 'Indian Railway-The weaving of a National Tapestry' - **Bibek Debroy**
- Bob Dylan, who received the 2016 Nobel Literature Prize, belongs to - **United States**
- The country that recently gave final legislative approval to a bill that permits the medicinal use of marijuana is – **Argentina**
- The Turkish runner who was recently banned by the IAAF for two years is - **Elvan Abeylegesse**
- The team that won the 2016–17 Deodhar Trophy is - **Tamil Nadu**
- UPI-based mobile payment service launched by Truecaller - **Truecaller Pay**
- The online film certification system launched to promote transparency and ease of doing business - **E-Cinepramaan**
- Renowned Assamese playwright and Sahitya Akademi Award-winning novelist who passed away recently - **Arun Sarma**
- Amazon, the USA based e commerce giant made its entry in UAE by acquiring a company and that is - **Souq.com**

- The state that will be the 27th state to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Centre to implement Power-for-All Project in the state is - **Uttar Pradesh**
- The state that on 29 March 2017 announced that recommendations' of the 7th pay commission will be implemented from 1 April 2017 is - **Chhattisgarh**
- Australian stargazers have been invited to join in for the hunt for – **Planet 9**
- This iconic theatre is going to bring its curtains down with the screening of Raj Kapoor's Mera Naam Joker and Sangam – **Regal Theatre**
- This country is going to host the southern EU leaders Brexit meeting - **Spain**
- This Pakistani pacer has been slapped with a one-year ban for failing to report a spot-fixing approach by bookmakers – **Mohammad Irfan**
- The former South Carolina Governor who was recently appointed by the United Nations to run the World Food Programme is - **David Beasley**
- The President of India recently presented Dr. B. C. Roy National Awards for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. The Awards were instituted in - **1976**
- The INLCU L51 was recently commissioned into the Indian Navy. The ship is commanded by - **Cdr Vishwesh S Nadkarni**
- The country that was recently approved by the US Senate as the 29th member of the NATO is - **Montenegro**
- Person bestowed with the Hari Om Ashram Alembic Research Award for 2016 - **Neena Srivastava**
- Ahmed Kathrada, the renowned anti-apartheid activist who passed away, belonged to - **South Africa**
- Jurist who passed away recently and was a Solicitor General of India from 1996 to 1998 - **Tehmtan R. Andhyarujina**
- As per a report of the NASSCOM, the number of internet users in India by 2020 will be – **730 million**
- The e-billing system Aviation Turbine Fuel Digital Issue and Payment that was launched by – **The Indian Air Force**
- The bank that launched the Unnati Credit Card to spread credit inclusion is – **State Bank of India**
- The book 'Home of the Brave' traces the history of - **Rashtriya Rifles**
- The Integrated Automatic Aviation Meteorological Systems was inaugurated at – **INS Rajali**
- Prime Minister of this country has activated a disaster response plan after a powerful cyclone named Debbie pummelled the north-east coast - **Australia**
- The High Court of this state on 28 March 2017 ordered a 'complete' ban on mining activities in the State for four months - **Uttarakhand**
- This Indian duo won the 2017 Vietnam Open International Challenger Badminton Doubles title - **Satwiksairaj Rankireddy & Chirag Shetty**

- It is on this subject the Law Commission of India submitted its 267th report to the Union Government – **Hate Speech**
- This many number of Integrated Cold Chain Projects were sanctioned by the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries recently – **101**
- He was elected as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of – **Punjab**
- World Theatre Day (WTD) is observed every year on - **27 March**
- Person appointed as Chairman of the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) - **Sharad Singh Negi**
- Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) launched Mobile Clinic Services in - **Andhra Pradesh & Telangana**
- She has been appointed as the first woman field officer of the BSF after 51 years - **Tanushree Pareek**
- The Lok Sabha recently passed the Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016. It will replace – **the Mental Health Act, 1987**
- The Indian that will host the hockey World League Final 2017 and the World Cup 2018 is - **Bhubaneswar**
- She became the first woman to be appointed as the president and CEO of 'The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights' - **Vanita Gupta**
- With this country India has renewed its agreement on the supply of petroleum for next five years – **Nepal**
- The renowned pulmonologist appointed as the Director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences is - **Randeep Guleria**
- The winner of the 2016-17 Santosh Trophy is - **West Bengal**
- The winner of the 2017 Australian Grand Prix is - **Sebastian Vettel**
- World Bank signed USD 100 million credit agreement to improve quality of health care services in all 13 districts of - **Uttarakhand**
- Jagadisa Thyagarajan, famously known as Ashokamitran, who died recently, was a - **litterateur**
- Indian who got ranked in the 2017 Best CEOs List of Barron's - **Aditya Puri**
- This Indian political leader has been named among the probable contenders for Times 100 most influential people in the world list 2017- **Narendra Modi**
- India has become the third largest in terms of domestic passenger traffic in - **Aviation Market**
- A court in this nation has passed a ruling sentencing the country's own President **to death for 'high treason'** – **Yemen**
- The 2-day long World Conference on Environment 2017 was held in – **New Delhi**

- India won this many number of medals in the 2017 Special Olympics World Winter Games – **72**
- It is in this country scientists switched on the world's largest 'artificial sun' recently – **Germany**
- The Beijing-backed civil servant who on 26 March 2017 was chosen to be the first female Chief Executive of the Hong Kong is - **Carrie Lam**
- Hatsun is planning to set up two Greenfield projects in 2017-18 in - **Coimbatore and Ongole**
- The Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators (COA) on 26 March 2017 issued a seven-point instruction for the three existing BCCI office bearers, namely - **Vice President CK Khanna, Joint Secretary Amitabh Chaudhary and Treasurer Aniruddh Chaudhry**
- The Supreme Court (SC) of India on 27 March 2017 held that the government cannot make Aadhaar mandatory for availing benefits of - **Welfare schemes**
- The Indian Navy is preparing for de-induction of a Long Range Maritime Patrol aircraft after 29 years of dedicated service to the nation - **TU142M**

-X-X-X-X-

QUIZZES

India and Malaysia had inked seven agreements including the development of a fertiliser plant in Malaysia. Consider the following statements in context to the agreements.

- I. The MoUs were inked during Vice President Hamid Ansari's 3-day visit to Malaysia.
- II. The two countries inked Air Services Agreement.
- III. MoU for collaboration in technology development in the field of Palm Oil was inked.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I
- b) Only II
- c) Both II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (c) Both II and II

These MoUs/agreements were signed during the Malaysian Prime Minister Mohd Najib Bin Tun Abdul Razak's visit to India. Raazak was on a six-day visit (from 30 March - 04 April 2017) to India.

-X-X-X-X-

The Union Cabinet gave its approval for signing of an agreement for the establishment of a CIRDAP Centre at National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD & PR) in Hyderabad, Telangana. Consider the statements.

- I. The new centre would help the NIRD & PR to enhance its position in the region through connections with other institutes in the CIRDAP member countries.
- II. The CIRDAP Centre would give NIRD & PR an advantage of acquiring first-hand knowledge about networking with organizations that specialise in rural development programmes.
- III. The centre would benefit the faculty at NIRD & PR with exchange visits to the best practices in the CIRDAP member countries.
- IV. The centre would benefit the rural communities by giving financial assistance to below poverty line households.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) Only I, II and IV
- b) Only I, II and III
- c) All of the above
- d) Only II, III and IV

Answer. (b) Only I, II and III

The CIRDAP centre would help the NIRD & PR to enhance its position in the region through connections with other institutes in the CIRDAP member countries and help it create its own storehouse of institutional knowledge. It would also benefit the faculty at the institute with exchange visits to the best practices in the CIRDAP member countries.

-X-X-X-X-

The Union Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the signing of the Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and Georgia. The features of the Air Services Agreement are as follows:

- I. Both countries shall be entitled to designate one or more airline.
- II. Carriers from both countries will be able to establish direct operations to any points in the other country's territory.
- III. The designated airlines of either country shall have the right to establish offices in the territory of the other for promotion and sales.
- IV. The designated airline of each party will be able to enter into cooperative marketing arrangements with the designated carriers of same party, other party and that of a third party.

Which among the above statements are correct?

- a) Only I and II
- b) I, II and III
- c) All of the above
- d) I, III and IV

Answer. (d) I, III and IV

The features of the Air Services Agreement include that both countries will be entitled to designate one or more airline. While Indian carriers will be able to operate to any points in Georgia from any point in India, Georgia will only be able to establish direct operation to six points in India including New Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai and Goa.

-X-X-X-X-

The Union Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the signing of the Air Services Agreement (ASA) between India and Georgia. The features of the Air Services Agreement are as follows:

- I. Both countries shall be entitled to designate one or more airline.
- II. Carriers from both countries will be able to establish direct operations to any points in the other country's territory.
- III. The designated airlines of either country shall have the right to establish offices in the territory of the other for promotion and sales.

- IV. The designated airline of each party will be able to enter into cooperative marketing arrangements with the designated carriers of same party, other party and that of a third party.

Which among the above statements are correct?

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- b) I, II and III
- c) All of the above
- d) I, III and IV

Answer. (d) I, III and IV

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-X-X-X-X-

Which of the following countries recently officially recognized bitcoin as legal money?

- a) South Korea
- b) Taiwan
- c) Japan
- d) Canada

Answer. (c) Japan

Japan officially recognized bitcoin and digital currencies as legal money with effect from 1 April 2017. The recognition comes after implementation of a new law amending Banking Act in Japan for legalizing these currencies. The step will facilitate integration of digital currency into legal banking system through regulatory scrutiny.

-X-X-X-X-

Name the child rights campaign launched by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi in Dhaka recently.

- a) 100 Million for 100 Million
- b) Stop Violence Against Children
- c) End child marriage
- d) Children are our treasure!

Answer. (a) 100 Million for 100 Million

Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi launched his child rights campaign '100 Million for 100 Million' at Saint Joseph Higher Secondary School in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The campaign is

aimed at mobilising millions of children from affluent families globally to speak up for their underprivileged peers. The campaign was launched by President Pranab Mukherjee in December 2016 in New Delhi.

-X-X-X-X-

Gilbert Baker, who passed away recently, was the creator of:

- a) Euro Currency Symbol
- b) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rainbow Flag
- c) Canadian National Flag
- d) Logo of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Answer. (b) Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rainbow Flag

Gilbert Baker is a gay rights activist and the creator of the iconic Rainbow Flag. The rainbow flag debuted at the Gay Freedom Day Parade in June 1978 in San Francisco. It was designed for the movie named Milk.

-X-X-X-X-

Union Cabinet recently approved closure of which scheme?

- a) Pradhan Mantri Atal Pension Yojana
- b) Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana
- c) Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana
- d) Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana

Answer. (c) Mahatma Gandhi Pravasi Suraksha Yojana

The scheme was launched with an aim to cover 5 million overseas blue collar Indian workers who have the ECR category passports in 17 countries. However, the subscription under the MGPSY was very low and no new subscription was received for more than a year.

-X-X-X-X-

Which of the following movies won the 64th National Film Awards for the Best Feature Film?

- a) Kasaav
- b) Alifa
- c) Neerja

- d) Pink

Answer. (a) Kasaav

The 64th National Film Awards were announced on 7 April 2017. The awards will be presented by Directorate of Film Festivals of India to honour the best films of 2016 in the Indian cinema. The award ceremony will be held on 3 May 2017. Marathi movie Kasaav won the National Film Awards for the Best Feature Film.

-X-X-X-X-

Which of the following movies won the 64th National Film Awards for the Best Hindi Feature Film?

- a) Airlift
b) Madaari
c) Neerja
d) Pink

Answer. (c) Neerja

The 64th National Film Awards were announced on 7 April 2017. The awards will be presented by Directorate of Film Festivals of India to honour the best films of 2016 in the Indian cinema. The award ceremony will be held on 3 May 2017. Sonam Kapoor-starrer 'Neerja', which was directed by Ram Madhvani, was declared as the Best Hindi Feature Film.

