

*March 2018*

# *GK Digest* *March 2018*

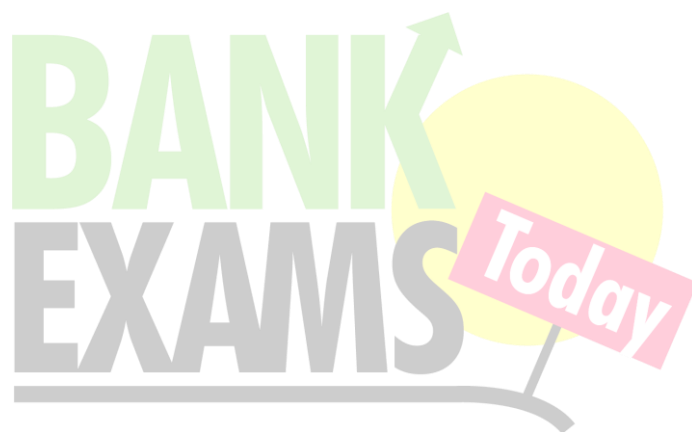
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## **World's Largest Solar Park Inaugurated in Karnataka**

- Karnataka has added a feather in its hat by launching the Shakti Sthala Solar Park, world's largest solar park with 2000 Megawatt capacity.
- The solar park, located in the bone-dry region of Pavagada, is spread across 13,000 acres covering five villages. It is special because people's participation in power generation model put forward in implementing the project.
- The project had been conceptualised, planned and built in three years with a total expenditure of INR 165 Billion
- The solar park infrastructure was developed by Karnataka Solar Power Development Corporation Limited (KSPDCL), a joint venture between Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) and Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Limited (KREDL). The 2GW(AC) of capacity has been separated into eight sections of 250MW.

### **Benefit**

- The solar park will help 2,300 farmers earn up to Rs 21,000 per acre of land and has been executed at a cost of Rs 16,500 crore.
- The government has taken the lease from the farmers - a very strong lease which can't be broken by the farmer and then this land is then leased back to the developers. The farmer will still possess the land after the plant life and the total cost is also fragmented over the years rather than being charged everything up front.

## **Anti Tank Guided Missiles Nag Successfully Tested**

- India has successfully test-fired Anti Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM) Nag in desert conditions against two tank targets at different ranges and timings. With this successful trial, the missile is ready for induction.

### **About ATGM Nag Missile**

- The missile has been developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It is a third generation "fire-and-forget" anti-tank missile developed in India with a cost of Rs. 3 billion (US\$45.9 million). It is one of five missile systems developed by DRDO under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP). The other four missiles are: Agni, Prithvi, Akash and Trishul. It will complement the existing Russian 9M113 Konkurs Anti-tank guided missile and European missile MILAN in Indian usage, both of which are manufactured under licence by Bharat Dynamics Limited.

## Variants of Nag Missile

### HeliNa:

HeliNa, with a range of 7–8 km, launched from twin-tube stub wing-mounted launchers on board the armed HAL Dhruv and HAL Light Combat Helicopter produced by state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). It will be structurally different from the Nag.

### Namica:

NAMICA (Nag Missile Carrier) is a tank destroyer built for the army. It is equipped with a thermal imager for target acquisition. NAMICA is a modified BMP-2 IFV produced as "Sarath" in India.

Land, Air and Man portable are the other versions of the missile.

## India's First Mega Food Park Inaugurated in Maharashtra

- Maharashtra's first Mega Food Park was inaugurated in Satara by Union Minister of Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badal. This is the 10th Mega Food Park being operationalized in the country and the 8th operationalized during the tenure of present government.

## Aim of Mega Food Parks

- Ministry of Food Processing Industries has been implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country to give a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables.

## Facilities Provided

- These mega food parks provide the basic as well as advanced facilities for food processing. The availability of modern infrastructure and a chain between farm to market removes the barriers. Along with modern infrastructure, collection centres and primary processing centres are also the part of these mega parks. Under the Scheme, Government of India provides financial assistance upto Rs. 50.00 Crore per Mega Food Park project.

## Satara Mega Food Park

- It is built with a cost of 140 crores covering 64 acres of land. The facilities offered here are Dry Ware House – Raw materials of 5000 MT, Warehouse with racking system of 2000 MT, Pulping line of 2 TPH, Hi-tech Cold Storage of 3000 MT, Ripening Chamber of 384 MT, Pack House for F&V of 1 TPH and other food processing facilities.

- There is a common administrative building for office and other uses by the entrepreneurs and 4 PPCs at Pandharpur, Narayangaon, Wai and Ajara having facilities for primary processing and storage near the farms. The park will also benefit the people of nearby Districts of Pune, Solapur, Sangli, Kolhapur, Ratnagiri and Rajgarh .

## ***Paschim Lehar: Tri-service Maritime Exercise Concludes***

- A three-week long tri-service military exercise of India, Paschim Lehar conducted by Indian Navy concluded in Arabian Sea.
- The objective of the exercise was to build interoperability and to test operational readiness of the Command and the execution of Western Naval Command's operational plans.

## **Participants**

- In this exercise several ships, submarines and fighter aircraft participated including the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, frontline ships of the Western Fleet and Eastern Fleet and the newly-inducted Kolkata class ones, submarines, potent missile vessels of the 22nd Killer Squadron, patrol vessels and craft of the local flotilla and the Coast Guard.
- Intense flying activity by carrier-borne Mig29K, P-8I, IL-38SDs, Dorniers and Remotely Piloted Aircraft were witnessed and maritime role Jaguars, Su-30 MKI, AWACS and Flight Refuellers participated in large numbers from different airfields in Gujarat, Maharashtra and North India.
- An amphibious landing was also conducted, which included the participation of the 91 Infantry Brigade of the Army.

## ***Establishment of National Financial Reporting Authority Approved***

- Modi-led Union Cabinet has given its nod to establish National Financial Reporting Authority and creation of one post of Chairperson, three posts of full-time Members and one post of Secretary for NFRA.

## **Aim**

- National Financial Reporting Authority or NFRA will act as an independent regulator for the auditing profession which is one of the key changes brought in by the Companies Act, 2013. The inclusion of the provision in the Act was on the specific recommendations of the Standing Committee on Finance. As a result of this, foreign/domestic investments will be improved, economic growth will be enhanced. It will also support the globalisation of business by meeting international practices, and assist in further development of audit profession.

## Background

- In the wake of accounting scam, the need for constituting NFRA arose and felt. It was required to form a regulatory authority that works independently and enforces the auditing standards and to ensure the quality of auditing to strengthen the independence of audit firms. Therefore, enhance investor and public confidence in financial disclosures of companies.

## India-Seychelles Exercise Lamitye 2018

- The eighth edition of joint military exercise between India and Seychelles, Lamitye 2018 concluded at Mahe island.
- Conducted biannually since 2001, Exercise Lamitye has been held between Indian Army and Seychelles People's Defence Force. The word "Lamitye" refers to friendship in Creole which is the official language of Seychelles.

## Aim

- The general aim of this military exercise is to enhance military co-operation and interoperability between the two nations but the 2018 edition of the exercise also focuses on the on fighting insurgency and piracy threats.

## Representatives

- In the nine-day long exercise, the Seychelles People's Defence Force was represented by a total of 52 personnel from their Special Forces Unit, Coast Guard and the Air Force, whereas India was represented by an Infantry Platoon from the Southern Command. The two armies jointly practised for counter-insurgency and counter-terror operations in a semi-urban environment under the United Nations charter.

## Highlights

- The Indian contingent shared expertise on techniques of House Clearing, Mobile Vehicle Check Post (MVCP) & Small Team Concept in Counter Terrorist environment (CT) to enhance effectiveness. The use of modern equipment for surveillance and tracking, specialist weapons for close quarter battle with terrorists, use and detection of improvised explosive devices as well as the latest communication equipment was fielded during the exercise.

## CCEA Approves to Continue Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme



- Modi-led Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved to continuation of Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme.
- The programme will be continued beyond 12th Plan for three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with a total outlay of Rs.5,500 crore.

### Aim of the Scheme

- The main purpose of the scheme is to create sustainable estimated employment opportunities for 15 lakh persons in three financial years. A minimum target of 75 project/district is awarded to all districts of the country to achieve Inclusive Growth. Higher rate of subsidy (25% to 35%) will be applicable for women, SC/ST, OBC, Physically Disabled, NER applicants in rural areas.

### Targets are fixed taking into account:

- Extent of backwardness of State
- Extent of unemployment
- Extent of fulfillment of previous year targets
- Population of State/Union Territory
- Availability of traditional skills and raw material

### Improvements in the scheme

- Second loan of upto Rs. one crore to existing and better performing PMEGP units for upgrading with subsidy of 15%;
- Merger of Coir Udyami Yojana (GUY) in PMEGP
- Introduction of concurrent monitoring and evaluation
- Mandatory Aadhaar and Pan card
- Geo-tagging of units
- Negative list under PMEGP amended allowing serving/selling non-vegetarian food at Hotels/Dhabas and Off Farm/Farm Linked activities.
- Dispensing the ratio of 30:30:40 for KVIC/KVIB/DIC.
- Cap the working capital component for manufacturing units to 40% of the project cost and for service/trading sector to 60% of the project cost.

## Background:

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme is a credit-linked subsidy programme. It is implemented by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises since 2008-2009 with an aim of generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.

## Govt Ropes in IIFT, ICAI for Improving 'Doing Business' Ranking.

To interact with stakeholders and suggest measures to push India's ranking in ease of doing business index, the Commerce and Industry Ministry of India has roped in four institutes for exercise.

### The four institutes are:

- The National Institute of Construction Management and Research (NICMAR)
- The Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT)
- The Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI)
- The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)

## Aim

- India has improved its ranking in the recently released Ease of Doing Business Index by securing 30th place and the government with an aim to maintain its legacy and improve the nation's ranking has decided to rope in the four institutes. These institutes will present their views on the parameters considered in "Ease of Doing Business Ranking" and methods to improve India's status.

## Responsibilities

There are almost ten factors that affect ease of doing business in a nation and these factors are starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, getting credit, protecting minority investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency. The government has allocated these parameters into the **four institutes**.

- ICAI will look into the paying taxes parameter
- ICSI and IIFT would work on starting a business
- IIFT will look after the trading across borders
- NICMAR is assigned the task to collate feedback on dealing with construction permits.

## **India's first Aviation Multi Skill Development Centre launched in Chandigarh**

- In the presence of Union Minister of Civil Aviation P Ashok Gajapathi Raju, Chandigarh MP Kirron Kher and Anandpur Sahib MP Prem Singh Chandumajra, India's first Aviation Multi Skill Development Centre was inaugurated at Chandigarh Airport's old terminal.
- The centre built with an aim to train youngsters will help the civil aviation sector's growth. Initially, 2400 youths will be trained here in eight aviation job roles over the next three years. A great response was witnessed among the aspirants to join the centre as the students will be trained.

### **Highlights**

- The project is implemented by Bird Education Society for Travel and Tourism. The students will be opted from different colleges and universities. Socially and economically backward students will be given preference. The chosen students will be trained in three courses viz. services executive, airline reservation agent and airport security executive.
- The centre, which has come up in collaboration with National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Aerospace and Aviation Sector Skill Council (AASSC) of India, will also leverage AAI's existing infrastructure, which has been converted to offer training in modern courses as well as upskilling programmes to empower the youths. The candidates will be certified by the NSDC through the AASSC.

## **Trafficking of Persons Bill, 2018 Approved by Cabinet**

- The Union Cabinet of India has given its nod to the Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2018 for introduction in Parliament.

### **Background**

- Human Trafficking is considered to be the third largest organised crime that violates basic human right and India has no specific law to deal with this issue. Therefore this bill was prepared to curb this crime which is quite widespread in India yet it is not recognised most of the time. Women and children are most affected by human trafficking.

### **Preparation of Bill**

- The Bill has been prepared in consultation with line Ministries, Departments, State Governments, NGOs and domain experts. Ministry of WCD received many petitions to be incorporated in the bill. The draft of the bill was consulted in Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai Bombay with various stakeholders including over 60 NGOs. The Bill was examined and discussed by Group of Ministers also.

### **Main Features of the Bill**

- The bill will address the problem of human trafficking with a point of view of prevention, rescue and rehabilitation.
- Aggravated forms of trafficking, which includes trafficking for the purpose of forced labour, begging, trafficking by administering chemical substance or hormones on a person for the purpose of early sexual maturity, trafficking of a woman or child for the purpose of marriage or under the pretext of marriage or after marriage etc.
- Punishment for promoting or facilitating trafficking of person
- The confidentiality of victims/ witnesses and complainants by not disclosing their identity.
- Time bound trial and repatriation of the victims - within a period of one year from taking into cognizance.
- Immediate protection of rescued victims and their rehabilitation.
- Rehabilitation of the victim which is not contingent upon criminal proceedings being initiated against the accused or the outcome thereof.
- Rehabilitation Fund created for the first time.
- Designated courts in each district for the speedy trial of the cases.
- Institutional mechanisms at District, State and Central Level which will be responsible for prevention, protection, investigation and rehabilitation work related to trafficking.
- National Investigation Agency (NIA) will perform the tasks of Anti-Trafficking Bureau at the national level present under the MHA.
- Punishment ranges from rigorous minimum 10 years to life and fine not less than Rs. 1 lakh.

### **Consequences**

- When approved, this law will make India a leading South Asian nation for combating human trafficking. Human trafficking is a growing concern for the world and India has now become an ace country by formulating a comprehensive legislation to tackle the issue.

## **CCEA Doubles Bank Guarantee Limit for Pulses and Oilseeds for NAFED**

- Chaired by PM Modi, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval to give guarantee of Rs. 1900 crore to National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) ) for obtaining credit from banks for procurement operation of pulses and oilseeds under Price Support Scheme (PSS). Earlier the limit was Rs. 9500 which has been doubled now.
- For Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium (SFAC) the guarantee limit of Rs. 45 crore has been approved. These Government Guarantees are provided for a period of five years i.e. till 2021-22 by Govt. of India and with waiver of 1% Government Guarantee fee.

### **Reasons**

- The market price of almost all pulses and oilseeds are ruling below Minimum Support Price (MSP) as notified by Govt. of India, provision of Govt. The guarantee will help to protect the farmers producing these commodities from making distress sales during the peak arrival period.
- Also the government wants to provide remunerative prices with a view to encourage higher investment and production and also to safeguard the interest of consumer by making available supplies at reasonable price with low cost of intermediation.

## **Cabinet approves Action Plan for Champion Sectors in Services**

Considering the recommendations of the Group of Secretaries to the Prime Minister, the Union Cabinet has given its nod to the proposal of Ministry of Commerce and Industry to give centralised attention to 12 identified Champion Service Sectors.

