

Monthly Current Affairs GK Digest: April 2019

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SINGAPORE'S CHANGI AIRPORT GETS SKYTRAX WORLD AIRPORT AWARD

Skytrax World Airport Awards which lists the Best 100 Airports of the World was released by the UK-based Skytrax, a consultancy firm which runs an air airline and airport review and ranking site.

- The accolade was awarded at the Passenger Terminal Expo 2019 in London.

DETAILS:

- **Singapore's Changi Airport has been crowned the world's best aviation hub for the seventh time in a row.**
- Singapore's Changi Airport is well known for its rooftop swimming pool, two 24-hour movie theatres and shopping spots.
- Tokyo International Airport (Haneda), up one place from 2018 stood at the second place.
- The airport hub also won accolade as World's Best Domestic Airport and World's Cleanest Airport.
- South Korea's Incheon International Airport, down one place from its second-place spot in 2018 is the other entrant at number three.
- Incheon International Airport also won the accolade for World's Best Transit Airport.

INDIAN AIRPORTS IN THE LIST:

- Indira Gandhi International Airport of New Delhi was eight points up this year after featuring at the 66th spot in 2018 and stood at rank 59.

Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport stood at 64, down one rank from the previous year.

Rajiv Gandhi Hyderabad International Airport stood at 66, up 10 ranks.

Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport at 69, down five ranks.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTED FOR AN EU-WIDE BAN ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC PRODUCTS

The European Parliament has voted for an EU-wide ban on single-use plastic products such as the straws, cutlery and cotton buds that are clogging the world's oceans.

DETAILS:

- The law on single-use plastic ban sets a target to gather 90 per cent of plastic for recycling by 2029 and mandates the production of plastic bottles with 25 per cent recycled material by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030.
- The law also insists on polluters pay principle by insisting polluters to pay the costs of a clean-up.
- The measures are strengthened, particularly for cigarette manufacturers, who will have to support the recycling of discarded filters.
- The "polluter pays" principle will be extended to manufacturers of fishing nets so that companies, not fishing crews pay the cost of nets lost at sea.
- The products prohibited under the law represent 70 per cent of the waste that pours into the world's oceans, posing a threat to wildlife and fisheries.

ABOUT SINGLE-USE PLASTICS:

- Single-use plastics, or disposable plastics, are used only once before they are thrown away or recycled.
- They are not usually biodegradable and goes into a landfill where it is buried or it gets into the water and finds its way into the ocean.
- They degrade into tiny particles after many years.
- In this process of degradation, they release toxic chemicals (additives that were used to shape and harden the plastic) which make their way into our food and water supply.

BLOCKCHAIN BASED E-MARKETPLACE APP FOR COFFEE

The Ministry of Commerce and Industries has launched a blockchain based e-marketplace app for coffee.

DETAILS:

- The e-marketplace helps farmers integrate directly with markets in a transparent manner, allowing them to realize fair prices for their produce.
- The blockchain technology will help in reducing the number of intermediaries between coffee growers and buyers and help farmers double their income.

- The blockchain-based marketplace app for trading coffee brings transparency and maintains the traceability of Indian coffee from bean to cup.
- The blockchain-based marketplace app by facilitating direct access to buyers, it will reduce growers' dependency on intermediaries and help them get a fair price for their produce.
- The coffee board has collaborated with Eka Plus for the development of the app.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- India produces one of the best coffees in the world and a considerable portion of it comes from small coffee growers and tribal farmers.
- Although Indian coffee is highly valued in the world market, the share of farmers in the final returns from coffee is very low.
- The Blockchain Based e-marketplace app is expected to help farmers in gaining higher returns.

WIPRO PARTNERS WITH IIT-KHARAGPUR FOR ADVANCED 5G RESEARCH

IT services major Wipro has announced a partnership with IIT Kharagpur to undertake industry-focused applied research in the areas of 5G and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

DETAILS:

- **Wipro and IIT Kharagpur will jointly take up applied research projects on industry challenges related to the design, planning and operations of 5G networks and cognitive information processing for the automation of these processes and 5G use cases.**
- The research will focus on AI research applicable in the healthcare, education and retail sectors as well as in domains such as climate change and cybersecurity.
- Research outcomes from this partnership will be leveraged by Wipro to develop solutions for its customers, across industry verticals.
- IIT Kharagpur will benefit from the commercialisation of the joint research insights and Wipro's industry expertise.
- **Subject matter experts from Wipro and IIT-Kharagpur will promote knowledge sharing through guest lectures, workshops and seminars on 5G and AI.**

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The collaboration brings together synergies of Wipro's rich industry technology expertise and understanding of domain-specific business challenges with IIT Kharagpur's distinguished research capabilities to co-innovate and develop next-generation AI and 5G solutions that will benefit both our clients as well as the industry at large.

FACEBOOK BANS WHITE NATIONALISM & WHITE SEPARATISM ON ITS PLATFORMS

Social media giant Facebook has banned praise, support and representation of white nationalism and white separatism on its platforms.

DETAILS:

- This move came after the recent Christchurch mosque shooting.
- Further, Facebook has stated that it will direct users who post or search content connected to these ideologies to an organization that helps people leave hate groups.
- Social Media platforms were under pressure and criticisms that they have failed to confront extremism.
- Social Media was under the spotlight after a suspected white supremacist broadcasted live footage of his attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand.

WHAT ARE WHITE SUPREMACY, WHITE NATIONALISM AND WHITE SEPARATISM?

- **White Supremacy** is defined as a belief system with tenets like "whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; whites should live by themselves in a whites-only society; white people have their own 'culture' that is superior to other cultures; white people are genetically superior to other people."
- **White Nationalism** is defined as a "euphemism for white supremacy". White Nationalism emphasizes defining a country or region by white racial identity and which seeks to promote the interests of whites exclusively, typically at the expense of people of other backgrounds."
- **White Separatism** is defined as a form of white supremacy which emphasizes the idea that white people should exist separately from all inferior, non-white races, whether by establishing an all-white community somewhere or removing non-whites from their midst.

VOTING THROUGH BALLOT PAPERS IN NIZAMABAD, TELANGANA

In the Lok Sabha Polls 2019, the people of Nizamabad in Telangana will vote through Ballot Papers instead of EVMs.

REASON FOR VOTING BY BALLOT PAPERS IN NIZAMABAD:

- For the Lok Sabha Polls 2019 in the Nizamabad Lok Sabha seat, there are 185 candidates in contention.
- As one EVM can accommodate only 16 candidates and a maximum of 4 EVMs can be used in one polling booth, the Election Commission is forced to switch back to the age-old practice of ballot papers.

MORE DETAILS:

- Of the 185 candidates in contention 178 are farmers who cultivate Turmeric and Jowar.
- They are contesting polls to highlight their demand for the remunerative price for their crops.
- The Nizamabad Lok Sabha Constituency had received around 200 nominations of these some were rejected and 189 candidates remained in contention after the scrutiny of nomination papers.
- Of these 4 candidates withdrew their nomination papers.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- K Kavitha who is also the daughter of Telangana Chief Minister, Chandrashekhar Rao is the sitting MP from the Nizamabad seat.

RAJASTHAN DAY CELEBRATED ON MARCH 30TH

Rajasthan Day is celebrated every year on March 30th to commemorate the day on which the state of Rajasthan came into existence.

DETAILS:

- Rajasthan Day commemorates the valour, strong willpower and sacrifice of the people of Rajasthan.
- **Rajasthan earlier known as Rajputana came into existence on March 30, 1949.**
- Rajasthan which is the largest state of India in terms of the area, before Independence comprised of around 21 small and big princely states.
- The princely states were annexed to the union of India on 15th August 1947 but their unification could be accomplished only later.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF RAJASTHAN UNIFICATION:

MATSYA UNION

The four princely states of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dhaulpur, and Karauli formed the Matsya Union and it was inaugurated on 17th March 1948.

RAJASTHAN UNION

Rajasthan Union came into existence by the union of states namely Banswara, Bundi, Dungarpur, Jhalawar, Kishangarh, Pratapgarh, Shahpura, Tonk, and Kota on 25th March 1948.

UNITED STATE OF RAJASTHAN

The Maharana of Udaipur decided to join the Rajasthan Union just three days after the formation of Rajasthan Union.

The United State of Rajasthan was inaugurated by Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru on 18th April 1948.

GREATER RAJASTHAN

States like Bikaner, Jaisalmer, Jaipur, and Jodhpur got merged and formed Greater Rajasthan on 30th March 1949 which was inaugurated by Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. Later Rajasthan was further reorganised by the merger of Matsya Union on May 15th, 1949, Sirohi joined Rajasthan on January 26th, 1950 and annexation of Ajmer-Merwara region in November 1956.

Later Madhya Pradesh's Bhanpura tehsil and Abu of Gujrat were also merged with Rajasthan.

PUNJAB-HARYANA HIGH COURT BANS MENTIONING OF CASTE IN PROCEEDINGS

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has instructed states of Punjab, Haryana and Union Territory Chandigarh to not mention the caste of the accused, victims or witnesses in proceedings before the court.

DETAILS:

- The High Court while passing a ruling in a murder case where the Haryana police had mentioned the caste of the accused witnesses and the victim during the proceedings stated this is not permissible and the caste system was profoundly illogical and was also against the basic tenets of the Constitution.
- The High Court stated that mentioning the caste separately in the criminal proceedings is a colonial legacy and requires to be stopped henceforth.
- The Constitution guarantees a casteless and classless society since all are born equal.
- The High court directed the governments to issue instructions to all investigating officers not to mention the caste of the accused, victims or witnesses in recovery memos, FIRs, seizure memos, inquest papers and other forms prescribed under CrPC and Punjab Police Rules.

EARTH HOUR WITNESSED ON MARCH 30TH

Earth Hour 2019 was witnessed on March 30th by turning off lights at 8:30 pm local time for an hour as a call for global action on climate change.

- The theme of Earth Hour 2019 is #Connect2Earth.

DETAILS:

- The theme signifies humanities connection to Earth and nature is undeniable: our planet's gain is everyone's gain.
- Nature not only provides us with all the things we need to live - from the air we breathe to the water we drink, and from the shelter we need to the economy we rely on - but also makes our lives better.
- However, its growing loss puts this all under threat.
- World Wide Fund for Nature has partnered with the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to create connect2earth movement.
- The movement partners to engage millions of people worldwide to speak up on why nature matters and take the lead in action against the harm being done to the planet we all call home.

ABOUT EARTH HOUR:

- Earth Hour is held annually by encouraging individuals, communities, and businesses to turn off non-essential electric lights for one hour, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. on a specific day towards the end of March, as a symbol of commitment to the planet.
- Earth Hour which began as a symbolic lights out event in Sydney in 2007 it is now the world's largest grassroots movement for the environment, inspiring millions of people to take action for our planet and nature.
- Earth Hour is organized by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

INDIAN OPEN (BADMINTON) HELD FROM 26TH TO 31ST MARCH 2019

The Indian Badminton Tournament 2019 was held at K. D. Jadhav Indoor Hall in New Delhi from 26th to 31st March 2019 and had a total purse of \$350,000.

WINNERS OF THE INDIAN OPEN (BADMINTON) 2019

- Women's Singles: Ratchanok Intanon (Thailand)
- Men's Doubles: Lee Yang and Wang Chi-lin (Chinese Taipei)
- Women's Doubles: Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu (Indonesia)
- Mixed Doubles: Wang Yilü and Huang Dongping (China)
- One must know:
- India's Srikanth Kidambi lost to Viktor Axelsen of Denmark 7-21, 20-22 in the men's singles summit clash.

VIJAYA BANK AND DENA BANK TO FUNCTION AS BRANCHES OF BOB

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has stated that all branches of public sector lenders Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank will function as branches of Bank of Baroda from April 1st, 2019, and the proposed merger Bank of Baroda with Dena and Vijaya Bank will be effective from April 1st 2019.

DETAILS OF THE MERGER PLAN:

- As per the proposed merger plan, shareholders of Vijaya Bank will get 402 equity shares of BoB for every 1,000 shares held and the shareholders of Bank will receive 110 equity shares of BoB for every 1,000 equity shares held.
- The boards of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank will stand dissolved.
- The entire share capital of Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank will stand cancelled and the shares of both these banks will also stand delisted from stock exchanges.
- Following the merger of these state-owned banks, BoB will become the third largest bank in India after the State Bank of India and HDFC Bank.
- The consolidated bank will have over 9,500 branches, 13,400 ATMs, 85,000 employees to serve 12 crore customers.
- The bank will have a business mix of Rs 15 lakh crore of the balance sheet, with deposits and advances of Rs 8.75 lakh crore and Rs 6.25 lakh crore, respectively.

GRSE BECOMES "FIRST INDIAN SHIPYARD" TO BUILD 100 WARSHIPS

State-owned Garden Reach Ship Builders and Engineers Ltd. (GRSE) has become the "first Indian shipyard" to build and deliver 100 warships.

DETAILS:

The 100th warship 'IN LCU L-56' has been handed over to the Indian Navy. GRSE had handed over its 99th warship, 'ICGS Priyadarshini', an advanced 'Fast Patrol Vessel' to the Indian Coast Guard.

GARDEN REACH SHIP BUILDERS AND ENGINEERS LIMITED:

- Based in Kolkata, Garden Reach Ship Builders and Engineers Ltd (GRSE) is a shipbuilding company in India under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence.
- GRSE primarily caters to the shipbuilding requirements of the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard.
- In addition to its ship and warship building capabilities, GRSE is also engaged in engine production and other engineering activities.
- In 1934, GRSE was incorporated under the Indian Companies Act, 1913 and was later acquired by the Government of India from Macneill & Barry Limited on May 19, 1960.
- **In 2006, GRSE was conferred upon the status of Mini Ratna.**
- Over the years, GRSE has built around 780 platforms, including 100 warships to the Navy, the Coast Guard, and the Mauritius Coast Guard.

ZUZANA CAPUTOVA BECOMES SLOVAKIA'S FIRST FEMALE HEAD OF THE STATE.

Zuzana Caputova wins Slovakia's presidential election to become the country's first female President. Zuzana Caputova has won Slovakia's presidential election, making her the country's first female head of the state.

DETAILS:

- Ms. Caputova defeated high-profile diplomat Maros Sefcovic, nominated by the governing party. She won 58% of the vote, with Mr. Sefcovic trailing on 42%. Mr. Sefcovic is the vice president of the European Commission.

ABOUT SLOVAKIA:

- Slovakia is a landlocked country in Central Europe.
- It borders Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east, Hungary to the south, Austria to the west, and the Czech Republic to the northwest.
- Slovakia is a member of the European Union and NATO.
- Slovakia was the "other half" of Czechoslovakia, which split into two countries in 1993.
- Slovakia's which spans about 49,000 square kilometres (19,000 sq mi) is mostly mountainous.
- The capital and largest city is Bratislava, and the second largest city is Košice.
- The official language is Slovak and Euro is its national currency.

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES 'EMISAT' FOR DRDO

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully launched an electronic intelligence satellite 'Emisat' for the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) along with 28 third party satellites.

DETAILS:

The notable aspects of the launch were:

- A new variant of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)
- Switching off and on the fourth stage engine couple of times.
- The use of the fourth stage as an orbital platform carrying three experimental payloads.
- PSLV first placed the 436 kg Emisat into a 749 km orbit.
- Then the rocket was brought down to put the 28 satellites into orbit, at an altitude of 504 km.

MORE DETAILS:

- The rocket was brought down further to 485 km where the fourth stage/engine transformed into a payload platform carrying three experimental payloads:
- Automatic Identification System (AIS) from ISRO:- for maritime satellite applications capturing messages transmitted from ships.
- Automatic Packet Repeating System (APRS) from AMSAT (Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation), India:- to assist amateur radio operators in tracking and monitoring position data.
- Advanced Retarding Potential Analyser for Ionospheric Studies (ARIS) from Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology (IIST):- for the structural and compositional studies of the ionosphere.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- For the first time, the launch also demonstrated new technology of putting payloads into three different orbits with a new variant of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) rocket.

ODISHA DIVAS CELEBRATED ON APRIL 1

The state of Odisha celebrates Odisha Divas or Utkala Divas every year on April 1st to commemorate the state formation day. On this day 82 years ago, Orissa (now Odisha) was established as a province of British India.

DETAILS:

- In 1912, Bihar and Orissa had been separated from Bengal to form the Bihar and Orissa Province.
- In 1936, Bihar and Orissa Province was itself split to form Bihar Province and Orissa Province.
- On 1 April 1936, the new province Orissa came into being with Sir John Austin Hubback, Indian Civil Servant (ICS), as the Governor.
- Orissa was the first linguistic province in the country.
- After Independence, the area of Orissa was almost doubled and the population was increased by a third with the addition of 24 former princely states.
- The name of the state was changed from Orissa to Odisha and the name of its language from Oriya to Odia, in 2011.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Known centuries ago as Kalinga, the state of Odisha has displayed exemplary courage in resisting the might of the Mauryas in the Kalinga War.

- Home to Lord Jagannath, the state of Odisha has a fifth of India's coal, a quarter of its iron ore, a third of its bauxite reserves and much of the country's art and culture.

RBI SETS LIMITS FOR WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES AT RS 75000 CRORE.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in consultation with the Government of India has set the limits for "Ways and Means Advances (WMA)" for the first half of the financial year 2019-20 (April 2019 to September 2019) at Rs 75000 crore.

ABOUT "WAYS AND MEANS ADVANCES (WMA)":

- Ways and Means Advances is the temporary loan facility provided by the RBI to the Centre and State Governments.
- The WMA scheme was introduced in 1997 to meet any temporary mismatches in the receipts and payments of the Government.
- The WMA needs to be vacated after 90 days.
- The interest rate for WMA is currently charged at the repo rate.
- The limits for WMA are decided by the RBI and in consultation with the Government of India.
- Further, the RBI provides an overdraft facility when the WMA limit is breached.
- The overdraft is not allowed beyond 10 consecutive working days.
- The interest rate on overdrafts would be 2 per cent more than the repo rate.

ABOUT WMA SCHEME FOR STATE GOVERNMENTS:

- For the State Governments, there are two types of WMA - Special and Normal WMA.
- Special WMA is provided against the collateral of the government securities held by the State Government.
- After the exhaustion of the special WMA limit, the State Government are provided with a normal WMA which is based on a three-year average of actual revenue and capital expenditure of the state.

WHATSAPP LAUNCHES "TIP LINE" TO COMBAT FAKE NEWS

Social Media Platform WhatsApp has launched an India-focused fact-checking feature to combat fake news and rumours starting with the run-up to the Lok Sabha elections.

CURBING FAKE NEWS:

- Users can check the authenticity of the information or rumours received on the platform by reporting the forward to the WhatsApp number +91-9643-000-888
- The response will indicate if the information is classified as 'true', 'false', 'misleading', 'disputed' or 'out of scope', and include any other related information.
- Pictures, video links or texts in Hindi, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam and English will be reviewed by WhatsApp.
- This tip line feature has been developed by WhatsApp in collaboration with India-based media skilling startup PROTO.

- The tip line feature will help to create a database of rumours to study misinformation during elections as part of a research project commissioned and assisted by WhatsApp.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- As more data flows in, WhatsApp will be able to identify the most susceptible or affected issues, locations, languages, regions, etc.
- The verification reports WhatsApp sends back will encourage the users to send more signals for analysis.

ODISHA'S KANDHAMAL HALDI GETS GI TAG

Southern Odisha's Kandhamal Haldi gets Geographical indication (GI) tag. Kandhamal Haldi a variety of turmeric indigenous to southern Odisha, earns Geographical indication (GI) tag.