-X-X-X-X-

Name the Pakistani cricketer who recently announced his retirement from the international cricket.

- a) Misbah-ul-Haq
b) Yasir Hameed
c) Younis Khan
d) Mohammad Yousuf

Answer. (a) Misbah-ul-Haq

The Pakistan Test captain, Misbah-ul-Haq, on 6 April 2017 announced that he would be retiring from international cricket after the end of the Test series in West Indies. However, the cricketer will continue to play cricket at the domestic level.

-X-X-X-X-

Who of the following cricketers was named the Wisden's Leading Cricketer in the World for 2016?

- a) Virat Kohli
- b) Ravindra Jadeja
- c) Ravichandran Ashwin
- d) Shikhar Dhawan

Answer. (a) Virat Kohli

India's ace batsman Virat Kohli on 5 April 2017 was named the Leading Cricketer in the World for 2016. The announcement was made in the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack, which is also often referred to as the 'Bible of the Cricket.' Kohli also features on the cover of the 2017 edition of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack. It shows the cricketer playing a reverse sweep in a Test match.

-X-X-X-X-

King Maha Vajiralongkorn in April 2017 signed a military-backed Constitution for his country into a law. He is the King of this country.

- a) Thailand
- b) Mangolia
- c) Myanmar
- d) UAE

Answer. (a) Thailand

Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn on 6 April 2017 signed a military-backed Constitution of the country into a law. The signing is an essential step toward an election that would bring the country back to democratic rule.

-X-X-X-X-

The World Health Day was observed on 7 April 2017 with the year's theme

- a) From farm to plate, make food safe
- b) Depression: Let's Talk
- c) Halt the Rise: Beat Diabetes
- d) Kidney Disease and Obesity

Answer. (b) Depression: Let's Talk

World Health Day is being observed on 7 April 2017 with theme 'Depression: Let's Talk. On this occasion, the World Health Organization (WHO) is leading a one-year global campaign on depression which is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide.

-X-X-X-X-

What is the theme of the 2017 International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action that was observed recently?

- a) Mine Action is Humanitarian Action
- b) Peace without mine action is incomplete peace
- c) Needs driven. People Centred.
- d) More than Mines

Answer. (c) Needs driven. People Centred.

International Day of Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action was observed on 4 April 2017 across the world. The theme of the year 2017 is Needs driven. People Centred.

-X-X-X-X-

It is with this public sector undertaking, the Indian Railways entered into an agreement for Rooftop SPV Systems recently.

- a) Bharat Heavy Electricals
- b) NTPC Limited
- c) Bharat Electronics Limited
- d) None of them

Answer. (a) Bharat Heavy Electricals

In April 2017, the Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL) signed an agreement with the Indian Railways for for Rooftop Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) Systems to decrease its carbon footprint.

-X-X-X-X-

As per the Amnesty International, it is in this country, most executions took place in 2016.

- a) Iran
- b) Iraq
- c) Pakistan
- d) China

Answer. (d) China

As per a report released by the Amnesty International in April 2017, at least 1,032 people were executed in 23 countries in 2016. And, most executions took place in China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Pakistan – in that order.

-X-X-X-X-

Name the country that vetoed the UN draft resolution demanding the Syrian government cooperate with an investigation of a suspected chemical attack.

- a) Russia
- b) China
- c) Japan
- d) France

Answer. (a) Russia

Russia has vetoed a UN draft resolution demanding the Syrian government cooperate with an investigation of a suspected chemical attack. The US, Britain, France and many other western countries believe that President Bashar al-Assad's forces were responsible for the chemical attack.

-X-X-X-X-

Which country won the 5th edition of Asian School Hockey Championship-2017?

- a) India
- b) Bangladesh
- c) Sri Lanka
- d) Japan

Answer. (a) India

The Indian School team has won the 5th edition of Asian School Hockey Championship after defeating Malaysia by 5-1 at the Aishbagh Stadium in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

-X-X-X-X-

Who will head the Committee constituted to prepare Draft Ganga Act that submitted its report to Union Water Resource Ministry?

- a) Dinesh Sharma
- b) Madhukar Gupta
- c) BN Srikrishna
- d) Girdhar Malviya

Answer. (d) Girdhar Malviya

The Committee constituted to prepare Draft Ganga Act submitted its report to the Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Uma Bharti. The Chairman of the committee was Justice (retd) Girdhar Malviya.

Which of the following committees was recently constituted by the Union Government to examine the existing framework with regard to Virtual Currencies?

- a) Justice Malviya Committee
- b) Madhukar Gupta Committee
- c) Dinesh Sharma Committee
- d) BN Srikrishna Committee

Answer. (c) Dinesh Sharma Committee

The Union Government has recently constituted an Inter-Disciplinary Committee to examine the existing framework with regard to Virtual Currencies. The Committee will take stock of the present status of Virtual Currencies both in India and globally. The Committee will be chaired by Dinesh Sharma, the Special Secretary of Economic Affairs, and will submit its report within 3 months.

-X-X-X-X-

Gurudwara of a city has entered into the Guinness Book of Records for hosting Breakfast for people of 101 nationalities. Name the city where the Gurudawara is located.

- a) Amritsar
- b) Dubai
- c) Dublin
- d) Berlin

Answer. (b) Dubai

On the auspicious day of Baisakhi, the Gurudwara in Dubai today entered the Guinness Book of Records for hosting Breakfast for people of 101 nationalities. Officially called "Breakfast for Diversity", the occasion exemplified the spirit of charity, religious and cultural tolerance amongst people of various nationalities and faith.

-X-X-X-X-

India and Australia in April 2017 signed six agreements to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Consider the following statements in context to the agreements

- I. These agreements were signed during Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's four-day visit to India.
- II. MoU on cooperation in combating international terrorism and transnational organised crime was signed.
- III. MoU for promotion and development of cooperation in civil aviation security was signed.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I and II
- b) Only I and III
- c) Only II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (d) I, II and III

India and Australia on 10 April 2017 signed 6 agreements to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two nations. The signed agreements include cooperation in combating international terrorism and transnational organised crime. These agreements were signed during Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's four-day visit to India. He will be in India from 9 April to 12 April 2017. This is Turnbull's first visit to India since he assumed office in 2015.

-X-X-X-X-

Who of the following was recently designated as a UN Messenger of Peace?

- a) Kailash Satyarthi
- b) Malala Yousafzai
- c) Angelina Jolie
- d) Sunitha Krishnan

Answer. (b) Malala Yousafzai

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on 10 April 2017 designated Malala Yousafzai as a UN Messenger of Peace with a special focus on girls' education. Nobel Laureate Yousafzai is the youngest-ever UN Messenger of Peace. She is also the first one to be designated by Secretary-General Guterres since he assumed office in January 2017.

-X-X-X-X-

The Lok Sabha recently passed the Constitution (123rd Amendment) Bill, 2017. The Bill seeks to constitutional status to which of the following bodies?

- a) National Commission for Backward Classes
- b) National Human Rights Commission
- c) National Commission for Women
- d) National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

Answer. (a) National Commission for Backward Classes

The Lok Sabha on 10 April 2017 passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Third Amendment) Bill, 2017. It was passed by the house with 360 MPs voting in favour and 2 against the bill. It seeks to give constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes.

The Parliament in April 2017 passed the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2017. Consider the following statements in context to the Bill

- I. It seeks to modify the list of Schedule Castes for the state of Nagaland.
- II. It modifies name of the Union Territory of Pondicherry to Puducherry by incorporating changes in the Constitution (Pondicherry) Scheduled Castes Order, 1964.
- III. The Bill amends the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 and the Constitution (Pondicherry) Scheduled Castes Order, 1964.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I and II
- b) Only I and III
- c) Only II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (c) Only II and III

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha on March 10, 2017 by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Thawar Chand Gehlot. It seeks to modify the list of Schedule Castes for the state of Odisha. The castes Sualgiri and Swalgiri will be introduced as synonyms to the Sabakhia caste in the list of SCs for the state of Odisha.

-X-X-X-X-

The Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Harsh Vardhan has launched a new web portal in New Delhi on the occasion of Survey of India's 250th anniversary. What is the name of the portal?

- a) Geoid
- b) Nakshe
- c) Geospatial
- d) Open Series Maps

Answer. (b) Nakshe

The Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Harsh Vardhan launched a new web portal called 'nakshe' in New Delhi on 10 April 2017. The launch commemorates the 250th anniversary of Survey of India (SoI).

-X-X-X-X-

India and Bangladesh on 8 April 2017 signed 22 agreements to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Consider the following statements in context to the agreements

- I. The MoUs were signed during Bangladeshi Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visit to India.

- II. MoU for enhancing cooperation in the field of national security, development and strategic studies was signed.
- III. Inter-Agency agreement on cooperation regarding Nuclear Power Plant Projects in Bangladesh was signed.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I and II
- b) Only I and III
- c) Only II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (c) Only II and III

India and Bangladesh on 8 April 2017 signed 22 agreements to boost the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The agreements were inked after delegation level talks were held between the two nations in the Hyderabad House, New Delhi. The delegation level talks were held during Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's four-day visit to India. She was in India from 7 April to 10 April 2017. She was in India from 7 April to 10 April 2017.

-X-X-X-X-

Which state's government has decided to hold People's Day on the 15th of every month?

- a) Manipur
- b) Assam
- c) Uttar Pradesh
- d) Goa

Answer. (a) Manipur

The new BJP-led government in Manipur state has decided to hold People's Day on the 15th of every month. The announcement was made by the state's Chief Minister, N Biren Singh during a function held at Khwairamband Bazar in Manipur's capital city, Imphal on 9 April 2017.

-X-X-X-X-

Name the British DJ who has reached Mount Everest's base camp and has plans to host the highest party on the earth.

- a) Armin van Buuren
- b) Paul van Dyk
- c) Paul Oakenfold
- d) David Guetta

Answer. (c) Paul Oakenfold

British DJ Paul Oakenfold has reached Mount Everest's base camp and has planned to host the "highest party on earth" by performing a set at 5380 metres. It is expected that mountaineers heading to the world's highest peak will join the party and dance beats of the three-time Grammy nominated artist.

-X-X-X-X-

The 'Working Group on Migration' on 1 March 2017 submitted its report to the union government. Consider the following statement in context to the report.

- I. The 18-member working group/panel was headed by Partha Mukhopadhyay of the Centre for Policy Research.
- II. It proposes amendments to the protocols of the registrar general of India.
- III. It talks about interstate operability of public distribution system (PDS).

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I and II
- b) Only I and III
- c) Only II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (b) I, II and III

'Working Group on Migration' suggests that the protocols of the registrar general of India should be amended to enable caste-based enumeration of migrants. This will help them to avail the attendant benefits in the states to which the migration takes place. Migrants should be enabled to avail benefits of public distribution system (PDS) in the destined state by providing interstate operability of PDS.

-X-X-X-X-

Jayant Malaiyya, the finance minister of Madhya Pradesh, presented the annual state budget of the financial year 2017-18 in the legislative assembly. Consider the following statement in context to the budget.

- I. Size of the budget 2017-18 was Rs 185564.27 crore.
- II. It proposes to implement the 7th pay commission from 1 April 2017.
- III. Rs 21 crore was allocated for computerisation of High Court, Subordinate Courts and Advocate General Office.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I and II
- b) Only I and III
- c) Only II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (b) Only I and III

Size of the budget 2017-18 is Rs 185564.27 crore, with a revenue surplus of Rs 4596.40 crore. The recommendations of Seventh Pay Commission will be implemented from 1 January 2016 and the hiked salaries will be paid from July 2017. However, arrears of 18 months will be paid in installments.

