

## My Notes....

### NATIONAL

'Eye in the sky' launched

The Indian Space Research Organisation's (Isro's) PSLV-C38 rocket carrying Cartosat-2 and other satellites had a successful take off on 23 June 2017. The rocket blasted off from the first launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. This will be the seventeenth flight of PSLV in the 'XL' configuration (with the use of solid strap-on motors). This is the 40th flight of Isro's workhorse, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). The PSLV-C38 is carrying the 712-Kg Cartosat-2 series satellite for earth observation and 30 co-passenger satellites, together weighing about 243 Kg at lift-off, into a 505-Km Polar Sun Synchronous Orbit.

What does the Cartosat satellite do?

1. When Indian Army soldiers crossed the Line of Control last year to conduct surgical strikes against terrorists, they had help from an "eye in the sky".
2. Now, Isro is strengthening this capability with the launch of an earth observation satellite belonging to the Cartosat-2 series.
3. The mission's primary objective is to provide high-resolution, scene-specific spot imagery. This is similar in configuration to earlier satellites in the series.
4. The satellite, the seventh in the Cartosat series, is capable of along-track and across-track steering, up to 26 degrees nominally. This will allow it to provide images in continuous imaging mode.
5. Weighing 700 Kg, the satellite will be hurled into a Sun-Synchronous Orbit at a nominal altitude of 500 Km.
6. The project has been allocated Rs 160 crore and the satellite is expected to help in the preparation of high-resolution maps using pictures from the panchromatic camera loaded on it.
7. It will also have a high-resolution, multi-spectral instrument, which will help in high-resolution land observation and cartography, working in tandem with the panchromatic camera.
8. Apart from taking pictures, it can also record videos from the sky. The pictures and videos would be helpful in a wide range of activities, including military and civil planning.
9. The images from this satellite will be useful for cartographic applications, urban & rural applications, coastal land use & regulation, utility management like road network monitoring, water distribution, creation of land use maps, change detection to bring out geographical and man-made features, and various other land information system and geographical information system applications.
10. The future earth observation programme envisages the continuity of the thematic series of satellites — the Resourcesat, Cartosat, Oceansat, RISAT, and INSAT series for land, water, ocean, and meteorological satellites. It also envisages placing a geo-imaging satellite in geostationary orbit to enable near real-time imaging.

#### What

1. The co-passenger satellites comprise 30 nano satellites from India and 14 other countries — Austria, Belgium, Chile, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
2. The total weight of all the satellites carried onboard PSLV-C38 is about 955 Kg.
3. The 30 international customer nano satellites are being launched as part of commercial arrangements with Antrix Corporation Limited (Antrix), Isro's commercial arm.

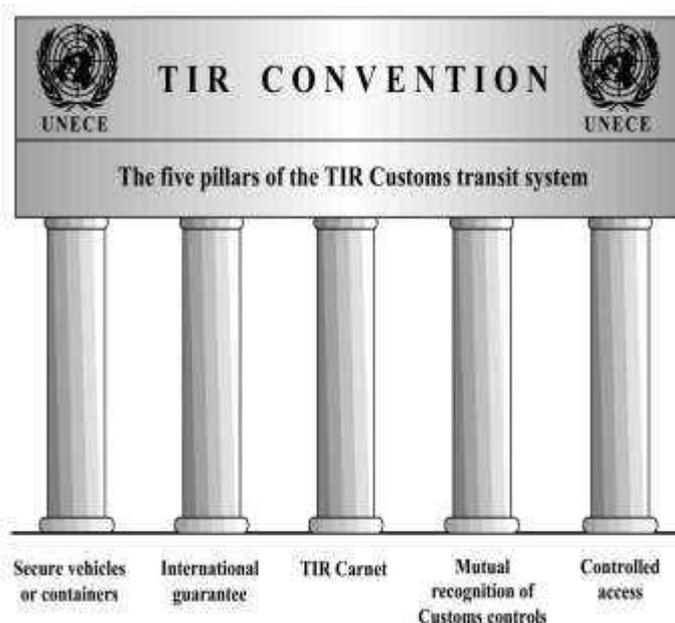
11. The overall aim is to maintain the continuity of services and carry out enhancements in technological capabilities with respect to sensors and payloads to meet operational applications.
12. In this regard, Isro plans to design, develop, and launch Cartosat-3 and Oceansat-3. In the future, Isro will also launch more satellites from the INSAT series for meteorological applications.
13. Cartosat-1, the first in the series of earth observation satellites, was launched on May 5, 2005, using the PSLV-C6 launch vehicle, followed by Cartosat-2 on January 10, 2007. The launch of more satellites will help the country to become self-reliant and reduce the cost of getting such images from external sources.

#### India ratifies TIR

India has become the 71st country to ratify the United Nations TIR Convention. It was managed and developed by IRU, the world road transport organisation, TIR is the global standard for goods customs transit. The milestone decision puts India and her neighbours at the centre of efforts to increase overland trade and regional integration across South Asia and beyond, **fast-tracking the region's potential** to become a strategic trade hub.