ABOUT KANDAMAL HALDI:

- Kandhamal in Odisha's southern hinterland is famous for its turmeric cultivation, a spice that enjoys its pride of place in an array of cuisines.
- Kandhamal Haldi has more oleoresin and volatile oil contents compared to other turmeric varieties.
- Kandhamal Haldi gives a strong aroma and has a high medicinal value.

WHAT IS GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATION?

- Geographical Indication defines the goods as originating in the territory of a country or a region or locality in that territory, provided a given quality reputation or other characteristics of the product are attributable to its geographical origin.
- The product to acquire GI tag has to indicate that the product is of a particular origin has a certain quality or reputation or some other characteristics, which is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.
- The GI tag in India is governed by the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 and is administered by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks, who is the Registrar of Geographical Indications and functions under the auspices of the Union ministry of commerce & industry.

BOLIVIA TO BECOME A MAJOR PROVIDER OF LITHIUM TO INDIA

India and Bolivia have signed an agreement for the development and industrial use of lithium, a prime component used to power electric vehicles and cell phones during the state visit of the President Ram Nath Kovind to Bolivia.

DETAILS

- India and Bolivia agreed to forge a mutually beneficial partnership to facilitate Bolivian supplies of lithium Carbonate to India and foster joint ventures for lithium battery/cell production plants in India.
- This agreement will make Bolivia, which is known to have one-fourth of the world's lithium reserves, one of the major provider of metal for India's e-mobility and e-storage needs.

- The agreement facilitates mechanisms for the commercialization of Lithium Carbonate and Potassium Chloride produced in Bolivia by Yacimientos de Litio Bolivianos Corporación (YLB – Corporación).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS AGREEMENT:

- Bolivia is estimated to hold over 60 per cent of the world's reserves for lithium, which is required for lithium-ion batteries for portable electronics and electric vehicles, but has not yet started producing it commercially.
- India is the second largest manufacturer of mobile phones in the world and has the ambitious goal of 30 per cent electric vehicles by 2030.
- But India imports all its lithium-ion batteries since India has no known sources of lithium, and zero lithium-ion battery manufacturing capabilities currently.
- As a result, India is heavily dependent on China, Taiwan and Japan for import, especially of batteries required for portable electronics.
- With the MoU number of Indian companies setting up production capabilities in Bolivia goes up, as well as the import of lithium to India.
- Domestic production is also set to see a boost, from the automotive perspective.
- Further, the arrival of hybrids and electric vehicles from as early as 2020 onwards, will force manufacturers to look at local production.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- This agreement could turn out to be the backbone for the recently launched FAME India policy (Faster Adoption and Manufacture of (Hybrid and) Electric Vehicles) and will also give a substantial push to India's ambition to have at least 30 per cent of its vehicles run on electric batteries by 2030.

'CAFÉ SCIENTIFIQUE' TO PROMOTE SCIENCE AMONG PUBLIC

A group of science experts of the Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology in Kerala are gearing up to launch 'Café Scientifique' to promote science among the public in an interesting way.

ABOUT CAFÉ SCIENTIFIQUE:

- Café Scientifique envisages bringing science back into popular culture by demystifying scientific research for the public and empowering non-scientists to comfortably assess science and technology issues, particularly those that impact social policymaking.
- Café Scientifique is a grassroots public science initiative based on the French Café Philosophique model.
- Under Café Scientifique, meetings of science enthusiasts would be organised every month at a café or a convenient place, where one or more scientists are invited to talk to the public about new developments in science.
- Various topics such as the universe, climate change, evolution, genetics and human-animal relations will be discussed in every monthly gathering.
- The project aims to make science relevant, powerful and important to the public, especially the younger generations.

RBI CHANGES NPA DISCLOSURE NORMS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has brought changes to the bad loan divergence rule for banks.

DETAILS:

- The bad loan divergence practice mandated by RBI aims at improving transparency in asset classification.
- The changes brought in by the RBI are with respect to the NPA Disclosure Norms.

NPA DISCLOSURE NORMS:

- Banks are required to disclose divergence when the additional provisioning for NPAs assessed by RBI exceeds 10% of the reported profit before provisions and contingencies for the reference period, instead of the earlier rule of 15% of the published net profits after tax.
- The second condition which prescribed the norms on divergence on gross non-performing assets (NPAs) continues to be a material divergence of 15 per cent, as found by the RBI auditors and as reported by the bank has been left unchanged.

WHY THE CHANGE IN NORMS?

- It was found that some banks, on account of low or negative net profit after tax were forced to disclose divergences even where the additional provisioning assessed by the RBI was small.
- This was contrary to the regulatory intent that only material divergences should be disclosed.

SUPREME COURT STRUCK DOWN RBI'S FEBRUARY 2018 CIRCULAR

The Supreme Court has struck down a February 2018 Reserve Bank of India (RBI) circular which gave lender banks six months to resolve their stressed assets or move under the Insolvency Code against private entities who have defaulted in loans worth over Rs 2000 crore.

DETAILS:

- The RBI had defended the circular by citing public interest and "in the interest of the national economy to see that evergreening of debts does not carry on indefinitely".
- RBI had argued that huge amounts that are due should come back into the economy for further productive use.

OBSERVATIONS MADE BY THE SUPREME COURT:

- The Court accepted the argument made by the petitioners that the applying the 180-day limit to all sectors, without going into the special problems faced by each sector, would "treat unequals equally" and is violative of Article 14 of the Constitution.

- The RBI circular sourced its power from Section 35AA of the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act of 2017.
- It states that Central Government may, by order, authorise the Reserve Bank to issue directions to any banking company or banking companies to initiate insolvency resolution process in respect of a default, under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.
- But the RBI circular missed two vital factors viz. authorisation of the government and the general nature of the circular which did not concern a "specific default".

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The Judgment even recorded submission that Rs 34,044 crore of their non-performing assets was primarily due to government policy changes, failure to fulfil commitments by the government, delayed regulatory response and non-payment of dues by DISCOMs and were hardly caused by mismanagement.
- Hence the power companies had asked the circular to be quashed as it was in the nature of "one-solution-fits-all".

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY: 2 APRIL

The World Autism Awareness Day 2019 was celebrated on April 2nd with the theme 'Assistive Technologies, Active Participation'.

DETAILS:

- The theme highlights the integral role technology plays in the development of people with any form of disability including autism.
- Technology is not only important for development it also ensures that people with disabilities enjoy their basic human rights and helps them tackle any issues they face as a member of the society.
- The theme 'Assistive Technologies, Active Participation' also highlights the fact that assistive technologies are expensive and inaccessible to a large population living with autism.
- There is also a lack of guidance about the usage of assistive technologies and their efficiency throughout the globe.

RBI CUTS REPO RATE BY 25 BASIS POINTS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has slashed the key interest rate, repo rate by 25 basis points or 0.25 per cent to 6 per cent and has decided to maintain the neutral policy stance.

KEY POINTS FROM THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE RBI:

- RBI projected GDP growth at 7.2 per cent for the financial year 2019-20.
- Reverse repo rate under the LAF stands adjusted to 5.75% and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate to 6.25%
- RBI expects economic growth to be in the range of 6.8-7.1 per cent in the first half of the current financial year, and in the range of 7.3-7.4 per cent in the second half with "risks evenly balanced".

- Inflation is likely to remain benign in the short term. Assuming a normal monsoon in 2019, the RBI lowered its CPI inflation projection to 2.4 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2018-19.
- For the first half of the current financial year 2019-20, RBI expects inflation at 2.9-3.0 per cent, and 3.5-3.8 per cent in the second half.
- RBI will issue a fresh circular for Banks on how to tackle NPAs since the Supreme Court has struck down the February 2018 circular which gave lender banks six months to resolve their stressed assets or move under the Insolvency Code against private entities who have defaulted in loans worth over Rs 2000 crore.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The rate cut will provide commercial banks more room to pass on the benefit of lower lending rates to loan borrowers.
- At the same time, it would also translate into a lower interest rate earned by depositors.

AFSPA PARTIALLY REMOVED FROM ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) was partially removed from three of nine districts of Arunachal Pradesh but would remain in force in the areas bordering Myanmar.

DETAILS:

- The State of Arunachal Pradesh had inherited AFSPA since the day of its formation.
- AFSPA enacted by Parliament in 1958 and was applied to the entire State of Assam and the Union Territory of Manipur.
- After Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland came into being, the Act was appropriately adapted to apply to these states as well.

CONTROVERSIAL PROVISIONS OF AFSPA:

- Section 4 of the AFSPA empowers an authorised officer in a disturbed area with certain powers.
- The authorised officer has the power to open fire at any individual even if it results in death if the individual violates laws which prohibit (a) the assembly of five or more persons; or (b) carrying of weapons. However, the officer has to give a warning before opening fire.
- The authorised officer is also empowered to (a) arrest without a warrant; and (b) seize and search without any warrant any premise in order to make an arrest or recovery of hostages, arms and ammunition.
- AFSPA mentions that individuals who have been taken into custody have to be handed over to the nearest police station as soon as possible. There is no prescribed time limit for detention.
- Prosecution of an authorised officer requires prior permission of the Central Government.

OBSERVATIONS MADE BY VARIOUS COMMITTEES:

- Justice Santosh Hegde Committee found four out of six deaths it was inquiring in Manipur have similar patterns of cause of death and could be cases of fake encounters.
- Justice Santosh Hegde Committee report also concluded that AFSPA has not been able to achieve peace in the Northeast, and on the contrary, it has widened the distance between the people of these areas and the mainland.

- J.S. Verma Committee (2012) and the Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee (2005) have found the law arbitrary and have recommended the repeal of AFSPA.

INDIA TO SET UP IAIARD IN MALAWI

The Ministry of External Affairs has signed an MoU with National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Consultancy Service (NABCONS) for setting up India-Africa Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development (IAIARD) in Malawi.

ABOUT INDIA-AFRICA INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

- IAIARD would be a Pan-African Institute wherein trainees not only from Malawi but also from other African countries, will receive training to develop their human resources and build their capacity.
- IAIARD will impart training in the areas of micro-financing and agro-financing, among others.
- The expenditure on faculty from India, the travel, logistics and training course expenses for students from other African countries will be borne by the Government of India for an initial period of three years.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- IAIARD is the first of its kind initiative undertaken in an African country by India.
- IAIARD will further strengthen the bilateral relations with Malawi and India's relations with the African Union.

ABOUT NABARD CONSULTANCY SERVICES:

- NABARD Consultancy Services (Nabcons) is a fully owned subsidiary promoted by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- Nabcons is engaged in providing consultancy in all spheres of agriculture, rural development and allied areas.
- Nabcons leverages on the core competence of the NABARD in the areas of agricultural and rural development, especially multidisciplinary projects, banking, institutional development, infrastructure, training, etc., internalized for more than two decades.

US APPROVES SALE OF 24 MH-60 ROMEO SEAHAWK HELICOPTERS TO INDIA

The United States Department of State approved the sale of 24 multi-role MH-60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters to India at a price of USD 2.4 billion (Rs 16,516 crore).

DETAILS:

- The Lockheed Martin-built helicopters will replace India's ageing fleet of British-made Sea King helicopters.

- MH-60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters will provide the Indian defence forces with the capability to perform anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions.
- MH-60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters are designed to operate from frigates, destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers along with the ability to perform secondary missions including vertical replenishment, search and rescue, and communications relay.
- MH-60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters will add would add lethal capabilities of the Indian Navy, which experts say is also the need of the hour given the aggressive behaviour of China in the Indian Ocean region.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- MH-60 Romeo Seahawk helicopters are considered as the most capable naval helicopters available today and are currently deployed with the US Navy as the primary anti-submarine warfare anti-surface weapon system for open ocean and littoral zones.

BIS AND IIT-DELHI SIGN MOU FOR STANDARDISATION AND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate in the field of standardisation and conformity assessment.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE MOU:

- BIS and IIT-Delhi will be setting up a Centre of Excellence in the field of Standardisation, Testing and Conformity Assessment with the BIS branding at IIT-Delhi campus and have also agreed to appoint a Chair in the field of standardisation and conformity assessment.
- IIT Delhi will provide infrastructure support for research and development projects of relevance to standardisation and BIS will provide financial support to IIT Delhi for projects.
- Both the institutions will jointly organise training and short-term education programmes on standardisation and conformity assessment, besides exploring the possibility of the hiring of IIT Delhi faculty as consultants on a secondment basis.
- IIT-Delhi will also introduce topics on standardisation in its academic courses for which BIS will provide inputs.
- The MoU will remain in force for a period of five years and can be extended further.
- The MoU will also explore the possibility of using laboratory facilities available at IIT Delhi for catering to the requirements of various conformity assessment schemes of the BIS.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Around 50 faculty members of IIT-Delhi are part of the technical committees of BIS and hoped that the memorandum would strengthen the collaboration further.

INDIAN ARMY BUILDS LONGEST SUSPENSION "MAITRI BRIDGE"

Indian Army has built the longest suspension bridge over the Indus river in Leh in just 40 days and the bridge is named as "Maitri Bridge".

ABOUT MAITRI BRIDGE:

- The bridge was constructed by the combat engineers of 'Sahas aur Yogyata' regiment of 'Fire and Fury Corps' of the Indian Army.
- The bridge is 260-feet long.
- This cable suspension bridge is expected to give a major boost to connectivity in remote areas in Ladakh.
- The bridge is constructed using around 500 tonnes of bridge equipment and construction material.
- Maitri Bridge has been dedicated to the people of India to commemorate the 20th year of Kargil Vijay Divas.
- The bridge is part of the Central Government plans to all-weather road connectivity in the region.

PM MODI AWARDED WITH ZAYED MEDAL BY UAE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been conferred with the prestigious Zayed medal by the President of the UAE Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan. PM Modi has been awarded in recognition of efforts in giving "a big boost" to bilateral relations between both the countries.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The statement issued by the UAE states that PM Modi has provided "exceptional leadership" in forging a new "strategic" relationship between the two nations. It lauds PM Modi's foreign policy and the way New Delhi reached out to the Islamic world.

ABOUT THE ZAYED MEDAL:

- The 'Order of Zayed' is the highest civil decoration instituted by the UAE. It consists of a collar cantered by a medallion bearing the name 'Zayed' who is the founding father of the United Arab Emirates.
- The Order of Zayed is awarded to Heads of Government/Head of State for their international relations with UAE.

INTERNATIONAL MINE AWARENESS DAY: APRIL 4

International Mine Awareness Day and Assistance in Mine Action 2019 was observed on April 4th with the theme 'United Nations Promotes SDGs- Safe Ground- Safe Home'.

MORE ABOUT THE THEME:

- The theme 'United Nations Promotes SDGs- Safe Ground- Safe Home' highlights the fact that "All people have the right to live in security, and not fear their next step" and calls for mine action, which "clears paths and creates safe ground on which homes can be built or rebuilt" and "changes mindsets so that people know how to protect themselves".
- The theme links mine action, sport and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by showing how clearing minefields, bring communities together and raises awareness about mine victims, and survivors of armed conflict.

- Further, the United Nations has launched "Safe Ground", a new strategy and campaign to "ensure that no one, no State, and no war zone is left behind".

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on 8th December 2005 declared that 4th April of each year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DAY:

- The day calls for the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the civilian population, or an impediment to social and economic development at the national and local levels.

SOUTH KOREA BECOMES FIRST COUNTRY TO LAUNCH 5G NETWORK

South Korea launched the world's first nationwide 5G mobile network on 11 pm April 3rd, 2019.

DETAILS:

- Three top telecom providers SK Telecom, KT, and LG Uplus launched the 5G services.
- South Korea launched the 5G services two days ahead of the schedule as there were speculations that US mobile carrier Verizon might start its 5G services early.
- Verizon began rolling out its 5G services in Chicago and Minneapolis on April 3rd, a week ahead of schedule.
- Reports suggest the 5G network in South Korea has launched in South Korea two hours ahead of the US.

BENEFITS OF 5G NETWORK:

- 5G will provide smartphones with near-instantaneous connectivity, 20 times faster than 4G.
- This allows users to download entire movies in less than a second.
- 5G will deliver vastly increased capacity, lower latency, and faster speeds.
- 5G networks will operate in a high-frequency band between 28 GHz and 60 GHz.
- This range is known as the millimeter wave (mmWave) spectrum and the sub-6 GHz range that LTE calls home will also be used.
- As a result, a lot of bandwidth will be available to users.
- In addition to greater bandwidth, the new 5G networks will have a dense, distributed network of base stations in the small cell infrastructure.
- This will allow more processing to happen on the edge, leading to lower latencies.
- The 5G technology is crucial for the future development of devices such as self-driving vehicles and is expected to bring about \$565 billion in global economic benefits by 2034.

LAKSHMI VILAS BANK TO MERGE INTO INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE

The board of Lakshmi Vilas Bank has approved its merger with Indiabulls Housing Finance (IBH) through a share swap deal.

DETAILS:

- The merger will help Indiabulls get access to low-cost stable funds and entry into banking.
- Indiabulls Housing Finance which is the nation's second largest housing finance firm, had unsuccessfully applied for a banking licence in 2013.
- The merger will also enable Tamil Nadu-based LVB to obtain a larger geographical presence.
- The merged entity will have a net worth ₹ 19,472 crore and a loan book ₹ 1,23,393 crore for the nine months of FY19.
- Its employee strength will stand at over 14,300.
- The share swap ratio of 0.14:1, or 14 shares of IBH for every 100 shares of LVB, has been agreed upon by the respective boards of directors.
- The deal is subject to regulatory approvals, including that from the RBI.
- As a first step towards the proposed merger, IBH's board has constituted a reorganisation committee headed by independent director and former RBI Deputy Governor SS Mundra.

DAVID MALPASS NAMED WORLD BANK PRESIDENT

David Malpass, US President Donald Trump's nominee to lead the World Bank, won unanimous approval from the institution's executive board.

DETAILS:

- The bank said that Malpass, the US Treasury's undersecretary for international affairs, will start his new role on April 9th 2019.
- Malpass, a former Bear Stearns and Co chief economist who advised Trump's 2016 election campaign, was the sole candidate.
- This time around, bank board members had said there was little appetite for a challenge to a US candidate from developed economies such as Europe and Japan, and from larger emerging markets such as China and Brazil.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Malpass said he would uphold the bank's commitment to reducing poverty in the poorest countries and to fight climate change, and pursue goals stated in a \$13 billion capital increase last year.
- Malpass emphasized the need to fight extreme poverty and "foster broad based growth for each and every borrower, and a stronger, more stable global economy for all."
- Malpass in the past, had been critical of the World Bank's continued lending to China, arguing that the world's second-largest economy was too wealthy for such aid while it was loading up some countries with unsustainable debt from its Belt and Road infrastructure program.

- Malpass intends to make his first trip as World Bank president in late April to Africa.

PRAFUL PATEL BECOMES FIRST INDIAN FIFA COUNCIL MEMBER

All India Football Federation President Praful Patel is elected as a FIFA Council member.

DETAILS:

- Praful Patel becomes the first Indian to enter the prestigious panel in a landmark development.
- Patel got 38 out of 46 votes.
- The AIFF chief was one of the eight candidates vying for the spot in the election which was held during the 29th AFC (Asian Football Confederations) Congress in the Malaysian capital.
- A total of five candidates, including Patel, was elected in addition to the AFC president, and one female member for the term 2019-2023.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Under Patel's leadership, AIFF has been awarded with the AFC's President Recognition award for grassroots at the AFC Annual Awards in 2014 in Manila, and was given an award for the AFC Best Developing Member Association in 2016.
- The successful hosting of the FIFA U-17 World Cup drew lavish praise from all quarters, and India have also won the bid to host the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup in 2020.
- The Indian Club Licensing system has also been dubbed as one of the best in Asia.

NATIONAL MARITIME DAY 2019: APRIL 5

The National Maritime Day 2019 was observed on April 5th, 2019. The theme of the National Maritime Day 2019 was "Indian Ocean- An Ocean of opportunity".