-X-X-X-X-

Bihar's annual state budget 2017-18 was presented in the legislative assembly. Consider the following statements in context to the same.

- I. The budget was presented by Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav.
- II. The size of the budget for the fiscal year 2017-18 is Rs 160085 lakh crore.
- III. The state government has introduced three types of new taxes including tax on sand mining.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only I
- b) Only II
- c) Only II and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (b) Only II

Abdul Bari Siddiqui, the finance minister of Bihar, presented the annual state budget of 2017-18 in the legislative assembly. The size of the budget for the fiscal year 2017-18 is Rs 160085 lakh crore. The state government has not introduced any fresh tax.

-X-X-X-X-

FORPHEUS has been given the Guinness title for which unique talent?

- I. For playing tennis better than humans
- II. For exploring unique technological intelligence
- III. For its exceptional educational capabilities
- IV. For exploring the possibility of Harmonised automation with Sinic Theoretics

Which of the above statements is correct?

- a) I and II
- b) All of the above
- c) None of the above
- d) I, II and IV

Answer. (b) All of the above

Des: FORPHEUS (Future Omron Robotics Technology for Exploring Possibility of Harmonised automation with Sinic Theoretics) has officially been given the Guinness title for its unique technological intelligence and educational capabilities.

-X-X-X-X-

35. Which of the following movies won the 89th Academy Awards for the Best Picture?

- a) La La Land
- b) Arrival
- c) Moonlight
- d) Lion

Answer. (c) Moonlight

The 89th Academy Awards, popularly called Oscar Awards, were conferred on 26 February 2017 (27 February 2017 as per Indian time). The award ceremony was held at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles. The Best Picture Award was won by Moonlight.

-X-X-X-X-

Who of the following won the 89th Academy Awards for the Best Actor?

- a) Andrew Garfield
- b) Ryan Gosling
- c) Denzel Washington
- d) Casey Affleck

Answer. (d) Casey Affleck

The 89th Academy Awards, popularly called Oscar Awards, were conferred on 26 February 2017 (27 February 2017 as per Indian time). The award ceremony was held at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles. Casey Affleck won the Best Actor for the movie Manchester by the Sea.

-X-X-X-X-

The term SWATHI that was in news refers to a

- a) Weapon Locating Radar
- b) Injectable Polio Vaccine
- c) Portable Weather Monitoring Device
- d) Smallest Blood Glucose Monitoring Device

Answer. (a) Weapon Locating Radar

SWATHI is a Weapon Locating Radar (WLR). It was developed by the DRDO's Electronics and Radar Development Establishment (LRDE). The radar provides fast, automatic and accurate location of all enemy weapons like mortars, shells and rockets firing within in its effective zone of coverage.

-X-X-X-X-

UK's House of Lords voted to amend the Brexit Bill. Which among the following was the main reason for the house to delay the bill's passing?

- a) The bill doesn't guarantee protection to EU citizens living in UK
- b) The bill doesn't guarantee protection to UK citizens living in the EU
- c) The bill doesn't speak the mandate of the people
- d) The bill doesn't fulfil the requirements of the Brexit negotiations

Answer. (a) The bill doesn't guarantee protection to EU citizens living in UK

UK's upper house, The House of Lords voted on 2 March 2017 to amend the Brexit Bill, thereby delaying the bills passing. The members of the House voted 358 to 256 for an amendment that will require the ministers to protect the rights of more than three million European Union and European Economic Area citizens living in the UK after it exits the EU.

-X-X-X-X-

Who won the 2017 Hockey India League title?

- a) Punjab Warriors
- b) Kalinga Lancers
- c) Dabang Mumbai
- d) Delhi Waveriders

Answer. (b) Kalinga Lancers

Kalinga Lancers on 26 February 2017 lifted the fifth edition Hockey India League title. In the finals played at Chandigarh, Kalinga Lancers defeated Dabang Mumbai 4-1.

-X-X-X-X-

Which Indian city was named as the Richest Indian city as per the New World Wealth report 2017?

- a) Delhi
- b) Mumbai

- c) Bengaluru
- d) Chennai

Answer. (b) Mumbai

Mumbai was named as the richest Indian city with a total wealth of USD 820 billion. It is home to 46000 millionaires and 28 billionaires, and is followed by Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune.

-X-X-X-X-

Which movie won the Audience Award at the Glasgow Film Festival 2017?

- a) City of Joy
- b) Bhakta Vidur
- c) Santa Banta Pvt Ltd
- d) Lipstick Under My Burkha

Answer. (d) Lipstick Under My Burkha

Restricted for release by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), Indian movie Lipstick Under My Burkha was awarded the third annual Audience Award at the Glasgow Film Festival 2017. Indian filmmaker Alankrita Shrivastava directed the movie.

-X-X-X-X-

The National Green Tribunal has banned camping activities within 100 m of which prominent Indian River?

- a) Yamuna
- b) Beas
- c) Indus
- d) Ganga

Answer. (d) Ganga

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered a ban on camping activities within 100 metres of the Ganga. The decision was taken by a bench of justices headed by Chairperson Swatanter Kumar. The ban will be imposed from Kaudiyala to Rishikesh in Uttarakhand.

-X-X-X-X-

Name the historic city that was recaptured by the Syrian troops back by Russian jets by the Islamic State (IS) in March 2017.

- a) Raqa
- b) Palmyra
- c) Aleppo
- d) None of the above

Answer. (b) Palmyra

Syrian troops backed by Russian jets on 2 March 2017 recaptured the historic city of Palmyra from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Loss of Palmyra is being considered as the latest blow to the militant group, ISIS, because in recent past the group had suffered losses in its two main strongholds, namely Raqa (Syria) and Mosul (Iraq).

-X-X-X-X-

Which among the following statements was not included in Trump's first address to the US congress?

- a) US will meet the financial obligations of all the NATO members
- b) US will adopt a merit-based immigration system
US will seek the help of its Muslim allies to destroy the ISIS
- c) US will build a great wall on the US-Mexican border

Answer. (a) US will meet the financial obligations of all the NATO members

US President Donald Trump reaffirmed his support to the NATO members during his first address to the Congress insisted that the members must meet their own financial obligations and warned that it was not his job to represent the world.

-X-X-X-X-

The Union Government recently notified the Specified Bank Notes (Cessation of Liabilities) Act, 2017. As per the Act, a person can hold how many notes if it is for the purposes of study, research or numismatics?

- a) Twenty-five notes
- b) Ten notes
- c) Twenty notes
- d) Fifteen notes

Answer. (a) Twenty-five notes

The Union Government on 1 March 2017 notified the Specified Bank Notes (Cessation of Liabilities) Act, 2017. The Act is introduced in the public interest for the cessation of liabilities on the specified bank notes. Section 5 of the Act bars any person from knowingly or voluntarily, holding, transferring or receiving any specified bank note after the expiry of grace period. However, a person can hold not more than ten notes in total, irrespective of the denomination. Up to twenty-five notes can be held, if it is for the purposes of study, research or numismatics.

-X-X-X-X-

Advanced Farming – Enriched Farmer was launched by a state for helping the farmers to increase their income. Name the state that has launched the scheme.

- a) Telangana
- b) Bihar
- c) Madhya Pradesh
- d) Maharashtra

Answer. (d) Maharashtra

Maharashtra Government on 16 April 2017 announced Advanced Farming – Enriched Farmer'. The scheme aims at increasing the income of farmers by cutting production cost and increase in output.

-X-X-X-X-

Union Minister of Human Resource Development Prakash Javadekar has launched portal and mobile app for RUSA. RUSA stands for

- a) Rashtriya Uchch Shiksha Abhiyan
- b) Rasaynik Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan
- c) Rashtra Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan
- d) Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

Answer. (d) Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

The portal and mobile app of the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, was launched on 17 April 2017. The portal is a one-stop location for States' Higher Education Plans, the decision of the States' Higher Education Councils and details of the resources. Also, the gallery is a rich repository of the projects initiated under RUSA. On the other hand, the mobile application will ensure that all projects under RUSA are tracked 24x7.

-X-X-X-X-

Prisoners of this country in Israeli prisons have started a hunger strike

- a) Palestine
- b) Iraq
- c) Syria
- d) None of the above

Answer. (a) Palestine

Thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails have begun a mass hunger strike against detention conditions. The protest is being led by Marwan Barghouti, a leader of the mainstream Fatah movement of the Palestine Liberation Organization, jailed by Israel for life for five murders.

Name the Mars orbiter that in recent past captured a region of Mars sprayed with strange-shaped secondary craters.

- a) Deep Space 2 Probes (2)
- b) Mars Odyssey
- c) Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter
- d) Mars Express Orbiter

Answer. (c) Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter

NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) captured this region of Mars, sprayed with secondary craters from 10-kilometer Zunil Crater to the northwest. Secondary craters form from rocks ejected at high speed from the primary crater, which then impact the ground at sufficiently high speed to make huge numbers of much smaller craters over a large region. In this scene, however, the secondary crater ejecta has an unusual raised-relief appearance like bas-relief sculpture

-X-X-X-X-

US President Donald Trump on 18 April 2017 signed an executive order named "Buy American, Hire American". Consider the following statements in context to the order.

- I. The order tightens the rules for technology companies seeking to bring highly skilled foreign workers to the United States.
- II. The order directs US agencies to propose rules to prevent immigration fraud and abuse in the programme.
- III. Agencies have also been asked to suggest changes so that the H-1B visas are granted to the most-skilled or highest-paid applicants.

Which is/are correct?

- a) Only III
- b) Only I and II
- c) Only I and III
- d) I, II and III

Answer. (d) I, II and III

US President Donald Trump on 18 April 2017 signed an executive order named "Buy American, Hire American". The order tightens the rules for technology companies seeking to bring highly skilled foreign workers to the United States. The executive order that targets the H-1B visa programme was signed during Trump's visit to the world headquarters of Snap-On Inc, a tool manufacturer in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

NICL AO MOCK TEST PAPER**Numerical Ability**

Direction (1 to 5): In each of the following questions there are five choices, select the correct answer in place of?

1. $\{(45)^2 + (55)^2\} \div ? = 25$
a) 225
b) 249
c) 434
d) 202
e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation:

$$\begin{aligned} ? &= \{(45)^2 + (55)^2\} \div (5)^2 \\ &= \{(45)^2 \div (5)^2\} + \{(55)^2 \div (5)^2\} \\ &= 9^2 + 11^2 = 81 + 121 = 202 \end{aligned}$$

2. $\sqrt{\frac{0.2^2+0.01^2+0.03^2}{0.02^2+0.1^2+0.003^2}}$
a) 2.02
b) 1.98
c) 2.03
d) 1.96
e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation:

$$\sqrt{\frac{0.2^2+0.01^2+0.03^2}{0.02^2+0.1^2+0.003^2}} = \sqrt{\frac{0.04+0.0001+0.0009}{0.0004+0.01+0.000009}} = \sqrt{3.93} = 1.98$$

3. If $(\frac{x}{y})^{a-5} = (\frac{y}{x})^{a-7}$, then the value of a is:
a) 5
b) 6
c) 7
d) 3
e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation: $(\frac{x}{y})^{a-5} = (\frac{y}{x})^{a-7} \Leftrightarrow (\frac{x}{y})^{a-5} = (\frac{x}{y})^{7-a} \Leftrightarrow a-5 = 7-a \Leftrightarrow a=6.$

4. $3.003 + 6.9(17 - 5.4(2.8 - 1.21) + 14) = ?$
 a) 35.5404
 b) 35.4405
 c) 157.6596
 d) -35.5404
 e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation:

$$= 3.003 + 6.9 (17 - 5.4(1.59) + 14)$$

$$= 3.003 + 6.9 (17.5 - 8.586 + 14)$$

$$= 3.003 + 6.9 (22.414)$$

$$= 3.003 + 154.6566$$

$$= 157.6596$$

5. $38\% \text{ of } 1288 + 16\% \text{ of } 134 - 115 = ?$
 a) 396
 b) 930
 c) 540
 d) 850
 e) 710

Answer (a) Explanation: $38\% \text{ of } 1288 + 16\% \text{ of } 134 - 115 = ?$
 $489.44 + 21.44 - 115 = 395.88$

Direction (6 to 10): What will come in place of the question mark in the following number series?