### **These 12 Champion Service Sectors are**

- Information Technology & Information Technology
- Tourism and Hospitality Services
- Medical Value Travel
- Transport and Logistics Services
- Finance Services
- Audio Visual Services
- Legal Services

- Communication Services
- Construction and Related Engineering Services
- Environmental Services
- Financial Services and Education Services.

Union Cabinet has directed the Department of Commerce to focus on these sectors for promoting their development, and realising their potential. For this purpose, a dedicated fund of Rs. 5000 crores has been proposed to support initiatives for sectoral Action Plans of the Champion Sectors.

### Background

- The Group of Secretaries, in its recommendations, identified ten Champion Sectors and suggested the PM for the development of these sectors. These sectors include 7 manufacturing related sectors while the three were services sectors.
- The Union Cabinet keeping in view the recommendations, assigned Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) the task to enforce the initiative for Champion Sectors in manufacturing. Notably, DIPP is the nodal department for "Make in India" initiative.
- Department of Commerce is assigned to coordinate the proposed initiative for the Champion Sectors in Services. The Department of Commerce then prepared a draft of of draft initial sectoral reform plan after consulting the wide stakeholders.

### Benefits

- Enhanced competitiveness of India's service sector
- Increase in GDP
- More Employment
- Promotion of exports in Global Market
- Increased Productivity
- Service Sector Export to rise 4.2% by 2022
- Share of services in Gross Value Added of 60 % by 2022

## **Cabinet approves Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018**

- In order to to avert the economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts, the Union Cabinet of India has given its approval to introduce the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, 2018 in Parliament.

### Reasons

- Recently, the PNB fraud has shattered the faith of people from Indian financial and well as judiciary system. Economic offenders remain away from the clutches of law. Therefore to nip this budding issue, the cabinet approved to introduce the bill. In most of the cases, these economic offenders avoid the proceedings in the court which results in clogs the investigation, wastes court's time and mock the rules of Indian laws. Offenders usually do not repay the loans worsening the financial status of the nations. It is felt that the present laws are not efficient to control the economic offenders and a strong law is desired.

### Background

- The bill adopts the principle of United Nations Convention against Corruption which allows the confiscation of the non-conviction-based asset for corruption related issues or cases. In the budget Of 2017-18, the government hinted to introduce legislative changes or even a new law to confiscate the assets of such absconders till they submit to the jurisdiction of the appropriate legal forum.

### Features

- The cases where the total value involved in such offences is Rs.100 crore or more, will come under the purview of this Bill.
- Application before the Special Court for a declaration that an individual is a fugitive economic offender
- Attachment of the property of a fugitive economic offender
- Issue of a notice by the Special Court to the individual alleged to be a fugitive economic offender
- Confiscation of the property of an individual declared as a fugitive economic offender resulting from the proceeds of crime
- Confiscation of other property belonging to such offender in India and abroad, including benami property
- Disentitlement of the fugitive economic offender from defending any civil claim
- An Administrator will be appointed to manage and dispose of the confiscated property under the Act.
- Provision has been made for appointment of an Administrator to manage and dispose of the property in compliance with the provisions of law.
- Provisions for a 'Special Court' under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002 to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

### Who is a fugitive economic offender?

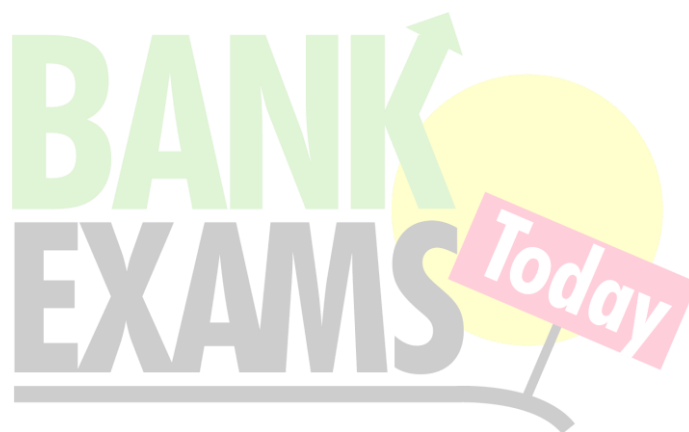
- pect of a scheduled offence and who has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution, or being abroad, refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution. A scheduled offence refers to a list of economic offences contained in the Schedule to this Bill.

### Government Approves Rs 2,919 Crore to Nirbhaya Fund

- Union Ministry of Women and Child Development approved projects worth Rs 2,919 crore under the Nirbhaya fund to develop eight safe cities for women.

#### The Eight Cities are:

- Delhi
- Mumbai
- Chennai
- Ahmedabad
- Kolkata
- Bengaluru
- Hyderabad
- Lucknow



### Focus

The main focus of the project will be on creating safe cities for women by co-coordinating with municipal corporation and police commissioners. The emphasis will be on protecting and making women safe at public places and this is to be done by developing a quick responsive system to combat the crime rate.

### Measures to be Taken

- Highly advanced security system for public places
- Use of technologies like video conferencing, location tracking, facial recognition, GPS mapping and criminal hotspots
- Dedicated women safety patrol vans
- Helpdesks for women



## Project Worth for the Cities

**Delhi:** Rs 663 crore has been approved to enhance safety of public places like roads, schools and metro stations.

**Mumbai:** Rs 252 crore has been sanctioned to enable GIS mapping of criminal hotspots, video surveillance, training of investigating officers and quick response police teams. Strengthening “Police Didi” programme wherein female police officers interact with women living in slums.

**Chennai:** The city will receive Rs 425 crore for the creation of safe-zone clusters at hot crime zones, GIS-based crime mapping, security in public transport, capacity building of police authorities as well as a helpdesk service for women.

**Ahmedabad:** This city will get a corpus of Rs. 253 crore for ABHAYAM Vans for quick response to women in distress, One Stop Crisis Centres and ‘She Teams’ of women for surveillance. The project also envisages redevelopment of the Sabarmati River Front to make it more women-friendly.

**Kolkata:** Rs 181.32 crore will be given for various schemes, including for strengthening nine women police stations.

**Bengaluru:** Projects Rs 667 crore has been approved for utilising for setting up women police outposts and creation of safety islands.

## What is Nirbhaya Fund?

- Nirbhaya Fund was created by Ministry of Finance in 2013 for the implementation of initiatives aimed at strengthening the safety and security of women in the country. It is a non-lapsable corpus fund, monitored by Empowered Committee of Officers under Secretary of Women and Child Development Ministry.
- Between 2013 and 2017, the corpus of Nirbhaya Fund has grown to Rs 3,100 crore. Another Rs 500 crore has been set aside for it for 2018-19. The empowered committee of officers also approved user trial of the panic button feature on mobile phones in Uttar Pradesh.

## 90th Oscar Awards 2018- Winners List

- The 90th edition of Oscar Awards or the Academy Awards took place at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California (US). During the ceremony, the awards were presented in 24 categories. The Shape of Water grabbed four awards, including Best Picture and Best Director for Guillermo del Toro.

## Winners List

Award

Awardee

Best Picture	The Shape of Water
Best Actress	Frances McDormand for “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri”
Best Actor	Gary Oldman, “Darkest Hour”
Best Director	“The Shape of Water,” Guillermo del Toro
Best Original Song	“Remember Me” from “Coco,” Kristen Anderson-Lopez, Robert Lopez
Best Original Score	“The Shape of Water,” Alexandre Desplat
Best Cinematography	“Blade Runner 2049,” Roger Deakins
Original Screenplay	“Get Out,” Jordan Peele
Adapted Screenplay	“Call Me by Your Name,” James Ivory
Live Action Short Film	“The Silent Child,” Chris Overton, Rachel Shento
Documentary Short Subject	“Heaven Is a Traffic Jam on the 405,” Frank Stiefel
Film Editing	“Dunkirk,” Lee Smith
Visual Effects	“Blade Runner 2049,” John Nelson, Paul Lambert, Richard R. Hoover, Gerd Nefzer (WINNER)
Animated Feature	“Coco,” Lee Unkrich, Darla K. Anderson
Animated Short	Dear Basketball,” Glen Keane, Kobe Bryant
Supporting Actress	Allison Janney, “I, Tonya”
Foreign Language Film	“A Fantastic Woman” (Chile)
Production Design	“The Shape of Water,” Paul D. Austerberry, Jeffrey A. Melvin, Shane Vieau
Sound Mixing	“Dunkirk,” Mark Weingarten, Gregg Landaker, Gary A. Rizzo
Sound Editing	Dunkirk,” Alex Gibson, Richard King
Documentary Feature	“Icarus,” Bryan Fogel, Dan Cogan
Costume Design	“Phantom Thread,” Mark Bridges
Makeup and Hairstyling	“Darkest Hour,” Kazuhiro Tsuji, David Malinowski, Lucy Sibbick
Supporting Actor	Sam Rockwell, “Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri”

### About Academy Awards

- The Academy Awards, also known as the Oscars are a set of 24 awards presented for artistic and technical merit in the American film industry.
- These awards are given annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS), to recognize excellence in cinematic achievements as assessed by the Academy's voting membership. The

various category winners are awarded a copy of a golden statuette, officially called the "Academy Award of Merit", which has become commonly known by its nickname "Oscar".

- The sculpture was created by George Stanley.

## **India, Russia, Bangladesh Sign Pact for Rooppur Atomic Plant**

- Indian, Russia and Bangladesh have signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation on implementing the Rooppur nuclear power plant. Russian State Atomic Energy Corporation (Rosatom), science and technology ministry of Bangladesh and the Department of Atomic Energy of India signed the deal in Moscow
- The Rooppur project is the first initiative under an Indo-Russian deal to undertake atomic energy projects in third countries and India's first atomic energy venture abroad.

### **Features**

- This is the very first instance for India being involved in the construction of the Rooppur power plant in Bangladesh for which the first agreement was signed between Bangladesh and Russia in November 2011.
- According to the signed agreement, Indian companies will be able to participate in the construction and installation works in the "non-critical" category for the Rooppur nuclear power plant in Bangladesh. As India is not a part of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) therefore the nation cannot directly participate in building of atomic power reactors. India is also not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which New Delhi considers as "discriminatory".
- A framework has been signed for the interaction between the Russian contractor and experts from India and Bangladesh in the implementation of works related to the project
- The parties will cooperate in the field of personnel training, exchange of experience and consulting support.

### **About the project**

- Russia is constructing two nuclear reactors with a capacity of 1,200 MW each in Rooppur, which will be Bangladesh's first nuclear power project. The Russian side is building a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh on a "turnkey" basis, which means the contractor will complete the whole project and they will be liable for any problems that arise in the plant. The scope of work includes design, production and supply of equipment, construction, installation, start-up and commissioning.

## Strategic Vision for Strengthening Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy between the India and Russian

- In December 2014, India and Russia signed 'Strategic Vision for Strengthening Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy' to explore opportunities for sourcing materials, equipment and services from Indian industry for the construction of the Russian- designed nuclear power plants in third countries"
- In April 2017, India signed a civil nuclear cooperation deal, along with two more agreements, with Bangladesh under which the two sides can supply and manufacture equipment, material for the atomic power plant

## Navjot Kaur Becomes First Indian Woman to Win Gold at Asian Championships

- Indian wrestler, Navjot Kaur created history by becoming first Indian Women to clinch gold at Asian Wrestling Championships 2018 that took place at the Kozhomkul Sports Palace, Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan.
- She thrashed Miya Imai of Japan by 9-1 and won the only gold for India in the event. India secured 8th place in the medal tally with one gold, one silver and 6 bronze medals.

## Asian Wrestling Championships 2018- Highlights

### Men's Freestyle Wrestling

- Barjrang Punia won bronze in 65kg category.
- Vinod Kumar Omprakash also won bronze in 70kg category.

### Men's Greco-Roman

- Rajender Kumar won bronze in 55kg event.
- Harpreet Singh won broze in 82 kg event.

### Women's freestyle

- Vinesh Phogat grabbed silver in 50 kg
- Sangeeta Phogat clinched bronze in 59 kg.
- Sakshi Malik won bronze in 59 kg.

## Military Strength Ranking 2017: India Ranks 4th

- According to the Military Strength Ranking 2017 released by Global Firepower, India has been placed at 4th place among the top five military powers in the world.
- The index that ranked 133 countries on the basis of their global military powers has placed the USA as the ace military power in the world while Russia and China secured second and third spot respectively.

### About Military Strength Ranking

- Military Strength Ranking is prepared after assessing the countries over 50 parameters and including military resources, natural resources, industry and geographical features and available manpower. The index not only relies upon a country's total number of weapons but focus on the weapon diversity also. The index didn't count nuclear stockpiles for the ranking but points were given for nuclear capability, whether recognised or suspected. Defence budget allocation also plays a key role in the index.

### India's Performance

India led the way in all aspects except the number of attack helicopters, self-propelled artillery and waterway coverage. India has 4,207,250 armed personnel and the total aircraft strength of India is 2102. India currently spends \$51 billion from its annual budget on the military, which is almost seven times more than what Pakistan does.

- Total population: 1,266,883,598
- Total military personnel: 4,207,250
- Total aircraft: 2,102
- Fighter aircraft: 676
- Combat tanks: 4,426
- Total naval assets: 295
- Defence budget: \$51bn

### Subhash Chandra Garg Committee Constituted to Regulate Fintech Sector

- The government of India has constituted an eight-member panel led by Economic Affairs Secretary Subhash Gard to find out the methods to make it easier for financial technology firms to do business.
- The committee will also find ways for the authorities to use their services to promote the goals of financial inclusion. The panel will assist financial technology companies in doing business in the country.

### Members of Panel

- Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) Secretary
- Rajiv Kumar, Department of Financial Services (DFS) Secretary
- Arun Kumar Panda, Secretary of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).
- Vanaja N. Sarna, Chairperson of the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC)
- Dr. Ajay Bhushan Pandey UIDAI CEO
- RBI Deputy Governor

### Responsibilities and Objectives

- Take stock of developments in the fintech sector globally
- Analysing the regulatory regime that could impact the growth of the country's fintech industry
- Foster international cooperation opportunities with the fintech industries
- Delivery of affordable housing, e-services to vulnerable sections, land record management
- Enhancing access and adoption of digital payments
- Find ways of using fintech in "critical sectors of the economy", including the financing of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).
- Delivery of e-services to the vulnerable sections of society, and management of land records and other government services
- The regulatory regime for the fintech industry and explore the creation of a regulatory 'sandbox model' to foster new ideas.
- Examine means of using data available with Goods and Services Tax (GST) Network
- Create and use the unique enterprise identification number
- Focus on the way financial technologies can be leveraged to bring MSMEs under financial inclusion.