ABOUT THE NATIONAL MARITIME DAY:

- National Maritime Day (NMD) first observed on April 5th, 1964, aims to spread awareness in supporting safe and environmentally sound commerce between the continents across the world.

AWARDS CONFERRED DURING THE NATIONAL MARITIME DAY:

- NMD Varuna Award to recognize persons for their sustained and outstanding contribution.
- NMD Award of Excellence to recognize and persons for their lifetime exceptional and distinguished achievements or performance at the senior functional level in the Indian Maritime Sector.
- Award for 'Outstanding Contribution to Maritime Education and Training' shall be given by the National Maritime Day Celebrations (Central) Committee for the sustained contribution made by an individual to the Maritime Education and Training.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- It has to be noted that the World Maritime Day is celebrated on September 26th every year to highlight the importance of shipping, maritime security and environment.

WORLD HEALTH DAY: APRIL 7

World Health Day 2019 was observed worldwide on 7th April 2019 with the theme "Universal health coverage".

DETAILS:

- The theme Universal health coverage seeks to ensure that everyone can obtain the care they need, when they need it, right in the heart of the community.
- World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that even though progress is being made in countries in all regions of the world millions of people still have no access at all to health care and are forced to choose between health care and other daily expenses such as food, clothing and even a home.
- The theme Universal health coverage reminds world leaders that everyone should be able to access the health care they need, when and where they need it.

WHY APRIL 7?

- The World Health Day is celebrated on April 7th, 1948 to commemorate the establishment of WHO which came into being to address vital health care issues.
- WHO is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.

JAPANESE SPACE PROBE "HAYABUSA2" DROPS EXPLOSIVE ON ASTEROID

Japan's space agency said its Hayabusa2 spacecraft released an explosive onto an asteroid to make a crater on its surface and collect underground samples to find possible clues to the origin of the solar system.

DETAILS:

- The crater mission was the riskiest for Hayabusa2, as it had to immediately get away so it won't get hit by flying shards from the blast.
- The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, said that Hayabusa2 dropped a "small carry-on impactor" made of copper onto the asteroid Friday morning, and that the spacecraft safely evacuated and remained intact.
- The copper explosive is the size of a baseball weighing 2 kilograms (4.4 pounds).
- JAXA plans to send Hayabusa2 back to the site later, when the dust and debris settle, for observations from above and to collect samples from underground that have not been exposed to the sun or space rays.
- Scientists hope the samples will be crucial to determine the history of the asteroid and our planet.
- If successful, it would be the first time for a spacecraft to take such materials.

MORE ABOUT THE CRAFT AND THE ASTEROID:

- Hayabusa2 successfully touched down on a tiny flat surface on the boulder-rich asteroid in February, when the spacecraft also collected some surface dust and small debris.
- The craft is scheduled to leave the asteroid at the end of 2019 and bring surface fragments and underground samples back to Earth in late 2020.
- The asteroid, named Ryugu after an undersea palace in a Japanese folktale, is about 300 million kilometers (180 million miles) from Earth.

NAGALAND OBSERVES 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF "BATTLE OF KOHIMA"

Nagaland observed the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Kohima.

DETAILS:

- The event was attended by the representatives from the UK and Japan who spoke on the theme of 'Remembrance, Reconciliation and Rebirth'.
- The dignitaries from the UK and Japan sought reconciliation and forgiveness for the sufferings and pain caused against each other at the Battle of Kohima, that was fought in three stages during the Second World War in 1944.

ABOUT BATTLE OF KOHIMA:

- Battle of Kohima is considered as the turning point of the Japanese U Go offensive, or Operation C mission launched in India in 1944 during the Second World War.
- The Battle of Kohima was fought in three stages from 3 April to 22 June 1944 around the town of Kohima in Nagaland in northeast India:
- From 3 to 16 April, the Japanese attempted to capture Kohima ridge, a feature which dominated the road by which the besieged British and Indian troops of IV Corps at Imphal were supplied. By mid-April, the small British and Indian force at Kohima was relieved.
- From 18 April to 13 May, British and Indian reinforcements counter-attacked to drive the Japanese from the positions they had captured. The Japanese abandoned the ridge at this point but continued to block the Kohima-Imphal road.
- From 16 May to 22 June, the British and Indian troops pursued the retreating Japanese and reopened the road. The battle ended on 22 June when British and Indian troops from Kohima and Imphal met at Milestone 109, ending the Siege of Imphal.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The battle is often referred to as the "Stalingrad of the East".
- Kohima was the theatre of the War in 1944 and the Nagas were drawn into it on both sides some with the British and some with the Japanese.

NASA'S PARKER SOLAR PROBE APPROACHES COSEST TO THE SUN

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA's) Parker Solar probe has successfully completed its second approach to the Sun which brought it closest to the Sun.

PERIHELION:

- The manoeuvre, called a perihelion, resulted in the closest approach on April 4.
- The spacecraft was about 24 million km above the surface of the Sun.
- Parker Solar Probe was travelling at 2,13,200 miles per hour during this perihelion and is now entering the outbound phase of its second solar orbit.
- Scientists are looking forward to getting the science data down from this encounter in the coming weeks so the science teams can continue to explore the mysteries of the corona and the Sun.

ABOUT THE PARKER SOLAR PROBE:

- Launched on August 12, 2018, the Parker Solar Probe, NASA's historic small car-sized probe, will make a steady journey to come closer to the Sun until it makes its closest approach at 3.8 million miles.
- Throughout its mission, the probe will make six more Venus gravity assists and 24 total passes by the Sun.
- The spacecraft in January completed its first orbit of the Sun, reaching the point in its orbit farthest from our star, called aphelion.
- For the second perihelion, the Probe began the solar encounter on March 30, and it will conclude on April 10.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The solar encounter phase is roughly defined as when the spacecraft is within 0.25 AU- or 23,250,000 miles- of the Sun.
- One AU, or astronomical unit, is about 93 million miles, the average distance from the Sun to Earth.
- The Sun may be granting us life but it also has the power to play havoc with spacecraft in orbit, and communications and electronics on Earth.

SCIENTISTS DISCOVERED NEW SPECIES OF SHRIMP IN KUTCH

A new freshwater shrimp species of genus Caridina has been discovered by researchers from Gujarat's Kutch district, and scientists have named it 'Caridina Kutchi', after the region itself.

DETAILS:

- The new species has been found from Khari River of semi-arid region of Kutch peninsula in Gujarat and is identified to be new to the science.
- Caridina Kutchi species is the first Caridina species to be described from Kutch, which is known for its complex geological set up.
- The species belongs to genus Caridina which are seen in aquatic water bodies and are very less studied in the western India.
- This species serves as ecological filters of water bodies.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Professor Pranav Pandya, who works in the field of marine biology and has co-authored the paper on the discovery.
- Pandya is presently working on a research project sanctioned by the Government of India on the intertidal animals of Gulf of Kutch.

MALAYSIA OPEN BADMINTON TOURNAMENT 2019

The 2019 Malaysia Open Badminton tournament was held at Axiata Arena in Malaysia from 2nd to 7th April 2019 and had a total purse of \$700,000.

WINNERS OF THE TOURNAMENT:

- Men's Singles: Lin Dan (China)
- Women's Singles: Tai Tzu-ying (Taiwan)
- Men's Doubles: Li Junhui & Liu Yuchen (China)
- Mixed Doubles: Zheng Siwei & Huang Yaqiong (China)

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The Malaysia Open is an annual badminton tournament that has been held since 1937 and it is also known as Malaysia Super Series.

INDIA EVACUATED PEACEKEEPING FORCES FROM TRIPOLI

India has evacuated its entire contingent of peacekeeping forces comprising of 15 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel from Tripoli after the situation in the war-hit nation suddenly worsened.

ABOUT THE LIBYAN CRISIS:

- Ever since the 2011 uprising which overthrew and killed long-ruling dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Libya is engulfed in a crisis.
- Even though there is a UN-backed internationally recognised government headed by Fayez al-Sarraj, Libya is governed by rival authorities in the east in Tripoli, and in the west, each backed by various armed groups.
- Libyan National Army (LNA) is backing the Tobruk-based parliament which governs the East of Libya and the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) controls Libya's western parts from Tripoli.
- An agreement signed in 2015 created the GNA as the legitimate interim Libyan government.
- It was not wholly implemented due to disagreements with the Tobruk-based parliament.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The recent tipping point of the crisis was the attempts by the Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter led LNA to capture Tripoli which is the seat of GNA.
- The GNA determined to defend Tripoli struck back against LNA.
- This escalation led to the killing of 23 civilians and several others were injured.

SCIENTISTS DEVELOPED APP TO ADDRESS HEART DISEASE

A group of Indian and Australian scientists has developed and tested a mobile application-based system that promises to help doctors and health workers in villages to identify, monitor and manage patients with high blood pressure and heart-related ailments in remote areas.

ABOUT THE APP:

- The app is in the form of a clinical decision support system (CDSS), which can be loaded on an android phone.
- The system also had a module that can send alerts to health workers about high-risk individuals who need follow-up visits.
- In addition, it reminds patients on when to take their medication and when to visit the doctor for follow-up via an interactive voice response system.
- The platform can also link village-based assessments to doctor-level care and follow-up.

ABOUT THE STUDY CONDUCTED:

- In the study, people aged 40 and drawn from 54 villages in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh were screened to identify those at high risk of heart disease.
- Health workers, ASHAs, were trained to evaluate the risk of heart disease using tablet phones loaded with the app and refer those with high risk to Primary Health Centres (PHCs).
- The intervention was rolled out in 18 PHCs in a step-wise manner and was evaluated by comparing improvements during the periods when PHCs were receiving the intervention and when they were not.

ITBP SERVICE VOTERS CAST FIRST VOTE FOR LOK SABHA POLLS 2019

The first vote for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections was cast in Arunachal Pradesh by service voters from a remote Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) unit located in the eastern tip of the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

- Votes through postal ballots have been cast from Lohitpur for many constituencies in India and the ballot papers have been dispatched.

WHO ARE SERVICE VOTERS?

- Service voters are those who have service qualification and include members of Armed Forces of the Union of India, members of Armed Police forces of the States serving outside that state and persons employed under Government of India on posts outside India.
- They are provided with an option to cast the votes through postal ballots and send them to the returning officer of the constituency.

- A service voter can also cast his vote through a proxy.
- The proxy can cast the vote on behalf of the service personnel at the polling station.
- The proxy should be a registered voter of that constituency.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- In cases of close contests, service voters play a crucial and decisive role.

US PLANS TO DESIGNATE IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS AS FTO

President Trump Administration of US has announced its intent to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and its Quds Force, as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) in accordance with Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

DETAILS:

- The designation is expected to take effect from April 15.
- The designation as FTO will impose sweeping economic and travel sanctions on the IRGC and on organisations, companies, and individuals that have links.
- The designation of IRGC as an FTO highlights that IRGC is an outlaw regime that uses terrorism as a key tool of statecraft.

ABOUT THE IRGC AND QUDS FORCE:

- IRGC is an ideologically-driven branch of the armed forces of Iran set up in 1979 after Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Revolution to protect the newly established Islamic system from hostile foreign powers and internal dissensions.
- Quds Force or Qods Corps is an elite wing of the IRGC.

WHAT IS A FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANISATION (FTO)?

- Under Section 219 of the United States Immigration and Nationality Act, the Secretary of State is authorised to designate an organisation as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation if the Secretary finds that:
- The organisation is a foreign organisation.
- The organisation engages in terrorist activity or terrorism.
- Threatens the security of United States nationals or the national security of the United States.

RBI ISSUES GUIDELINES TO SET UP NEW CURRENCY CHESTS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued guidelines for banks to set up new currency chests.

THE GUIDELINES INCLUDE:

- Area of the strong room/ vault of at least 1,500 sq ft. For those situated in hilly/ inaccessible places, the strong room/ vault area of at least 600 sq ft.
- The new chests should have a processing capacity of 6.6 lakh pieces of banknotes per day. Those situated in the hilly/ inaccessible places, a capacity of 2.1 lakh pieces of banknotes per day.
- The currency chests should have Chest Balance Limit (CBL) of Rs 1,000 crore, subject to ground realities and reasonable restrictions, at the discretion of the Reserve Bank.

WHAT IS A CURRENCY CHEST?

- Currency chest is the place where the currency is stored.
- These chests act as the distributives of RBI cash and enable RBI to take back soiled notes and mutilated notes from the public.
- As per the RBI's annual report of 2017-18, the currency management infrastructure consists of a network of 19 issue offices of the Reserve Bank, 3,975 currency chests and 3,654 small coin depots of commercial, co-operative and regional rural banks spread across the country.

KERALA'S RIVER PERIYAR WITNESSES DECOLOURISATION

River Periyar in Kerala is again witnessing decolourisation.

DETAILS:

- The decolourisation of River Periyar which provides drinking water to Kochi city and adjoining areas has become the cause of worry for the people and government of Kerala.
- The water turned pitch black in one stream, it was milky near the Pathalam regulator-cum-bridge.
- Cause of the change in colour- Eutrophication
- The pollution control Board (PCB) has attributed the change in colour to the poor quality of water as a result of eutrophication.
- PCB has stated that huge quantities of organic load in the form of sewage from nearby townships are regularly reaching the river system.
- This is contributing to the eutrophication, resulting in the change of colour.

ABOUT RIVER PERIYAR:

- River Periyar flows in the state of Kerala.
- It originates in the Western Ghats and flows north for a short distance to Periyar Lake.
- Periyar Lake is an artificial reservoir created by Mullaperiyar Dam across the river.
- From the Periyar Lake, a tunnel carries water through mountains to the Vaigai River in Tamil Nadu, where it is used for irrigation.
- Further downstream Idukki dam is constructed across the river.
- The river descending out of the mountains into the coastal plain, empties into the Arabian Sea.

ISRAELI PM BENJAMIN NETANYAHU WINS NATIONAL ELECTIONS FOR FIFTH TIME

Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu has won the Israeli national election, securing a record fifth term in office.

DETAILS:

- Though neither party captured a ruling majority in the 120-member Knesset, the results published, put Netanyahu in a strong position to form a coalition government with right-wing factions.
- The closely contested race was widely seen in Israel as a referendum on Netanyahu's character and record in the face of corruption allegations.
- He faces possible indictment in three graft cases, and has denied wrongdoing in all of them.
- The veteran right-wing leader's Likud party is seen to win 35 seats, according to the Knesset website and the Israeli TV channels.
- That would mean a five-seat gain for Likud.
- With 97 percent of the votes counted, final results were expected by Friday.
- If he wins, Netanyahu, 69, will be on track to be the longest-serving prime minister in Israel's 71-year history.
- Netanyahu said he had already begun talks with prospective coalition allies.
- Netanyahu, in power consecutively since 2009, has been fighting for his political survival.
- He faces possible indictment in three graft cases, and has denied wrongdoing in all three.

54TH SHAURYA DIWAS- 9 APRIL 2019

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) celebrated its 54th Valour Day (Shaurya Diwas) on April 9th 2019. On the occasion, President Ram Nath Kovind paid homage to the martyrs of police at National Police Memorial in New Delhi.

WHY APRIL 9TH IS OBSERVED AS SHAURYA DIVAS?

- In the intervening night of 8 and 9 April 1965, nearly 3500 men from the 51st Infantry of Pakistani Army invaded India at Sardar Post.
- The mission of the Pakistani Army was to capture the Indian Territory defended by Sardar Post.
- The Sardar post was being guarded by two battalions of CRPF which comprised of roughly 150 soldiers.
- The CRPF soldiers were no match in terms of arsenal compared to the Pakistani Army.
- The 51st Infantry of Pakistani Army that invaded India comprised 18 Punjab battalion, 8 Frontier Rifles, and 6 Baluch battalion.
- In addition, the terrain was disadvantageous for the Indian forces.
- In the fight ensued the Pakistani Army made three attempts to overrun the post.
- The CRPF soldiers thwarted every attempt with a brilliant display of courage and strategic intelligence.
- The battle lasted for 12 hours and in the end, the Pakistani Army fled the battleground leaving behind 34 of their men dead, which included two officers.
- Another four soldiers were captured alive.
- On that night, the CRPF lost six of its brave soldiers.
- Ever since April 9 is observed by the CRPF as the Valour Day or Shaurya Diwas.

GOVT. CLEARED PROPOSAL TO PROCURE T-90 TANKS FROM RUSSIA

The Cabinet Committee of Security has cleared the proposal for the procurement of 464 T-90 tanks from Russia.

DETAILS OF THE PROCUREMENT DEAL:

- The cost of the acquisition is expected to be worth over Rs 13,000 crores.
- **The deal also includes a Make-in-India element for integration at the Heavy Vehicles Factory in Avadi near Chennai.**
- The acquisition will increase the new T-90 regiments by 10 more units.
- **The new T-90 tanks would be equipped with thermal imaging night sights to allow the tank commander to strike enemy locations during night battles.**
- T-90 battle tanks are expected to be deployed on the borders with Pakistan.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- T-90 has emerged as the main battle tank of the Indian Army.
- **It would be replacing the older variants of T-72 and T-55 tanks in the force.**
- The acquisition is expected to tackle the problem of Indian Army's 4000- strong tank fleet has been battling with night blindness in the past and these new tanks would help in doing away with that.

EC DECIDES TO USE THE M3 EVMS IN THE LOK SABHA POLLS IN NIZAMABAD

The Election Commission has decided against the using of Ballot papers in the Nizamabad parliamentary constituency of Telangana.

- To accommodate a whopping 185 candidates in contention, the Election Commission has decided to use the M3 EVMs in the Lok Sabha Polls.

DETAILS:

- The Election Commission has ordered Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) to supply 26,820 EVMs, 2,240 control units and 2,600 Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPAT) of M3 make.
- **In each of the polling station, there will be 12 M3 version EVMs.**
- **All the EVMs would be connected to a single control unit and a VVPAT.**
- **These EVMS will be arranged in 'L' shape with each machine carrying a maximum of 16 names.**
- The Election Commission also had to tackle with the grappling problem of allocating symbols for the 178 farmers who are contesting as independents, complained that they were yet to be allotted the symbols.

ABOUT M3 EVMS:

- M3 EVMs are the third generation EVMs.

- The M3 EVMs can keep data of 384 candidates.
- M3 EVMS also has added features like Tamper Detection and Self Diagnostics.
- **The tamper detection feature makes an EVM inoperative the moment anyone tries to open the machine.**
- **The Self diagnostic feature checks the EVM fully every time it is switched on.**
- **Any change in its hardware or software will be detected.**

'DOST EDUCATION' BAGS \$25,000 NEXT BILLION EDTECH PRIZE 2019

India's education technology startup 'Dost Education' has bagged a \$25,000 Next Billion Edtech Prize 2019 along with two other winners from Tanzania and Egypt.

- Ubongo (Tanzania) and PraxiLabs (Egypt) were the other two winners.

ABOUT DOST EDUCATION:

- Dost Education was awarded for its ability to empower parents to take charge of their child's early education by creating short, friendly audio content that is sent to them via their mobile phones.
- The software, audio content, and tool kits of Dost Education makes it easy fun and addictive for parents to boost their child's early development, so low-income families need no longer send their children to primary school behind and without a chance to catch up.

ABOUT THE NEXT BILLION EDTECH PRIZE:

- Next Billion Edtech Prize is awarded by the UK-based Varkey Foundation.
- The award recognises the most innovative technology destined to have a radical impact on education in low income and emerging world countries.
- The award also highlights technology's potential to tackle the problems that have proven too difficult for successive generations of politicians to solve.

WORLD HOMEOPATHY DAY: 10 APRIL

April 10th is observed as the World Homeopathy Day.