6. 112, 113, 105, 132, 68, ?
 a) 140
 b) 35
 c) 193
 d) 150
 e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation:

$$112 \quad 113 \quad 105 \quad 132 \quad 68 \quad ?$$

$$+ 1^3 \quad - 2^3 \quad + 3^3 \quad - 4^3 \quad + 5^3$$

Hence, question mark (?) will be replaced by 193.

7. 44, 14, 46, ?, 48, 16, 50.
 a) 14
 b) 17
 c) 36
 d) 15
 e) 28

Answer (d) Explanation:

Here the series consists of two series S_1 and S_2 :

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| S_1 : | 24 | 26 | 28 | 30 | | | | | | |
| +2 | +2 | | +2 | | | | | | | |
| S_2 : | 14 | 15 | 16 | | | | | | | |
| | | +1 | +1 | | | | | | | |

8. 5824, 5242, ?, 4247, 3823
 a) 4457
 b) 4865

- c) 4718
- d) 5154
- e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation: Each term in the series is obtained by subtracting from the preceding term the number formed by the first three digits of the preceding term. So, the missing term $5242 - 524 = 4718$

9. 46, 49, 58, ?, 110
- a) 78
 - b) 79
 - c) 77
 - d) 67
 - e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation:

$$46 + (2 \times 1^2 + 1) = 49$$

$$49 + (2 \times 2^2 + 1) = 58$$

$$58 + (2 \times 3^2 + 1) = 77$$

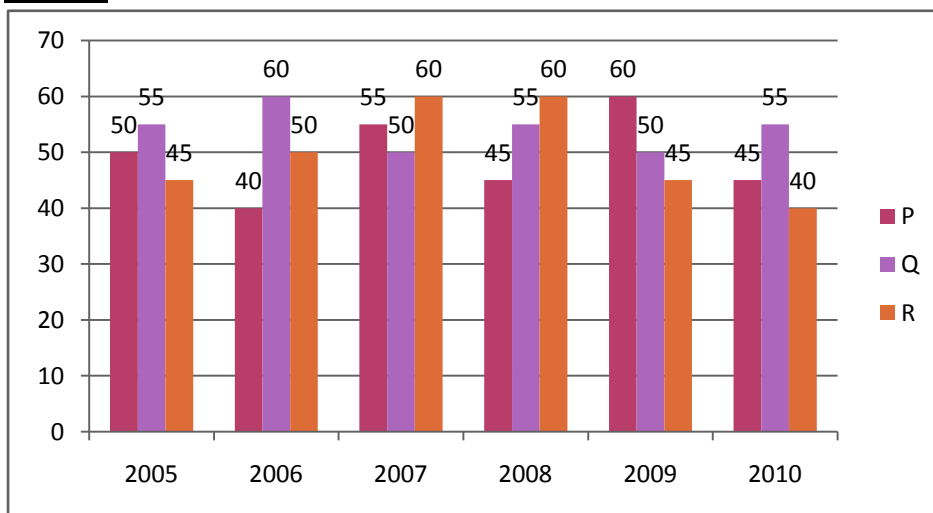
$$77 + (2 \times 4^2 + 1) = 110$$

10. 28, 42, 84, 210, 630, ?
- a) 2110
 - b) 2270
 - c) 2280
 - d) 2205
 - e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation: The sequence follows the pattern $\times 1.5, \times 2, \times 2.5, \times 3, \times 3.5$. The next term is $630 \times 3.5 = 2205$

Directions (11 - 15): A health drink company prepares the drinks of three different flavours P, Q and R. The production of three flavours over a period of six years has been expressed as bar graph provided below. Study the graph and answer the questions.

Production of three different flavours of health drinks of a company 6 years in (lakh bottles)



11. What was the approximate decline in the production of flavour R in 2010 as compared to the production of 2008 in percentage?

- a) 30.33%
- b) 53.33%
- c) 43.33%
- d) 33.33%
- e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation: Decline is $\frac{60-40}{60} \times 100\% = 33.33\%$

12. The average annual production of which flavour was maximum in the given period?

- a) Both P and R
- b) Only P
- c) Both P and Q
- d) Only Q
- e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation:

P= 295

Q=325

R=300

13. The percentage of the total production of flavour R in 2007 and 2008 with respect to the production of flavour P in 2005 and 2006 is

- a) 133.33%
- b) 97.67%
- c) 102.25%
- d) 115.35%
- e) None of these

Answer (a) Explanation:

Production of P in 2005 and 2006 is $50+40=90$

Production of R in 2007 and 2008 is $60+60=120$

Required percentage = $\frac{120}{90} \times 100 = 133.33$

14. What is the difference between the average production of flavour Q in 2008, 2009 and 2010 to that of flavour P in 2005, 2006 and 2007 (in lakh bottles)?

- a) 5.5
- b) 5
- c) 50
- d) 0.5
- e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation:

Average production of Q (2008-2010) = $\frac{55+50+55}{3} = 53.3$

Average production of P (2005-2007) = $\frac{50+40+55}{3} = 48.3$

The difference is $53.3-48.3=5$

15. In which of the following years the percentage rise or fall in production from the previous year maximum for the flavour of Q?

- a) 2010
- b) 2006
- c) 2007
- d) 2009
- e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation:

Values of percentage change for the four years are:

2006- 9.09%

2007- 16.6%

2009- 9.09%

2010- 9.09%

16. **Quantity 1:** Percentage of zinc in an alloy. 450 kg of alloy consists of 45% steel, 72 kg of aluminium and the rest zinc.

Quantity 2: Percentage of oranges thrown by vendor. A vendor sells 60% of oranges he had and throws away 15% of the remainder. Next day he sells 50% of the remainder and throws away the rest.

- a) Quantity I > Quantity II
- b) Quantity I < Quantity II
- c) Quantity I ≥ Quantity II
- d) Quantity I ≤ Quantity II
- e) Quantity I = Quantity II or No relation

Answer (a) Explanation:

Quantity 1: Amount of zinc

$$= 450 - 72 - \frac{45}{100} \times 450 = 450 - 549 = 351$$

$$\text{Percentage of cement} = \frac{175.5}{450} \times 100 = 39\%$$

Quantity 2: % of oranges thrown on day 1 = 15% of 40% = 6%

% of oranges thrown on day 2 = 50% of 34% = 17%

Total % of oranges thrown = (6 + 17)% = 23%

Quantity 1 > Quantity 2.

17.

Quantity 1: Highest weight. The average weight of 8 persons in a group is 92. Of these, the highest weight is 2 more than the next in value. If these two persons are eliminated, the average weight of the remaining persons is 88.

Quantity 2: Number of managers. The average monthly salary of employees, consisting of managers and workers of an organization is Rs. 3000. The average salary of an manager is

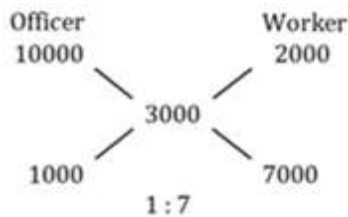
Rs. 10000 while that of a worker is Rs. 2000 per month. There are a total 800 employees in the organization.

- a) Quantity I > Quantity II
- b) Quantity I < Quantity II
- c) Quantity I ≥ Quantity II
- d) Quantity I ≤ Quantity II
- e) Quantity I = Quantity II or No relation

Answer (a) Explanation:

Quantity1: Let highest weight be x ,
 then the next in value is $x - 2$
 $x + (x - 2) = 8 \times 92 - 6 \times 88 = 736 - 528 = 208$
 $\Rightarrow x = \frac{210}{2} = 105$

Quantity2:



No. of officers = $\frac{1}{8} \times 800 = 100$

Quantity1 > Quantity 2.

18. Quantity1: Cost price of calculator. If a calculator is sold at 8% profit instead of 8% loss, it would have brought Rs. 24 more.

Quantity 2: Cost price of the coffee mug. A man sells a coffee mug at a profit of 20%. If he had bought it at 20% less and sold it for Rs. 18 less he would have gained 25%.

- a) Quantity I > Quantity II
- b) Quantity I < Quantity II
- c) Quantity I ≥ Quantity II
- d) Quantity I ≤ Quantity II
- e) Quantity I = Quantity II or No relation

Answer (a) Explanation:

Quantity1:

$$\frac{108}{100}x - \frac{92x}{100} = 24$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{16x}{100} = 24$$

$$\Rightarrow x = 150$$

Quantity2:

$$\left(\frac{120}{100}x - 18\right) - \frac{80}{100}x = \frac{25}{100} \times \frac{80}{100}x$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{40x}{100} - \frac{20x}{100} = 18$$

$$\Rightarrow \frac{20x}{100} = 18$$

$$\Rightarrow x = 90$$

Quantity 1 > Quantity 2.

19. A can complete a piece of work in 60 days whereas B and C working together can complete it in 15 days. When A and C alternately work for a day each the work gets completed in 40 days.

Quantity 1: Number of days in which B will complete twice the work.

Quantity 2: Number of days in which C will complete twice the work.

- Quantity I > Quantity II
- Quantity I < Quantity II
- Quantity I \geq Quantity II
- Quantity I \leq Quantity II
- Quantity I = Quantity II or No relation

Answer (e) Explanation:

Let total units of work be 60 units.

Then units done by A in one day = 1 unit

For 40 days, A and C work alternately.

A does $20 \times 1 = 20$ units and C does 40 units in 20 waits.

i.e. C does 2 units/day.

B and C do all the units in 15 days.

Which means C does $15 \times 2 = 30$ units and

B does remaining 30 units.

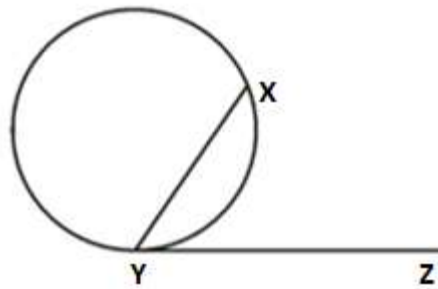
Hence, B does 2 units/day.

Efficiency of B & C is same.

Hence, Quantity 1 = Quantity 2 .

20. In the given figure, ZY is the tangent to the circle, $\angle XYZ = 64^\circ$

And 'M' is any point on the minor arc XY.

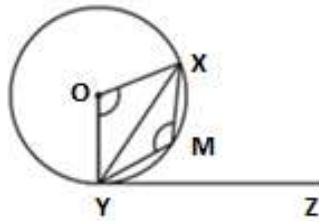


Quantity 1: $\angle XMY$

Quantity 2: $\angle XOY$

- a) Quantity I > Quantity II
- b) Quantity I < Quantity II
- c) Quantity I \geq Quantity II
- d) Quantity I \leq Quantity II
- e) Quantity I = Quantity II or No relation

Answer (a) Explanation:



Let 'O' be the centre of circle

$$\angle OYX = \angle OYZ - \angle XYZ = 90^\circ - 64^\circ = 26^\circ$$

$$\angle OYX = \angle OXY = 26^\circ \text{ (since } OY = OX = \text{radius)}$$

$$\angle YOX = 180 - \angle OYX - \angle OXY = 180^\circ - 26^\circ - 26^\circ = 128^\circ$$

$$\angle XMY = \frac{1}{2} \text{ reflex } \angle XOY = \frac{1}{2} \times (360^\circ - 128^\circ) = \frac{1}{2} \times 232^\circ = 116^\circ$$

Quantity 1 > Quantity 2

21. A man has 1276 candles and can make one candle from 11 stubs after burning. How many candles can he make at the maximum?
- a) 126
 - b) 127
 - c) $125 \frac{5}{11}$
 - d) 129
 - e) None of these

Answer (a) Explanation:

1 candle can be made from 11 stubs.