### What is Sandbox model?

- It is a hub for the regulators where they activate the limited roll-out of new products to customers in order to minimise any risk to consumers and to ensure the stability of the sector. Sandbox helps in covering the regulatory vacuum whenever something new comes up. It encourages entrepreneurs to experiment with the fresh idea

## State Of The Fintech Sector In India

- As per a report by KPMG India and NASSCOM, India is currently home to more than 500 fintech startups working to attain financial inclusion. The launch of IndiaStack including Aadhaar, eKYC, UPI and BHIM helped to restructure the financial sector by disrupting the monopoly of traditional institutions like banks. The growth of this sector is forecasted to cross \$2.4 Bn by 2020.

## Animal Welfare Board of India Shifted Headquarters From Chennai to Haryana

- The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) has shifted its headquarters from Chennai to Ballabhgarh of Haryana. The decision has been taken for better coordination between the board and the environment ministry. This will help in carrying out the animal welfare activities more efficiently.

"Rule 3 of the Animal Welfare Board (Administrative) Rules, 1962 reads as -- 'The Headquarter of the Board shall be at New Delhi or at such other place as the central government, may, after consultation with the Board direct',"

## About Animal Welfare Board of India

- It is a statutory advisory body advising the Government of India's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. It was set up in 1962 under Section IV of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act(1960). The board is directed to prevent the cruelty of animals. Famous humanitarian Rukmini Devi Arundale played a key role in setting up the board and she was appointed as its first chairperson.

## Functions of Animal Welfare Board of India

- Granting recognition to Animal Welfare Organisations if they meet its guidelines
- Appointing key people to the positions of (Hon) Animal Welfare Officers
- Suggests changes to laws and rules about animal welfare issues
- Issues publications to raise awareness of various animal welfare issues

## India's first heli taxi launched in Bengaluru

- Bengaluru has got the credit to launch India's first helicopter taxi service by launching the maiden trip between a Bengaluru airport and Electronic City. Kochi-based Thumbay Aviation Private Limited.

- The service provided by Thumbby Aviation connects a couple of locations from Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru.

### **Features of the heli taxi**

- It is a one-way trip to fly people approximately in 15 minutes from KIAL to Electronic City and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited airport. It will cost around Rs 4,130 per seat including GST  
The service includes pick up from airport terminal to the helipad and allowed to carry 15 kg luggage but would be charged extra for more luggage. Six passengers can be ferried on each trip.  
Heli Taxi app has also been developed for the people to book the taxi from their phones.

### **Swachh Shakti 2018 Campaign Organised in Lucknow**

- The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in collaboration with the state government of Uttar Pradesh organised Swachh Shakti 2018 on the occasion of International's Women's Day. The event was organised in Lucknow with the participation of 8000 women sarpanches, 3000 women Swachhagrahis, 2000 mahilasamakhyas from Uttar Pradesh

### **Highlights of the event**

- Uttar Pradesh, being the largest state of India, has the massive rural population and therefore this year's Swachh Shakti campaign was organised in Lucknow. Uma Bharti, Minister Drinking Water and Sanitation. Yogi Adityanath, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh presided the event as chief guests. Special exhibitions, films and other activities dedicated to women's role in Swachh Bharat Mission were among the highlights of the events. 37 SwachhataShakti Rathes were flagged off to run and trigger various districts in the state. During the course of the event, women Swachhagrahis were awarded for their efforts in improving sanitation condition in their villages and communities.

### **Swachh Bharat Mission**

Swachh Bharat Mission is an initiative of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched with an aim of achieving a clean and open defecation free India. It was launched on October 2, 2014. With the efforts, India has been able to declare 9 States and 2 UTs open defecation free. Since its launch, women have been participating to in large number to give this Clean India movement a push towards success.

### **Balkrishna Doshi Wins The Prestigious Pritzker Prize**



- Architect Balkrishna Doshi has become the first Indian architect to win prestigious Pritzker Prize for his pioneer work in low-cost housing solution.

### About Doshi

- The 45th Pritzker laureate is renowned for his sustainable architecture and inexpensive housing and ringing modernist design to India. Doshi is one of the last living architects to have apprenticed with the Franco-Swiss trailblazer Le Corbusier. He is an important figure of South Asian architecture and contributed to the evolution of architectural discourse in India. The Indian Institute of Management Bangalore and the Aranya Low-Cost Housing development in Indore which was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture are the two of his exemplary works.

### What is Pritzker Prize?

- Pritzker Prize is awarded annually to "to honor a living architect or architects whose built work demonstrates a combination of those qualities of talent, vision and commitment, which has produced consistent and significant contributions to humanity and the built environment through the art of architecture.". It was established in 1979 by Jay A. Pritzker and his wife Cindy. It is said to be world's premier architecture prizes and is also referred to as the Nobel Prize of architecture.
- The recipients receive US\$100,000, a citation certificate, and since 1987, a bronze medallion.

### Centre Approves Rs. 1151.80 Crore Fund For Crop Residue Management

- In the budget 2018-19, the government announced to launch a special scheme to support state governments of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and NCT of Delhi to tackle air pollution. Also, the scheme would help in subsidizing the machinery required for crop residue management.
- In this regard, the government has approved a Rs 1,151 crore scheme to promote in-situ (in the farm itself) management of crop residue in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.

### Objective of the scheme

- The major objective of the scheme is to offer a cost-effective and eco-friendly solution to farmers to deal with the problem of stubble burning. The burning of stubble results in raising air pollution levels in the capital and neighbouring states.

### Funding and Usage

- The cabinet committee chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sanctioned a fund of Rs. 1151.80 crores. Rs 591 crore will be spent in next fiscal while the remaining Rs 560 crore will be meant for assisting stakeholders in 2019-20. The fund will be used to promote agricultural mechanisation for this purpose for the next two years (2018-20).

### Key Components

- The scheme aims at establishing "Farm Machinery Banks for the custom hiring of in-situ crop residue management machinery. The costs of these equipments will be decided by the ministry in consultation with manufacturers so that it can be made available to users at a reasonable price
- Individual farmers, cooperative societies, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), private entrepreneurs and registered groups of women farmers will be assisted by the government
- The agriculture ministry is assigned the task to identify manufacturers and equipment for in-site management of crop.
- Department of agriculture of each state will be the nodal implementing agency to identify various beneficiaries and location-specific agricultural equipment, depending on the farming system.
- The government will launch mass awareness campaigns through short and long films, documents, radio and TV programmes, demonstration camps at various levels and capacity building programme among others.

### ***Dearness Allowance For Government Employees Hiked to 7%***

- The Union Cabinet of India has given its nod to provide 7% dearness allowance on the recommendations of the 7th Pay Commission. The increased DA increased to 7% from 5% will benefit 11 million government employees.

### Official Statement says

“The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval to release an additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to central government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners from 1 January 2018 representing an increase of 2% over the existing rate of 5% of the Basic Pay/Pension, to compensate for price rise,”

- The hike will benefit about 48.41 lakh central government employees and 61.17 lakh pensioners.
- The combined impact on the exchequer on account of both DA and DR would be Rs 6,077.72 crore per annum, and Rs 7,090.68 crore in 2018-19

## What is Dearness Allowance?

- The Dearness Allowance (DA) is a cost of living adjustment allowance paid to Government employees, Public sector employees (PSE) and pensioners in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan
- It is calculated as a percentage of an Indian citizen's basic salary to mitigate the impact of inflation on people.

## What is Pay Commission?

- Pay Commission is set up by Government of India to give recommendations regarding changes in the salary structure of its employees. Since independence, seven pay commissions have been set up to review and make recommendations on the work and pay structure of all civil and military divisions of the Government of India. The headquarters is in Delhi and the commission is given 18 months from the date of its constitution to make its recommendations.

## Cabinet Approves Relief Measures For Stressed Telecom Sector

- Modi-led Union Cabinet has given its approval to two measures in telecom sector for facilitating investments and giving a push to ease of doing business. The Cabinet slacken the spectrum holding limit

### These two measures include

- Restructuring the deferred payment liabilities
- Revising the limit of the cap

## Restructuring of Deferred Payment Liabilities of telecom Service providers for spectrum

- The cabinet has allowed the restructuring of deferred payment liabilities of telecom service providers by giving them one-time opportunity to opt for higher number of installment. Maximum 16 installments can opt. It extends the time period for payment of spectrum bought in an auction to 16 years from the present 10 years. This is based on the principle that the Net Present Value (NPV) of the Payment Due is protected as per respective notice inviting application for the auction of spectrum from 2012. The total amount received will be higher by Rs. 74446.01 crores till 2034-35.

## Importance

- With the restructuring, the cash flow for the telecom service providers will be increased in the immediate time frame providing them with some relief

### Revision of Limits of Cap for Spectrum Holding

- As per the recommendations of TRAI and Telecom Commission, the limits of cap for spectrum have been revised. The overall spectrum cap is revised from the current limit of 25% to 35%. The current intra-band cap is removed. There is a cap of 50% on the combined spectrum holding in the sub-1 GHz bands (700 MHz, 800 MHz and 900 MHz bands). No cap for individual or combined spectrum holding in above 1 GHz band is approved

### Importance

- The easing of holding caps will give a boost to mergers and acquisitions and spectrum sales as carriers try to dispose of assets, including airwaves, to repay debt.

### Telecom Commission's Recommendations

- The Telecom Commission (TC) headed by telecom secretary Aruna Sundararajan recommended to scrap the 50% limit on intra-band spectrum holdings of telcos. It decided to impose a separate 50% cap on combined spectrum holdings in the 700 MHz, 800 MHz and 900 MHz bands (sub-1 GHz bands). However, it's unclear if the Cabinet has accepted another TC recommendation

### About TRAI

- TRAI stands for Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI). Established in 1997, this authority works as the regulator of the telecommunications sector in India. It was established by an Act of Parliament to regulate telecom services and tariffs in India. It focuses to create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in India. TRAI regularly issues orders and directions on various subjects such as tariffs, interconnections, quality of service, Direct To Home (DTH) services and mobile number portability.

### Sukhad Yatra App And Emergency Number Launched For Highway Users

Minister for Road Transport & Highways, Nitin Gadkari has launched Sukhad Yatra mobile application for the frequent users of highways. Also, a "Toll-Free Emergency Number 1033 has been launched for reporting emergency conditions.

### Features of Sukhad Yatra

- Prepared by National Highways Authority of India, NHAI
- Real-time SMS updates on expected waiting time at toll plazas
- Enter road quality-related complaints
- Report any accident or pothole on the highway
- Purchase the FASTag tag

### Features of Toll-Free Number 1033

- Report an emergency condition
- Ambulance and towing service services
- Multi-lingual support
- User location tracking features
- Driving Training Centre

During the launch of Sukhad App, Mr Gadkari gave details of the future project that aims at establishing at least one model driving training in each district of the State or UT. For this purpose, the funding of Rs. 1 crore will be provided by the Ministry. The scheme is designed with an objective of creating employment and meeting the requirement of HMV and LMV drivers in the country. It also aims at inculcating the habit of road safety, like behavioural and attitudinal changes among drivers.

### European Development Bank Approves India's Membership

- The shareholders of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have given their approval for India's membership in the international financial institution.
- After India becomes the 69th member of EBRD, Indian companies can undertake joint investments in regions in which the EBRD operates. The decision is followed by Indian government's application to seek the EBRD membership back in December 2017.
- Now to initiate the formal membership, India will purchase the shares at an estimated cost of around €1 million.

### About European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

EBRD is a multilateral development bank established in 1991 during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is headquartered in London and uses the investment to build market economies. It supports development in more than 30 countries from central Europe to central Asia. Though it has members from all around the world, it only lends regionally in its countries of operations. The EBRD mandates to work only in countries that are "committed to democratic principles". It promotes "environmentally sound and sustainable development", and does not finance "defense-related activities, the tobacco industry, selected alcoholic products, substances banned by international law and stand-alone gambling facilities."

## **Nari Shakti Puraskar 2017- List of Awardees**

- On the occasion of International Women's Day, the President of India, Sh. Ram Nath Kovind presented Nari Shakti Puraskar to 39 women who were honoured for their services towards women empowerment and society.
- The awards are given in the field of science sports, arts, social work, education, conservation, security, handicrafts and defence. It includes a certificate and cash prize of Rs. 1 lakh
- These awardees included ISRO scientists, first-ever women troupe of Kathakali dancers, India's first female graphic novelist, survivors of acid attack and trafficking, environment and animal activists, among others.

### **About Nari Shakti Puraskar**

- The government of India confers the "Highest Civilian Honor for Women" on International Women's Day, 8th March, every year by presenting "Nari Shakti Puraskars". The award acknowledges and recognizes the services of individuals and institutions who have made a lasting contribution to women's empowerment. Through Nari Shakti Puraskar, Government of India reaffirms its commitment towards strengthening women's position in the society.

### **Awardees**

#### **Jayamma Bhandari**

- Jayamma Bhandari has been working for over 20 years to rehabilitate sex workers. She has rehabilitated over 1,000 sex workers and supports around 3,500 other sex workers.

#### **K Syamlakumari**

- K. Syamalakumari is the first known female temple Mural Artist in Kerala. Traditionally, painting on temple walls is dominated by males. Syamalakumari has painted, preserved and restored traditional Mural Art in the temples of Kerala.

#### **Vanstree**

- Vanastree is a women-run seed saving collective in the Malnad region of the Western Ghats in Southern India.
- It is working in 15 villages and promotes forest biodiversity and food security through conservation of traditional seeds.

### Gargi Gupta

- She founded 'Voice of World' NGO in 1992, which works for visually impaired and differently-abled orphaned children in Eastern India.

### Dr Sindutai Sapkal

- Sindhutai Sapkal has set up five large homes across Maharashtra for orphans by raising money through public lectures and private donation, the largest of which in Hadapsar Pune has 300 orphans in it. She also helps widows who are thrown out of their families.

### Beti Zindabad Bakery

- Chhattisgarh government has come up with a unique initiative of setting-up a bakery unit for survivors of human trafficking, as its pilot project under flagship of "Beti Zindabad" campaign in Jashpur.

### Sabarmatee Tiki

- Sabarmatee Tiki is a scholar, conservationist and founder of Sambhav, an NGO that runs large organic and training farms near Bhubaneswar in Odisha. She works with local communities for the restoration of forests and regeneration of wasteland. She has converted 90 acres of barren land into jungles and has conserved and increased production of 452 indigenous variety of rice.

### Mittal Patel

- Ms. Mittal Patel has done extensive work for the rights of nomadic and de-notified tribes of India. She is the founder of VichartaSamudaySamarthanManch (VSSM) in Ahmedabad.