- **This is because Dr Samuel Hahnemann who discovered Homeopathy was born on April 10th in 1796.**
- World Homeopathy Day aims to create better awareness about homoeopathy, improve its accessibility and to modernise the system of healing.

ABOUT HOMEOPATHY:

- **Homeopathy is an alternative system of medicine based on the principle of 'Like cures like'.**
- Homeopathy believes that a disease can be cured by a substance that can induce symptoms similar to the ailment itself by using highly-diluted doses of natural ingredients.
- These diluted doses of natural ingredients are expected to trigger the body's healing system.
- **Homeopathy is among the Indian Government's AYUSH for alternative medicine.**

- Western medicine dismisses Homeopathy as a mere placebo whose two most important principles are at loggerheads with the laws of physics.
- But plenty of documented cases exist where people have been seemingly cured of their health conditions with Homeopathy.

INDIA-SINGAPORE EXERCISE BOLD KURUKSHETRA- 2019

Bold Kurukshetra- 2019, Joint Military Exercise of India and Singapore was inaugurated at Babina Cantonment of Jhansi.

- The joint exercise is aimed at developing military technology, enhance the maritime security and bolster the nations' fight against terrorism.

INDIA-SINGAPORE DEFENCE COOPERATION:

- In November 2017, India and Singapore had entered into an official agreement to strengthen defence ties between their respective armed forces.
- As per the agreement, personnel from the Singapore Armed Forces will receive training and undertake firing exercises along with the Indian Armed Forces.
- Both India and Singapore have also agreed to step up intelligence and information sharing in maritime security, especially in the field of counter-terrorism, and agreed to expand collaboration on submarine safety and rescue.

NAMAMI GANGE RECEIVES DISTINCTION AT GLOBAL WATER SUMMIT

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) or Namami Gange has received the distinction of "Public Water Agency of the Year" by Global Water Intelligence at the Global Water Summit in London.

DETAILS:

- The awards aim to recognise excellence across the international water industry and reward those initiatives in the water, wastewater, and desalination sectors, which can bring remarkable improvements in the lives of people.
- An integrated mission for Ganga rejuvenation, the Namami Gange programme provides for a comprehensive multi-sector intervention with multi-stakeholder involvement and adopts a basin-based approach.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL WATER SUMMIT:

- Global Water Summit is the annual business conference for the water industry worldwide.
- The summit attracts high-level executives from industry, municipalities and international water companies and provides the opportunity to connect with hard-to-reach industry insiders that will not attend any other water event.

- The summit provides a platform for connecting the public and private sector and for accelerating change and innovation within the sector, it attracts the most influential industry representatives and also becomes a forum for business development and expanding your network.

PRESIDENT LAUNCHES "VEER PARIVAR APP"

On the occasion of the 54th Valour Day (Shaurya Diwas) of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), **President Ram Nath Kovind** launched "Veer Parivar App", a mobile application for the families of CRPF personnel killed in the line of duty.

ABOUT THE VEER PARIVAR APP:

- The Veer Parivar App will act as an interface between the CRPF authorities and the next of kin of the martyred personnel.
- **The Veer Parivar App will be installed securely on the phones of the martyred personnel families and will not be available in the app stores.**
- **The app will provide assistance to the families of the martyred CRPF personnel with regard to issuance of ex gratia, pension benefits etc.**
- The app will also provide all the necessary information regarding the welfare schemes introduced for them by the government.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Android-based Veer Parivar App will provide assistance to the families on a real-time basis and the CRPF authorities will respond to the issues raised by the members of the families of the martyred personnel.

KOHLI NAMED WISDEN'S LEADING CRICKETER IN WORLD

Wisden or Wisden Cricketers' Almanack has named Virat Kohli as the Leading Cricketer in the World for 2018 as well as one of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year.

DETAILS:

- Indian Skipper Virat Kohli is joined by Tammy Beaumont, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran and Rory Burns in Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year list.
- Indian player Smriti Mandhana bagged the Women's Leading Cricketer of the Year.
- Rashid Khan of Afghanistan bagged the Leading T20 Cricketer of the Year.

ABOUT WISDEN OR WISDEN CRICKETERS' ALMANACK:

- Wisden Cricketers' Almanack (or simply Wisden) is a cricket reference book published annually in the United Kingdom.
- Wisden was founded in 1864 by the English cricketer John Wisden (1826–84).

- Its annual publication has continued uninterrupted to the present day, **making it the longest running sports annual in history.**
- **Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year represent a tradition that dates back in Wisden to 1889.**
- **This makes Wisden's oldest individual award in cricket.**
- The editor chooses cricketers based on their "influence on the previous English season".
- In October 2013, an all-time Test World XI was announced to mark the 150th anniversary of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack.
- In 1998, an Australian edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack was launched. It ran for eight editions.
- **In 2012, an Indian edition of Wisden Cricketers' Almanack was launched (dated 2013).**

1600 RAILWAY STATIONS TRANSFORMED INTO RAILWIRE WI-FI ZONES

RailWire Wi-Fi by RailTel is now live at 1600 railway stations across the country.

- The Santacruz railway station in Mumbai became the 1600th station to become a RailWire Wi-Fi zone.

ABOUT RAILWIRE:

- **RailWire is a retail Broadband initiative of RailTel.**
- It envisages extending broadband and application services to the public.
- **RailTel is working to establish bringing fast and free Wi-Fi at all stations (except the halt stations) within a year.**
- RailTel has provided high-speed Wi-Fi at 985 stations with its funding.
- The Wi-Fi at 415 A, A1 and C category stations has been provided in association with Google as the technology partner.
- Wi-Fi connections at 200 stations were provided with support from the Universal Service Obligatory Fund of the Government of India.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION FUND:

- **Universal Service Obligation Fund was instituted by the Government of India to help fund projects to boost connectivity in rural areas.**
- The money for this fund comes through a 'Universal Access Levy,' charged from the telecom operators as a percentage of various licenses fees being paid by them.

ABOUT RAILTEL:

- **RailTel Corporation of India Ltd. is a Miniratna public sector enterprise of Government of India.**
- **It is one of the largest neutral telecom infrastructure providers in the country owning a Pan-India optic fibre network on exclusive Right of Way (ROW) along Railway track.**

DEEPA MALIK NAMED RECIPIENT OF SIR EDMUND HILLARY FELLOWSHIP

Rio Paralympics silver medallist Deepa Malik was named as the recipient of the New Zealand Prime Minister's Sir Edmund Hillary Fellowship for 2019 in recognition of her inspiring achievements.

- Deepa Malik had won the silver medal in shot put event in Rio in 2016.

DETAILS:

- **The citation states that the Deepa Malik exemplifies two values that make a great sportsperson: courage and a can-do attitude.**
- Deepa is an inspiring achiever who can confidently and proudly carry forward our message of inclusivity and the pursuit of excellence.
- Deepa Malik will be undertaking a series of visits to Paralympic sporting organisations, and engage with Kiwi athletes, students and the media as well as New Zealand's significant Indian Diaspora community.
- Deepa Malik will promote cultural as well the people-to-people relationship between India and New Zealand.

ABOUT NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER'S SIR EDMUND HILLARY FELLOWSHIP:

- **The Fellowship Program which is running since 2008** aims to strengthen the relationship between India and New Zealand by showcasing the different aspects of the warm friendship between the two countries.
- The fellowship aims to strengthen the ties between India and New Zealand.

ABOUT SIR EDMUND HILLARY:

- **Sir Edmund Percival Hillary was a New Zealand mountaineer, explorer and Philanthropist. Hillary and Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer Tenzing Norgay became the first climbers confirmed to have reached the summit of Mount Everest on 29th May 1953.**
- They were part of the ninth British expedition to Everest, led by John Hunt.
- **Sir Edmund Hillary served as New Zealand's High Commissioner to India and Bangladesh and concurrently as Ambassador to Nepal from 1985 to 1988.**

ALICE G. VAIDYAN AWARDED "FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON"

Alice G. Vaidyan, Chairman and Managing Director of the General Insurance Corporation (GIC) of India, India's reinsurance major, has been awarded the "Freedom of the City of London" in recognition of her work to promote insurance ties between India and the UK.

ABOUT ALICE G. VAIDYAN:

- **Alice G. Vaidyan holds post graduate degree in English literature and has been trained at Harvard Business School, Boston, USA.**
- She is a Fellow of the Insurance Institute of India.

- **Alice G. Vaidyan was the first lady officer to assume the post of Chairman-cum-Managing Director of General Insurance Corporation of India.**
- She was also the first lady chairman-cum-managing director in the public-sector insurance industry (non-life) under the Ministry of Finance in India.

ABOUT THE "FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON":

- **Freedom of the City of London is an honour bestowed by the City of London Corporation upon a valued member of the community, or upon a visiting celebrity or dignitary.**
- **The genesis of the 'Freedom of the City of London' is traced to the medieval time of around 1237.**
- The honour enabled recipients to carry out their trade.
- Over the years, the award has evolved into an honour bestowed upon individuals who make an impact in the financial hub of London, referred to as the City or the Square Mile.

PRESIDENT APPOINTS NAJMA AKHTAR AS VC OF JMI UNIVERSITY

The Ministry of Human Resources and Development has issued a statement about appointing Professor Najma Akhtar as Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMI) by the President of India.

- She has been appointed for a period of five years.

DETAILS:

- **Professor Najma Akhtar will be the first woman to hold the post.**
- **Professor Najma Akhtar is a gold medallist from Aligarh Muslim University.**
- **She has a Ph.D in Education from Kurukshetra University.**
- **Professor Najma Akhtar also has been a Commonwealth Fellow for University Administration Course at University of Warwick and Nottingham.**
- **She has also trained at the International Institute of Educational Planning (IIEP), UNESCO, Paris.**

ABOUT JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA UNIVERSITY:

- JMI is a public central University in New Delhi.
- JMI was founded on October 29, 1920, by nationalist Muslim leaders during British rule in Aligarh in the erstwhile United Provinces.
- **Dr. Zakir Hussain was the first Vice-Chancellor of JMI.**
- The Ali brothers, Moulana Mohammad Ali Jouhar and Moulana Shoukat Ali, especially played a major role in the establishment of JMI.
- JMI became a central university by an act of the Indian Parliament in 1988.
- **Manipur Governor Najma Heptulla is the chancellor of the varsity.**

PM MODI HONOURED WITH 'ORDER OF SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE'

The Russian embassy announced that its government has decided to honour PM Modi with the 'Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle' which is Russia's highest state decoration.

DETAILS:

- The embassy said the Indian PM is being decorated with the award for exceptional services in promoting special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries.

OTHER AWARDS OR HONOURS CONFERRED ON PM MODI RECENTLY:

- Earlier this month, PM Modi was conferred with the Zayed Medal by the United Arab Emirates - the Gulf country's highest decoration - for boosting the relations between the two countries.
- PM Modi was given the Philip Kotler Presidential Award in January in recognition of his outstanding leadership.
- The Citation mentioned several initiatives taken by his government like Make in India, Start-up India, Digital India, and Swachh Bharat, "which have positioned India as one of the most lucrative manufacturing and business destinations in the world."
- In October last year, PM Modi was conferred with the Seoul Peace Prize in recognition of his contribution to the growth of Indian and world economies.
- The award citation credited what came to be termed as 'Modinomics' for bringing down social and economic disparity between the rich and the poor.

SUDANESE PRESIDENT OMAR-AL-BASHIR REMOVED BY ARMY

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir was ousted by the army after months of anti-government protests against his three decades of iron-fisted rule.

DETAILS:

- Defence Minister Awad Ibnouf announced the toppling of the regime and detaining its chief in a secure place in a televised address to the nation.
- A transitional military council would replace Bashir for two years.
- The country's borders and airspace would be shut until further notice.
- Omar al-Bashir who swept to power in a 1989 coup, was one of Africa's longest serving presidents.
- He is wanted on charges of genocide and war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Officials say 49 people have died in protest-related violence since demonstrations first erupted in December 2018.
- The protests, which erupted in December 2018 over the government's tripling of the price of bread, were the biggest challenge yet to Bashir's long rule.

ISRAEL'S SPACECRAFT BERESHEET CRASHES ON MOON

Israel's first privately funded mission to the Moon crashed on the lunar surface just minutes before touchdown after the apparent failure of its main engine.

DETAILS:

- **The aim of the spacecraft, called Beresheet, was to take pictures and conduct experiments.**
- **The spacecraft had several technical problems during its final descent to the Moon's surface.**
- Its soft landing was unsuccessful after it lost communication with its ground control.
- But a spokesperson from the Israel Aerospace Industries said that "It is by far the smallest, cheapest spacecraft ever to get to the Moon".

ABOUT BERESHEET:

- **Beresheet, which means Genesis, was about the size of a washing machine and built by non-profit SpaceIL and state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries.**
- For the last two months, it travelled around the Earth several times before entering lunar orbit.
- The spacecraft crashed near the historic Apollo landing sites.
- **The Beresheet project cost Israel about \$100 million (nearly Rs 691 crore).**

FALCON HEAVY ROCKET SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED BY SPACEX

SpaceX's Falcon Heavy rocket took off from Cape Canaveral, Florida, and successfully completed its first commercial mission by deploying the communications satellite Arabsat-6A into a geo-synchronous orbit.

DETAILS:

- **The most powerful operational rocket on the planet took off from the historic 39A launch pad at the Kennedy Space Centre.**
- It is the same platform that the Moon missions of the Apollo programme were launched from.
- It then managed to recover for the first time the three Falcon 9 rocket parts that make up the device.
- Less than eight minutes after take off, the two boosters landed side by side on Cape Canaveral, while the central core stage landed itself one minute later on the drone ship called "Of Course I Still Love You" in the Atlantic Ocean.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- This successful landing of the three rocket parts represents a new step in the trajectory of the company, owned by billionaire businessman Elon Musk, whose policy is to re-use rockets in order to reduce the cost of space travel.
- **With this deployment the Falcon Heavy, created with the goal of sending manned missions to the Moon and Mars, has successfully completed its first commercial mission.**

ABOUT THE ARABSAT-6A SATELLITE:

- SpaceX launched the 70-meter-high Falcon Heavy, designed to carry more than 64 metric tonnes of cargo, with the Arabsat-6A on board.
- **The modern and innovative satellite, weighing more than 5,900 kilograms, will provide television, radio, internet and mobile communication services throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa.**

RAJOURI DAY CELEBRATED ON APRIL 13TH

Rajouri Day was celebrated on April 13th to commemorate the bravery and valour of the soldiers who laid down their lives for the liberation of Rajouri district.

DETAILS:

- The Partition of India and the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India in October 1947 was followed by the first Kashmir war between India and Pakistan.
- **The Pakistani raiders, along with the rebels and deserters from the western districts of the state, captured Rajouri on 7 November 1947.**
- More than 30,000 Hindus and Sikhs living in Rajouri were reportedly killed, wounded or abducted.
- **Rajouri was recaptured on 12 April 1948 from rebels and Pakistan Army personnel who had infiltrated from across the border by the 19 Infantry Brigade of the Indian Army under the command of Second Lieutenant Rama Raghoba Rane.**
- Having destroyed most of the town and killing large number its inhabitants the captors had fled by the time Indian Army entered the town.
- **After the arrival of the Army, some 1,500 refugees who had fled to the hills, including women and children, returned to the town.**
- 'Rajouri Day' is celebrated on April 13 every year to commemorate the bravery and valour of the Indian Army soldiers who laid down their lives for the liberation of Rajouri district from rebels and Pakistan Army.

ODISHA WITNESSES BAMBOO RICE AFTER FOUR DECADES

Nearly after four decades, Bamboo rice has shown up in Odisha.

- The state of Odisha had last witnessed Bamboo rice in 1979.

DETAILS:

- **The Forest Authorities of Chandaka-Dampara Wildlife Sanctuary in Cuttack district have opened up the gates for the forest dwellers to collect the Bamboo rice.**
- Whenever the bamboo rice shows up, it would be accompanied by the increase in the rat population which starts running over the bamboo rice.
- Hence to avoid the menace the forest authorities have allowed forest dwellers to harvest Bamboo rice.
- **Further, the authorities are also planning to purchase bamboo rice from the forest dwellers to germinate bamboo trees in other areas of the state.**

ABOUT BAMBOO RICE:

- **Bamboo rice grows out of a dying bamboo shoot.**
- Bamboo rice looks like paddy rice and tastes more like wheat.
- Bamboo rice is not commonly available as it takes many years for a bamboo tree to flower.
- **Bamboo rice is believed to contain a low glycaemic index compared to other varieties and it is good for diabetics.**
- **It is rich in proteins and does not contain any fat.**

- Bamboo rice is also believed to be containing medicinal values.

CMFRI AND ISRO INK MOU TO MAP WETLANDS

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have signed an MoU to map, validate and protect Smaller Wetlands in the coastal regions and restore them through coastal livelihood programmes.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Smaller Wetlands (which are smaller than 2.25 hectares) cover an area of more than 5 lakh hectares across the country, with **Kerala alone having as many as 2,592 such wetlands.**

DETAILS OF THE MOU:

- **As per the MoU, a mobile app and a centralised web portal with a complete database of wetlands in the country which were smaller than 2.25 hectares will be developed.**
- The two institutes will identify and demarcate the wetlands and restore the degraded ones through suitable livelihood options such as coastal aquaculture.
- **The mobile app will be used for real-time monitoring of the wetlands and giving advisories to the stakeholders and the coastal people.**
- The collaboration is part of the national framework for fisheries and wetlands recently developed under the National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA).
- **As per the agreement, "National Wetland Atlas" which has been already developed by the Space Applications Centre of ISRO will be updated with real-time data of physical, chemical and biological parameters of the wetlands to be provided by the CMFRI.**
- The collaboration will aid in developing a comprehensive wetland information system which could facilitate the village-level wetland advisories to the local people by scientific communities.

AIM OF NICRA:

- The National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) is aimed at finding ways and means to mitigate the impact of climate change on marine fisheries and coastal region.

EVENT HORIZON TELESCOPE PROJECT REVEALS FIRST-EVER PHOTO OF BLACK HOLE

Marking a milestone in astrophysics - the first-ever photo of a black hole was released from a research conducted by the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) project.

DETAILS:

- **The photo of the black hole was taken using a global network of telescopes to gain insight into celestial objects with gravitational fields so strong no matter or light can escape.**

- The research was conducted by the Event Horizon Telescope (EHT) project, an international collaboration begun in 2012 to try to directly observe the immediate environment of a black hole using a global network of Earth-based telescopes.
- The announcement was made in simultaneous news conferences in Washington, Brussels, Santiago, Shanghai, Taipei and Tokyo.

ABOUT THE IMAGE:

- **The image reveals the black hole at the centre of Messier 87, a massive galaxy in the nearby Virgo galaxy cluster.**
- This black hole resides about 54 million light-years from Earth.

WHAT ARE BLACK HOLES?

- **Black holes, phenomenally dense celestial entities, are extraordinarily difficult to observe despite their great mass.**
- **A black hole's event horizon is the point of no return beyond which anything - stars, planets, gas, dust and all forms of electromagnetic radiation - gets swallowed into oblivion.**
- **The fact that black holes do not allow light to escape makes viewing them difficult.**
- The scientists look for a ring of light - disrupted matter and radiation circling at tremendous speed at the edge of the event horizon - around a region of darkness representing the actual black hole.
- This is known as the black hole's shadow or silhouette.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- **The project's researchers obtained the first data in April 2017 using telescopes in the US states of Arizona and Hawaii as well as in Mexico, Chile, Spain and Antarctica.**
- **Since then, telescopes in France and Greenland have been added to the global network.**
- The global network of telescopes has essentially created a planet-sized observational dish.

ANCIENT HUMAN SPECIES HOMO LUZONENSIS DISCOVERED

Researchers in the Philippines have discovered a species of ancient human "Homo Luzonensis" which was previously unknown to science.