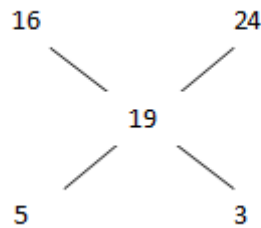
So number of candles from 1276 stubs is 116.

From the remaining 116 stubs, ten candles can be made and the remaining 6 stubs cannot make a candle. Hence 126 is the maximum number of candles that can be made.

22. Mr. Gupta spent Rs. 72 Crore on two properties for his real-estate project. Later he sold the first property at 16% profit and the second one at 24% profit. Thus he gained a total profit of 19%. The selling price of second property is:

- a) 27.00 crore
- b) 52.20 crore
- c) 45.00 crore
- d) 33.48 crore
- e) Cannot be determined

Answer (d) Explanation:



$$1^{\text{st}} : 2^{\text{nd}} = 5 : 3$$

Thus the cost price of 2nd property = $\frac{3}{8} \times 72 = 27$ Crore

Therefore, the selling price is = $27 + 27 \times \frac{24}{100} = 33.48$ Crore

23. Probability that Saurabh passes in mathematics is $\frac{2}{3}$ and the probability that he passes in English is $\frac{4}{9}$. If the probability of passing both courses is $\frac{1}{4}$, then the probability that Saurabh will pass in at least one of these subjects is:

- a) $\frac{31}{36}$
- b) $\frac{32}{36}$
- c) $\frac{12}{36}$
- d) $\frac{8}{36}$
- e) None of these

Answer (a) Explanation: Let A be the event that Saurabh passes in mathematics and B be the event that he passes in English.

$$\text{We have, } P(A) = \frac{2}{3}, P(B) = \frac{4}{9} \text{ and } P(A \cap B) = \frac{1}{4}$$

$$\therefore \text{ Required probability} = P(A \cup B)$$

$$= P(A) + P(B) - P(A \cap B) = \frac{2}{3} + \frac{4}{9} - \frac{1}{4} = \frac{31}{36}$$

24. There are 84 students in block A of a residential school. Due to the admission of 26 new students, the expenses of the mess increase by Rs. 62 per day while the average expenditure per head diminished by Rs. 3. What was the original expenditure of the mess?

- a) 1500
- b) 1266
- c) 1350
- d) 1398

e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation: Let the average be X, According to question, $84x + 62 = 110(x-3)$

$$X = \frac{392}{26} = 15.07$$

Total expenditure = $15.07 \times 84 = 1266$.

25. Ram has two books and one calculator. The calculator worth Rs. 192. If he sells calculator along with along with the first book, he has an amount double that of the value of the second book. But if he decides to sell the calculator along with the second book, the amount received would be less than the value of first book by Rs. 612. What is the value of first book?

- a) 2100
- b) 1800
- c) 2000
- d) 1600
- e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation:

Let the price of book II be Rs. X. According to question

$$192 + \text{Book I} = 2X$$

$$\text{And } 192 + \text{Book II} = 2x - 192 - 612$$

$$\text{Or, } 192 + X = 2x - 192 - 612$$

$$X = 996$$

On solving value of first book = Rs. 1800

26. A cab driver makes a profit of 20% on every trip from Delhi to Agra when he carries 4 passengers and the price of petrol is Rs. 60 a litre. Find the percentage profit for the same journey if he goes for 5 passengers per trip and price of petrol reduces to 20%. (Assume that revenue per passenger is the same in both the cases.)

- a) 87.5%
- b) 90%
- c) 95%
- d) 100%
- e) None of these

Answer (a) Explanation: The cost of the trip would be proportional to the price of petrol. So, if initially the cost is 100, the new cost would be 80. Also, initially since his profit is 20%, his revenue would be 120. When he takes 5 passengers instead of 4, his revenue goes up to 150 and his profit would be $\frac{70}{80} \times 100 = 87.5\%$

27. A man borrows money at a rate of 5% for the first two years, at 10% for the next four years and at 15% for the rest of the period. He pays Rs 16500 at the end of 10 years. How much money did he borrow?

- a) Rs 15000
- b) Rs 14500
- c) Rs 16500
- d) Rs 17500
- e) None of these

Answer (a) Explanation: Let the money borrowed be x.

$$\left(x \times \frac{5}{100} \times 2\right) + \left(x \times \frac{10}{100} \times 4\right) + \left(x \times \frac{15}{100} \times 4\right) = 16500$$

$$\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)x + \left(\frac{4}{10}\right)x + \left(\frac{6}{10}\right)x = 16500$$

$$x = 15000$$

28. A contractor estimated that his team of 15 men can construct a bridge in 100 days if there was no rain. (Assume the team does work on rainy day and rain is the only factor that can deter the team from working). However, on 51st day, after 5 days of rain, he hired 5 more people and finished the project early. If the job was done in $96\frac{1}{4}$ days, how many days after day 50 had rain?

- a) 6
- b) 8
- c) 9
- d) 5
- e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation: Total man – days needed = $15 \times 100 = 1500$

Man days worked before 51 day = $(50 - 5) \times 15 = 675$

Man days worked after 51st day = $20 \times (46.25 - x)$, where X is the number of days it rained after day 50.

$$1500 = 675 + 20 \times (46.25 - x)$$

X = 5 days.

29. A, B, C alone can construct a house in 15, 30 and 20 days respectively. All together start the work, after 4 days they have some misunderstanding and they start working alternatively starting with A. How many days are required to complete the construction of the house?

- a) 12 days
- b) 11 days
- c) 15 days
- d) 17 days
- e) None of these

Answer (a) Explanation: Work done by A,B,C = $\frac{1}{15} + \frac{1}{30} + \frac{1}{20} = \frac{9}{60}$

Work done in 4 days = $\frac{9}{60} \times 4 = \frac{36}{60}$, remaining work = $60 - \frac{36}{60} = \frac{24}{60}$

By working alternatively total work done in 12 days

30. Find out the speed of stream if a boat covers. 72 km upstream and 48 km downstream in 13 hours, and 48 km upstream and 72 km downstream in 12 hours

- a) 5 km/hr
- b) 2 km/hr
- c) 3 km/hr
- d) 4 km/hr
- e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation:

Let the speed of boat be x

Speed of stream be y

$$\text{Then } \frac{72}{x+y} + \frac{48}{x+y} = 13$$

$$\frac{48}{x-y} + \frac{72}{x+y} = 12$$

$$\text{Let } \frac{1}{x-y} = a \quad \frac{1}{x+y} = b$$

$$72a + 48b = 13$$

$$48a + 72b = 12$$

$$a = \frac{1}{8} \& b = \frac{1}{12}$$

$$\text{So } x - y = 8 \quad x + y = 12$$

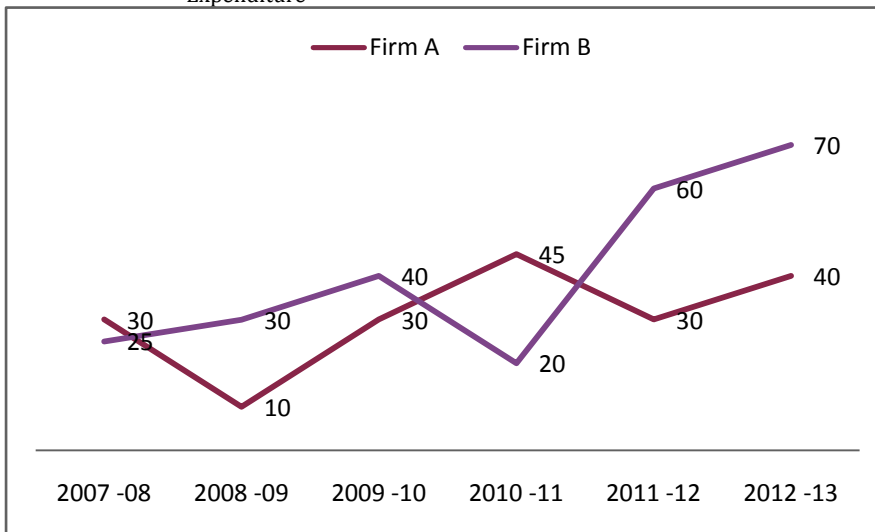
$$= y = 2$$

Hence speed of stream = 2 km/h.

Directions (31-35): Study the following bar chart and the data table to answer the questions given below them.

Percent profit earned by two firms over the given years

$$\% \text{ profit} = \frac{(\text{Income} - \text{Expenditure})}{\text{Expenditure}} \times 100$$



1. For Firm A, its income in 2011-2012 was equal to its expenditure in 2012-2013, what was the ratio of its respective incomes in these two years?

- a) 4:5
- b) 3:4
- c) 5:7
- d) Cannot be determined
- e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation:

$$\text{Income of A in 2011-12} = \text{Expenditure of A in 2012-13} = \frac{\text{Income of A in 2012-13}}{1.4}$$

$$\text{Income of A in 2011-12} : \text{Income of A in 2012-13} = \frac{10}{14} = 5:7.$$

2. If the income of Firm A in 2008-09 was equal to the expenditure of Firm B in 2011-2012, what was the ratio of their respective profits?

- a) 13:15
- b) 15:26
- c) 13:26
- d) Cannot be determined
- e) None of these

Answer (e) Explanation:

Suppose in the year 2008 - 09 expenditure of Company A = Rs a

Then profit earned by Company A in the year = Rs (10% of a)

Hence, income of Company M = Rs (110% of a)

Again, expenditure of Company N in 2011 - 12

$$= \text{Rs. } \frac{a \times 110}{100}$$

Hence, profit earned by Company N in 2011-12

$$\frac{a \times 110}{100} \times \frac{60}{100}$$

Thus required ratio

$$= \frac{\frac{10}{100} \times a}{\frac{a \times 110}{100} \times \frac{60}{100}} = \frac{10}{66} = 5:33.$$

3. What was the difference in the expenditures of the two firms in 2009-2010?

- a) 10
- b) 100
- c) 1000
- d) Cannot be determined
- e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation: The given graph depicts only the percent profit earned by the two firms over the given years. Hence, these information are insufficient to answer the question.s

4. In 2012-13 the income of Firm B was Rs. 119 crores. What was its expenditure in that year?

- a) Rs. 76.8 crore
- b) Rs. 64 crore
- c) Rs. 70 crore
- d) Cannot be determined
- e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation: In 2012 – 13 profit earned by Firm B was 70%

Therefore, 170% of expenditure Rs. 119 crore

Thus, required expenditure = $119/170 \times 100 = \text{Rs. } 70 \text{ Crores}$

5. For Firm B, in which year is the percent of increase in percent profit over that of previous year the highest?
- 2012-13
 - 2009-2010
 - 2011-12
 - Cannot be determined
 - None of these

Answer (c) Explanation:

Percent of increase in percent profit over that of previous year

$$2008 - 2009 = \frac{(30-25)}{25} \times 100 = 20\%$$

$$2009 - 10 = \frac{(40-30)}{30} \times 100 = 33.33\%$$

$$2010 - 11 = \frac{(20-40)}{20} \times 100 = -50\%$$

$$2011 - 12 = \frac{(60-40)}{20} \times 100 = 200\%$$

$$2012 - 13 = \frac{(70-60)}{60} \times 100 = 16.66\%$$

Reasoning Ability

Directions (1-5): Study the following information carefully and answer the questions given below:

There are nine people P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8 and P9 who sit around a circular table. Some are facing towards and some are facing away from the center. They like different chocolates among Kit Kat, Dairy Milk, Five star, Mars and Bourneville. Not more than 2 people like the same chocolate. The following information is known about them.