### Dr. S Siva Sathya

- Dr. S. Siva Sathya developed a mobile app, MITRA (Mobile Initiated Tracking & Rescue Application) in 2015 which is a customized SOS application for the Puducherry region. The app is now being used by Puducherry Police since 2016.

### Dr. Lizymol Phillipose

- Dr. Lizymol Phillipose Pamadykandathil is a scientist with three decades of experience in the field of polymers and biomaterials. One of her major breakthroughs has been the development of a novel Bioactive bone cement

Chirom Indira

**Urmil Balwant Apte:** Urmila Balawant Apte is an advocate of women's rights and has spent decades working for the cause of gender equality. She founded the BhartiyaStree Shakti in 1988 where she worked to eradicate discrimination at all levels and recognise women's contribution to the family and nation-building.

### **Deepika Kundaji**

- **Purnima Barman:** Purnima Barman is a wildlife biologist who has been making tremendous efforts to protect an endangered stork called 'Hargilla'. Around 1,200 of these birds remain today and about 800 of them reside in Assam.

### **Dr. Anita Bhardwaj**

- With 88 doctors, para-medicals and social workers, her team has undertaken rescue operations during the Uttarakhand Flood, Nepal Earthquake and ShriAmarnathYatra. Her team operates from the height of 24,500 feet and has been successful in saving the lives of 5600 women and children, till date. They have also provided treatment to 53,889 victims on high altitudes.

### **Dr. Bharti Kashyap**

- Dr. BhartiKashyap has dedicated her life for the well-being of women and children in the tribal areas of Jharkhand. She has founded an eye-care hospital in Ranchi which conducts free eye camps for children in Jharkhand where she has screened 17 lakh school children so far.

### **Ms. Ambica Beri**

- Ambica Beri has singlehandedly established Art Ichol, India's only permanent creative retreat for artists, writer and sculptors in Ichal, a small village 140 km from Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh).

### **Gauri Maulekhi**

- Ms. Gauri Maulekhi has contributed to animal welfare advocacy in India. She has been the key person to get world's largest mass religious slaughter of animals stopped at Gadhimai in Nepal. During the Kedarnath floods, she led a small group to evacuate more than 6,000 animals from the disaster region.

### **Aranya Naturals**

- Aranya Naturals, based in Munnar, seeks to preserve a unique repository of community heritage. Set up in 1994, they have been working for 20 years to produce non toxicnatural dyes based on nature's discards – fallen leaves, flowers, seeds, nuts, tea and coffee waste.

### **Pushpa Girimaji**

- Ms. PushpaGirimaji, is India's best known journalist on consumer affairs. As a consumer safety advocate, she has been responsible for bringing the consumer movement to media attention in India.

### **AVANI Organisation**



- Rashmi Bharati and Rajneesh Jain in 1997, AVANI in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, is a community built on the principles of sustainability and community-centric rural development programmes.

### Shrujan

- In 1969 Kutch was in the grip of drought. Mrs Chanda Shroff visited Dhaneti village in Kutch to help run a free kitchen. In the exquisite embroidery on their clothing, she saw a way to enable them to earn a sustainable and dignified livelihood.

### Dr CK Dugra:

- Dr C.K. Durga has contributed immensely in the field of women's health through her extensive research on Breast Cancer. Dr Durga developed a path-breaking technique in Breast Cancer Surgery, wherein the cancer is surgically removed and a new breast is constructed simultaneously using the native tissue of the patient herself.

### Rekha Mishra

- In 2015, being posted with the Women Security wing of Mumbai division, she undertook extensive campaigns at railway stations to raise awareness among women about precautions to be taken and how to approach 182 Helpline for round-the-clock service. She also led the Mahila Shakti Team of the Mumbai Railway division.

### Thinlas Chorol

- Ms. Thinlas Chorol founded the Ladakhi Women's Travel Company at the age of 29 and it is the first women-owned and operated a company in Ladakh.

### Mehvish Mushtaq

- Ms. Mehvish Mushtaq has the distinction of developing the first-ever Android application for Kashmir called 'Dial Kashmir'. The app provides detailed information of essential addresses, phone numbers and email addresses of services, government and non-government organisations and individuals in Kashmir.

### Karuna Society for animals and nature

- Clementine Pauws Koenegras came to India from Belgium with her husband and son to the Satya Sai Baba ashram in Puttaparthi. Moved by the animal suffering she saw, she formed a group with other devotees and started looking after street animals. She formed a group in 2000 called Karuna Society for Animals and Nature and built a hospital and shelter in Anantapur district.

### Navika Sagar Parikarma- INSV Tarini

- The crew of the Indian Navy Sailing Vessel 'Tarini' is a part of the Indian Navy's unique project 'Navika Sagar Parikrama', an all-women team circumnavigating the globe, promoting ocean sailing activities in the Navy and depicting Government of India's commitment towards women empowerment.

### One Stop Centre- Raipur

- One Stop Centre (OSC) -- "Sakhi" -- in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, provides 24/7 integrated services to women affected by violence, under one roof. About 1,840 women have availed services at the centre, till date.

### Millet Network of India

- National Millet Sister Network is a first of its kind group launched by 100 women from nine states to provide knowledge to women in the area of millet farming. Set up eight years ago in league with the Millet Network of India, over 5,000 women from across the country are part of this network that enhances the cultivation of millet crops and increases the production and use of natural fertilizers like farmyard manure, vermicompost and panchgavya which they produce, use and sell.

### State of Punjab

- In Punjab, as per the data received from the Health Management Information System for 2015-16 to 2016-17, in the selected 20 districts, remarkable progress has been seen in the percentage of institutional deliveries. The Sex Ratio at Birth has shown an improving trend in 14 districts. The exemplary initiatives of various districts have inspired other states to follow suit. In Tarn district, 'menstrual hygiene management' was promoted in all the sub-divisions of the district during Children's Day

### Madhu Jain

- Madhu Jain is a Craft and revivalist Textile who has been working for thirty years to revive ikat techniques and bamboo fibres. She has been a frontrunner in Indian Textile Innovation. She was instrumental in reviving the Naksha – Kantha embroideries and Dacca Muslim in collaboration with Brac in Bangladesh.

### Jetsuna Pema

- Ms. Jetsun Pema has dedicated her life for Tibetan refugee children since 1964. With the assistance of the Government of India and other philanthropic organizations, Ms. Pema established a total of 10 residential schools, 17 day schools, 3 vocational training institutes, 3 hostels for college students and 1 college spread across India.

### MS Sunil

- She has built 83 homes for destitute people. Each home has an area of 450 sq. ft. with one bedroom, a hall, kitchen and a toilet. The roof is made of galvanized iron sheets. The average time required to build these homes is 35 days.

### Sheela Balaji

- Between 1960 and now, of the 1,10,000 lakh varieties of rice, only a few thousand now survive. For Sheela Balaji, Chairperson and Managing Trustee of NGO AIM For Seva, this variety was something she wanted to bring back. So she not only grew these lost gems but also made sure that people could taste them and encourage farmers to grow them once again.

### Dr Malvika Iyer

- Dr. Malvika Iyer lost her hands to a freak bomb explosion in Bikaner. She also sustained multiple fractures on her legs and nerve paralysis. In two years she had multiple surgeries and it took her several years to walk again. Today she is a Ph.D. Scholar with an M.Phil in Social Work, an international motivational speaker and a disability rights activity.

### Revanna Umadevi Nagraj

- She has emerged as the female world champion in billiards. Her dedication to the game led her to her first National Championship in 2002, which she won to the surprise of many. She went on to participate in a number of World Championships in 2003, 2004 and 2011. In 2012, she won the Women's Billiards and Snooker World Championship in UK.

### Anuradha Krishnamoorthy and Namrata Sundaresan

- Anuradha Krishnamoorthy and Namrata Sundaresan of Chennai have founded an enterprise called Kase which produces 20 varieties of unique artisanal cheese. Kase is a social enterprise and is produced by women with disabilities

### Justice Geeta Mittal

- Justice Mittal as a judge of the Delhi High Court spearheaded the Vulnerable Witness Project. It emerged as an unparalleled example of jurisprudential intervention and judicial leadership in which the legal and institutional barriers for access to justice to women were removed.

## India's First Coastal Policing Academy Set up in Gujarat

- The Union home ministry sanctioned the launch of the National Academy of Coastal Policing (NACP) from a campus of Gujarat's Fisheries Research Centre located in coastal Okha in the newly created Devbhoomi Dwarka district.
- It will be India's first national academy to train police forces in safeguarding the Indian shoreline will start functioning from the next month along the Gujarat seafront. The academy will run temporarily for about three years from the fisheries department campus at Okha. In the meantime, a new permanent campus will be created for the academy in Devbhoomi Dwarka district.

### Features

- The institution will be created and run by a multi-agency team of paramilitary and defence forces
- The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) will pilot the establishment and running of the academy, the Border Security Force (BSF), that guards the Indian frontier in Gujarat with Pakistan, the navy and the Coast Guard will form the core to run the academy.
- The BSF will also provide security to the campus and the navy and the Coast Guard will help design "the training curriculum, providing skilled trainers and ensuring access to jetties and boats" for the trainees of the academy.
- Gujarat government to provide two interceptor boats to the academy that are stationed by it at Okha for patrolling of the sea by the marine unit of the state police.

- The academy, that will have faculty from the Navy, Coast Guard and the BSF, will train police personnel and other security agencies staff in maritime laws, seamanship, boat work, navigation, weapons handling, usage of sea guidance and surveillance gadgets and survival skills for long haul operations on the sea or during distress times when they may get stranded in these waters running up to 12 nautical miles from the shore.

## **India wins 'Best Exhibitor Award' at ITB in Berlin**

- On the last day of ITB- Berlin World Tourist Meet, India won the "Best Exhibitor Award".
- In the convention, India was represented by Minister of State (Independent charge) for Tourism K J Alphons along with a couple of Ministry officials.
- More than 100 countries participated in the event with their respective Tourism Ministers in which India's Incredible India (Ministry of Tourism) presented a short film named "Yogi of the Racetrack " in the meet.

## **What is ITB Berlin?**

The ITB Berlin is the world's largest tourism trade fair. Various companies including hotels, tourist boards, tour operators, system providers, airlines and car rental companies. The annual ITB Berlin fair takes place in Berlin. Every year there is an official partner country and this year German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was chosen to represent as the same.

## **First Indo-French Knowledge Summit held in New Delhi**

- The first two-day Knowledge Summit of India and France concluded with the state visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India.
- It ended with a landmark agreement on mutual recognition of educational qualifications between the two countries. The two nations also signed 15 other MoUs between universities and research institutions on joint initiatives and partnerships

## **Who organised the summit?**

- The French Embassy in India organised the summit in New Delhi. It was co-hosted by Human Resource Ministry of India. The summit also received the support of the Ministry of Science and Technology, Campus France and Confederation of Indian Industry. More than 350 people from nearly 80 Indian Institutions and 70 French Institutions participated in the Summit

## MoUs and Agreements

- Both the nations agreed to extend cooperation in finalization of agreement on mutual recognition of academic qualifications. The agreement will facilitate possibilities for the students to continue their studies in the other country and would also promote excellence in higher education through cooperation
- India will also launch its Study in India Programme to encourage more foreign students to take up education in India.
- India and France will also look at the possibilities of allowing professionals to practice in each other's country on reciprocity basis. A Joint Working Group between the two countries will be formed to take ahead the bilateral cooperation in education and research.
- A Franco-Indian Education Trust was also unveiled at the closing session today. It will be funded by the Indian industry and French Companies in India to offer educational scholarships and merit based financial support to Indian students.

## The Knowledge Summit

- It is the First Franco-Indian Summit for university, scientific and technology cooperation with the broader objective to design a roadmap of Franco-India cooperation for the next five years, in collaboration with companies.

## Objective

The objectives of the summits include increase student mobility, enlarge Research & Development collaborations and link campuses to companies by focusing on employability.

## First meeting of Executive Committee under POSHAN

The Executive Committee held its first meeting to decide on the roadmap for the Mission. The Committee headed by Sh. Rakesh Srivastava is the apex body for all Nutrition related activities under the POSHAN Abhiyaan ((PM's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment).

## Decisions Taken in the Meeting

- Annual release of India Nutrition Report
- Gram Panchayats to hold meetings to discuss the Nutritional aspects and their implementation along with Health and Sanitation issues on Ambedkar Jayanti(14th April) this year,

- Adaptation of best practices of states across the country which are successful in reducing Stunting, Anaemia and Malnutrition
- A detailed survey of the people who are outside the Anganwadi System

### About POSHAN Abhiyaan

- POSHAN Abhiyaan was launched by the Prime Minister in Jhunjhunu on 8th March 2018. A three year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore commencing from 2017-18 is been approved for the same. The Executive Committee under POSHAN Abhiyaan providing key policy directions, work towards integration of Nutrition components of various schemes and ICDS-CAS of WCD Ministry and RCH portal of Health Ministry for data flow and timely interventions

#### Activities under POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- Implementation of Convergence Action Plan at State/UT Level.
- Procurement of Smartphones, Tablets and Growth Monitoring Devices by States/UTs.
- Roll-Out of ICDS-CAS(Common Application Software).
- Implementation of ILA(Incremental Learning Approach) and CBE(Community based events).

### ICMR wins 2017 Kochon Prize for TB Research

- Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has won the 2017 Kochon Prize for building a tradition of excellence in TB research and development.
- ICMR and several of its research groups like NIRT, JALMA and India TB Research Consortium are engaged in TB research, and some of them for a very long time. Kochon Prize to ICMR recognises decades of ground-breaking TB research by India, which shaped the global DOTS strategy

### ICMR

- ICMR is the apex body in India that formulates and coordinates the biochemical research. Funded by Government of India, ICMR is the largest and one of the oldest research bodies in the world. It works under the Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- ICMR has 26 National Institutes and 6 regional centres. National Institutes research on specific health topics like tuberculosis, leprosy, cholera and diarrhoeal diseases, viral diseases including AIDS, malaria, kala-azar, vector control, nutrition, food & drug toxicology, reproduction while the regional centres address themselves to regional health problems, and also aim to strengthen or generate research capabilities in different geographic areas of the country.

### Kochon Prize

- The Kochon Prize is awarded annually by Stop TB Partnership to individuals and/or organizations for their significant contribution to combat TB. It endowed by the Kochon Foundation, a non-profit foundation registered in the Republic of Korea, consists of a USD \$65,000 award.
- The Kochon Prize was established in 2006 in honour of the late Chairman Chong-Kun Lee (left), founder of the Chong Kun Dang Pharmaceutical Corporation and Kochon Foundation in Korea, who was committed throughout his career to improving access to low-cost lifesaving antibiotics and anti-TB drugs. "Kochon" was a pen name that he used.