ABOUT THE HOMO LUZONENSIS SPECIES:

- **Homo Luzonensis lived on the island of Luzon at least 50,000 to 67,000 years ago.**
- The hominin was identified from a total of seven teeth and six small bones and teeth from two adults and one child found in a cave on the island of Luzon in the Philippines.
- Homo Luzonensis is boasted as an eclectic mix of features comparable to different species of hominins.
- Homo Luzonensis' curved finger and toe bones portray a clear difference between the newly discovered species and most members of the Homo genus.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The discovery could mean primitive human relatives left Africa and made it all the way to South-East Asia, something not previously thought possible.

JEAN MICHEL LAPIN ELECTED AS HAITI'S NEW PM

Jean Michel Lapin, who once served as a courier in the public administration will be the new prime minister of Haiti.

- The announcement was made by Haiti's President Jovenel Moise.

DETAILS:

- He succeeds Prime Minister Jean-Henry Ceant.
- The former culture and communications minister, Lapin was named acting prime minister on March 21.
- Lapin is the third head of government under President Moise, since he came to office in February 2017.
- The formation of a new government in Haiti is an International Monetary Fund (IMF) pre-requisite for the disbursement of the first tranche of a US\$229 million loan to Haiti.
- In 2018, Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas, had a record US\$290 million deficit, while its national budget was estimated at US\$1.8 billion.

ABOUT HAITI:

- Capital: Port-au-Prince
- Currency: Haitian Gourde
- Continent: North America

INDIA TO BE THE GUEST OF HONOUR AT ABU DHABI INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced that India will be the Guest of Honour country at the Abu Dhabi International Book Fair, ADIBF 2019, to be held at the end of April 2019.

DETAILS:

- The Book Fair aims to highlight the UAE's rich heritage, showcasing its authenticity and modernity, as well as its cultural and literary output.
- India's participation in the fair will attract a significant increase in the number of visitors with various events and activities which will be held throughout the entire duration of ADIBF.

WORLD PARKINSON'S DAY 11 APRIL

World Parkinson's Day is observed on April 11th all over the world.

- This day is meant to raise awareness about Parkinson's disease, which is a progressive nervous system disorder.

DETAILS:

- Parkinson's disease causes problems with movement and results in stiffness and slow movement.
- The disease is such that it progresses gradually, beginning with minor tremors in hand.
- In the early stages, the disease makes your face unable to show any expression.
- Arms stop swinging as you walk and speech becomes soft or slurred.
- The disease worsens as the condition progresses over time.

CAUSES OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE:

- **When nerve cells in the brain begin to break down or die, it may result in Parkinson's disease.**
- Decrease in levels of dopamine - because of loss of neurons that produce these chemical messengers - may result in symptoms of Parkinson's disease.
- **Lack of sufficient dopamine may be the cause of delayed or slow movements.**
- Genetic mutations may be possible for Parkinson's disease.
- **Exposure to certain toxic or environmental factors may also cause this disease.**

TIPS FOR PREVENTION:

- **Ditch regular consumption of junk and processed foods, and switch to a healthy and nutritious diet.**
- Foods like leafy green veggies, fruits, protein-rich foods, vitamins, antioxidants, minerals and good fats can help in improving brain health and reduce risk of Parkinson's disease.
- **People who exercise regularly are definitely at lower risk of developing Parkinson's.**
- **A healthy sleep is one of the most essential prerequisites of Parkinson's disease.**

CO-FOUNDER OF WIKILEAKS, JULIAN ASSANGE ARRESTED IN LONDON

WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange was arrested in London to face a charge in the United States of conspiring to hack into a Pentagon computer network in 2010.

DETAILS:

- **This has brought an abrupt end to a seven-year saga in which he had holed up in Ecuador's embassy in Britain to avoid capture.**
- **The Ecuadorean government suspended the citizenship it had granted Julian Assange and evicted him clearing the way for his arrest.**
- Julian Assange indicated that he would fight extradition, and legal experts stated that the process could take years.
- Julian Assange's arrest brought to head long-simmering tensions that have raised profound First Amendment press freedom issues.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- The internal government debate over whether to charge Julian Assange, continued under the Trump administration and was accelerated by Jeff Sessions, the attorney general at the time, according to former officials involved in the discussions.

SEBI APPROVES A RS 10,000 CRORE "AIRPORT FUND"

SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) approved an "Airport" specific fund of Rs 10,000 crore.

DETAILS:

- **The name of the fund is 'Taking Off To the Future Airport Fund'.**
- It can raise a capital amounting to \$1.5 bn (Rs. 10,000 crores).
- **The 'Sponsor and Investment Manager' of the fund is based in Chennai and is termed as 'Taking Off To The Future Investment Management LLP'.**
- **Gigi George leads the management and operation of 'Sponsor and Investment Manager'.**
- A minimum capital contribution of Rs. 3500 crore and a maximum of Rs. 7000 crore is targeted by the fund.

ABOUT SEBI:

- **The regulator for the securities market in India is the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (established in 1988).**
- On 12th May 1992, it became an autonomous body by the Government of India.
- Through the SEBI Act, 1992, SEBI was given statutory powers on 30 January 1992.
- **On 10th January 2017, Ajay Tyagi was appointed as the chairman of SEBI by replacing U.K. Sinha.**

HDFC BANK TOPS FORBES BEST INDIAN BANKS 2019 LIST

Forbes has compiled a first-ever list of the World's Best Bank 2019 in terms of customer services and technological advancements.

- **Indian private lender- HDFC Bank was ranked at the top of the 'Forbes Best Indian Banks 2019' list.**

DETAILS:

- **HDFC Bank claims to provide the best of its technological features to its 43 million customers.**
- **Another private lender ICICI Bank took the second spot, while DBS was at the third rank in Forbes list of Indian banks.**
- Kotak Mahindra Bank and IDFC Bank had managed to gain the fourth and fifth spot respectively.
- Syndicate Bank, PNB, Allahabad Bank, Vijaya Bank and Axis Bank were ranked from sixth to tenth respectively.
- **Forbes had partnered with Statista, a market research company, to measure the best banks in 23 countries.**
- The survey compiled data from around 40,000 customers around the world for their opinions on their banking relationships.
- The banks were rated on the basis of the following attributes-
 - Trust

- Digital Services
- Financial Advice
- Fees

ABOUT HDFC BANK:

- **HDFC Bank is India's largest private sector lender by assets.**
- **It's CEO is Aditya Puri.**
- **HDFC Bank is headquartered in Mumbai.**
- The bank was founded in August 1994, India.
- It has a presence in Bahrain, Hong Kong and Dubai.

TELUGU POET K SIVA REDDY SELECTED FOR PRESTIGIOUS SARASWATI SAMMAN 2018

Telugu poet K Siva Reddy is selected for the prestigious Saraswati Samman 2018 for his collection of poetry titled Pakkaki Ottigilite.

- The award carries a cash prize of 15 lakh rupees, a citation and a plaque.

ABOUT THE SARASWATI SAMMAN 2018 AWARDS:

- **The Saraswati Samman is an annual award for outstanding prose or poetry literary works in any 22 Indian languages listed in Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India.**
- It is named after the Indian Goddess of learning and is considered to be among the highest literary awards in India.
- It is currently held by Sitanshu Yashaschandra.

DR. A K SINGH HONOURED WITH LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD AT KALAM INNOVATION CONCLAVE

Dr. A K Singh, director at Life Sciences, DRDO has been honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award 2019 during the 4th APJ Abdul Kalam Innovation Conclave at Chandigarh University, Mohali.

ABOUT THE WORK OF DR. A K SINGH:

- **He has made notable contributions in Internal Decorporation of Fission Produced Radionuclides and Infection Imaging.**
- **He also discovered a Diagnobact Kit to detect the infectious lesion.**
- **He also introduced Pharmacosyntigraphy, i.e. application of nuclear medicine imaging in drug research.**

ABOUT THE 4TH DR. APJ ABDUL KALAM INNOVATION CONCLAVE:

- For Best Innovative Project Awards 2019, 965 innovative projects competed against each other.

- Pankaj Sharma bagged the first position and Best Innovation of the Year Award 2019, for Smart Trolley Bag project.
- Pratul and Abhishek shared second place.
- Pratul acquired an award for Automatic Toilet Cleaner project.
- Abhishek won for prototype model for Accident Management System respectively.
- Third prize was jointly won by Vaibhav and Daniyal for treatment of textile affluent and plastic with bio-mass to help in controlling water and air pollution.

ABOUT THE DEFENCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (DRDO):

- **DRDO was formed in 1958.**
- **It is headquartered in New Delhi.**
- **It's Chairman is Dr.G.Satheesh Reddy.**
- **The Minister responsible for DRDO functioning is Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman.**
- The parent organization of DRDO is the Ministry of Defence.
- DRDO is charged with the military's research and development.

RBI PERMITS REINSURANCE BROKERS TO OPEN FOREIGN CURRENCY ACCOUNTS

Reinsurance Brokers have been permitted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to open non-interest bearing foreign currency accounts with banks for undertaking transactions.

WHAT IS A FOREIGN CURRENCY ACCOUNT?

- Foreign currency account refers to a bank account held or maintained in currency other than the currency of India or Nepal or Bhutan.

HOW IT HAPPENED?

- Earlier, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) had issued a notification and then the RBI issued Foreign Exchange Management (Foreign Currency Accounts by a person resident in India) Regulations, 2015 - Opening of Foreign Currency Accounts by Re-insurance and Composite Insurance brokers.

ABOUT THE INSURANCE REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF INDIA (IRDA):

- **IRDA is tasked with regulating and promoting the insurance and re-insurance industries in India.**
- **IRDA was founded in 1999.**
- **It is headquartered at Hyderabad.**
- **It's Chairperson is Subhash Chandra Khuntia.**

MEENA KUMARI WINS GOLD IN COLOGNE BOXING WORLD CUP

India finished its campaign at the Cologne Boxing World Cup 2019 with a haul of five medals with Meena Kumari Maisnam winning the only gold medal for India.

- The Cologne Boxing World Cup 2019 was held at Cologne, Germany.

DETAILS:

- **Meena Kumari Maisnam (54kg) won the only gold medal for India in the tournament.**
- It was the only bout of the tournament for the Manipur pugilist Meena Kumari as she had been directly placed in the final due to a smaller draw.
- **Youth world champion Sakshi (57kg) and India Open gold medallist Pwilao Basumatary (64kg) lost their final bouts and finished with silver medals.**
- **Pinki Rani (51kg) and Parveen (60kg) won bronze medals after losing their semi-final bouts.**

ABOUT THE COLOGNE BOXING WORLD CUP:

- **Cologne Boxing World Cup earlier known as Chemistry Cup witnesses participation from more than 20 nations and 160 boxers in seven women and ten men weight classes.**
- It is one of the strongest international events in Europe with nearly 50 years of traditions.
- **The first edition was held in 1970.**

MOHAMMED ISHTAYE BECOMES PRIME MINISTER OF PALESTINE

Mohammed Ishtaye was sworn in as the new Palestinian Prime Minister.

- He along with 24 ministers took the oath of office before President Mahmoud Abbas.

ABOUT THE NEW PALESTINIAN GOVERNMENT:

- **It is the 18th Palestinian Government since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1995.**
- Ishtaye and the ministers separately took the oath vowing to respect the law and the Palestinian constitutional system.
- The new government consisting of 24 ministers has representation from Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Abbas' Fatah Party, the Palestinian People's Party, the FIDA party, the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front in addition to independent figures.
- **Islamic Hamas movement and Islamic Jihad are excluded from the new government since Hamas has been ruling the Gaza Strip since it violently seized control of the coastal enclave from Abbas' security forces in 2007.**

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **The Islamic Hamas movement has slammed the formation of a new Palestinian government is deepening the internal division.**
- Hamas has said that the new government is far from any Palestinian national accord or any legal measure.

- Criticising the government as further deepening the internal Palestinian division, Hamas has stated that it expects to get representation in the government to strengthen the national unity.

PMLA PREVAILS OVER BANKRUPTCY ACT AND INSOLVENCY CODE

The Delhi High Court has ruled that Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) prevails over the Bankruptcy Act and Insolvency Code when it comes to attachment of properties obtained as 'proceeds of crime'.

DETAILS:

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had challenged the orders of PMLA appellate tribunal on the pleas of various banks.
- PMLA Tribunal had held that third parties, banks in this case, which have legitimately created rights such as a charge, lien or other encumbrances, have a superior claim over such properties.

STAND OF THE DELHI HIGH COURT:

- **PMLA, Recovery of Debt and Bankruptcy Act (RDBA), Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest (SARFAESI) Act and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) must co-exist and be enforced in harmony.**
- The Delhi High Court has set aside the verdict of the PMLA tribunal and held that the objective of PMLA being distinct from the purpose of RDBA, SARFAESI Act and IBC.
- **RDBA, SARFAESI Act and IBC doesn't not prevail over PMLA.**
- The attachment order under the PMLA will not be illegal only because a secured creditor has a prior secured interest [charge] in the property, within the meaning of the expressions used in RDBA and SARFAESI Act.
- Also mere issuance of an order of attachment under the PMLA does not ipso facto render illegal a prior charge or encumbrance of a secured creditor, the claim of the latter for release (or restoration) from PMLA attachment being dependent on its bonafides.

INTERESTING TO KNOW:

- Delhi High Court has stated that by the virtue of Section 71, PMLA has the overriding effect over other existing laws in the matter of dealing with "money-laundering" and "proceeds of crime".

INDO-PACIFIC WING SET UP IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE

The Ministry of External Affairs has set up an Indo-Pacific Wing in the foreign office.

DETAILS:

- The Indo-Pacific division is intended to give a coherent architecture to the Indo-Pacific policy articulated by PM Narendra Modi at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2018.
- Setting up of this special wing or division makes a strong strategic statement.

ABOUT THE INDO-PACIFIC WING OR INDO-PACIFIC DIVISION:

- The Indo-Pacific Wing is currently headed by joint secretary Vikram Doraiswami.
- The Indo-Pacific Wing is a big step by the Government and it is expected to give thrust to the Indo-Pacific centred policymaking.
- The Indo-Pacific Wing integrates the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), ASEAN region and the Quad.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The Indo-Pacific diplomacy of India has repeatedly placed ASEAN at the centre of its policy.
- Even the US has recently renamed its Pacific Command to the Indo-Pacific Command as it seeks to give teeth to its Indo-Pacific policy.

HARSHEEL DANI WINS VICTOR DUTCH INTERNATIONAL BADMINTON TITLE

India's Harsheel Dani, a former junior national champion, defeated Mads Christophersen of Denmark to clinch the 20th Victor Dutch International Badminton title in Wateringen, Netherlands with a 15-21, 21-12, 21-13 victory in a 47-minute clash.

DETAILS:

- It was the second win for Dani opposite Christophersen.
- The 22-year-old won the Ghana International Crown in 2018 and second Karvy All India junior-ranking Badminton Tournament in 2012.
- He also finished runner-up at Polish International last year.

ABOUT VICTOR DUTCH INTERNATIONAL:

- The Victor Dutch International is the Netherlands' second biggest badminton event with a prize money of \$10,000
- It is a part of the Badminton Europe Elite Circuit.
- This tournament has been an International Series level tournament and another tournament for Grand Prix level named as Dutch Open.

INDIA SUCCESSFULLY TEST FIRES SUB-SONIC CRUISE MISSILE 'NIRBHAY'

India's first indigenously designed and developed long-range sub-sonic cruise missile 'Nirbhay' successfully test fired from a test range in Chandipur, Odisha.

ABOUT THE NIRBHAY MISSILE:

- **Nirbhay missile has blended missile and aeronautical technologies which allows it to take off vertically like missile and cruise horizontally like an aircraft.**
- The missile is a two-stage missile, powered by solid rocket motor booster developed by Advanced Systems Laboratory (ASL).
- **Nirbhay Missile has an operational range of 1000 km and can carry warheads of up to 300 kg including nuclear warheads.**
- It can be launched from various kind of platforms.
- It can travel with a turbofan or turbojet engine and is guided by a highly advanced inertial navigation system.
- **It has the capability to loiter and cruise at 0.7 Mach, at altitudes as low as 100m.**
- **It is a terrain hugging missile which keeps on encircling the area of its target for several minutes and then hits bull's eye' at an opportune time.**
- **It is difficult to detect by enemy's radars.**
- It is capable to engage several targets in a single flight.
- The guidance, control and navigation system of the missile is configured around indigenously designed Ring Laser Gyroscope (RLG) and MEMS-based Inertial Navigation System (INS) along with GPS system.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- It was the sixth experimental test of Nirbhay missile system and it achieved all mission objectives right from lift-off till the final splash, boosting the confidence of all scientists associated with the trial.

APRIL 17TH OBSERVED AS WORLD HAEMOPHILIA DAY

April 17th is observed as World Haemophilia Day.

DETAILS:

- The World Haemophilia Day 2019 is aimed at reaching out and identifying new members of the bleeding disorders community.
- **April 17th is observed as World Hemophilia Day to commemorate the birthday of Frank Schnabel who established the World Federation of Haemophilia in 1963.**

ABOUT HAEMOPHILIA AND ITS OCCURRENCE:

- **Haemophilia is a medical condition in which the ability of blood to clot is severely reduced. As a result, even a minor injury can cause severe bleeding.**
- **It is mostly inherited and is attributed to the defect in the X chromosome.**
- **If a girl is born with one defective X chromosome, her other X chromosome can compensate for it.**
- **As a result, she will be a carrier of haemophilia but she herself will not suffer from the condition.**
- **On the other hand, if both of her X chromosomes are defective she is bound to suffer from haemophilia.**
- **If a boy is born with a defective X chromosome, he does not have the second X chromosome to compensate for it.**
- Hence he will suffer from haemophilia.
- That is the reason haemophilia is more common among men.

- Britain's Queen Victoria is the world's most widely known carrier of haemophilia.
- From her, the condition spread to a number of European royal families.
- Hence haemophilia is often referred to as the Royal Disease.
- Haemophilia A, occurs in about 1 in 5,000 births, while Haemophilia B is even rarer at about 1 in about 20,000 births.
- According to the World Federation of Haemophilia's Annual Global Survey 2017, there were over 1.96 lakh persons living with haemophilia across the world in 2017 and India emerged with the highest count at nearly 19,000.

STREET CHILD CRICKET WORLD CUP GETS MITHALI RAJ AS ITS GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Cricketer Mithali Raj has been named as the goodwill ambassador of the Indian team for the Street Child Cricket World Cup.

- She will join former captain Saurav Ganguly and IPL franchise Rajasthan Royals in supporting team India for the Street Child Cricket World Cup.

ABOUT THE STREET CHILD CRICKET WORLD CUP:

- The first ever Cricket World Cup for street children will take place ahead of the 2019 ICC Cricket World Cup in England and Wales.
- The Street Child Cricket World Cup aims to unite street children from around the world to play in their own international cricket tournament to raise awareness and tackle the widespread stigma and negative treatment they face.
- Off the pitch, these young people will also make their voices heard and make recommendations to help improve the lives of street children worldwide.

FIRST AFRICA ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE LAB OPENED BY GOOGLE IN GHANA

Google has opened an Artificial Intelligence (AI) research lab in Ghana's capital Accra, reportedly the first of its kind in Africa, to take on challenges across the continent.

DETAILS:

- The lab would develop solutions in areas including agriculture, like helping in diagnosing certain types of crop disease.
- Using Google's AI machine app 'TensorFlow', farmers analyze the issue with their plants and boost their production.
- TensorFlow was outsourced by the company to help developers generate solutions to real-world problems.
- Tech giant Google opened new research centers across the globe such as in Tokyo, Zurich, New York, and Paris, to exhibit itself as the first AI company in front of the world.
- Google joins Facebook and other tech companies, in launching projects in Africa with a keen eye on the continent's rising youth population.