P3 and P7 form the only pair that is sitting together and like the same chocolate. They are facing in opposite directions to each other. The one who likes Five star chocolate sits third to the left of P2 but is neither P3 nor P6. P1 sits second to the left of P6, who likes Dairy Milk. The one who likes Kit Kat is an immediate neighbour of P8 and P5 but none of them sits adjacent to P3 or P7. P1 and P8 face in the same direction as that of P5. P9 sits third to the right of P4, who is facing away from the center and likes Mars. P5 sits second to the left of P3. The persons who like Dairy Milk face towards the center. P1 either likes Kit Kat or Mars chocolate. One who sits second to the right of P9 likes Mars and faces opposite to the center.

- Who sits second to the right of P5?
 - P1
 - P8
 - P4
 - P9
 - P7

Answer (b)

- Who among the following like Kit Kat?
 - P3 and P9

- b) P5 and P7
- c) P9 and P1
- d) P5 and P9
- e) P1 and P7

Answer (c)

3. Which chocolate is liked by P2?

- a) Dairy Milk
- b) Five star
- c) Mars
- d) Bourneville
- e) Either Mars or Five star

Answer (c)

4. How many people face towards the centre?

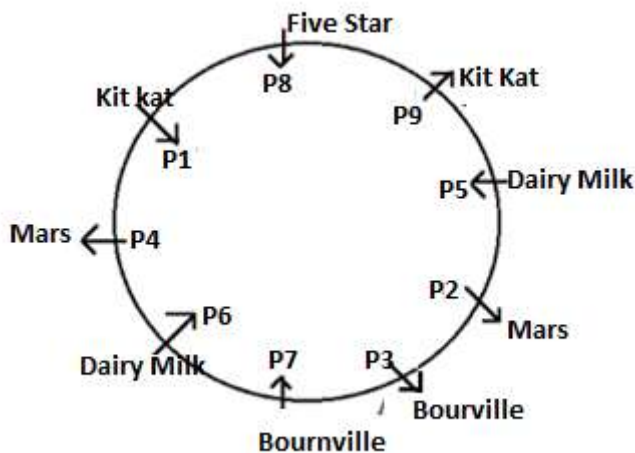
- a) 2
- b) 3
- c) 4
- d) 5
- e) Cannot be determined

Answer (d)

5. In which direction P7 and P1 are facing?

- a) Both of them face away from the center.
- b) Both of them face towards the center.
- c) P7 faces away from the center and P1 faces towards the center.
- d) P7 faces away from the center and P1 faces away from the center.
- e) Cannot be determined.

Answer (b) Explanation:



Directions (6 - 10): Study the following information carefully and answer the questions given below:

Twelve family members are sitting in two parallel rows containing six people each in such a way that there is an equal distance between adjacent persons. All of them gathered in

family function. And all of them are discussing some issues which are arising after the marriage of one family member. In row 1 – S1, S2, S3, S4, S5 and S6 are seated (but not necessarily in the same order) and all of them are facing south. In row 2 – N1, N2, N3, N4, N5 and N6 are seated (but not necessarily in the same order) and all of them are facing North. Therefore, in the given seating arrangement, each member seated in a row faces another member of the other row.

S3 is the sister of S4, who is son of N1. S2 is the mother of N2 and married to N1. S2 has only one daughter. N6 is grandmother of S4 and married to N5. S1 is brother of N1's sister N3. S5 is the daughter of N6. S2's father N4 has only one son S6. S4 sits fourth to the left of one who is brother of N1. The one facing S1 sits third to the left of N5. Only one person sits between N5 and N1. N1 does not sit at any of the extreme ends of the line. The one facing N6 sits second to the right of S6's sister. N6 does not sit at any of the extreme ends of the line. Only two people sit between S2 and S2's brothers. The one facing S2 sits second to the left of N4. N2 is not an immediate neighbour of N6. S3 is not an immediate neighbour of S4.

6. Which of the following groups of people represents the people sitting at the extreme ends of both the rows?

- a) S4, S6, N4, N3
- b) S4, S2, N2, N3
- c) S5, S2, N2, N5
- d) S1, S5, N1, N2
- e) S1, S6, N6, N4

Answer (a)

7. Who faces son of N4?

- a) S4
- b) S3
- c) N3
- d) S5
- e) S2

Answer (C)

8. Which of the following is true with respect to the given information?

- a) S2 faces one of the immediate neighbours of N4.
- b) N2 sits exactly between N3 and N1.
- c) None of the given options is true.
- d) S1 is an immediate neighbour of S2.
- e) S1 faces N6.

Answer (e)

9. Which of the following is true regarding S5?

- a) S2 sits second to the right of S5.
- b) N2 is an immediate neighbour of the one who faces S5.

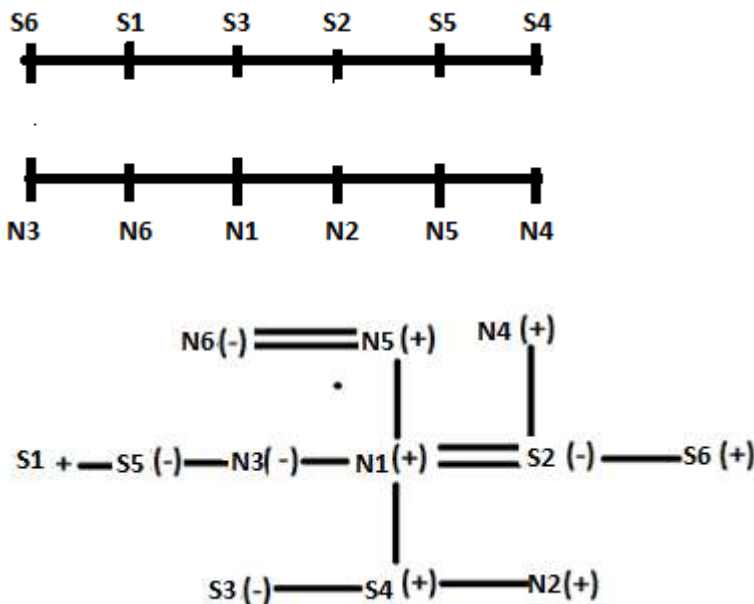
- c) Both S3 and S6 are immediate neighbours of S5.
- d) Only one person sits between S5 and S1.
- e) None of the given options is true.

Answer (b)

10. Who amongst the following sits second to the right of the person who faces sister of N2?

- a) N2
- b) N6
- c) N3
- d) N4
- e) N5

Answer (e) Explanation:



Directions (11-15): Study the following information carefully and answer the questions given below:

There are seven persons - Mandeep, Priya, Quereshi, Radha, Sonal, Tina and Uma - who participated in a singing competition which started on 15th June and ended on 21st June. In the first round of the competition, each of them performed dances, viz Manipuri, Odissi, Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Ghoomar, Bhangra and Kathak, but not necessarily in the same order. They like different colours, viz White, Yellow, Red, Black, Brown, Green and Pink, but not necessarily in the same order.

Uma, who likes Green, performed on the fourth day of the competition but performed neither Manipuri nor Odissi dance. Two performances were held between the performance of Uma and Tina, neither of whom performed on the 1st day of the week. There was one performance between the performance of Radha and Quereshi. But Quereshi performance did not happen either on 1st or on 3rd day of the competition. Quereshi likes Yellow colour and performed Manipuri dance. The one, who performed Kuchipudi dance on the last day of competition, likes Red colour. Priya did not perform on the day either immediately before or

immediately after the performance of Radha, who does not like either Brown or White or Black colour. Sonal performed immediately after Quereshi and he likes White colour. Mandeep does not like Brown colour and performed a Kathakali dance. Radha did not perform either Kathak or Bhangra dance. The one who performed in Ghoomar was scheduled immediately after the performance of the Manipuri dancer.

11. Which of the following combinations is definitely false regarding their schedule?

- a) Quereshi- Yellow-Manipuri
- b) Radha-Pink-Odissi
- c) Mandeep-Black-Kathakali
- d) Uma-Green- Kuchipudi
- e) None of these

Answer (d)

12. Who among the following performed on the fifth day of the competition?

- a) Sonal
- b) Tina
- c) Quereshi
- d) Mandeep
- e) None of these

Answer (c)

13. Who is Bhangra dancer?

- a) U
- b) R
- c) P
- d) Either P or U
- e) None of these

Answer (d)

14. If 'Uma' is related to 'Yellow', 'Sonal' is related to 'Red', then which of the following is 'Radha.' related to?

- a) Brown
- b) Green
- c) Black
- d) Pink
- e) None of these

Answer (b)

15. What is the favourite colour of the person who sings on 19th June?

- a) Yellow
- b) Pink
- c) Black
- d) Brown
- e) None of these

Answer (a)

Explanation:

| Day | Person | Colour | Song |
|-----|--------|--------|------|
|-----|--------|--------|------|

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|--------|-----------------|
| 15 th June | Priya | Brown | Bhangra/ Kathak |
| 16 th June | Mandeep | Black | Kathakali |
| 17 th June | Radha | Pink | oddissi |
| 18 th June | Uma | Green | Bhangra/ Kathak |
| 19 th June | Quereshi | Yellow | Manipuri |
| 20 th June | Sonal | White | Ghoomar |
| 21st June | Tina | red | Kuchipudi |

Directions (16 -20): In each question below give three statements followed by three conclusions numbered I, II and III. You have to take the given statements to be true even if they seem to be at variance with commonly known facts. Read all the conclusions and then decide which of the given conclusions logically follows from the given statements, disregarding commonly known facts.

16. Statements:

Some cakes are bikes.

All bikes are laptops.

All laptops are hills.

Conclusions:

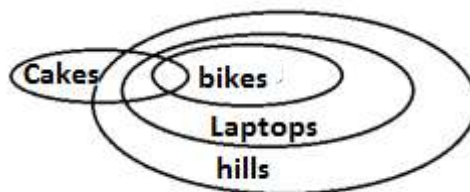
I. All bikes are hills.

II. All hills being cakes is a possibility.

- Only conclusion II is true
- Neither conclusion I nor II is true
- Only conclusion I is true
- Either conclusion I or II is true
- Both conclusion I and II are true

Answer :e)

Explanation:



17. Statements:

Some cars are guns.

No cow is a car.

All guns are horses.

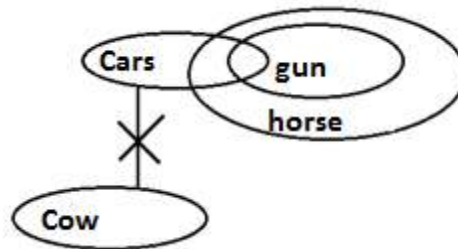
Conclusions:

- At least some cars are definitely horses.
- At least some guns are not cows.
- No horse is a gun.

- a) Only I follow
- b) Only I and II follow
- c) Only III follows
- d) None follows
- e) None of the above

Answer :b)

Explanation:



18. Statements:

- All iron is copper.
- Some steel are copper.
- No Zinc is a iron.

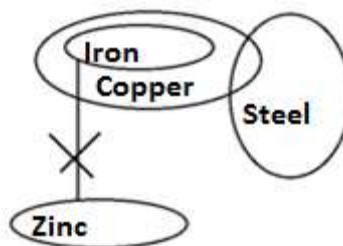
Conclusions:

- I. some iron is definitely not steel.
- II. At least some copper are steel.
- III. Some Zincs are copper.

- a) Only II follows
- b) Only III follows
- c) Only I and III follow
- d) Only II and III follow
- e) None of the above

Answer: a)

Explanation:



19. Statements:

- All lions are tigers.
- No sparrow is a lion.
- No mice are a tiger.