#### What

1. TIR will help India to integrate with Myanmar and Thailand as well as Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.
2. It will also enable India to move cargo along the International North-South Transport Corridor via Chabahar port in Iran, to access landlocked Afghanistan and the energy-rich Eurasian region.
3. The accession to the TIR Convention is part of **India's multi-modal** transport strategy that aims to integrate the economy with global and regional production networks through better connectivity.
4. TIR will be critical in helping India implement the **World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement**, which entered into force this year.
5. The Convention on International Transport of Goods Under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) is a multilateral treaty that was concluded at Geneva on 14 November 1975 to simplify and harmonise the administrative formalities of international road transport.
6. TIR stands for "Transports Internationaux Routiers" or "International Road Transports".



#### First building to get trademark

The iconic Taj Mahal Palace hotel in the city has acquired an 'image trademark', making it the first building in the country to get intellectual property rights protection for its architectural design. It will ensure that commercial use of the image of its dome and grand exterior can be made only with the consent of Taj Hotels Palaces Resorts Safaris.

What

1. The dome of the Taj Mahal Palace, which stands on the waterfront in south Mumbai, has long been **been** ‘triangulation point’ for the **Indian Navy** which guides its vessels to the harbour.
2. The distinctive red-tiled Florentine Gothic dome, which crowns the elegant Indo-Saracenic arches and architraves of the hotel, sits 240 feet above the street level.
3. The architects modeled it on the dome of the Victoria Terminus (now Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus). The hotel opened on December 16, 1903.
4. This hotel becomes among the first to get a registration of this kind in the country. The hotel has hosted many eminent personalities, including Neil Armstrong, John Lennon and Barack Obama.

Isro's GSAT-17 launches successfully

India's GSAT-17 communication satellite was launched successfully from the French Guiana on 29 June 2017. The **GSAT-17 became India's third communication** satellite to successfully reach orbit in the past two months. The satellite was launched in the early morning hours using the European Ariane 5 Launch Vehicle from Kourou, French Guiana.

What

1. The 3,477-Kg GSAT-17 carries communication payloads in C-band, extended C-band, and S-band for providing various services to the country.
2. The satellite also carries equipment for meteorological data relay and satellite-based search and rescue services.
3. After its lift-off and a flight lasting about 39 minutes, GSAT-17 separated from the Ariane 5 upper stage in an elliptical geosynchronous transfer orbit with a perigee (nearest point to Earth) of 249 Km and an apogee (farthest point to Earth) of 35,920 Km, inclined at an angle of 3 degree to the equator.
4. Isro's Master Control Facility at Hassan in Karnataka took over the command and control of GSAT-17 immediately after its separation from the launch vehicle.
5. In the coming days, orbit raising manoeuvres will be performed to place the satellite in geostationary orbit (36,000 Km above the equator) by using the **satellite's propulsion system in steps**.
6. During the final stages of its orbit-raising operations, the two solar arrays and both the antenna reflectors of the satellite will be deployed.
7. Following this, the satellite will be put in its final orbital configuration. The GSAT-17 will be positioned at its designated orbital slot in the geostationary orbit and will be co-located with some of the other operational Indian geostationary satellites. Subsequently, the communication payload of the satellite will be turned on.
8. GSAT-17 will be positioned at its designated orbital slot in the geostationary orbit and will be co-located with some of the Indian operational geostationary satellites.
9. Later, it is planned to turn on the communication payloads of the satellite. After the successful completion of all the in-orbit tests, GSAT-17 will be ready for operational use.

Resolution to create office on counter-terrorism

The UN General Assembly has approved the establishment of a new office to coordinate counter-terrorism efforts, **a move welcomed by India as a “much awaited first step” that will align the world body with needs of the global community in the fight against** the menace. The 193-member General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution on 16 June 2017 creating the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism that will be headed by an Under-Secretary-General.

What

1. India welcomed the creation of the new UN counter-terrorism office, saying it demonstrates the importance member states place on collective and coordinated action on terrorism, which remains the most complex threat faced by the international community.
2. India believes that the creation of the Office of Counter Terrorism Coordinator is a much awaited first step in our efforts to enhance coordination of the **UN's CT** (counter-terrorism) efforts.
3. The office should not only engage member states at a higher political level but also cooperate with other international organisations dealing with issues relating to terrorism for fulfilling its mandate effectively.
4. The Secretary-General expects the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre within the new Office of Counter-Terrorism to play a central role in the provision of enhanced capacity building assistance to Member States.
5. Under the new structure, the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office (CTITF) and the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), currently in the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) will be transferred to the new office, together with their existing staff and all associated regular and extra-budgetary resources.
6. The main functions of the new office would include enhancing coordination and coherence across the 38 Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force entities, strengthening the delivery of UN counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to Member States, improving visibility, advocacy and resource mobilisation for UN counter-terrorism efforts and ensuring that due priority is given to counterterrorism across the United Nations system and that the important work on preventing violent extremism is firmly rooted in the strategy.