ABOUT GHANA:

- **The capital of Ghana is Accra and its currency is Ghanaian Cedi.**
- The President of Ghana is Nana Akufo-Addo.

ABOUT GOOGLE:

- The founders of Google are Larry Page and Sergey Brin.
- It was founded on 4th September 1998.
- **Its CEO is Sundar Pichai.**
- **The parent organization of Google is Alphabet Inc.**
- Google is headquartered at Mountain View, California, United States.

SUPREME COURT BANS MINING ALONG KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

The Supreme Court has banned all mining activities along the Kaziranga National Park and catchment area of rivers originating in Karbi Anglong Hills in Assam.

DETAILS:

- **The ban was ordered as per the recommendations of the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).**
- Mining was continuing in the Karbi Anlong hills despite the Supreme Court ban in 1996 and in violation of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, resulting in environment degradation and habitat destruction in an important elephant and tiger habitat.
- **Supreme court has also banned new construction activities on private lands which form part of the nine identified animal corridors.**

ABOUT THE KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK:

- **Kaziranga National Park is located in the Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam.**
- **It was established in 1908.**
- It is being declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in the year 1985.
- **It is home to world's largest population of Indian one-horned Rhinoceros.**
- It is also a tiger reserve and has a very high density of population of tigers.
- It is spread across the floodplains of the Brahmaputra River.

RS. 50 NOTES SIGNED BY SHAKTIKANTA DAS PUT INTO CIRCULATION

The Reserve Bank of India put into circulation 50 Rupees denomination banknotes signed by its Governor Shaktikanta Das.

- The RBI in Mumbai said the design of these notes is similar in all respects to 50 banknotes in Mahatma Gandhi new series.

- It also said that all banknotes in the denomination of 50 issued by the Reserve Bank in the past will continue to be legal tender.

PNB APPOINTS RAJESH KUMAR YADUVANSHI AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Punjab National Bank (PNB) appointed Rajesh Kumar Yaduvanshi as the Executive Director of the bank.

ABOUT RAJESH YADUVANSHI:

- **Rajesh Kumar Yaduvanshi joined PNB as a management trainee in 1985.**
- He is equipped with an experience of 34 years in the banking career and is a certified associate member of Indian Institute of Bankers.
- **In the past, he had worked with Dena Bank in the capacity of the Executive Director.**
- He holds a doctorate in science from Indian Agricultural Research Institute, (IARI) New Delhi.

SRI LANKA'S FIRST SATELLITE RAAVANA-1 LAUNCHED INTO SPACE

Sri Lanka's first satellite Raavana-1 was launched into space from NASA's Flight Facility on Virginia's east shore.

ABOUT RAAVANA-1:

- **Raavana-1 weights around 1.05 kg and is 1000 cubic centimetres in size.**
- The minimum lifespan of the satellite is around one and a half years and it is expected to be active for five years.
- **Raavana-1 satellite was designed and built at the Kyushu Institute of Technology in Japan by two Sri Lankan research engineers.**
- **Raavana-1 satellite's camera mission is to capture images of Sri Lanka and its neighbouring countries.**
- The Raavana-1 is expected to orbit 400 kilometres away from the earth.
- The launch of Raavana-1 marks Sri Lanka's entry into the global space age.

MEDALS OF HONOUR AWARDED TO INDIAN PEACEKEEPERS

150 Indian peacekeepers serving with the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) were honoured with medals of honour by the United Nations for their dedicated service and sacrifice.

ABOUT UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SOUTH SUDAN:

- **UNMISS is working to deter violence against civilians by providing a safe and secure environment for South Sudanese people who have fled violence and sought sanctuary at Protection of Civilian sites across the country.**

- UNMISS peacekeepers are also working to facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian assistance, such as food, clean water, shelter and healthcare to the millions of displaced people.
- **UNMISS aims to provide a safe and supported environment so that these people can return to their former homes and communities to live safely and with dignity.**
- UNMISS also protects, monitors, investigates, and reports on human rights violations and abuses with a strong focus on the most vulnerable such as women and children and those who are subjected to sexual and gender-based violence.
- UNMISS is committed to helping build durable peace in South Sudan.

UN PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS AND INDIA:

- India is one of the top troop-contributing nations to UN Peacekeeping Missions.
- **Till date, more than 200,000 military and police have served under the various peacekeeping missions and 168 Indian military personnel have lost their lives under the UN flag.**
- **Currently, India is the second largest contributor of peacekeepers to UNMISS with more than 2,400 military and police personnel currently deployed in the mission.**

APRIL 18TH OBSERVED AS WORLD HERITAGE DAY

April 18th was observed as the World Heritage Day 2019 with the theme Rural Landscapes.

- The theme Rural Landscapes is related to the theme of the 2019 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Scientific Symposium on Rural heritage to be held at Marrakesh, Morocco in October.

WHAT IS A WORLD HERITAGE SITE?

- **UNESCO defines a World Heritage Site as a "natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and space which requires special protection."**

HOW WORLD HERITAGE DAY CAME INTO EXISTENCE?

- On 18th April 1982 on the occasion of a symposium organised by ICOMOS in Tunisia, it was suggested to observe the "International Day for Monuments and Sites" simultaneously throughout the world.
- **UNESCO passed a resolution at its 22nd session on November 1983 approving the idea and recommended the member states to examine the possibility of declaring 18th April each year as "International Monuments and Sites Day".**
- This has been referred to as the World Heritage Day.

ROLE OF THE WORLD HERITAGE DAY:

- World Heritage Day offers an opportunity to raise the public's awareness about the diversity of cultural heritage and the efforts that are required to protect and conserve it, as well as draw attention to its vulnerability.

PADMAJA ALAGANANDAN APPOINTED CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER OF PWC INDIA

PwC India announced the appointment of Padmaja Alaganandan as the firm's new Chief People Officer (CPO).

ABOUT PADMAJA ALAGANANDAN:

- **She takes over the role from Jagjit Singh.**
- Padmaja is associated with PwC for the last eight years.
- She was the Technology sector lead for PwC's Advisory Line of Service.
- **Before being appointed to this role, Padmaja was the leader of the firm's People and Organisation Consulting practice.**
- Before joining PwC in 2011, Padmaja worked in leadership roles in different organisations such as Mercer Consulting and AF Ferguson.
- **She is a member of CII's National HR Committee and the Committee on Skill Development.**
- Earlier this year, Padmaja was inducted into the firm's leadership team.
- **Padmaja completed her graduation from the University of Madras, and her post-graduation from the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta.**

IDRBT LAUNCHES THE "5G USE CASES LAB"

Institute for Development and Research in Banking Technology (IDRBT) launched the "5G Use Cases Lab" for banking and financial sector along with blockchain technology.

DETAILS:

- **IDRBT is an arm of Reserve Bank of India.**
- It also released a white paper on 5G applications for banking and financial sector in India.
- **The use of 5G will change a range of technologies and applications, including point of sale (PoS) machines in the banking sector, which are currently using 2G and are in the process of being phased out.**
- **Since India is now the biggest user of mobile data in the world and the rates of devices and services have been dropping aggressively, 5G holds immense potential for the country.**

JAPAN DOMINATES SINGAPORE OPEN 2019

The winners of the Singapore Open 2019 are listed below:

- **Men's Singles: Kento Momota (Japan)**
- **Women's Singles: Tai Tzu-ying (Taiwan)**
- **Men's Doubles: Takeshi Kamura and Keigo Sonoda (Japan)**
- **Women's Doubles: Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara (Japan)**
- **Mixed Doubles: Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai (Thailand)**

ABOUT THE 2019 SINGAPORE OPEN BADMINTON TOURNAMENT:

- The 2019 Singapore Open Badminton Tournament which took place at the Singapore Indoor Stadium in Singapore had a total purse of \$355,000.

NASA LAUNCHES NEPAL'S FIRST EVER SATELLITE 'NEPALISAT-1'

Nepal's first satellite NepaliSat-1 was launched into space from the Virginia-based station of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the US.

ABOUT NEPALISAT-1:

- NepaliSat-1 will start rotating around the Earth's orbit to collect information about the country's topography and Earth's magnetic field.
- The satellite also bears the Nepal flag and logo of Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).
- The satellite is equipped with a 5MP camera to capture Nepal's topography and a magnetometer to collect data related to the Earth's magnetic field.
- The images and data will be sent by satellite to the ground station at NAST.
- The satellite was developed by two Nepalis Abhas Maskey and Hariram Shrestha at Japan's Kyushu Institute of Technology.

PERU'S FORMER PRESIDENT ALAN GARCIA SHOT HIMSELF

Peru's former president Alan Garcia shot himself in the head to avoid arrest in connection with alleged bribes from Brazilian builder Odebrecht, taking his own life, in the most dramatic turn yet in Latin America's largest graft scandal.

DETAILS:

- Alan Garcia served two terms as Peru's president, from 1985 to 1990 and from 2006 to 2011.
- Garcia was one of nine people whom a judge had ordered arrested in connection with the bribery investigation into Odebrecht.

ABOUT PERU:

- Peru is a South American country with its capital as Lima.
- The currency of Peru is Sol.
- Its current President is Martín Vizcarra and its current Prime Minister is Salvador del Solar.

CANARA BANK BECOMES FIRST PSB TO MEET RBIS EMV MANDATE

Canara Bank has successfully rolled out major new functionality to support EMV card acquiring across its ATM network and Aadhaar Authentication.

DETAILS:

- **Canara Bank, with nearly 6,300 branches and a network of more than 10,000 ATMs, is the first public sector bank to shift to EMV chip and PIN for card present transactions across the country's vast ATM network.**

WHAT IS AN EMV CHIP?

- **EMV stands for Europay, MasterCard, Visa, the three organisations that developed and established EMV as the global standard for chip-based credit and debit transactions.**
- **The EMV standard helps to maximise security and global interoperability so that Visa cards can continue to be accepted around the world.**

SAUDI ARABIA WILL HOST FIRST G20 SUMMIT IN 2020

Saudi Arabia will host the annual G20 leaders' summit on November 21-22, 2020, in its capital Riyadh.

DETAILS:

- **This will be the first G20 Summit to be hosted in the Arab world.**
- **Japan will host this year's G20 summit in Osaka, which will be held June 28-29, as well as ministerial meetings in eight cities.**
- **In 2018, the conference was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina and focused on the global economy, the future of labour markets and gender equality.**

ABOUT G20:

- **Group of Twenty (G20) is an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 19 countries and the European Union.**
- **Chairperson:** Shinzō Abe
- **Founder:** Group of Seven
- **Founded:** 26 September 1999
- **G20 economies account for around 90% of the gross world product (GWP), two-thirds of the world population.**
- **G20 world leaders met for the first time in 2008 with focus on rescuing the global economy from the worst financial crisis in more than 70 years.**
- **The 19 member Countries of G20 are:**
- **Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Republic of South Africa, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America.**

BANDHAN BANK'S MERGER WITH GRUH FINANCE APPROVED BY CCI

Bandhan Bank received approval from the Competition Commission of India (CCI) for the proposed scheme of amalgamation of Gruh Finance with the bank.

DETAILS:

- The approval has been made under sub-section (1) of Section 31 of the Competition Act, 2002.
- Bandhan Bank in January 2019, announced the merger of Gruh Finance with it.

ABOUT BANDHAN BANK:

- Bandhan Bank is a private sector bank that was founded on 23rd August 2015.
- **Chandra Shekhar Ghosh is the founder of Bandhan Bank and it is headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal, India.**

INDIA AND FRANCE TO CONDUCT LARGEST NAVAL EXERCISE "VARUNA"

India and France are all set to hold their largest-ever naval exercise 'Varuna' with aircraft carriers, destroyers, submarines and fighters early May as part of their expanding strategic partnership.

DETAILS:

- **The exercise that has been christened 'Varuna' will take place off Goa and Karwar from 1st May 2019.**
- Conducting the Varuna exercise was reiterated in the Joint Statement made by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France, on the 10th of March 2018.
- **The two countries will be deploying their aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and FNS Charles de Gaulle with their Mig-29K and Rafale-M naval fighter jets.**
- The Indian participation will also include the destroyer INS Mumbai, frigate INS Triakand with their integral helicopters, IN submarine Kalvari, P8-I aircrafts and Dornier Maritime Patrol aircraft.
- **This comes after the successful operationalisation of the logistics support agreement between India and France under which Indian warships can access the French bases like Reunion Islands and in Djibouti.**
- Under the same pact, French anti-aircraft destroyer FNS Cassard had docked at the Mumbai naval port in January 2019.
- This was second such logistics support agreement signed by India after the one signed by it with United States (US) in 2016.

BANK OF MAHARASHTRA PARTNERS WITH M1XCHANGE TREDIS PLATFORM

Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) partnered with M1Xchange Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS) platform for MSME bill discounting.

WHAT IS TREDIS?

- TReDS is a digital platform to support micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to get their bills financed at a competitive rate through an auction where multiple registered financiers can participate.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Mynd Solutions is a technology management firm which runs the TReDS platform of M1Xchange.

ABOUT BANK OF MAHARASHTRA:

- Bank of Maharashtra is headquartered in Pune and was founded in 1935.
- Its CEO is A. S. Rajeev.

CHRISTINA KOCH SETS RECORD FOR THE LONGEST SPACEFLIGHT

NASA astronaut Christina Koch is going to have her mission on the International Space Station (ISS) extended to 328 days, which would set a record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman.

Details:

- Koch, who arrived at the space station on March 14th is scheduled to remain in orbit until February 2020 which will eclipse the record of 288 days set by former NASA astronaut Peggy Whitson in 2016-17.

ABOUT CHRISTINA KOCH:

- Christina Koch went on the space missions- Expedition 59, Soyuz MS-12 and Soyuz MS-13.
- She is an American and had her first space flight on Expedition 59.
- She studied at the North Carolina State University.

KAUSHIK SHAPARIA BECOMES CEO FOR DEUTSCHE BANK INDIA

Deutsche Bank appointed Kaushik Shaparia as the Chief Executive Officer for India.

DETAILS:

- Kaushik Shaparia succeeds Ravneet Gill.
- Gill left the bank to head private lender YES Bank.
- Shaparia's appointment will be effective from May 2019.

N. KASHINATH TAKES OVER AS MEMBER OF RAILWAY BOARD

N. Kashinath took over as Member (Signal & Telecom) of Railway Board.

ABOUT N. KASHINATH:

- N. Kashinath was associated with the Train Describer Project, Survey for the Mobile Train Radio Communication in Northeast Frontier Railway.
- N. Kashinath belongs to the 1980 Batch of the Indian Railway Service of Signal Engineers (IRSSE).

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Vinod Kumar Yadav is the Chairman of Railway Board.

IMF AND THE WORLD BANK LAUNCH "LEARNING COIN"

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have together launched a private blockchain with a pseudo-token- "Learning Coin".

DETAILS:

- The new token, called "Learning Coin" is accessible within the IMF and World Bank.
- The main purpose of this token is to teach relevant individuals within the organizations about blockchain.
- The coin has no real value, hence has the description of a pseudo-token.
- Staff members who pass educational milestones will receive the tokens which can then be redeemed for certain rewards.

ABOUT THE WORLD BANK:

- The World Bank was established in 1944.
- The World Bank is headquartered in Washington DC, USA.
- David Malpass is the current president of the World Bank.

AMAZON PLANS TO CLOSE DOWN ONLINE RETAIL OPERATIONS IN CHINA

Amazon plans to close down online retail operations in China, admitting defeat to local e-commerce rivals such as Alibaba and JD.com.

DETAILS:

- Amazon will continue other operations in China such as Amazon Web Services (AWS).
- They will also continue Kindle e-books and teams that help ship goods from Chinese merchants to customers abroad.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Amazon entered China in 2004, when it acquired a local online book seller for USD 75 million.
- They launched its Prime membership programme in China in 2016 with aim to lure customers with high-quality Western goods and perks like free international deliveries.

ABOUT AMAZON:

- Amazon was founded on July 5th, 1994, that is 24 years ago in Bellevue, Washington.
- Its founder is Jeff Bezos.
- The headquarters of Amazon are at Seattle, Washington, U.S.
- Jeff Bezos is the Chairman, President and CEO of Amazon.

WORLD'S TALLEST INDOOR WATERFALL OPENED AT CHANGI AIRPORT

The world's tallest indoor waterfall, 131-foot-tall, opened for the general public at Singapore's Changi Airport.

DETAILS:

- The waterfall is housed inside a dome-shaped complex which has gardens growing over four storeys, more than 280 retail and food outlets, a hotel and a movie theatre.
- The structure also has a botanical garden with 120 species of plants.

OBSERVANCE OF CIVIL SERVICES DAY DEFERRED DUE TO LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

The Civil Services Day 2019 was not observed on 21st April 2019 due to Lok Sabha elections.

- The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has stated that the Civil Services Day will be celebrated once the new government takes over or may even consider clubbing this year's celebrations with the next year's programme.

ABOUT CIVIL SERVICES DAY:

- Every year April 21st is observed as Civil Services Day since it was on this day Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, addressed the first batch of civil servants in Independent India at the Metcalf House where he referred to civil servants as the 'Steel Frame of India'.
- On Civil Services Day bureaucrats rededicate themselves to public service.
- On the occasion of the Civil Services Day, 'Prime Minister Award for Excellence in Public Administration' instituted with a view to acknowledge, recognise and reward the extraordinary and innovative work done by officers of Central and State Governments towards the welfare of common citizens is bestowed on the civil servants.

INDONESIAN VOLCANO- MOUNT AGUNG ERUPTS AGAIN

The active volcano of Indonesia- Mount Agung has erupted again, spewing volcanic ash into the sky to a height of 2km.

- Two other volcanoes popular with tourists Mount Bromo in East Java and Mount Merapi in Yogyakarta also continue to erupt.

ABOUT MOUNT AGUNG:

- Mount Agung is an active volcano in Bali, Indonesia.
- Mount Agung stratovolcano is the highest point on Bali and it dominates the surrounding area, influencing the climate, especially rainfall patterns.
- **The most important temple of Bali, Pura Besakih, is located high on the slopes of Mount Agung.**

ABOUT MOUNT BROMO:

- Mount Bromo is an active volcano and part of the Tengger massif, in East Java, Indonesia.
- **The name Bromo is derived from Javanese pronunciation of Brahma, the Hindu Creator God.**

ABOUT MOUNT MERAPI:

- Mount Merapi is an active volcano located on the border between Central Java and Yogyakarta provinces, Indonesia.
- **The word Merapi can be translated as the Mountain of Fire.**
- Meru means "mountain" and Api means "fire".

INDIAN NAVY LAUNCHES GUIDED MISSILE DESTROYER IMPHAL

The Indian Navy launched a guided missile destroyer 'Imphal' at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders under 'Project 15B'.

DETAILS:

- **Project 15B or Project 15 Bravo is a project under which a class of stealth guided missile destroyers are built.**
- **Warships built under Project 15Bravo, with a length of 163 metres and 17.4 metres at the beam and a displacement of 7.300 tonnes, are propelled by four gas turbines to achieve speeds in excess of 30 knots.**
- Ships under this project can carry and operate two multiple role helicopters.
- Enhanced stealth features have been achieved through the shaping of hull and use of radar transparent deck fittings which make these ships difficult to detect.
- **The first ship of Project 15B, a guided missile destroyer christened 'Visakhapatnam', was launched on April 20, 2015.**

ASIAN TEA ALLIANCE LAUNCHED IN GUIZHOU, CHINA

Asian Tea Alliance, a union of five tea-growing and consuming countries was launched in Guizhou in China.