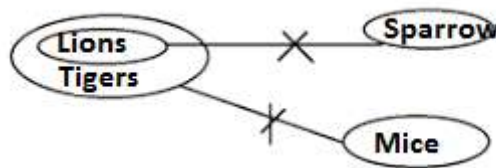
Conclusions:

- I. No lion is a mice.

- II. No lion is a sparrow.
 III. At least some tigers are not sparrows.
- Only II and III follow
 - Only I follow
 - All I, II and III follow
 - None follows
 - None of the above

Answer: c)

Explanation:



20. Statements:

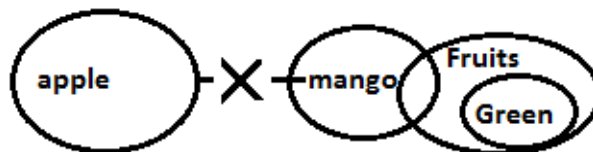
- No apple is a mango.
 Some mangos are fruits.
 All green are fruits.

Conclusions:

- some fruits are not apples.
 - At least some mangos are apples.
 - No mango is a green.
- Only I follow
 - Only I and II follow
 - Only II follows
 - All I, II and III follow
 - None of the above

Answer :e)

Explanation:



Directions (21 - 25): In these questions, a relationship between different elements is shown in the statement(s). The statements are followed by two conclusions. Give answer

- If only conclusion I is true.
- If only conclusion II is true.
- If either conclusion I or II is true.
- If neither conclusion I nor II is true.
- If both conclusion I and II are true.

21. Statements: $X > Y \geq Z < D, Z = E > G$

Conclusions: I. $D > E$ II. $Y > E$

Answer (a) Explanation: Given statements:

$$X > Y \geq Z < D \dots(i)$$

$$Z = E > G \dots(ii)$$

Combining (i) and (ii), we get

$$X > Y \geq C = E < D$$

Thus, $E < D$ or $D > E$ is true. Hence conclusion I is true.

Again, $Y \geq E$ is true. But conclusion II ($Y > E$) is not definitely true.

22. Statements: $A \geq H > C \geq N, H = S$

Conclusions: I. $S > A$ II. $N < S$

Answer (b) Explanation: Given statements:

$$A \geq H > C \geq N \dots(i)$$

$$H = S \dots(ii)$$

Combining (i) and (ii), we get

$$A \geq H = S > C \geq N$$

Thus, $A \geq S$ or $S \leq P$ is true. But conclusion I ($S > A$) is not true.

Again, $S > N$ or $N < S$ is true. Hence conclusion II is true.

23. Statements: $F > M = Z > P < Q > K$

Conclusions: I. $K = F$ II. $Q > M$

Answer (d) Explanation: Given statements:

$$F > M = Z > P < Q > K$$

Thus, we can't compare V and F or M and Q.

So, conclusion I ($K = S$) is not true and also conclusion II ($Q > M$) is not true.

Hence neither conclusion I nor II is true.

24. Statements: $A < U = V \geq B > P \geq Q$

Conclusions: I. $B > A$ II. $V > Q$

Answer (b) Explanation: Given statements:

$$A < U = V \geq B > P \geq Q$$

Thus, we can't compare A and B. Hence conclusion I ($B > A$) is not true. Again, $V > Q$ is true. Hence conclusion II is true.

25. Statements: $A \geq B > R > X, E = J > L \geq X$

Conclusions: I. $E > X$ II. $A > L$

Answer (a) Explanation: Given statements:

$$A \geq B > R > X \dots(i)$$

$$E = J > L \geq X \dots(ii)$$

Combining (i) and (ii), we get

$$A \geq B > R > X \leq L < J = E$$

Thus, $X < E$ or $E > X$ is true. Hence conclusion I is true.

Again, we can't compare A and L. Hence conclusion II ($A > L$) is not true.

Directions (26 - 30): Study the following information carefully and answer the given questions.

In the following questions, δ , $@$, \odot , $\%$ and $*$ are used with the following meanings as illustrated below:

' $X \odot Y$ ' means 'X is not smaller than Y.'

' $X \% Y$ ' means 'X is neither smaller than nor equal to Y.'

' $X * Y$ ' means 'X is neither greater than nor equal to Y.'

'X δ Y' means 'X is not greater than Y.'

'X @ Y' means 'X is neither greater than nor smaller than Y.'

Now, in each of the following questions assuming the given statements to be true, find with of the three conclusions I, II, and III given below them is/are definitely true and give your answer accordingly.

26. Statements: P δ X, X%M, D@M, E%D.

Conclusions:

- I. P%E
 - II. X *E
 - III. D δ P
- a) I is true
 - b) III is true
 - c) All are true
 - d) Either I or II is true
 - e) None true

Answer (e) Explanation: P<X>M=D<E

27. Statements: P*Q, Q@R, R@S, S δ T

Conclusions:

- I. T%S
 - II. T@S
 - III. R%P
- a) I and II are true
 - b) Either I or II and III are true
 - c) II, III are true
 - d) All are true
 - e) None of these

Answer (b) Explanation: P<Q=R>S≤T.

28. Statements: U@V, V%W, W@X, Y*X

Conclusions:

- I. U%Y
 - II. V%Y
 - III. U*W
- a) None is true
 - b) Only II is true
 - c) Only I and II is true
 - d) Only III is true
 - e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation: U≥V>W=X>Y.

29. Statements: P*Q, Q δ R, S%R, S @T

Conclusions:

- I. P@T

- II. Q@T
- III. S%P
- a) None is true
- b) Only I is true
- c) Only II is true
- d) Only III is true
- e) None of these

Answer (d) $P < Q \leq R < S \geq T$.

30. Statements: $F \delta G, G \odot M, M @ O, O * P$

Conclusions:

- I. $F \% M$
- II. $O @ G$
- III. $P \% M$
- a) None is true
- b) Only I is true
- c) Only II is true
- d) Only III is true
- e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation: $F \leq G \geq M = O < P$.

31. A boy walks 10km towards south from point M. And take the right turn and walk 16km and reach point N. From N he takes right turn and walks 14km and reaches point R. From R he takes right turn and walks 20 km and reaches point S. From S he takes again right turn and walks 4km and reaches point T.

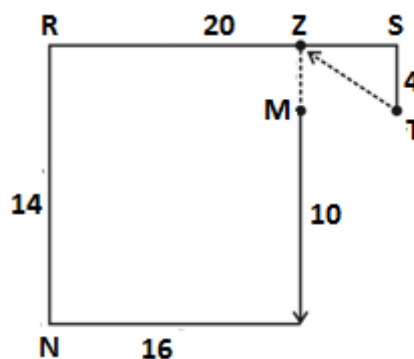
If there is a point Z which is 4km north from point M. Then Z is in which direction with respect to T?

- a) North-west
- b) South-west
- c) North-east
- d) South-east
- e) None of these

Answer

(a)

Explanation:



32. If "animal live on earth" is coded as 'za ka vo ta' and " live high on plant" is coded as ' ka sx fz za' and " plant are animal place" is coded as " ' lv sx vo cz' then on same language" Are" is coded as?

- a) lv
- b) cz
- c) vo
- d) Either (a) or (b)
- e) Either (a) or (c)

Answer (d) Explanation:

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------|-------|------------|-------|------|-----------|
| Word | animal | earth | fly/ on | plant | high | are/place |
| Code | vo | ta | za / ka | sx | fz | lv/ cz |

33. If "College study provide" is coded as ' sx ft rl' and " contribute provide employment" is coded as 'ny aq ft' and " employment with result" is coded as " 'lx cz aq' then what is the code for " "contribute with result"?

- a) lx cz aq
- b) lx ft cz
- c) lx nycz
- d) lx nysx
- e) None of these

Answer (c) Explanation: Provide = ft
Employment = aq

Contribute = ny

Directions (29-30): Study the following information carefully and answer the questions given below:

- I. 'A × B' means 'A is the sister of B'.
- II. 'A + B' means 'A is the mother of B'.
- III. 'A – B' means 'A is the father of B'.
- IV. 'A ÷ B' means 'A is the brother of B'.

34. Which of the following represents 'M is the grandfather of O'?

- a) M + N – O
- b) M ÷ N – O
- c) M × N + O
- d) M ÷ N + O
- e) None of these

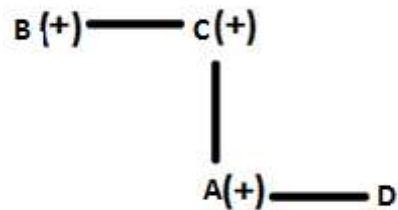
Answer (e) Explanation: Going through the options, none of the given options is correct.

35. Which of the following represents 'A is nephew of B'?

- a) A ÷ C – B
- b) B ÷ C – A

- c) $B \times C + A \times D$
 d) $B \div C - A \div D$
 e) None of these

Answer (d) Explanation:



English Language

Directions (1-5): Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow:

The Maharashtra government's decision to treat madrassas giving only religious education as non-schools cannot be **faulted**. To be called an educational institution, the school should also teach mathematics, English, science and social science, as **prescribed** by the state education board. The decision satisfies the Right to Education Act which defines a school. The decision is also applicable to Vedic schools that teach only the Vedas. A person who studied only Islamic history and teachings will not be considered educated. Such madrassas will not be eligible for government grant or subsidy. Calling the decision as targeting Muslims is missing the point. It is a wake-up call.

The Muslims have, time and again, proved that they are not **averse** to education, including higher education. Given equal opportunity, they do exceedingly well in education. In any case, it is the poor who send their **wards** to the madrassas. Since education in most madrassas is free, the parents do not have any say in their management. There is also no one to monitor the quality. As a result, thousands of children complete their education in madrassas without learning any language other than Arabic and have no understanding of science, mathematics and social science. Such students once they complete prove unfit for jobs and end up in religious institutions with no scope for career growth.

Unfortunately, some of them are also recruited by agencies inimical to the state. They lack the ability to differentiate and get carried away when **extremism** is **couched** in religious terminology. When the state is unable to provide free education to children who attend madrassas, their closure cannot be an option. In some states like Gujarat, madrassas provide modern education using tools such as computers and the Internet along with religious education. The Maharashtra government's decision should encourage the madrassas to change their syllabi so that students acquire the skills necessary to compete in the job market. Once they have acquired the basic skills, those interested can go in for higher studies in Islamic history and **theology**. Alas, the present system is aimed at keeping a section of the Muslim community in darkness, which is not in the interest of either the community or the country.

1. According to the passage, Madrassas have been considered by Maharashtra Government as:

- a) An educational institution equivalent to school.
- b) Religious Education Institution.
- c) A primary education school.
- d) A higher studies educational institution.
- e) None of the above

Answer: b)

Explanation: The first line of the passage clearly states that the Maharashtra Government has decided to treat madrassas as non-schools imparting only religious education.

2. The Maharashtra Government will not provide grant or subsidy to which institutions?

- a) Madrassas teaching all the subjects.
- b) Vedic Schools teaching all the subjects.
- c) Schools teaching Islamic History along with other subjects.
- d) Vedic Schools teaching only Vedas.
- e) None of the above

Answer: d)

Explanation: The first paragraph clearly states that the Maharashtra government's decision to treat madrassas giving only religious education as non-schools applies to Vedic schools that teach only the Vedas.

3. According to the passage, children completing educations from madrassas ends up learning which language only?

- a) Hindi
- b) English
- c) Islamic
- d) Arabic
- e) None of the above

Answer: d)

Explanation: It has been clearly mentioned in the second paragraph that thousands of children complete their education in madrassas without learning any language other than Arabic.

4. Madrassas in Gujarat provide what kind of education to their students?

- a) Traditional education along with religious education.
- b) Modern education without any religious education.
- c) Modern education along with religious education.

- d) Traditional education without any religious education.
- e) None of the above.