### Justice Khanwilkar To Head Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal

- To resolve dispute between Odisha and Chhattisgarh over sharing of Mahanadi water, Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation constituted the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal.
- The tribunal was formed as per section 4 of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 following the Supreme Court directive on January 23, 2018

### Composition:

- Supreme Court judge Justice AM Khanwilkar -Chairman of the tribunal  
Patna High Court judge-Justice Ravi Ranjan and  
Delhi High Court judge Justice Indermeet Kaur Kochhar as its members.

### Back ground

Mahanadi water dispute arose when Chhattisgarh being the upper riparian state started building dams on Mahanadi constraining the water supply for the farmers of Odisha. On the other hand, Chhattisgarh arguing that the water sharing agreement, which Odisha has been relying on, was with the erstwhile Madhya Pradesh government, before the State was carved out in 2000.

### President Kovind Inaugurates World Hindi Secretariat building in Mauritius

- The President of India Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the World Hindi Secretariat building in Port Louis Mauritius.

- The logo of World Hindi Secretariat was also launched. Early Digital Learning Programme unveiled foundation stones of a social housing project and a large ENT hospital being built with Indian assistance.

### World Hindi Secretariat

- World Hindi Secretariat is built with a grant of Rs. 33 crore which was funded entirely by India. The land for the secretariat was provided by the government of Mauritius while Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi laid the foundation stone in 2015. The secretariat aims to present Hindi as the language of common man. Undoubtedly, Hindi has played significant role in culture and society building in both India and Mauritius. Indian diaspora in Mauritius has played a huge role in the spread of Hindi.

### Background of World Hindi Secretariat

- During the first World Hindi Conference held in Nagpur in 1975, Sir Shivsagar Ramgoolam put forth the idea of setting up World Hindi Secretariat. Considering the recommendation of Ramgoolam, the then Prime Minister of Mauritius and President of the delegation decided to give shape to the idea of establishing the World Hindi Secretariat in Mauritius after the brainstorming at the Second World Hindi Conference held in Mauritius. Consequently, an agreement was signed between the Government of India and the Mauritian Government and the Act was passed in the Legislative Assembly of Mauritius.
- After the 5th World Hindi Conference in Trinidad and Tobago in April 1996, Mauritius Government appointed Dr Smt Sarita Budhu as an advisor in the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research for the works related to the creation of the World Hindi Secretariat.
- The idea was determined into formation and this is how The World Hindi Secretariat (WHS), an international organisation representing countries and regions where Hindi is the first ("mother") or customary language, came into existence
- The main objective of the WHS is to promote Hindi as an international language and further its cause for recognition at the United Nations as an Official Language.
- Vinod Bala Arun was the first secretary-general of the World Hindi Secretariat. The organisation was set up by the governments of India and Mauritius to promote Hindi across the world

### President's Two-Nation Visit

- President Sh RamNath Kovind embarked a two-nation visit to Mauritius and Madagascar becoming the first Indian President to visit Madagascar. He was the Chief Guest at the main event to mark 50 years of Mauritius' Independence and during this event four MoUs were signed between India and Mauritius.
- On the second leg of his visit he reached Madagascar, which has close maritime trade links with India since the 18th century. There he held talks with the top leadership expecting to bridge the gap in high level visits between the two countries. The choice of Presidential visit also reflects the historical ties with the two countries with a sizeable Indian-origin population.



## ***Bidya Devi Bhandari, Nepal's 1st Female President, Wins Aecond Term***

- Nepal's first woman President Bidya Devi Bhandari with her uncontroversial image managed to be re-elected for a second term by the lawmakers. She received an over-whelming majority.

### **About Bhandari's triumph**

- Bhandari is the the Left alliance's candidate who defeated her Nepali Congress (NC) rival Kumari Laxmi Rai in the presidential election. She secured 39,275 votes while the NC's Ms. Rai garnered 11,730 votes. Her nomination was backed by the ruling Left alliance of the CPN-UML and CPN (Maoist Centre), the Sanghiya Samajbadi Forum-Nepal and other fringe parties.

### **Bhandari's Political Career**

- She took up politics in her teens by joining the fight to overturn the monarchy's centuries-long rule. She became Nepal's first woman President in 2015 and was elected twice in parliamentary elections in 1994 and 1999. After the end of the brutal Maoist insurgency in 2006 and overthrow of the king two years later, Bhandari campaigned hard to bring woman's voices to parliament.

## ***Government Forms Committee to Probe Illegal Cultivation of HT Cotton***

- To investigate the matter of illegal cultivation of HT cotton, the Department of Biotechnology in the Ministry of Science and Technology has constituted a Field Inspection and Scientific Evaluation Committee (FISEC). The committee will investigate into illegal cultivation of HT cotton in four states.

### **Reasons**

- Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of the Ministry of Environment has not approved the cultivation of BG-III or HT cotton. Even though, the government has received several representations for ban of illegal cultivation of Herbicide Tolerant (HT) or BG-III cotton in the country. There were a number of media reports citing the illegal or unauthorised cultivation of HT cotton in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat and Maharashtra

### Steps Taken by States

- **Telangana:** The Telangana government decided to book criminal cases against those involving in sale, processing and storage of the illegal variety of cotton seed with the herbicide tolerant (HT) trait, also known as BG-III, in a bid to check its further spread in the State.
- **Andhra Pradesh-** Andhra Pradesh has prohibited use of glyphosate, a chemical that goes into making herbicides, during the crop period when its required the most by a farmer. HT cotton is genetically modified to be resistant to glyphosate.
- **Maharashtra:** The state government of Maharashtra has formed special investigation teams (SIT) to probe the role of seed companies in introducing illegal herbicide tolerant (HT) cotton seeds into the market.

### HT Cotton

- Herbicide-Tolerant (HT) Cotton also known as BG-III cotton is innovation in BT Cotton. It deals with weeds problem at a lower cost as compared to physical labour required for weeding. It contains Round-up Ready and Round-up Flex (RRF) gene
- The sale, cultivation and seed production of HT Cotton is a punishable offence under Seeds Act 1966, Seed Rule 1968, Seeds (Control) Order 1983 with regard to Environmental Protection Act 1986 and Environmental Protection Rules, 1989.
- The herbicide-resistant gene in HT cotton can spread through pollen into biodiversity system consequently transforming the weeds into super weeds on large-scale. It will threaten growth and yields of all crops in future and also increase cultivation costs and lead to health hazards.

### End of TB Summit Held in New Delhi

- On the inaugural ceremony of "End of TB Summit 2018" at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi launched a campaign to end tuberculosis from India by 2025.

### What is the campaign?

- TB Free India campaign launched during the summit held in New Delhi. This campaign aims at taking up various activities under the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination forward in the mission mode to end up the disease by 2025. The target to end the TB was set up by 2030 but honourable Prime Minister with great self-confidence declare to root it out five years earlier than planned.
- National Strategic Plan is backed by a historic funding of over 12,000 crore rupees for the next three years it also ensures the access to quality diagnosis, treatment, and support for every TB patient.

- This plan adopts a multi-pronged approach and aims to 'Detect' all TB patients, 'Treat' all patient irrespective of where they seek care, 'Prevent' emergence of TB in susceptible population groups and 'Build' empowered institutions and human resources to streamline implementation.

### End of TB Summit

- End of TB Summit was co-hosted by Union Health Ministry, World Health Organisation (WHO) South East Asia Regional Office and Stop TB Partnership. It set stage for September 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB, where for first time, TB will be discussed in UN General Assembly (UNGA) at Heads of State level.

### About TB:

- Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* generally affecting the lungs and sometime the other parts of the body.
- There were an estimated 28 lakh new cases of TB in 2016, with over 4 lakh people succumbing to the disease, including those with TB and HIV. Under the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP), the government has also proposed an incentive of Rs.500 per patient per month for the nutritional support of TB-affected patients during the course of the treatment. Mission Indradhanush has been a successful strategy to help India in combating TB

### India-UK Joint Team wins Newton-Bhabha Fund

- The joint team of India and United Kingdom has won the Newton-Bhabha Fund for the project called "Groundwater Arsenic Research in Ganga River Basin."

### About the Project

- The project is jointly undertaken by India's Department of Science and Technology along with the Natural Environment Research Council of UK. The research was focused on finding solutions to water challenges faced in pervasively arsenic-affected Ganga River Basin.
- The project aims at assessing the problem of arsenic poisoning can get aggravated in the next 25 to 30 years and influence groundwater management practices and suggest water remedial technologies accordingly. The project to be conducted from three sites - Bijnor and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Nadia in West Bengal.

### Members of the team

- The Indian team has the representatives of the IIT Kharagpur, the National Institute of Hydrology, the IIT Roorkee and the Mahavir Cancer Sansthan and Research Centre of Patna

- The team of UK consists of representatives of the University of Manchester, the British Geological Survey, the University of Salford and the University of Birmingham.
- Prof Abhijit Mukherjee of IIT-KGP's Department of Geology and Geophysics and School of Environmental Science and Engineering is heading the project at IIT-KGP.

### What is Newton Bhabha Fund?

- It is a fund provided by British Council and it focuses on bringing together the UN and Indian scientific research and innovation sectors to find joint solutions to the challenges facing India in economic development and social welfare. . The scheme is part of the UK's £375 million Newton Fund to support science and innovation partnerships between the UK and emerging powers.
- In India, the Fund is worth £50 million over five years and is supported by the UK and Indian governments through a ministerial agreement.

### MILES-18: Naval Exercise Held in Andaman

- The Indian Navy hosted the first ever eight-day long multi-national naval exercise at the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- The exercise called "Milan" held in the backdrop of imposition of state of emergency in Maldives and Sri Lanka, two of India's maritime neighbours, and China's growing assertiveness in the region.. The military exercise, with the participation of 23 countries, was organised with the theme of "Friendship Across the Seas"

### Participatory Nations

- Almost 28 warships including 17 from India and 11 from Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand participated in the exercise to expand regional cooperation and combat unlawful activities in critical sea lanes.
- Participation of 39 delegates from 16 countries, made it the largest gathering since its inception in 1995.
- The Indian warships participating in the exercise include 11 ships of Andaman and Nicobar Command and six ships of the Eastern Fleet.

### What is Milan?

- Exercise MILAN was first held in 1995 with five participating nations; India, Indonesia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The aim of the initiative was to have an effective forum to discuss common concerns in the Indian Ocean Region and forge deeper cooperation among friendly navies.
- Since 1995, the exercise was conducted bi-annually except in 2001, 2005 and 2016

## **Samvedna 2018: IAF's First Multilateral HADR Air Exercise in South Asia**

- Samvedna 2018, the first ever Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise of the Indian Air Force in association with South Asian Region nations being organised in Kerala.
- It is the first HADR Exercise in South Asian Region involving representatives from air forces of Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and the UAE.

### **Objective of Samvedna**

- HADR aimed at impelling all the stakeholder to co-operate in the unified HADR efforts. The exercise is based on a scenario of a tsunami in the western coast of India originating from an earthquake in Makran subduction zone and resulting in post-tsunami disaster management along the western coast and western islands of India. Ensuring better understanding and sharing of response procedures between a number of friendly neighbouring nations is also focused.

### **Highlights of Samvedna**

- Ground training and flying exercise are included in the exercise.
- The first day of exercise was dedicated towards pre-exercise ground training with an aim of getting all participants on a common platform.
- Flying cum Field Training Exercise was conducted from the dispersal area of Air Force Station Trivandrum to practice the flying/ field activities undertaken by Air Forces towards HADR under controlled conditions.

### **Importance**

- The exercise will provide a clear understanding of the scope, role and task, including challenges in air operations and ensuring better understanding and sharing of response procedures among the nations. Basic framework for the conduct of Joint Air HADR operations will be further refined during subsequent exercises.

## **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India inks MoU with RBI**

- The two apex regulatory authorities of India, the Reserve Bank of India and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding for enhanced co-operation between the two authorities for the better implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy code (IBC).
- The MoU was signed by Sudarshan Sen, executive director of RBI, and Mamta Suri, executive director of IBBI. The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the fourth meeting of the Insolvency Law Committee (ILC)

### **Details of the MoUs**

- RBI and IBBI will share data and resources upto the law abiding limits.
- Discussion to curb regulatory bottlenecks with respect to implementation of IBC will be organised.
- Efforts for capacity building of insolvency professionals and financial creditors will be jointly taken by the two authorities.
- Focus will be on raising the awareness among financial creditors about the necessity of swift resolution of firms in distress.
- Enforcement of cross-training of staff in order to enhance each party's understanding of the other's mission for effective utilisation of collective resources; capacity building of insolvency.

### **LaQshya Program Launched to Improve Quality of Maternity Care**

- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare launched program 'LaQshya' to improve the quality of care in labour room and maternity Operation Theatre (OT). The Program will improve quality of care for pregnant women in labour room, maternity Operation Theatre and Obstetrics Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and High Dependency Units (HDUs).

### **Highlights of the programme**

- LaQshya will help in reducing the maternal and newborn morbidity and mortality.
- The quality of care during delivery will be improved.
- Steps like improving infrastructure up-gradation, ensuring availability of essential equipment, providing adequate human resources, capacity building of health care workers and improving quality processes in the labour room are to be taken.
- Obstetrics, dedicated Obstetric ICUs at Medical College Hospital level and Obstetric HDUs at District Hospital are operationalized under LaQshya program.

### Way Forward

- The Program aims at implementing 'fast-track' interventions for achieving tangible results within 18 months. A multi-pronged strategy has been adopted such as improving infrastructure up-gradation, ensuring availability of essential equipment, providing adequate human resources, capacity building of health care workers and improving quality processes in the labour room.

### Certification

- National Quality Assurance Standards will assess the quality improvement in labour room and maternity OT. Every facility achieving 70% score on NQAS will be certified as LaQshya certified facility. Facilities scoring more than 90%, 80% and 70% will be given Platinum, Gold and Silver badge accordingly. Facilities achieving NQAS certification, defined quality indicators and 80% satisfied beneficiaries will be provided incentive of Rs 6 lakh, Rs 3 lakh and Rs 2 lakh for Medical College Hospital, District Hospital and FRUs respectively.

### World Happiness Index 2018: India ranks 133

- India ranked 133 out of 156 countries in the "World Happiness Index 2018 surveyed by the UN. The country slipped 11 places and it at the bottom of all the SAARC nations and even Afghanistan is above India in the ranking.
- The less-developed nations like Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan are ahead of in the index. Evidently, India is growing in quantitative terms but when it comes to quality the country lags behind.

### India's Report

- The report suggests that people aren't happy in India and there is a consistent urge of migrating to other nations. The 2018 WHR observed Indians were increasingly migrating to other countries. There were big flows from the Indian sub-continent to the Gulf States.