- The members of the alliance are the Indian Tea Association, China Tea Marketing Association, Indonesian Tea Marketing Association, Sri Lanka Tea Board and Japan Tea Association.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ALLIANCE:

- To work towards enhancing tea trade, cultural exchanges, technology exchanges as well as globally promoting tea.
- To work towards enhancing global consumption of tea, while creating a sustainability agenda for the future of Asian tea.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Earlier, Indian Tea Association and China Tea Marketing Association had signed an MoU to promote green and black tea consumption in major tea markets of Europe, US, Russia and West Asia, besides India and China.

49TH ANNUAL EARTH DAY OBSERVED ON 22ND APRIL 2019

Earth Day 2019 observed on 22nd April 2019 marks the 49th annual Earth Day.

- Earth Day 2019 is observed with the theme 'Protect Our Species'.

DETAILS:

- The theme 'Protect Our Species' aims to highlight that nature's gifts to our planet are the millions of species.
- But unfortunately, human beings have irrevocably upset the balance of nature.
- As a result, the world is facing the greatest rate of extinction and the rapid extinction of species in our world today is the result of human activity.

THE EARTH DAY 2019 THROUGH THE THEME 'PROTECT OUR SPECIES' URGES PEOPLE TO:

- Educate and raise awareness about the accelerating rate of extinction of millions of species and the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.
- Achieve major policy victories that protect broad groups of species as well as individual species and their habitats.
- Build and activate a global movement that embraces nature and its values.
- Encourage individual actions such as adopting a plant-based diet and stopping pesticide and herbicide use.

ABOUT EARTH DAY:

- **Earth Day was formally proposed by John McConnell at the UNESCO conference on Environment in 1969.**
- Later in 1971, a proclamation was signed to observe international Earth Day annually on the Vernal Equinox by UN Secretary-General U Thant.

- Since then, April 22nd is celebrated every year in more than 193 countries and **the celebrations are coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network.**
- Earth Day celebrations are a way to remind humans of the environmental deterioration caused by them and advise them to turn off the electronic devices that are not in use or taking public transport to reduce the emission levels.
- It recognises that Earth and its ecosystems provide its inhabitants with life and sustenance.

LSE ESTABLISHES AMARTYA SEN CHAIR IN INEQUALITY STUDIES

London School of Economics (LSE) has announced the establishment of the 'Amartya Sen Chair in Inequality Studies' to honour the Nobel laureate who also served as the Professor of Economics at LSE.

ABOUT THE AMARTYA SEN CHAIR IN INEQUALITY STUDIES:

- 'Amartya Sen Chair in Inequality Studies' is a living embodiment of the LSE's enduring commitment to working for the betterment of society through research, education and public engagement.
- Amartya Sen's theories of justice; equity and well-being transcend disciplines, build bridges to real-world policy and practice; and inspire generations to improve the human condition.
- Hence by naming a chair after him, LSE is recognising one of the world's great thinkers on social equity.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **Amartya Sen was awarded Noble Prize in the year 1998 for his works in Welfare Economics.**

ABOUT WELFARE ECONOMICS:

- **Welfare economics focuses on the optimal allocation of resources and goods and it evaluates how the allocation of these resources affects social welfare.**
- This relates directly to the study of income distribution and how it affects the common good.
- Welfare economics is a subjective study that may assign units of welfare or utility to create models that measure the improvements to individuals based on their personal scales.

NASA SCIENTISTS DETECT FIRST MOLECULE OF UNIVERSE

The scientists of NASA have detected the first molecule which is Helium Hydride that was formed from stray atoms in the universe.

- Helium Hydride is a combination of helium and hydrogen.

ABOUT THE DISCOVERY:

- The research was published in the journal 'Nature'.
- The researchers used the National Aeronautics and Space Administrations SOFIA, the world's largest airborne observatory, to detect helium hydride in NGC 7027, a planetary Nebula about 3,000 light-years away from Earth.

WHAT IS SOFIA?

- **Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA)** is a Boeing 747SP jetliner modified to carry a 106-inch diameter telescope.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DISCOVERY:

- Scientists for long had held that around 100,000 years after the big bang, helium and hydrogen combined to make a molecule called helium hydride for the first time.
- But scientists could not find HeH⁺ in space and it was unproven.
- The discovery brought a long search to a happy ending and eliminates doubts about our understanding of the underlying chemistry of the early universe.

CSIR UNDERTAKES A GENOME SEQUENCING PROJECT

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has undertaken an indigenous genetic mapping effort to educate a generation of students on the "usefulness" of Genomics.

DETAILS OF THE PROJECT:

- Under the Project, nearly 1,000 rural youth from the length and breadth of India will have their genomes sequenced by the CSIR.
- The project is an adjunct to a much larger government-led programme which is still in the works to sequence at least 10,000 Indian genomes.
- Those recruited as part of genome-sample collections are representative of the country's population diversity and the bulk of them will be college students, both men and women, and pursuing degrees in the life sciences or biology.
- Genomes will be sequenced based on a blood sample.
- Every participant would be given a report and would be informed whether they carry gene variants that make them less responsive to certain classes of medicines.

ABOUT GENOME SEQUENCING:

- Genome refers to an organism's complete set of DNA, including all of its genes.
- Each genome contains all of the information required to build and maintain that organism.
- Genome sequencing refers to figuring out the order of the DNA nucleotides, or bases, in a genome.

INDIA'S HAJ QUOTA INCREASED TO 2 LAKH BY SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia has issued a formal order increasing the Haj quota for India to two lakhs from one lakh seventy five-thousand.

DETAILS:

- In February this year, the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced that Indian Haj quota would be increased by 25 thousand to 2 lakhs.
- This is the third hike in three consecutive years.
- In 2017, the quota was increased by 35,000 while last year, it was raised by 5,000 to take the number to 1,75,000.
- A record number of two lakh Indian Muslims will perform Haj this year without subsidy.
- As many as 2,340 Indian Muslim women will go for the pilgrimage without male companion or Mehram.
- **The GST on Haj pilgrimage has been reduced from 18 per cent to 5 per cent this year**, which will ensure that about Rs 113 crore will be saved by pilgrims during the 2019 Haj.

VOTER TURNOUT APP LAUNCHED BY ECI

Election Commission of India (ECI) launched a new mobile app for the voters across the country to see the realtime availability of voter turnout during the election season in the country.

DETAILS:

- The beta version of the ECI's Voter Turnout app is available for download on the Google Play Store and as of now it has been downloaded over 5,000 times.
- **The app captures the real-time information gathered by the Returning Officers following which it calculates the estimated totals.**
- It then displays this information over a user-friendly user interface in the app.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The app is available for download on the Google Play Store and users need to have a smartphone running on Android 4.4 KitKat or above to be able to use the app.

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY WON UKRAINE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Ukrainian comedian Volodymyr Zelenskiy, who played president in a TV series, is set to become the new president of Ukraine.

Details:

- He received 73.19% of the votes, while his opponent, incumbent President Petro Poroshenko saw support of 24.48%.
- Poroshenko, who was running for his second five-year term, has admitted defeat.
- **Zelenskiy plans to continue European-backed talks with Russia on a so far largely unimplemented peace deal and would try to free Ukrainians imprisoned in Russia, which is holding 24 Ukrainian sailors among others.**

ONE MUST KNOW:

- The capital of Ukraine is Kyiv and its currency is Ukrainian Hryvnia.

BHAYANAKAM WON BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY AWARD BEIJING INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Malayalam film Bhayanakam (Fear) directed by Jayaraj won the best cinematography award at the 2019 Beijing International Film Festival.

DETAILS:

- The cinematography of the film was done by Nikihil S Praveen.
- The film had also won the best cinematography award at the 65th National Film Awards.

ABOUT THE FILM:

- The film portrays the visits of a first World War veteran to a small village in the backwaters of Kerala's Kuttanad as a postman during the World War-II.
- He shares with the families the good and bad news of the soldiers who took part in the war.

OTHER INDIAN ATTRACTIONS AT THE FESTIVAL:

- The festival also screened five Indian films, including Satyajit Ray's "Pather Panchali", "Apu Sansar", "Aparajito", the romantic comedy "Love Per Square Foot" and the thriller "Ittefaq".

EPCH APPOINTS RAVINDER KUMAR PASSI AS ITS CHAIRMAN

The board of 'Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH)' has appointed Ravinder Kumar Passi to the post of Chairman of EPCH.

DETAILS:

- He will take charge for the post of Chairman shortly from his predecessor O P Prahladka.
- He has been a part of EPCH since its establishment in 1986-87.
- He is associated with EPCH since its inception and has served EPCH as its Chairman during 2001 and 2002.
- He is very actively involved in various trade bodies.

ABOUT EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL FOR HANDICRAFTS (EPCH):

- Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts (EPCH) was established under Companies Act in the year 1986-87 and is a non-profit organisation.
- It is an apex body of handicrafts exporters for promotion of exports of handicrafts from country and projecting India's image abroad as a reliable supplier of high quality of handicrafts goods & services.

- The Council has created necessary infrastructure as well as marketing and information facilities, which are availed both by the members exporters and importers.

EPCH ACTIVITIES:

- **Providing commercially useful information and assistance to members in developing and increasing exports.**
- Offering professional advice and services to members in areas of technology upgradation, quality and design improvement, standards and specifications, product development, innovation etc.
- Organising visits of delegation of its members abroad to explore overseas market opportunities.
- **Participating in specialized International Trade Fairs of handicrafts & gifts.**
- **Organizing Indian Handicrafts and Gifts Fair at New Delhi.**
- Dissemination of government notification, orders, information on trade and other relevant information to members.

CYBER DEFENCE INSURANCE LAUNCHED BY SBI GENERAL INSURANCE

SBI General Insurance launched its new product - 'Cyber Defence Insurance' to protect businesses from financial and reputational losses due to cyber attacks.

DETAILS:

- The product focusses on SMEs and from mid-market businesses to larger businesses.
- **This offers protection against the growing threat of cyber breaches like hacking attacks, identity theft, disclosure of sensitive information and business interruption.**
- It provides IT forensic investigations, legal advice, reputational and PR management.

ISRAELI PM ANNOUNCES TO NAME A NEW COMMUNITY IN THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that he would name a new community in the Golan Heights after US President Donald Trump.

DETAILS:

- **President Trump has officially recognised the disputed area as Israeli territory.**
- **Israel has also stated that in appreciation of the U.S. President, it intends to name a proposed train station near Jerusalem's Western Wall after him.**
- Israel captured the Golan from Syria in the 1967 war and annexed it, in a move not recognized internationally.

ABOUT THE GOLAN HEIGHTS:

- Israel seized most of the Golan Heights from Syria in the closing stages of the 1967 Middle East war and thwarted a Syrian attempt to retake the region during the 1973 war.
- Golan Heights is located about 60km (40 miles) south-west of the Syrian capital, Damascus and covers about 1,200 sq km (400 sq miles).
- Israel and Syria remained technically in a state of war.
- Syria has always insisted that it will not agree a peace deal with Israel unless it withdraws from the whole of the Golan.
- The last US-brokered direct peace talks broke down in 2000, while Turkey mediated in indirect talks in 2008.
- There are more than 30 Israeli settlements in the Golan, which are home to an estimated 20,000 people.
- The settlements are considered illegal under international law, although Israel disputes this.
- The settlers live alongside some 20,000 Syrians, most of them Druze Arabs, who did not flee when the Golan was captured.

NATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AWARD WON BY BENNY ANTONY

Benny Antony, Joint Managing Director of Kochi-based Arjuna Natural Ltd, has been conferred with the National Intellectual Property Award for 2019 in the category of Top Individual for Patents and Commercialization.

DETAILS:

- He is the inventor of BCM-95, the world's leading patented turmeric extract formulation, with over 80 international patents to his credit.
- Antony was also conferred with the 'WIPO Medal for Inventors' jointly by Intellectual Property Office India and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

ABOUT THE NATIONAL INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (IP) AWARDS:

- The Indian Intellectual Property Office bestows National Intellectual Property (IP) awards to outstanding innovators, organisations and companies in the field of patents, designs, trademarks and geographical indications on the occasion of World IP Day every year.
- The awards will be given away on April 26 at a function jointly organised by the Indian Intellectual Property Office and the Confederation of Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CII) in New Delhi.

AIR AND CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY WON THE SWACHTA PAKHWADA AWARD

All India Radio and Children's Film Society of India were given Swacchta Pakhwada Award-2019 in New Delhi.

DETAILS:

- Secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry Amit Khare gave away the awards.
- Director General of All India Radio F. Sheheryar and Director General (News) Ms. Ira Joshi received the Award for All India Radio.
- Press Council of India, Press Information Bureau and BECIL were also mentioned during the award ceremony for their efforts during the Swachhta Pakhwada.

ABOUT SWACHHATA PAKHWADA:

- **Swachhata Pakhwada was started in April 2016** with the objective of bringing a fortnight of intense focus on the issues and practices of Swachhata by engaging GOI Ministries/Departments in their jurisdictions.

BAN ON IMPORT OF MILK PRODUCTS FROM CHINA EXTENDED

The government extended the ban on import of milk and milk products (including chocolates, chocolate products, candies/ confectionary/ food preparations with milk or milk solids as an ingredient) from China.

DETAILS:

- The order follows food regulator FSSAI's recommendation that the ban should be extended till laboratories at ports are "suitably upgraded" for testing presence of toxic chemical melamine.
- Melamine is a toxic chemical used for making plastics and fertilisers.
- The ban was first imposed in September 2008 and extended subsequently from time to time.
- The latest ban imposed by the government ended April 23, 2019.

ABOUT INDIA'S MILK PRODUCTION:

- India is the world's largest producer and consumer of milk.
- It produces around 150 million tonne milk annually.
- Uttar Pradesh is the leading state in milk production followed by Rajasthan and Gujarat.

NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY: 24 APRIL

The National Panchayati Raj Day is celebrated every year in India on 24th April.

DETAILS:

- The Constitution of India recognizes Panchayats as 'Institutions of self-government'.
- This day marks the passing of Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 that came into force with effect from 24 April 1993.
- The Amendment Act permits states to take steps to organize village panchayats and provide them with necessary powers and authority necessary to facilitate them to function as units of self-government.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL PANCHAYATI RAJ DAY:

- **The first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated in 2010.**
- The enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act had led a defining moment in the history of India which helped in the decentralization of political power to the grassroots level.
- **In turn, it had led to the institutionalization of Panchayati Raj (PR) through the village, Intermediate and District level Panchayats.**

ABOUT THE CONSTITUTION (73RD AMENDMENT) ACT, 1992:

- **The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force with effect from 24th April, 1993.**
- **It has vested constitutional status on Panchayati Raj institutions.**
- It marks a defining moment in the history of decentralization of political power to the grassroots level.
- The 73rd Amendment 1992 added a new Part IX to the constitution titled The Panchayats covering provisions from Article 243 to 243(O).
- A new Eleventh Schedule covering 29 subjects within the functions of the Panchayats.
- It implemented article 40 of DPSP which says that State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

NITI AAYOG AGREES TO ALLOW DENTISTS TO PRACTICE AS GENERAL PHYSICIANS

Government's think tank NITI Aayog has agreed to the proposal of the Dental Council of India which had sought to allow dentists to practice as general physicians after a bridge course.

- The proposal was in the backdrop of the call by the Prime Minister's office to explore unconventional methods to address the shortage of doctors in the country, particularly in rural areas.

PROPOSAL OF THE DENTAL COUNCIL OF INDIA:

- A bridge course of 3 years post Bachelor of Dental Science (BDS).
- The admission would be either through a common entrance exam or through cumulative marks secured in the BDS course, or even a combination.
- The syllabus curriculum, scheme of examination, method of evaluation, degrees and registration all these criteria will be the same as recommended for MBBS.

IMA'S OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSAL:

- **Indian Medical Association has vehemently opposed the proposal.**
- Stating the figures the IMA has said that 63,250 MBBS graduates come out of 494 medical colleges every year and India has only 23,729 post-graduate seats.
- Unemployment among medical graduates is a cause for concern and the **IMA has called the policy as flawed.**

23RD APRIL OBSERVED AS ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAY

Every year 23rd April is observed as English Language Day.

DETAILS:

- **23rd April was chosen as the English Language Day to commemorate both the birthday and date of death of William Shakespeare.**
- The English Language Day was the result of a 2010 initiative by the Department of Public Information which had sought to establish language days for each of the Organization's six official languages.

ABOUT UN LANGUAGES DAY:

- **The purpose of the UN's language days is to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six official languages throughout the Organization.**
- Under the initiative of UN Language Days, UN celebrates six separate days, each dedicated to one of the Organization's six official languages viz.
 - Arabic: 18 December
 - Chinese: 20 April
 - English: 23 April
 - French: 20 March
 - Russian: 6 June
 - Spanish: 23 April

GOOD TO KNOW:

- Language Days were instituted by the UN with an aim to entertain as well as inform, with the goal of increasing awareness and respect for the history, culture and achievements of each of the six working languages among the UN community.

INDONESIA RELEASES A STAMP ON THE THEME OF RAMAYANA

Indonesia has released a special commemorative stamp on the theme of Ramayana to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of its diplomatic ties with India.

ABOUT THE STAMP:

- **The stamp is designed by renowned Indonesian sculptor Padmashri Bapak Nyoman Nuarta.**
- **The stamp features a scene from Ramayana in which Jataayu valiantly fought to save Goddess Seeta.**
- **A specially signed version of the stamp will be on display at the Philately Museum in Jakarta.**

ABOUT THE INDIA-INDONESIA BILATERAL RELATIONS:

- **India and Indonesia have shared close cultural and commercial contacts spanning back to two millennia.**
- **The Hindu, Buddhist and later Muslim faith travelled to Indonesia from the shores of India.**
- **The Indonesian folk art and dramas portray great influence from the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata.**
- **The shared culture, colonial history and post-independence goals of political sovereignty, economic self-sufficiency and independent foreign policy had a unifying effect on the bilateral relations.**

- The foundation of the Non-Aligned Movement at the Asian-African Conference held in Bandung in 1955 and the adoption of India's 'Look East Policy' in 1991, provided avenues for rapid development of bilateral relations in political, security, defence, commercial and cultural fields.
- The diplomatic relations have further received uplift with the 'Act East Policy'.

WORLD BOOK DAY OBSERVED ON 23RD APRIL

23rd of April is observed as World Book Day by UNESCO and other related organisations every year.

DETAILS:

- **The city of Sharjah has been selected as the World Book Capital for the year 2019.**
- **World Book Day 2019 is the 24th edition** and the theme is centred around round celebrating literature and reading with a particular focus on enhancing and protecting indigenous languages.
- The theme is in line with the celebration of the International Year of the Indigenous Languages by the UN.

ABOUT THE WORLD BOOK DAY:

- Often also called the World Book and Copyright Day, it aims to promote the joy of books and the art of reading.
- World Book Day recognises that books are a link between the past and the future, a bridge between cultures and generations.
- **UNESCO chose 23rd April for the World Book Day to pay tribute to great literary figures including William Shakespeare, Miguel Cervantes and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega who died on this day and was finalised in the year 1995 in the UNESCO General Conference, held in Paris.**
- Further UNESCO and organisations representing publishers, booksellers and libraries select World Book Capital for a year to maintain the celebrations of books and reading.
- **For the year 2019, Sharjah, UAE has been declared as the World Book Capital.**
- **It will be preceded by Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in the year 2020.**

RBI SELLS ITS ENTIRE STAKE IN NABARD AND NHB

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has sold its entire stake in the National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD) and National Housing Bank for Rs 20 crore and Rs 1,450 crore respectively.

DETAILS:

- **The decision to divest its entire stake was taken based on the recommendations of the second Narasimham Committee.**
- The committee had stated that RBI could not own those entities which are regulated by it.
- **The Government now holds a 100 per cent stake in both NHB and NABARD.**

ONE MUST KNOW:

- Earlier in June 2018, the Government had bought out the entire 59.7 per cent stake in SBI from the Reserve Bank.
- The RBI in 2010 divested 71.5% of 72.5% of its shares in NABARD and the remaining were divested in February 2019.
- Similarly, RBI which held 100% in NHB, divested its stake on 19 March 2019.