Answer: c)

Explanation: It has been clearly mentioned in the third paragraph that in some states like Gujarat, madrassas provide modern education using tools such as computers and the Internet along with religious education.

5. According to the author of the passage, the aim of present education system is:
- a) To keep the entire Muslim community in darkness.
 - b) To keep a section of the Muslim community in darkness.
 - c) To keep the entire Hindu community in darkness.
 - d) To keep the entire nation in darkness.
 - e) None of the above

Answer: b)

Explanation: The last line of the passage clearly states that the present system is aimed at keeping a section of the Muslim community in darkness, which is not in the interest of either the community or the country.

Directions (6 - 8): The following questions have a word highlighted from the passage with four words following it. Choose the best word that matches the meaning of the highlighted word as your answer.

6. Prescribed
- a) Disposed
 - b) Specified
 - c) Refused
 - d) Confused
 - e) None of the above

Answer: b)

Explanation: Both 'Prescribed' and 'Specified' means stating authoritatively or as a rule that an action or procedure should be carried out.

7. Wards
- a) Independent
 - b) Majors
 - c) Minors
 - d) Mature
 - e) None of the above

Answer: c)

Explanation: Both 'Ward' and 'Minor' means a child or young person under the care and control of a guardian.

8. Couched
a) Escaped
b) Engrossed
c) Bagged
d) Formulated
e) Evaded

Answer: d)

Explanation: Both 'Couched' and 'Formulated' means to express something in language of a specified style.

Directions (9 - 10): The following questions have a word highlighted from the passage with four words following it. Choose the best word that is opposite in meaning to the highlighted word as your answer.

9. Faulted
a) Failed
b) Weakened
c) Perfection
d) Flawed
e) None of the above

Answer: c)

Explanation: Faulted means someone made some mistake and 'Perfection' is the exact opposite word.

10. Averse
a) Allergy
b) Agree
c) Dislike
d) Contrary
e) None of the above

Answer: b)

Explanation: 'Averse' means having a strong dislike of or opposition to something and 'Agree' is the exact opposite word.

Directions (11 - 20): In the following passage, there are blanks each of which has been numbered. For each number some words are suggested below the passage, one of which fits the blank appropriately. Find the appropriate words.

According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the banking sector in India is sound, adequately 11 and well-regulated. Indian financial and 12 conditions are much better than in many other countries of the world. Credit, market and 13 risk studies show that Indian banks are generally 14 and have withstood the global downturn well. With a sense of optimism slowly 15 in, the banking industry expects that 2015 will bring better growth prospects. This optimism stems from factors such as the Government working hard to 16

the industrial growth in the country and the RBI initiating a number of measures that would go a long way in helping the banks to 17. The recent announcements of RBI, it is felt, are a clear pointer to the future of the restructured domestic banking industry. The Indian banking sector is 18, with 46 commercial banks jostling for business with dozens of foreign banks as well as rural and co-operative lenders. State banks control 80 percent of the market, leaving relatively small shares for private rivals. At the end of February, 13.7 crore accounts had been opened under Pradhanmantri Jan Dhan Yojna (PMJDY) and 12.2 crore RuPay debit cards were 19. These new accounts have 20 deposits of Rs 12,694 crore (US\$ 2.01 billion).

11.

- a) Realised
- b) Subsidised
- c) Defunded
- d) Capitalised
- e) None of the above

Answer: d)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Capitalised' which means to provide money for the ventures.

12.

- a) Climatic
- b) Political
- c) Economic
- d) Environmental
- e) None of the above

Answer: c)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Economic' which means something business or financial related.

13.

- a) Personal
- b) Liquidity
- c) Systematic
- d) Security
- e) None of the above

Answer: b)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Liquidity' which means the ability to convert an asset into cash quickly.

14.

- a) Resilient
- b) Delicate
- c) Weak
- d) Rigid
- e) None of the above

Answer: a)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Resilient' which means being able to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

15.

- a) Retreating
- b) Missing
- c) Decreasing
- d) Leaving
- e) Creeping

Answer: e)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Creeping' which means something occurring or developing gradually and almost imperceptibly.

16.

- a) Absorb
- b) Cripple
- c) Anticipate
- d) Revitalise
- e) Impede

Answer: d)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Revitalise' which means to instill something with new life and vitality.

17.

- a) Subsist
- b) Prevail
- c) Restructure
- d) Survive
- e) None of the above

Answer: c)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Restructure' which means to organize differently.

18.

- a) Collaborated
- b) Fragmented
- c) Aligned
- d) Combined
- e) None of the above

Answer: b)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Fragmented' which means to divide something in segments.

19.

- a) Issued
- b) Released
- c) Furnished
- d) Equipped
- e) None of the above

Answer: a)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Issued' which means to supply or distribute something for use or sale.

20.

- a) Divided
- b) Dissuaded
- c) Mobilised
- d) Dispersed
- e) Separated

Answer: c)

Explanation: The appropriate word should be 'Mobilised' which means to organize and make something ready for action.

Directions (21 - 30): In each of the following questions there are four parts a, b, c and d, among which one part is erroneous. Find out which part of the sentence has an error and mark 'e' if no error is found. Ignore punctuation errors.

21. The road (a)/ to famous pilgrimage (b)/ passes through (c)/ a mountain (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: b)

Explanation: Add 'the' before the word 'famous pilgrimage' because 'the' has to be used for particular objects.

22. His colony comprises (a)/ of seven blocks and (b)/ thirty flats in an (c)/ area of about hundred yards (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: d)

Explanation: Add 'a' before hundred yards.

23. The Indian Armed Force (a)/ consists of (b)/ the Indian Army, Indian Navy,(c)/ Indian Air Force and Indian Coast Guard (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: a)

Explanation: Instead of 'Indian Armed Force', it should be 'Indian Armed Forces'.

24. She is amongst (a)/ those people (b)/ who never (c)/ accepts their mistake (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: d)

Explanation: Instead of 'accepts', the word should be 'accept'.

25. What is needed is (a)/ proper guidelines (b)/ to build a (c)/ framework for development (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: a)

Explanation: Instead of 'What is needed is', it should be 'what is needed are'.

26. The symptoms of nerve-poisoning (a)/ are due to the (b)/ carbolic acid which (c)/ circulate around the blood (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: d)

Explanation: Instead of 'around the blood', it should be 'in the blood'.

27. One can play (a)/ as much games (b)/ as one wants (c)/ to play (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: b)

Explanation: Instead of 'as much games', it should be 'as many games'.

28. As soon as the (a)/ principal entered (b)/ everyone stood (c)/ in respect (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: e)

Explanation: There is no mistake or error in the sentence.

29. The manager (a)/ tested his workers (b)/ to see if they can (c)/ understand the latest technology (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: c)

Explanation: 'To see' can be removed as it is redundant after 'tested'.

30. The passengers (a)/ are requested (b)/ to be in (c)/ its seats (d). / *No error (e)*

Answer: d)

Explanation: 'Its' has to be replaced with 'their'.

SARKARI NAUKRI

Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission

- Vacancy Details: 2808 LDC & Others
- Eligibility: Class 12 Pass
- Last date: 15 June 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/ROS8Dh>

SSC

- Vacancy Details: 2221 SI, ASI Posts
- Eligibility: Graduate
- Last date: 15 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/yQ21MY>

India Post

- Vacancy Details: 1912 Gramin Dak Sevaks Posts
- Eligibility: Class 10 Pass
- Last date: 11 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/kNAOIn>

Bihar Public Service Commission

- Vacancy Details: 1171 Assistant Professor Posts
- Eligibility: Post Graduate Degree
- Last date: 31 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/2WW41W>

PSPSCL

- Vacancy Details: 1500 Asst Lineman Posts
- Eligibility: Class 10 Pass

- Last date: 8 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/jxT2W0>

Telangana State Public Service Commission

- Vacancy Details: 616 Physical Education Teachers
- Eligibility: Class 12 Pass
- Last date: 04 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/SiW8R5>

Bank of India

- Vacancy Details: 670 Officer and Manager
- Eligibility: Graduate
- Last date: 5 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/BWcoH7>

UPSC

- Vacancy Details: Combined Medical Services Examination 2017
- Eligibility: M.B.B.S Degree
- Last date: 19 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/cjrS4j>

India Post

- Vacancy Details: 579 Gram Dak Sevak
- Eligibility: Class 10 Pass
- Last date: 18 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/vbRyLW>

Dena Bank

- Vacancy Details: 300 PO
- Eligibility: Graduate degree

- Last date: 09 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/WIG8Qm>

West Bengal Police

- Vacancy Details: 259 Forest Guard
- Eligibility: Class 10 Pass
- Last date: 19 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/sYXVvn>

AIIMS, Bhubaneswar

- Vacancy Details: 217 Senior Resident Posts
- Eligibility: MD/MS/MDS/DNB/DM/MCH
- Interview Date: 11 May & 12 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/SbZZm7>

TSPSC

- Vacancy Details: 372 Art Teachers
- Eligibility: Class 10 Pass
- Last Date: 04 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/ZqJD6y>

TSPSC

- Vacancy Details: 533 Staff Nurse Posts
- Eligibility: Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 6 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/BNOZhU>

Delhi Cantonment Board

- Vacancy Details: 217 Safaiwala & Other Posts
- Last Date: 31 May 2017

- Know More: <https://goo.gl/4X8H10>

AIIMS, Patna

- Vacancy Details: 279 Faculty Posts
- Eligibility: Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 1 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/Ne6NUm>

TSPSC

- Vacancy Details: 197 Music Teacher Posts
- Eligibility: Graduate/ Post Graduate
- Last Date: 04 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/4AcCUX>

Odisha Staff Selection Commission

- Vacancy Details: 174 Soil Conservation Extension Workers
- Eligibility: Class 12 Pass
- Last Date: 24 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/b1tjUf>

Goa Shipyard Limited

- Vacancy Details: 149 Non Executive Cadre Posts
- Eligibility: Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 25 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/qcaU3u>

National Seeds Corporation Limited

- Vacancy Details: 188 Senior Trainees, Management Trainees and Other
- Eligibility: Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 6 May 2017

- Know More:
<https://goo.gl/pO6Uwl>

Syndicate Bank

- Vacancy Details: 114 Temporary Attender/Part Time Sweeper Posts
- Eligibility: Class 10/ 12 Pass
- Last Date: 5 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/KsjKyE>

Odisha Public Service Commission

- Vacancy Details: 119 Group A Lecturer Posts
- Eligibility: Post Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 08 June 2017
- Know More:
<https://goo.gl/DqswLe>

BISCOMAUN

- Vacancy Details: 122 Sales Man cum MTS and Other
- Eligibility: Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 20 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/Jort8Q>

ESIC

- Vacancy Details: 102 Faculty
- Eligibility: Graduate Degree
- Last Date: 2 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/uXANlc>

Government Medical College, Jammu

- Vacancy Details: 300 Class IV Posts
- Eligibility: Class 10 Pass
- Last Date: 09 May 2017
- Know More: <https://goo.gl/7SzldL>

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सर्वाधिकार सुरक्षित. इस ई-बुक का कोई भी खण्ड या संपूर्ण ई-बुक को किसी भी रूप में (इलेक्ट्रॉनिक, मैकेनिकल, फोटोकॉपी, रिकॉर्डिंग या किसी भी अन्य माध्यम से) प्रतिलिपिकरण, पुनःप्रकाशन, पुनःप्राप्ति योग्य अणुकरण और किसी भी घटना, परिस्थिति और प्रणाली में उल्लेख तब तक नहीं किया जा सकता, जब तक कि कॉपीराइट प्राप्तकर्ता से लिखित अनुमति न प्राप्त हो. यदि उपरोक्त में से कोई भी या संबंधित गतिविधि का कोई भी प्रमाण मिलता है या सूचित किया जाता है तो कड़ी दण्डनात्मक वैधानिक कार्यवाही की जाएगी.