### Parameters of Happiness Index

- GDP
- Social Support
- Generosity
- Perception of Corruption
- Life Expectancy
- Dystopia

- Freedom to Make Life Choices

### Top 10 Nations

- The index states that Finland is the happiest nation in the world followed by Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland. Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Australia come at the 6th to 10th place respectively. Talking about SAARC Nations, Pakistan is at 75th position, up five spots from last year. Nepal stood at 101, Bhutan at 97, Bangladesh at 115 while Sri Lanka was at 116.

### Bottom Five

- Burundi
- Central African Republic
- South Sudan
- Tanzania
- Yemen.

### World Happiness Report

- The World Happiness Report is a landmark survey of the state of global happiness. The World Happiness Report 2018, ranks 156 countries by their happiness levels, and 117 countries by the happiness of their immigrants.

### Pune Tops in Urban Governance: ASICS 2017 Report

- Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Janaagraha) released the 5th edition of its Annual Survey of India's City-Systems (ASICS) report. The report assessed the quality of governance in 23 major cities of India across 20 states based on 89 questions. The cities are scored between 3.0 and 5.1 on 10.

### Top and Bottom Five

- Pune secured the number one position from Thiruvananthapuram in ASICS 2017. Surat gained 12 positions over 2016 to the 5th spot. This was on the back of improved performance on own revenue generation, higher capital expenditure per capita by the city and implementation of AMRUT reforms including the appointment of an internal auditor and credit rating

### Key Features of the Report



- The report does not rank the cities on the basis of the quality of infrastructure and services such as roads and traffic, garbage, water, housing, sanitation and air pollution.
- It measures the preparedness of cities to deliver high-quality infrastructure and services in the long-term.
- It evaluated the of spatial planning and design standards, municipal finance, municipal staffing, political leadership at the city level and transparency and citizen participation

### Score Card Analysis

- The 12 cities out of 23 covered under this report managed to score the points between 3 to 5.1 which indicates that Indian cities are under-prepared to offer a high quality of life which is sustainable in long-run. The recurring floods, garbage crises, fire accidents, building collapses, air pollution and dengue outbreaks are only symptoms of this deeper governance crisis in our cities.
- Overall, India's cities have continued to score low over the last three editions of ASICS, with average score improving marginally from 3.4 to 3.9. This indicates slow progress on fixing City-Systems. This is particularly worrisome, given the pace at which India is urbanising and the already poor state of public service delivery in our cities. The report underlines the need for sharp focus on City-Systems or institutional reforms to city governance in our cities.

### Five Challenges

- ASICS stated that there are five systemic challenges that need to be urgently addressed for our cities to deliver a better quality of life to citizens in a sustainable manner. These are:
- Lack of a modern, contemporary framework of spatial planning of cities and design standards for public utilities
- Weak finances in terms of financial sustainability and financial accountability of cities
- Poor human resource management
- Powerless mayors and city councils a
- Total absence of platforms for systematic citizen participation and lack of transparency in finances

### Key Findings

- India's cities are improving at a snail's pace, scoring between 3 and 5.1 out of 10 in the City-Systems framework. Global benchmark cities like London and New York score 8.8 on the same framework of evaluation, while Johannesburg, a city in a similarly placed developing country, scored 7.6.

## About Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy

Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (Janaagraha) is a Bengaluru based not-for-profit organisation which is a part of the Jana group. It aims at transforming the quality of life in India's cities and towns. The organisation defines the quality of life as comprising quality of infrastructure and services and quality of citizenship. Janaagraha works with citizens to catalyse active citizenship in city neighbourhoods and with governments to institute reforms to City-Systems.

## City Systems

The systems that underlie urban governance collectively refer to as "City-Systems". The systems refers to laws, policies, quality of institutions and accountability mechanisms that drive or give rise to the quality of life that we experience in our daily lives. The City-Systems framework comprises four distinct but inter-related components namely:

- Urban Planning and Design (Spatial Planning, Urban design standards)
- Urban Capacities and Resources (Municipal Finance, Municipal Staffing, IT)
- Empowered and Legitimate Political Representation (powers and functions of city council, their legitimacy)
- and
- Transparency, Accountability and Participation (public disclosure, accountability for service levels)

## Jaipur to Host 8th Theatre Olympics

- The Pink City, Jaipur is all ready to co-host the 8th Theatre Olympic for the very first time in India. The event organised by National School of Drama (NSD) under the aegis of Ministry of Culture in collaboration with Ravindra Manch Society and Art & Culture Department, Government of Rajasthan.
- The fest will cover 17 cities in India with more than 25,000 artists performing 450 shows, 600 ambience performances and 250 youth shows
- There will be 15 plays between consisting of international, national, and folk theatre forms.
- Folk production Satya Harishchandra (directed by Choudhary Chajjan Singh), specially invited plays such as Bali (directed by K S Rajendran), Gokulmirgamana (directed by B V Karanth), and Mirza Sahibaan (directed by G S Channi) going to be the highlights of the event.

## Significance

- The 8th Theatre Olympics is an opportunity to highlight the cultural heritage of Rajasthan. Many folk forms from the state have already been showcased during the festival. This international festival will give a boost to the folk and theatre performers,

### History of Theatre Olympics

- The Theatre Olympics was established in 1993 in Delphi, Greece, on the initiative of the famous Greek theatre director, Theodoros Terzopoulos. The event presents some of the achievements of the greatest theatre practitioners from around the world.

### Odisha to Collaborate with RIMES for Disaster Management

- The government of Odisha is all set up to join hands with the Thailand-based Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES). Odisha State Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) and RIMES would forge a partnership in the field of drought monitoring and early warning for different natural disasters.

### Objective

- The decision is taken to fortify the early warning services of the state. Also, the state aims at preparing for management of hazards using the system. The collaboration of OSDMA and RIMES will help improve the disaster management capability of the State.
- Under the drought monitoring system, both institutions would work on a system to archive, analyse and visualise data, besides evaluating station performance and validating forecast data.
- RIMES is expected to provide a one-stop risk management system for all OSDMA needs.
- It would also enhance the warning-response capacities of the OSDMA by imparting specialised expert training. The RIMES will help to develop a one-stop risk management system for all OSDMA needs-integration of multiple data database/servers.

### What is RIMES?

The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System is an international and intergovernmental institution, owned and managed by its Member States. RIMES was established on 30 April 2009 and was registered with the United Nations on 1 July 2009. RIMES operates from its regional early warning centre located at the campus of the Asian Institute of Technology in Pathumthani, Thailand.

### Krishi Unnati Mela Begins in Delhi

- PM Modi inaugurated the annual Krishi Unnati Mela at Indian Agricultural Research Institute in the New Delhi. During the inaugural event, he unveiled Jaivik Kheti portal on organic farming and laid the foundation stone of 25 Krishi Vigyan Kendras.
- 'Krishi Karman' and 'Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Krishi Vigyan Protsahan' awards were also conferred on the occasion. This year's event has the theme of doubling farmer's income by 2022.

## **Objectives**

The Krishi Mela owed to the interests of farmers and those involved in allied sectors. Theme based pavilions have been set up that aim to-

- Double the farmers' income by 2022
- Encourage organic farming
- Give a boost to cooperatives sector
- Ensure farmers establish direct contacts with companies manufacturing seeds, fertiliser and pesticides
- Popularize dairy, animal husbandry, fisheries and horticulture
- Creating awareness about the latest technological developments

## **Significance**

- To achieve the goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022, the government has ensured that sectors like animal husbandry, fisheries and dairy farming fetch more income to the farmers. Also, implementation of the schemes at ground level is stressed.

## **Achievements of Govt in Agriculture Sector**

- All notified crops, MSP will be at least one and a half times the cost
- Efforts to link rural mandis to APMC wholesale markets to global market
- Grameen Retail Agriculture Markets have been envisaged
- Farmers can market their produce in a better way through Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs) (Income Tax Exempted)
- e-marketing portal for organic products
- soil health card and neem coating of urea

## **Celebration of 6th Foundation Day of BIRAC**

- The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) celebrated its 6th Foundation Day on 20th March Day in New Delhi.
- The celebration was themed as ‘Sustaining Innovation – A Market-Driven Pathway. A large number of dignitaries from the scientific and industry sectors both from within the country and overseas participated in the event

### **Achievements of BIRAC**

- BIRAC has played a critical role in supporting the entrepreneurial aspirations of brightest minds in the country through its programs and mentor support networks in keeping with the Government’s mandate. Through these efforts, India has been able to develop affordable products and technologies that will better the lives of our people.
- BIRAC has played in bringing together healthcare, entrepreneurship and science.
- From affordable devices or diagnostics to treatments, BIRAC supported innovators and technologies are on their way to changing healthcare in India and beyond.’
- BIRAC has supported over 650 projects, more than 500 start-ups, & entrepreneurs, and 30 incubators across the country in six years.

### **Roles of BIRAC**

- BIRAC implements a wide range of high impact initiatives providing access to risk capital through targeted funding, facilitating technology transfer, and supporting intellectual property management and handholding schemes for biotech firms to make them globally competitive.
- BIRAC has 10 flagship schemes that are supported by funding from the Department of Biotechnology and manages 7 collaboratively funded programs
- It tries to galvanize the social impact by piloting research and extension services within a series of thematic calls and other global definite initiatives to improve public health and beyond.

### **About BIRAC**

- Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council is a not-for-profit Public Sector Enterprise, set up by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology Government of India. It was set up to empower the emerging biotech industry to undertake strategic research and innovation.

## ***NITI Aayog, Piramal Foundation Ink Agreement***

- The policy think tank of India, NITI Ayog has entered into an agreement with Piramal Foundation. According to the statement of intent(SoI) NITI Ayog and Piramal will work to transform the healthcare, education and nutrition in "Aspirational Districts".
- The objective will be fulfilled with the help of District Collectors and key officers of "Aspirational Districts"

### Objectives of SOI

- During the four years of collaboration, Piramal Foundation will work in with the district administration, State Prabhari Officers, Central Prabhari Officers, state government and concerned Central ministries to improving the identified indicators. The six socio-economic parameters are pertaining to health and nutrition, education, financial inclusion and skill development, agriculture and water resources and basic infrastructure.
- The focus will be on strengthening the existing public systems specifically in the health and nutrition and education sectors.
- Piramal Foundation will provide support to focus on leadership development, change management, technology integration and implementing various innovative practices.
- The collaboration is for a duration of four years, with the option to continue, based on mutual agreement.

### Aspirational Districts

- The Centre has commenced a major policy initiative for rapid transformation of 115 districts that are lagging on specific development parameter. Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked collectors and officers-in-charge of the 115 aspirational districts to come up with pioneering innovations to achieve visible results for development by April 14, the birth anniversary of B R Ambedkar.

### Cabinet Approves North-East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS) 2017

- PM Modi led Union Cabinet of India has approved the North East Industrial Development Scheme with the financial assistance of Rs. 3000 crores upto March, 2020. The required financial assistance will be offered after analysing the progress of the scheme in 2020.

### Objectives

- The main objective of the scheme is to promote employment in the North East states by offering incentives to the MSME sectors All eligible industrial units, which are getting benefits of one or more components of other schemes of the Government of India, will also be considered for benefits of other components of this scheme. The overall cap for benefits under all components of incentives will be of Rs. 200 crores per unit.

## Incentives Provided

Under the Scheme, the following incentives shall be provided to new industrial units set up in the North Eastern States including Sikkim:

### Central Capital Investment Incentive for Access to Credit (CCIIAC)

- 30% of the investment in Plant & Machinery with an upper limit of Rs.5 Crore on the incentive amount per unit.

### Central Interest Incentive (CII)

- 3% on working capital credit advanced by eligible Banks/ Financial institutions for first 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.

### Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (CCII)

- Reimbursement of 100% insurance premium on insurance of building and Plant & Machinery for 5 years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.

### Goods and Service Tax (GST) Reimbursement

- Reimbursement up to the extent of Central Govt. share of CGST and IGST for 5 Years from the date of commencement of commercial production by the unit.

### Income-Tax (IT) Reimbursement

- Reimbursement of Centre's share of income tax for first 5 years including the year of commencement of commercial production by the unit.

### Transport Incentive (TI)

- Transport Incentive (TI) 20% of the cost of transportation including the subsidy currently provided by Railways/ Railway PSU for movement of finished goods by rail. 20% of cost of transportation for finished goods, for movement through inland waterways Authority of India. 33% of the cost of transportation of air freight on perishable goods (as defined by IATA) from the airport nearest to place of production to any airport **within the country.**

### Employment Incentive (EI)

- The Government shall pay 3.67% of the employer's contribution to the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) in addition to Government bearing 8.33% Employee Pension Scheme (EPS) contribution of the employer in the Pradhan Mantri RojgarProtsahan Yojana (PMRPY).

## Cabinet Approves Amendments in Surrogacy Bill, 2016

- With an aim to regulate surrogacy in India, the Union Cabinet has given its approval to amend the "Surrogacy Regulation Bill 2016. The bill, applicable to the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir

### Features

- Once enacted, the bill will provide rights of a child born through surrogacy equal to those of a natural or biological child.
- It will make it mandatory to register surrogacy clinics with the appropriate state authorities. 16 months of extended insurance coverage for surrogate mothers to cover all complications will be offered and a clause to prevent exploitation of the surrogate mother has been added
- "If the bill is passed, it will regulate surrogacy services throughout the country, control unethical practices in surrogacy and prevent the commercialization of surrogacy. It will also prohibit potential exploitation of surrogate mothers and children born through surrogacy"

### Regulation of Surrogacy

- National Surrogacy Board at the central level, State Surrogacy Boards and appropriate authorities in the states and union territories will be established in order to regulate the surrogacy.

### Need of Regulation

India has been emerging as a "surrogacy hub" for couples from different countries and with this, the incidents of unethical practices, exploitation of surrogate mothers, abandonment of children born out of surrogacy and rackets of intermediaries importing human embryos and gametes have been increasing. The 228th report of the Law Commission had recommended prohibiting commercial surrogacy and allowing ethical altruistic surrogacy by enacting a suitable legislation.

### Recommendations of the Parliament Committee

- Departmental-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare on the Bill tabled the 102nd report in Rajya Sabha and simultaneously in Lok Sabha
- The panel recommended that there should be no discrimination against people of Indian-origin living abroad seeking to use surrogacy services in India.
- There is "no point" in restricting Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) from using surrogacy services, the panel's report, tabled in Parliament recently, said.



- While recommending that foreign nationals be kept out of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2016, it advocated an appropriate mechanism for a complete background check of NRIs, PIOs and OCIs intending to use the services of surrogates for bearing a child on their behalf.