RBI ASKS BANKS FOR THE DISCLOSURE OF IL&FS NPA DETAILS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks and financial institutions to disclose the non-performing assets (NPA) stemming from their exposure to troubled infrastructure conglomerate Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Limited (IL&FS) and its group entities in their upcoming results announcements.

DETAILS:

- **RBI said that the new directions are as per the order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), which asked banks not to declare their loans to the company and group as NPAs.**
- The banking regulator has, therefore, asked the lenders to disclose details such as the provisions required for such NPAs and also the actual provisions made, in their Notes to Accounts in the financial results.
- It has prescribed a disclosure format for this purpose.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **An account becomes non-performing if repayment is due for more than 90 days.**
- **Banks have to set aside capital as provisions for NPAs.**
- Banks and financial institutions have to disclose the information in a particular format as prescribed by the banking regulator.

ABOUT THE NCLAT'S ORDER:

- No financial institution will declare the accounts of Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Limited or its entities as NPA without prior permission of this Appellate Tribunal.

USA CRICKET TEAM HAS SECURED ODI STATUS FOR THE FIRST TIME

The United States Cricket Team has sealed the one-day international status for the first time with a third straight victory at the World Cricket League Division 2 event in Namibia.

DETAILS:

- **There will be 20 ODI nations after the end of the tournament, with the top four sides to join Scotland, the United Arab Emirates, Nepal and the Netherlands in having temporary status.**

- United States Cricket Team beat Hong Kong by 84 runs in the WCL Division 2 to attain one-day International (ODI) status.
- **Apart from USA, Oman has secured ODI status.**

KARNAM SEKAR APPOINTED AS THE NEW MD AND CEO OF IOB

Karnam Sekar, Dena Bank's former Managing Director, appointed as the new Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Indian Overseas Bank.

DETAILS:

- **Karnam Sekar would take up the position from July 1, 2019.**
- He has been working as an officer on special duty and Whole Time Director in IOB (Indian Overseas Bank) from April 1 till the time of taking over charge from R Subramaniakumar who was the erstwhile CEO and MD.
- R Subramaniakumar had initiated measures to uplift IOB from losses due to high Non-Performing Assets.

SEBI REDUCES MINIMUM SUBSCRIPTION REQUIREMENT FOR REITS

SEBI has reduced the minimum subscription requirement as well as defined trading lots for REITs and InvITs.

DETAILS:

- SEBI has come out with its guidelines titled "Guidelines for Determination of Allotment and Trading Lot Size for Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) and Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)"
- **For determining the allotment in an initial offer and follow on public offers, REITs have to offer their units in lots worth at least Rs 50,000 and in case of InvITs, the minimum value of a single lot should be Rs 1 lakh.**
- The allotment to any investor shall be made in the multiples of a lot.
- For initial listing in case of REITs and InvITs, a trading lot should be of 100 units and for follow on public offers, each lot shall consists of such number of units in its trading lot as it had at the time of initial offer.
- **Moreover, SEBI has also increased the leverage limit for InvITs from 49 per cent to 70 per cent.**

PU CHITRA WON GOLD AT THE ASIAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

PU Chitra won gold in women's 1500m at the Asian Athletics Championships in Doha.

DETAILS:

- With the victory Chitra also qualified for the World Championships, which will be held later this year.

- 23-year-old Chitra clocked 4:14.56s to become the first Indian athlete to defend her Asian Athletics Championships in the 2019 meet.
- Chitra had won the gold medal in the women's 1500m race in the 2017 Asian Athletics Championships held in Bhubaneswar.

OTHER DETAILS:

- Dutee Chand clinched the bronze medal in 200-metre sprint after clocking 23.24 seconds.
- **With her medal haul, India picked up four medals on the fourth and final day of the competitions, to end at fourth place in the medal tally.**
- **India bagged 17 medals overall, including 3 gold, 7 silver and 7 bronze medals.**
- **China tops the medal table of 2019 Asian Athletics Championships with 29 medals in total.**
- Bahrain (22 medals) and Japan (18 medals) secured second and third place respectively in medal table.

ABOUT THE 2019 ASIAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS:

- This is the 23rd edition of the Asian Athletics Championships.
- **It was hosted by the city of Doha in Qatar.**
- 43 nations participated in it from 21st to 24th April 2019.

RUSSIA SUCCESSFULLY TESTS WORLD'S FIRST FLOATING NPP

Russia has successfully tested the world's first floating nuclear power plant (NPP), Akademik Lomonosov.

DETAILS:

- Reactors of the floating atomic block were launched in November 2018.
- The tests confirmed the operational stability of the main and auxiliary equipment for the plant and it will be the world's first fully commercial operational floating nuclear power plant.
- All automatic process and control systems were tested successfully.

ABOUT AKADEMIK LOMONOSOV:

- Akademik Lomonosov was built at a shipyard in St. Petersburg since 2008 and was last summer towed around Scandinavia to Murmansk where the uranium fuel elements were loaded into the two reactors and testing now has been going on for nearly a year.
- **The plant will be towed out of Murmansk towards Pevek along the Northern Sea Route during the sailing season 2019.**
- Providing 70 MW electricity and 300 MW head, the Akademik Lomonosov will replace the existing Bilbino nuclear heat- and electricity plant in Pevek.

RBI APPROVES HDFC FOR HOLDING UP TO 9.9% STAKE IN BANDHAN BANK

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has given its in-principle approval to Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) Ltd. for acquiring 9.9 per cent stake in Bandhan Bank following the Gruh Finance deal.

DETAILS:

- **Gruh Finance, the affordable housing finance arm of HDFC Ltd, was taken over by Bandhan Bank in a share-swap deal in January.**
- After the deal was announced, HDFC made an application to the RBI for holding shares in Bandhan Bank.
- Recently RBI gave its approval to HDFC to acquire the shareholding of up to 9.9 per cent of the paid-up capital of Bandhan Bank upon the effective date of the scheme of amalgamation.
- The amalgamation scheme is awaiting approvals from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the respective shareholders of Gruh Finance and Bandhan Bank.
- The Gruh Finance deal will reduce the stake of Bandhan Financial Holdings Ltd. in Bandhan Bank to about 61% from the current 82%.
- The share swap ratio for the merger will be 568 shares of Bandhan Bank for every 1,000 shares of Gruh Finance.

INDUSIND BANK TO MERGE WITH BHARAT FINANCIAL INCLUSION

National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved merger of private sector lender IndusInd Bank with Bharat Financial Inclusion (BFIL), a microfinance company.

DETAILS:

- Last year, IndusInd Bank received 'No Objection' from Reserve Bank of India, National Stock Exchange and Bombay Stock Exchange.
- As per the report, the merger is expected to complete within 2-4 weeks.
- **Bharat Financial will become a subsidiary of IndusInd Bank.**

INDIA'S FIRST GREEN CAR LOAN LAUNCHED BY SBI

In a first of its kind move, India's largest bank State Bank of India (SBI) launched 'Green Car Loan' to encourage customers to buy electric vehicles (EVs) in the country.

DETAILS:

- **The interest rates on the loan will be 20 basis points (0.2 per cent) lower than SBI's existing auto loans.**
- Thus, the equated monthly instalment (EMI) per Rs 1 lakh will be lower at Rs 1,468 for 96 months (8 years) against Rs 1,622 for 84 months, based on the maximum tenor of existing schemes.
- **The scheme comes with the longest repayment period of up to 8 years.**
- The loan is offered with zero processing fee for the first 6 months of the launch.
- **SBI along with Wipro joined the Climate Group's EV100 initiative for enhancing the launch of electric vehicles worldwide.**

RANA DASGUPTA AWARDED RABINDRANATH TAGORE LITERARY PRIZE

Author Rana Dasgupta was awarded the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2019 for his 2010 novel 'Solo' which is a tale of estrangement and the ultimate failure of material existence.

DETAILS:

- **It is the second edition of the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize.**
- The Prize aims to revive poetry and books that can change lives.
- The prize consists of an amount of \$10,000, a Tagore statue and a certificate for contribution to literature is given to the awardee.

OTHER AWARDEES:

- **Yohei Sasakawa, the World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination was awarded for the category of social achievement.**
- He was recognized for his incredible efforts to uproot Leprosy and his great contribution to world peace.
- **Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen was awarded as a Beacon of Democracy.**

ABOUT THE TAGORE AWARDS:

- Tagore Prize is founded and launched with a strong vision to be a platform and a vehicle for improving and inspiring World Peace, Literature, Art and Education.
- The prizes promote the culture and beauty of literature just as Rabindranath Tagore had taught us to, but also, the culture and society of tolerance, harmony and non-discrimination.

ABOUT RABINDRANATH TAGORE:

- **Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali polymath, poet, musician, and artist from the Indian subcontinent.**
- He reshaped Bengali literature and music, as well as Indian art with Contextual Modernism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- **Author of the profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse of Gitanjali, he became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.**
- Tagore's poetic songs were viewed as spiritual and mercurial.
- He is sometimes referred to as the Bard of Bengal.
- **His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: India's Jana Gana Mana and Bangladesh's Amar Shonar Bangla.**
- The Sri Lankan national anthem was also inspired by his work.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS FIRST AIRLINE TO OPERATE A PLASTIC-FREE FLIGHT

The UAE's flag carrier Etihad Airways has become the first airline in the Gulf region to operate a flight EY484 without any single-use plastics on board, in a bid to raise awareness about pollution on Earth Day (April 22).

DETAILS:

- Etihad identified that over 95 single-use plastic products are used across its aircraft cabins.
- **As a result of planning the Earth Day flight EY484, Etihad additionally committed to remove up to 20% of the single-use plastic items on board by June 1.**
- The airline also announced that by the end of this year, Etihad will have removed 100 tonnes of single-use plastics from its inflight service.

AMIT PANGHAL WINS GOLD AT ASIAN BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Boxer Amit Panghal won gold medal at the Asian Boxing Championships in Bangkok.

DETAILS:

- India bagged one gold and two silver medals at the Asian Boxing Championships in Bangkok.
- **Boxer Amit Panghal picked up his second successive gold medal of the year, claiming the top honours in the 52-kilogram category.**
- Panghal defeated Korea's Kim Inkyu Korea.
- **National champion Deepak Singh and Kavinder Singh Bisht in 56 kg category signed off with silver medals after close losses.**
- Deepak lost to Mirzamedov of Uzbekistan while Bisht was also defeated by an Uzbek.

ABOUT THE ASIAN BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS:

- The Asian Amateur Boxing Championships is the highest competition for boxing amateurs in Asia.
- **The first tournament took place in 1963, hosted by Bangkok, Thailand.**

WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK IS OBSERVED FROM 24 TO 30 APRIL

World Immunization Week 2019 is being observed from 24-30 April.

DETAILS:

- **The 2019 theme is "Protected Together: Vaccines Work".**
- World Immunization Week aims to promote the use of vaccines to protect people of all ages against disease.
- Immunization saves millions of lives every year and is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful and cost-effective health interventions.

- **World Immunisation Week 2019 celebrates Vaccine Heroes from around the world** from parents and community members to health workers and innovators who help ensure that all are protected, at all ages, through the power of vaccines.

ABOUT THE WORLD IMMUNISATION WEEK:

- **World Immunization Week is a global public health campaign to raise awareness and increase rates of immunization against vaccine-preventable diseases around the world.**
- World Immunisation Week is observed by all member states of the World Health Organization.
- **Immunization Week was observed simultaneously for the first time in 2012**, with the participation of more than 180 countries and territories worldwide after the World Health Assembly endorsed World Immunization Week during its May 2012 meeting.
- Immunization can protect against 25 different infectious agents or diseases, from infancy to old age.
- This initiative plans to demonstrate the value of vaccines for the health of children, communities and the world.

ABHISHEK VERMA WINS GOLD AT ISSF WORLD CUP

Abhishek Verma has won the 10m Air Pistol gold medal at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup at Beijing, China.

DETAILS:

- He clinched the top spot with a total score of 242.7
- **His brilliant performance in the Shooting World Cup Final also secured a fifth Olympic quota for India.**
- Russia's Artem Chernousov took silver.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SHOOTING SPORT FEDERATION (ISSF):

- **ISSF is the governing body of the Olympic Shooting events in Rifle, Pistol and Shotgun disciplines, and of several non-Olympic Shooting sport events.**
- ISSF was founded in 1907.
- **It is headquartered in Munich, Germany.**
- The President of ISSF is Vladimir Lisin.

INDIAN ARMY SIGNS MOU WITH NHPC TO BUILD UNDERGROUND TUNNELS

Indian Army has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) Limited to build four underground tunnels.

DETAILS:

- The agreement is to build four underground tunnels along China and Pakistan borders for storage of ammunition and other war-related equipment.
- Three tunnels will be built along the Chinese border and one tunnel will be built along the Pakistan border.
- The tunnel can store 175-200 metric tonnes of ammunition and the cost of this pilot project is around Rs 15 crore.

ABOUT NATIONAL HYDROELECTRIC POWER CORPORATION LIMITED:

- **NHPC is an Indian Hydropower generation company.**
- It has an objective to plan, promote and organise an integrated and efficient development of hydroelectric power in all aspects.
- NHPC was founded in 1975.
- **It is headquartered at Faridabad, Haryana, India.**
- Balraj Joshi is the Chairman & MD of NHPC.

QATAR WILL ABOLISH ITS EXIT VISA SYSTEM FOR ALL FOREIGN WORKERS

UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) announced that Qatar will officially abolish its Exit Visa system for all foreign workers by the end of 2019.

DETAILS:

- **Amnesty International (human rights group) report accused that Qatar, which will be hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup was failing to implement reforms and stop widespread labour abuse.**
- As a result, Qatar revived its pledge to reform labour section, and introduced a minimum monthly wage of 750 riyals (\$206) and also agreed to work closely with ILO.

ONE MUST KNOW:

- **In September 2018, Qatar approved legislation to scrap "Kafala", and by October 2018 it went into force for all but 5% of a company's workforce (mostly senior positions).**
- By end of 2018 it was eliminated for majority of workers, and in 2019 it will be extended to all remaining categories of workers.

WHAT IS KAFALA SYSTEM?

- **It is a Sponsorship system which regulates the status of migrant workers.**
- **It is used to monitor migrant labourers, by requiring all unskilled laborers to have an in-country sponsor mostly their employer who is responsible for their visa and legal status.**
- **This tying of migrant workers' visas with employers leads to requiring the prior consent of their employer before changing jobs or leaving, which further leads to their exploitation.**

CHINA EXCLUDES BCIM ECONOMIC CORRIDOR ITS BRI UMBRELLA

India's decision to skip the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) may have led to the exclusion of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor from the list of projects covered by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) umbrella.

DETAILS:

- In an annex tagged with the Joint Communiqué of the Leaders' Roundtable of the BRF, the Chinese Foreign Ministry website has not listed the BCIM as a project covered by the BRI.
- BRI is the giant connectivity initiative spearheaded by China to revive the ancient Silk Road across Eurasia and Africa.
- The BRF was concluded in Beijing, China.
- Three major undertakings covering South Asia:
 - The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC)
 - The Nepal-China Trans-Himalayan Multi-dimensional Connectivity Network, including Nepal-China cross-border railway
 - The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

INDIA'S NON-PARTICIPATION IN BRF:

- India, for the second time, did not participate in the Belt and Road Forum (BRF), as the CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), citing sovereignty concerns.
- The 2,800-km BCIM corridor proposes to link Kunming in China's Yunnan province with Kolkata, passing through nodes such as Mandalay in Myanmar and Dhaka in Bangladesh before heading to Kolkata.

BAHRAIN TOPS MEDALS TALLY AT 23RD ASIAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Bahrain topped the medal tally with 11 Golds and a total of 22 medals followed by China with a total of 29 medals (9 Golds) and Japan with a total of 18 medals (5 Golds).

- India clinched the 4th spot with 3 Golds.
- India bagged 3 Golds, 7 Silver and 7 Bronze with a total of 17 medals.

ABOUT THE 2019 ASIAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS:

- The 2019 Asian Athletics Championships was the 23rd edition of the Asian Athletics Championships.
- The 4-day event was held at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha, Qatar.
- It was held from 21st April to 24th April 2019.

INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY OBSERVED: 29 APRIL

International Dance Day is observed all over the world on 29th of April.

DETAILS:

- **In 1982 the Dance Committee of ITI founded International Dance Day to celebrate the birthday of Jean-Georges Noverre, creator of modern ballet.**
- The intention of the International Dance Day is to celebrate dance, revel in the universality of this art form, cross all political, cultural and ethnic barriers and bring people together with a common language which is dance.

DOMINIC THIEM WINS THE BARCELONA OPEN 2019

Dominic Thiem clinched the Barcelona Open Banc Sabadell 2019 title held at Barcelona, Spain.

DETAILS:

- Barcelona Open was held from April 22 through April 28, 2019.
- Dominic Thiem scored 6-4, 6-0 in the finals.
- The Austrian became the fourth player in the past 15 years to lift the title in Barcelona, joining Rafael Nadal, Kei Nishikori, and Fernando Verdasco.
- **He's also the first Austrian winner at this event since Thomas Muster in 1996.**
- Thiem now has 13 ATP Tour titles, nine of which have come on clay.

GAGANDEEP KANG FIRST INDIAN WOMAN TO BE AWARDED FELLOWSHIP OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY

Gagandeep Kang becomes the first Indian woman scientist to be awarded the Fellowship of the Royal Society (FRS), United Kingdom.

ABOUT GAGANDEEP KANG:

- **Gagandeep Kang is a clinician-scientist.**
- **She is well known for her key role in the development of Rotavac.**
- She is currently appointed as the executive director of Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad, Haryana.

ABOUT ROTAVAC:

- **Rotavac is India's first indigenously developed vaccine for Rotavirus infections, which is responsible for childhood diarrhea.**
- It was developed by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech Limited and Pune-based Serum International.
- Rotavac was licensed for use in India in 2014 and is manufactured by Bharat Biotech International Limited.
- **Rotavirus vaccine is a vaccine used to protect against Rotavirus infections.**
- **Rotavirus is the leading cause of severe diarrhea among young children.**
- Rotavac is a live attenuated, monovalent vaccine containing a G9P[11] human strain isolated from an Indian child.

- It is given by mouth in a three-dose series, 4 weeks apart, beginning at 6 weeks of age up until 8 months of age.
- **The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that Rotavirus vaccine be included in national routine vaccinations programs.**

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY (FRS):

- **The award is sponsored by the Royal Society of London.**
- **It is the oldest scientific academy since 1663.**
- The award recognizes the individuals who made a substantial contribution to the improvement in fields of natural knowledge, including mathematics, engineering science and medical science.

BAJRANG PUNIA TO BE THE FIRST INDIAN WRESTLER TO FIGHT AT ICONIC MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

India's Bajrang Punia is the first Indian wrestler to be invited by the American wrestling body for a special fight at the iconic Madison Square Garden in New York, US.

DETAILS:

- He will be among other top wrestlers selected by the American governing body for the 6th May 2019 tournament.
- He will take on two-time US national champion Yianni Diakomahlis in "Grapple at the Garden" Beat the Streets fight night event, which has become a major showcase for international wrestling since 2010.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF BAJRANG PUNIA:

- **The 25-year-old, currently holds World No.1 title in 65-kg weight category freestyle wrestling.**
- **He has won eight gold medals from his earlier nine international tournaments including 2018's Commonwealth and Asian Games.**
- **He also registered only gold medal won by India in recently concluded Asian Wrestling Championships, in 65kg men's freestyle category.**