### Features of Surrogacy Bill 2016

- Only for couples who cannot conceive a child can avail the benefit of surrogacy. In case of any other medical conditions which could prevent a woman from giving birth to a child, this procedure isn't allowed.
- The intending couple needs to fulfil the requirement in order to commission surrogacy.
- The surrogate mother and the intending couple need eligibility certificates from the appropriate authority
- The surrogate mother must be a 'close relative' of the intending couple. .
- For an abortion, in addition to complying with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971, the approval of the appropriate authority and the consent of the surrogate mother is required.

### Cabinet Approves Opening of 18 Missions in Africa

- The Union Cabinet has approved the opening of 18 new Indian missions in Africa. The new Indian missions will be set up over four years, from 2018 to 2021.

### Indian Missions in Africa

- India already has 29 resident missions in Africa. The new mission will be opened in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Swaziland and Togo. These new missions are also a step towards implementing the vision of enhanced co-operation and engagement with Africa.

### Reason

- India wants to expand its influence in the African continent which is rich in resources. China has been trying to increase its appearance in Africa. The decision will enhance India's diplomatic outreach in the African continent and allow India to engage with Indian diaspora in African countries.

### Parivara and Talawara: Cabinet Approves Inclusion of Communities ST List

- The Union Cabinet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi has approved the recommendation of Karnataka Government to include "Parivara" and Talawara communities in the list of scheduled tribes (STs). The two communities will be given the synonyms of "Nayaka" at SI NO. 38 in the list.

### **Effect**

- The decision has been taken to gratify the long-term demand of the two communities to grant them the status of Scheduled Tribes in Karnataka. Now the people belonging to the communities will be able to apply for a certificate of Scheduled Tribes from Karnataka state consequently they will enjoy the benefits meant for the ST communities in the state

### **Whats Next?**

- The first specification of Scheduled Tribes in relation to a particular State or Union territory is by a notified Order of the President, after consultation with the State Government / UT concerned. Any subsequent inclusion in or exclusion from and other modifications in the list of Scheduled Tribes can be made only through an amending Act of Parliament.

### **What are Scheduled Tribes?**

- The term 'Scheduled Tribes' is notified under Article 366 (25) of Indian constitution. It defined scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution". Article 342, which is reproduced below, prescribes procedure to be followed in the matter of specification of scheduled tribes.

### **World Water Day: 22 March 2018**

- International World Water Day is celebrated annually on 22 March with the purpose of drawing attention towards the importance of freshwater and its also advocates the sustainable management of water resources for future generations

### **Background**

- During the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the recommendation to celebrate a day as an International Water Day was put forth and in 1993, the General Assembly of United Nations designated 22nd March as the World Water Day. Since 1993, the World

Water Day is observed to devote the day to the activities that promotes general awareness about water resources, their depletion and the resourceful management of water.

### **Theme 2018**

- This year World Water Day is observed around the theme– Nature for Water
- The theme explores how nature can be used to overcome the water challenges of the 21st century. This could be in the form of nature-based solutions to reduce floods, droughts and water pollution and protect ecosystems. Restoring wetlands, implementing constructed wetlands, green roofs, green infrastructure, planting new forests, reconnecting rivers to floodplains, are some examples. Each of these use natural processes to rebalance the water cycle and improve human health and livelihoods.

### **MCX Launches World's First Brass Futures Contracts**

- For the very first time, Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX) launched futures trading in brass felicitating brass stakeholder to hedge their price risk.
- India's largest commodity exchange MCX will start the future trading in brass on March 26 will offer three contracts ending in April, May and June for trading, with a lot size of one tonne. Significantly, MCX Brass futures is the first non-ferrous contract with a compulsory delivery option.

### **Significance**

- Brass futures will offer the stakeholder a more organised and robust price discovery platform and will help them to use benchmark price of national level. This will enable them to reduce their price risk
- The price is quoted ex-warehouse Jamnagar (delivery centre) inclusive of taxes and duties, excluding GST.
- Almost the entire scrap for making brass gets imported into India, but the importers are not sure on the price until the brass shipments lands in the country. With MCX providing price stability, a platform will be given to the market participants and also brass value chain would get a single price to benchmark

### **Brass Production in Country**

- India produces 100,000-150,000 tonne of brass annually, which includes production through primary metal and recycled brass. India imports huge quantities of brass scrap from the US, the Middle East, Africa and Europe which is then separated and recycled to make brass. It is the largest exporter of finished brass products.
- Out of the 5,000 small and medium units producing brass in the country, about 3,000 are located at Jamnagar, accounting for 80 per cent of the brass produced in India. The rest of the companies are spread across Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh and Jagadhari in Haryana.

## First 'Indian Sign Language' Dictionary Of 3000 Words Launched

- The very first sign language dictionary of India called "Indian Sign Language Dictionary" has been launched in New Delhi by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot.

### Who developed the dictionary?

- The dictionary has been developed by Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre (ISLR&TC) that works under the department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities M/o Social Justice & Empowerment.

### Features of the dictionary

The very impressive feature of the dictionary is that it collaborates around 3000 words in it. It will be available in English and Hindi Languages making it easier for the deaf to understand a foreign language.

**The ISL dictionary has been categorised into following sections:**

- **Everyday Terms** -The terms that are used in everyday communication. The videos contain the sign and the corresponding English term.
- **Legal Terms** – This category includes videos for 237 legal terms help explain complicated legal terminology like “Affidavit”, “Acquittal”, etc. That are used in various legal situations.
- **Academic Terms** - To help deaf children understand complex academic concepts, the academic dictionary contains explanations for terms like “Nervous System”, “Rotation” and “Revolution”, etc. The words are from various subjects like Physics, Geography, Biology, Maths, etc. This category contains 229 videos for 212 terms.
- **Medical Terms** – This category includes 200 sign videos for 200 medical terms will help the deaf community to better understand medical terminology used in hospitals and in medical situations.
- **Technical Terms** - This category has 206 videos of sign and explanations in ISL for 204 technical terms that are used in vocational training or in computer courses.

### Significance

- The dictionary will help the deaf to remove the communication barriers and also it will help them with an opportunity to express openly and clearly. With the help of ISL, deaf people will be brought to the main stream of the society

## **African Union Join Hands to Make Continent Free Trade Area**

- Out of 55 members of the African Union, 44 members signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) during a summit of the African Union in Kigali, Rwanda. But 10 countries, including Nigeria, have refused to sign the deal.
- These members pledged to make Africa the largest free trade bloc by using the potential to bring over 1.2bn people together into the same market.

### **Significance of AfCFTA**

- Currently, the trade between African countries is relatively low. It accounts for only 10% of all commerce on the continent - compared with 25% in south-east Asia. It will improve the trade between African countries as 27 member states have agreed to provide free movement of the persons. It will also reduce the barriers like import duties and non-tariffs from the path of free trade and it will definitely boost commerce, trade and employment.
- It will create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments and will also encourage the competitiveness at the industry and enterprise level through exploitation of opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better reallocation of resources.
- Once implemented, AfCFTA will then think of following the path of the European Union.

### **Background of AfCFTA**

- During the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in January 2012, the member adopted a decision to establish a Continental Free Trade Area by an indicative date of 2017. The Summit also endorsed the Action Plan on Boosting Intra-Africa Trade (BIAT) which identifies seven priority action clusters: trade policy, trade facilitation, productive capacity, trade related infrastructure, trade finance, trade information, and factor market integration.

## **Parliament Passes Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 2018**

- Payment Gratuity (Amendment) Bill 2017 has been passed by the Parliament of India to ensure the harmony amongst employees in the private sector and Public Sector Undertakings/Autonomous .

- These employees receive higher amount of gratuity at par with their counterparts in Government sector.

### Features of the Act

- The act seeks to increase the maximum limit of the employees' gratuity in private as well as in the public sector undertakings Autonomous Organizations under Government who are not covered under CCS (Pension) Rules, at par with Central Government employees.
- It also demands the calculation of continuous service for the purpose of gratuity in case of female employees who are on maternity leave from 'twelve weeks' to such period as may be notified by the Central Government from time to time.
- The maximum maternity leave, for the purpose of calculating continuous service under the Act, was based on the maternity leave provided under the Maternity Benefit Act, 1961. The maximum maternity leave under the 1961 Act was changed from 12 weeks to 26 weeks by the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017.
- The Bill removes the reference to 12 weeks in the 1972 Act and empowers the central government to notify the maximum maternity leave.
- The maximum amount of gratuity payable to an employee cannot exceed Rs 10 lakh. The Bill removes the existing ceiling and states that the ceiling may be notified by the central government.

### World's Longest Sandstone Cave Found in Meghalaya

Meghalaya has added another beautiful feather in its crown with the discovery of world's longest sandstone cave called "Krem Puri". Meghalaya is famous for several caves hidden under undulating hills.

- The cave is discovered near the village of Laitsohum in Mawsynram area of East Khasi Hills district.
- It is longest sandstone cave in the world at 24,583m, with dinosaur fossils from 66-76 million years ago. It was first discovered in 2016 but the actual length is obtained by Meghalaya Adventurers' Association (MAA) during one of its recent expeditions.
- It is 6,000m longer than the currently listed sandstone cave in the world, Cueva El Samán, (18,200m) in Venezuela.
- This sandstone cave is also India's second longest cave in general category after limestone Krem Liat Prah-Umim-Labit system measuring little over 31 km in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya.

### World Tuberculosis Day: 24 March

- Every year March 24 is commemorated as "World Tuberculosis Day" to spread awareness about this fatal disease and to set up efforts to end the global epidemic.
- On this date in 1882, Dr Robert Koch announced that he had discovered the bacterium that causes TB, which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this disease.
- Theme 2018: "Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world"
- The theme of this year aims at building commitment to end TB, not only at the political level but at all levels from Mayors, Governors, parliamentarians and community leaders, to people affected with TB, civil society advocates, health workers, doctors or nurses, NGOs and other partners. All can be leaders of efforts to end TB in their own work or terrain
- World TB Day provides the opportunity to shine the spotlight on the disease and mobilize political and social commitment for accelerate progress to end TB.

### Background

- In 1982, on the one-hundredth anniversary of Robert Koch's presentation, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) proposed that 24 March be proclaimed an official World TB Day.
- In 1995, WHO and the Royal Netherlands Tuberculosis Foundation (KNCV) hosted the first World TB Day advocacy planning meeting in Den Haag, Netherlands; an event they would continue co-sponsor over the next few years.

### Videsh Aaya Pradesh ke Dwaar Launched by MEA

- The Ministry of External Affairs launched an initiative titled 'Videsh Aaya Pradesh ke Dwaar' in Hyderabad with an aim to strengthen public diplomacy.
- The other objective of the initiative was to enhance the commitment to take mandates of our foreign policy to the all the people.

### Features

- The programme encourages regional media of different cities to curve their own and create a vast readership profile. The ministry will attempt to explain the foreign policy priorities in a simple manner with the help of regional media. Through this initiative, a pool of media professionals will be created to guide and connect the people at grassroot level with the foreign policy of India.

- The event was attended by around 40 Editors and representatives from the main media organisations based in Hyderabad.

## **Mathematician Robert P. Langlands wins Abel Prize 2018**

- Robert Langlands, a Canadian mathematician, has won the Abel Prize 2018 for developing that connects representation theory to number theory. He will be awarded the 6-million-kroner (\$776,000) Abel Prize by Norway's King Harald in Oslo on May 22.
- "The programme has enlisted hundreds of the world's best mathematicians over the last 50 years. No other project in modern mathematics has as wide a scope, has produced so many deep results, and has so many people working on it," a statement said.

### **About Abel Prize**

- The Abel Prize is an annual award given by the Government of Norway to one or more outstanding mathematicians. It is named after Norwegian mathematician Niels Henrik Abel and modelled after the Nobel Prizes.
- The award was established in 2001 by the Government of Norway and complements its sister prize in the humanities, the Holberg Prize. It comes with a monetary award of 6 million Norwegian kroner (NOK) (around €650,000). It is the most prestigious international academic award in mathematics.
- The award ceremony takes place in the Atrium of the University of Oslo Faculty of Law.

## **March 25: International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery**

- Every year on 25 March, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is observed.
- The day is observed to remember and honour the victims of brutal slavery system. A memorial has been built at United Nations Headquarters to honour the victims permanently.
- The day also aims at creating awareness about the danger of slavery, prejudice and racism.
- It was first observed in 2008 with the theme "Breaking the Silence, Lest We Forget" to honor the lives of those who died as a result of slavery or experienced the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. It is also an occasion to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice.
- Since then it is commemorated every year.



## Background

- About 17 million people were transported against their will from Africa to North, Central and South America during the 16th century and up until the 19th century. Millions more died while being transported to the Americas. This mass deportation and resulting slavery are seen as one of the worst violations of human rights.

## ***Print Biennale India 2018: First International Exhibition Held in New Delhi***

- With the participation of 17 countries, Lalit Kala Akademi of New Delhi hosted the very first International Print Biennale of India. The prime focus of the event was to discover new trends in print making nationally and internationally.

## Highlights of the events

- A total of 200 original prints created by Indian and international artists of impeccable competence were the in the highlights and is a window view into the giant strides in printmaking that is taking place in India and the world.
- The participants came from countries such as USA, UK, Sri Lanka, Italy, Mexico, China, Israel, Sweden, Lithuania, Poland, Argentina, Greece, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Mauritius. A total number of 988 entries at the national level were received of which 127 have been chosen for display.
- The number of entries at the international level was 137 of which 50 artists have been selected. A total of 73 artworks of international artists are on display. While, the 'Eminent Printmakers of India' show consisted of 98 artists to be displayed at the NGMA galleries from Monday 26th March till April 22nd, 2018.

## ***E-Tribes India on e-Commerce Platforms Launched***

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India, (TRIFED), under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, has launched the "e-Tribes India" that banners at Amazon, Snapdeal, Paytm & GeM.
- Also, two websites of TRIFED that includes [www.tribesindia.com](http://www.tribesindia.com), [www.trifed.in](http://www.trifed.in) were launched along with Retail Inventory Software and M-commerce app.
- The event also marked the launch of TRIFED's Handbook for Retail Trade and TRIFED's quarterly magazine 'Tribes Haat'

## Background

- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) is promoting and marketing tribal products, tribal art and crafts within the country and abroad by providing marketing support to tribal products through its network.
- It also organizes exhibitions like National Tribal Craft Expo called “Aadi Mahotsav” etc. in which it promotes and markets tribal products. It also facilitates the participation of tribal artisans to enable them to interact directly with art lovers to assess the market needs.
- In the last three years, it has begun providing e-commerce platforms to the tribal artisans to sell their products.

## Agreements

- TRIFED has entered into agreements with e-commerce platforms like Snapdeal and Amazon with an objective to offer their customers various tribal products and produce through their portals [www.snapdeal.com](http://www.snapdeal.com) and [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) respectively to facilitate the online sale.
- On the request of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Commerce has also made provision for sale of tribal products through TRIFED on [www.gem.gov.in](http://www.gem.gov.in). Also, Tribes India products are available on Flipkart and Paytm too.

## NAIPUNYA RATHAM: Andhra Pradesh Govt. Launches World on Wheels

- The state government of Andhra Pradesh has launched Naipunya Ratham, a multi-utility vehicle. Also called, "World of Wheels", the project aims at connecting remote corners of the states with technology.

## Features

- It is a part of the Smart village Smart Ward Programme launched to facilitate and improve digital literacy, digital skills and create awareness on various government schemes that are underway in Andhra Pradesh
- All the sections of the society, school children can avail benefits from the vehicle for technical and educational information while youth can use it for their skill development purposes
- It will create opportunities in underserved communities and empower people
- More than 10 lakh people across the State will undergo skill development training in the year 2018-19 through this vehicle.
- The vehicle also possesses an excellent system for entertainment purposes as well
- The first phase of the Naipunya Ratham launch will cover 13 districts and 28 smart villages in collaboration with Hewlett Packard (HP), Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India and Guide Foundation for Development

## **Brazzaville Declaration Signed to Protect World's Largest Tropical Peatland**

- In order to protect world's largest tropical peatland "Cuvette Centrale", Brazzaville declaration has been signed off. The declaration aims at promoting better management and conservation of tropical peatland located in Congo Basin.
- Jointly signed by Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo and Indonesia with an objective to prevent the unregulated land use, drainage and degradation.

### **Reason**

- The Cuvette Centrale is at stake in the protection. The equivalent of three years of global greenhouse gas emissions are stored in the Congo Basin, emissions that could be released if the peatlands are degraded or the natural wetlands drained. To preserve the future of these valuable natural peatlands, the DRC and the Republic of Congo established a transboundary collaboration agreement. The agreement noted the importance of good land use and infrastructure planning that takes the nature of peatlands into account.

### **Significance of Brazzaville Declaration**

- Brazzaville declaration aims to implement coordination and cooperation between different government sectors to protect the benefits provided by peatland ecosystems. It also recognizes the importance of the scientific breakthrough of mapping the world's largest tropical peatland area.

## **Chhattisgarh Wins National Water Digest Award**

- Chhattisgarh has been awarded the National 'Water Digest Award' for Water Conservation-Diversion and for increasing the irrigation capacity in the state.
- Chhattisgarh Water Resources Department received the award World Forestry Day' in New Delhi from Chhattisgarh Water Resources Department Secretary Mr. Sonmani Bora.

### **Background**

- Chhattisgarh bagged the award for increasing the irrigation capacity, community participation, water management -water diversion, water conservation, efforts towards inter-linking of rivers, better techniques utilized in irrigation facilities.

### Water Digest Award

- Water Digest Award is presented every year by the globally renowned magazine 'Water Digest' in association with Central Water Resources River Development and Ganga Cleaning Ministry, UNESCO, Central Water Board, Central Water Commission and Ganga Purification National Mission. The Water Digest Award is recognized by the UNESCO.

### Famous Madhavpur Mela Organised in Gujarat

- For the very first time, Ministry of Culture organised Madhavpur Mela in Gujarat with an objective to symbolise the country's unity in diversity.
- The four-day long event was organised under the banner of "Ek Bharat Shreshth Bharat in Madhavpur Ghed, district Porbandar. A group of 150 people from the Northeast were given a traditional welcome

### Purpose of the event

The purpose of this integration is to bring various parts of the country especially the Northeast, close to each other under the banner of Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Madhavpur Mela shares its connection with the Mishmi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The Mishmi tribe traces its ancestry to the legendary King Bhisimak and through him to his daughter Rukmini and Lord Krishna.

### Highlights of the event

- The festival celebrated the immortal journey which Rukmini undertook from Arunachal Pradesh to Gujarat with Lord Krishna.
- All the Union Territories and states except West Bengal are participating in the Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat campaign and have been paired for the purpose of exchanges at the level of students, sports and through culture.

### Surat Becomes First District with 100% Solar Powered Health Centres

- Gujarat's Surat has become first Indian district to have 100 percent solar powered Primary Health Centers (PHC).
- Surat has a total of 52 PHCs in the district and all of them are now powered by the solar system. This initiative will definitely set an example for other districts and states. In the scenario global warming, it has become very important for the world to find the sustainable as well as eco-friendly sources of energy.

- Other than PHCs, there are 572 gram panchayats in the Surat District, out of which 150 are solar powered gram panchayats and soon the other 422 panchayats will too be solar powered. 25 percent of the total expense of making the gram panchayat solar powered has been borne by the district panchayat.

## **ISA, India sign Host Country Agreement**

- India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and International Solar Alliance (ISA) inked the Host Country Agreement.

### **What is the agreement?**

- Under this agreement, ISA will be given a juridical personality and gives it the power to contract, to acquire and dispose off movable and immovable properties, to institute and defend legal proceedings.
- ISA will also enjoy the privileges of applicable tax concessions and immunities as are necessary for ISA's Headquarter to independently discharge its function and programmes.
- ISA shall be deriving its status, privileges and immunities as per Article 10 of Framework Agreement.

### **What is ISA?**

- The International Solar Alliance is an initiative launched by the Prime Minister of India and President of France on 30th November 2015 in Paris on the sidelines of COP21 UN Climate Change Conference. ISA became the first international intergovernmental treaty-based organization to be headquartered in India. ISA celebrated its founding day on 11th March 2018.

### **Objective**

- Undertaking joint efforts required to reduce the cost of finance and the cost of technology,
- Mobilizing more than the US \$1000 billion of investments needed by 2030 for massive deployment of solar energy,
- Pave the way for future technologies adapted to the needs of 121 countries lying fully or partially between the Tropics.

### **ISA has presently four ongoing programmes:**

- Scaling Solar Applications for Agricultural Use
- Affordable Finance at Scale
- Scaling Solar Mini-Grids

- Scaling Solar Rooftop
- SWIFT Broadens Real-Time Payment Tracking Capabilities

## **SWIFT Broadens Real-Time Payment Tracking Capabilities**

- Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) expanded the GPI Tracker system to help banks track their global transactions at all times.
- The system will provide a complete vigilance for the payment activities. The GPI Tracker will cover all payment instructions sent across the network

### **Significance**

- SWIFT GPI facilitates more accurate reconciliation of payments and invoices. The introduction of the unique end-to-end transaction reference in all payment instructions will be effected through the mandatory annual standards update in November 2018. Customer experience will be improved by increasing speed, transparency and automatically provides status updates to all GPI banks involved in any GPI payment chain It also allows banks to confirm when a payment has been completed.

### **Implementation**

- From November a unique end-to-end transaction reference will be included in all payment instructions carried between all 11,000 customers on SWIFT at all times, across more than 200 countries and territories. It will significantly extend transparency and it will drive more banks to join the service, rapidly making GPI the new normal in cross-border payments.

### **What is SWIFT?**

- SWIFT stands for Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). It is a cooperative society under Belgian law owned by its member financial institutions
- It offers a network that enables the financial institutions to send and receive information about all types of financial transactions. It is a secure, reliable and standardised platform.
- Business Identifier Codes (BICs, previously Bank Identifier Codes) are popularly known as "SWIFT codes".
- SWIFT transports financial messages but does not hold accounts for its members and does not perform any form of clearing or settlement.
- The annual conference of SWIFT is called Sibos.

#### **Key Facts:**

- Headquarters: La Hulpe, Belgium, near Brussels.
- Chairman: Yawar Shah
- CEO: Gottfried Leibbrandt

## Myanmar Elects Win Myint as New President

- Win Myint has been elected as the 10th President of Myanmar by the parliament. Myint is a loyalist of Aung San Suu Kyi who has retained her executive authority over the government.
- Win Myint has been appointed for the role after former president Htin Kyaw suddenly stepped down last week, citing his health issues.

### About Win Myint

- Win Myint was born on 8 November 1951. He is a Burmese politician and former political prisoner. He was the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Myanmar from 2016 to 2018.

### Political Career

- He was prisoned for his role in the 8888 Uprising. He won a Pyithu Hluttaw, lower house seat in Patheingyi constituency in 2012 and going on to become secretary of parliament's rule of law committee. In the Myanmar general election, 2015, he was elected as Pyithu Hluttaw MP for Tamu Township. He served as the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Myanmar from 2016 to 2018.

## Cabinet Approve New Integrated Scheme for School Education

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval to the proposal of Department of School Education and Literacy.
- The department suggested to formulate an Integrated Scheme on School Education by **subsuming Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE)** from April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2020.

### Objectives of the Scheme

- Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education from nursery to senior secondary stage

- Improving the quality of school education by focussing on the two T's - Teacher and Technology.
- Providing quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students
- Bridging social and gender gaps in school education
- Promoting vocationalization of education
- Implementing Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.
- Strengthening and upgrading State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs)/State Institutes of Education and District Institutes for Education and Training (DIET) as nodal agencies for teacher training

### Features of the scheme

- The scheme will equip the children with varied skills and knowledge essential for their holistic development and prepare them for the world of work or higher education in the future.
- Optimal utilization of budgetary allocations will be led.
- It would provide a holistic approach to education with the inclusion of senior secondary levels and pre-school levels in support for School education for the first time.
- Quality of education will be focused on by improving the learning outcomes and enhanced capacity building of teachers.
- Use of digital technology in education will be promoted through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTK channels. Specific provision will be made for Swachhta activities - support 'SwachhVidyalaya'. The quality of infrastructure in Government Schools will be improved.
- An enhanced commitment will be given to 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' besides upgrading of KGBVs from class VI-VIII to class XII. There will be an emphasis on 'Kaushal Vikas' in schools and support for 'Khelo India' - provision for sports and physical equipment.

### Background

- The scheme comes in the backdrop of the Prime Minister's vision of Sabko Shiksha, Achhi Shiksha. It aims to support the States in universalizing access to school education from classes pre-nursery to XII across the country, an estimated allocation of Rs. 75,000 crore over the period was approved at the meeting yesterday, a 20% increase over the current allocation.

### CCEA Decision

- The CCEA has approved the continuation of a credit guarantee fund for education loans, which would also increase the ceiling of eligible loan amounts from the existing Rs 4 lakh to Rs7.5 lakh.



- Under the Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana, the government will now take care of the entire employer contribution to social security schemes meant for new formal employees for a period of three years from the date of joining.

## **Cabinet Approves Export of All Edible Oils in Bulk**

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its nod to the proposal of Ministry of Commerce & Industry to allow the export of all varieties of edible oils except mustard oil.
- Mustard oil will continue to be exported only in consumer packs to 5 Kgs and with a minimum export price of US \$900 per tonne.

### **Significance**

- Removing of restrictions on the export of all edible oils will provide additional marketing avenues for edible oils and oilseeds. It will also benefit the farmers by way of better realisation for oilseeds. Idle capacity in India's edible oils industry will be utilised. This move is a step towards Ease of Doing Business by removing confusion arising out of prohibition on the export of edible oils and a plethora of exemptions.

### **Background:**

- India witnessed a jump in the production of oilseeds in 2016-17. At present, only certain edible oils can be exported in bulk and other oils only in consumer packs upto 5 Kg with MEP. In order to support growing production of oilseeds and to explore additional avenues for marketing of edible oils, it is required to allow bulk export of all edible oils with the exception of mustard oil, which is an item of mass consumption in India.

## **Rosemary DiCarlo Becomes First Female UN Political Chief**

- American diplomat Rosemary DiCarlo has become the first woman to head UN political affairs, one of the most high-profile positions at the world body. She will replace Jeffrey Feltman, another American who held the post of under-secretary-general for political affairs since 2012.

### **About DiCarlo**

- She is a former deputy US ambassador to the United Nation with more than 35 years of experience in public service and academia. She also served as deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs and director for United Nations affairs at the national security council in Washington.
- DiCarlo has been president of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy since 2015. Her areas of expertise include Russia and the former Soviet Union as well as the Middle East. DiCarlo speaks Russian and French.

## **GSAT-6A Successfully Launched by ISRO**

- Indian Space Research Organisation has successfully launched the GSAT6A satellite which is a twin of GSAT6. The communication satellite was launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota
- GSLV Mk II (F08) carrying GSAT-6A took off from the second launch pad in Sriharikota.

## **Features of the satellite**

- The satellite will offer mobile communication to India through multibeam coverage facility.
- It will also provide a platform for developing technologies such as demonstration of 6m S-Band Unfurlable Antenna, handheld ground terminals and network management techniques that could be useful in satellite-based mobile communication applications.
- It is high power S-band communication satellite built on I-2K satellite bus with a mission life of about ten years.
- In its oval shaped GTO, GSAT-6A orbits the Earth with a perigee (nearest point to Earth) of 169.4 km and an apogee (farthest point to Earth) of 36,692.5 km with an orbital inclination of 20.64 deg with respect to the equator.
- Induction of high thrust Vikas engine and electromechanical actuation system were made in the rocket's second stage this time around.

## **Madhya Pradesh Wins GI Tag for Black Chicken**

- Madhya Pradesh has won the Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Kadaknath, a black-feathered chicken.
- The chicken is known for its flavourful meat and found mainly in the tribal district of Jhabua, Chhattisgarh

- The GI tag indicates that a product possesses certain qualities exclusive to its land of origin.
- The GI tag will ensure that no one else can use the name Kadaknath while selling any other black chicken and will also translate into higher prices for producers
- Kadaknath is in demand for its taste and low cholesterol and high protein content. It sells at about Rs 500 per kg, which is around five times the price of normal broiler chicken.
- Kadaknath, the black chicken, also lays black eggs. Besides, its blood is also black in colour. The breed is also popular abroad due to high iron content.

### ***Assam Launches Toll-free Helpline for Women***

- The Chief Minister of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal has launched a women helpline called Sakhi 181 to control the crime against women in the state.
- The helpline is part of a scheme under the Union ministry of women and child development to provide 24 hours response to women affected by violence which will initially work from 9am to 5.30pm but will soon be a 24x7 service.

### **Features**

- It is a tech-enabled human response system, which follows instructions depending on what is fed to it by the caller. Women can use this helpline for any kind of assistance, including a medical emergency, an urgent need for family counselling or if they require assistance from the police.
- The helpline can be used for any kind of assistance, and not just in the event of a threat to their safety.
- Superintendents of police of all the districts have been asked to ensure swift and correct filing of charge sheet in all crimes against women so that justice can be given to the victims.
- The service is integrated with women police stations, state commission for women, family counselling centres, NGOs, legal service centres, shelter homes, medical and legal experts.