India wins re-election to UN organ

India has been re-elected to the **UN's principal organ on economic, social and environmental issues** for another three-year term. India was among 18 nations to win election to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). India obtained 183 votes, the second highest after Japan in the Asia Pacific category. Election to fill the 18 vacancies in ECOSOC was held.

What

1. **India's** re-election to ECOSOC comes just a day after leading expert on international law Neeru Chadha won a crucial election to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), becoming the first Indian woman to be elected as judge to the tribunal. Chadha got 120 votes, the highest in the Asia Pacific group and was elected in the first round of voting itself.
2. India was seeking re-election to ECOSOC as its current term is set to expire this year. Pakistan, whose term on the Council is expiring this year, too was seeking re-election to the UN body but lost as it got only one vote.
3. Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, the nations elected members of ECOSOC for a three-year term beginning January 1, 2018 are Belarus, Ecuador,

#### Flashback

1. ECOSOC, one of the six main organs of the United Nations, is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.
2. **The Council's 54 member** Governments are elected by the General Assembly for overlapping three-year terms.
3. Seats on the Council are allotted based on geographical representation with fourteen allocated to African States, eleven to Asian States, six to Eastern European States, ten to Latin American and Caribbean States, and thirteen to Western European and other States.

El Salvador, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Japan, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Spain, Sudan, Togo, Turkey and Uruguay.

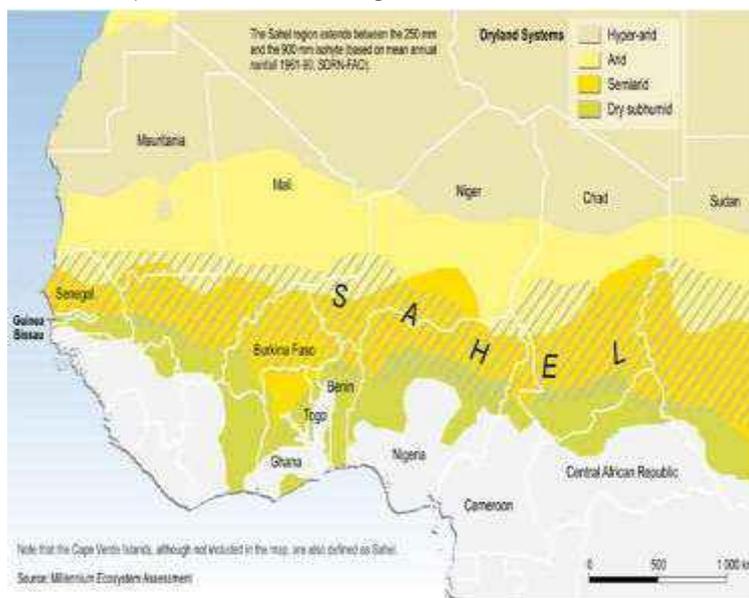
- France, Germany, Ghana, Ireland and Japan were among nations seeking re-election

#### UN resolution on Sahel force

France and the United States said on 21 June 2017 they reached agreement on a UN resolution that welcomes the deployment of a 5,000-strong force from five countries in **Africa's vast Sahel region to fight the growing threat from extremists**. The final draft, obtained by The Associated Press, eliminates several provisions that the United States **opposed: It now can't be militarily enforced; it doesn't authorize the deployment; and it doesn't ask the UN secretary-general to come up with options for financing the force.**

#### What

- The Security Council scheduled a vote on 21 June 2017, and with the US on board it is expected to be adopted unanimously. **France's UN Ambassador Francois Delattre called the resolution "a very important step forward since it will be the first resolution ever on this force."**
- France drafted the resolution in response to a request from the African Union and the five Sahel countries - Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Chad\_ which had already agreed to the deployment.
- This resolution will send a very strong signal that the Security Council is united and firm against terrorism in the Sahel and in its support of the force that is more than ever needed in this region.
- The final draft "welcomes the deployment" of the five-nation force "with a view to restoring peace and security in the Sahel region," and urges the countries to continue efforts toward its "sustainable, viable and effective operationalization."**
- The original text called for UN authorization of the force and opened the door to possible UN financing at a time that the Trump administration is trying to cut \$1 billion from the budget funding the UN's far-flung peacekeeping operations for the year starting July 1.



#### India's first water metro

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has dedicated the first phase of Kochi Metro to the nation. Addressing a gathering at the inaugural event's venue in Kaloor, Modi highlighted features of **Kerala's first metro rail network which made it unique**.

#### What

- Kochi Metro is the first metro project commissioned with Communication-Based Train Controlling Signalling System.
- The Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) has provided jobs for about 1,000 women and 23 trans-genders.
- The project is also an example of environment-friendly development. It plans to meet nearly 25% of the entire energy requirements from renewable sources, particularly solar energy. The long-term plan is to become a zero-carbon emitting urban transit system.

4. Kochi will be the first Indian city to have a 'water metro' which will be the feeder service to the rail metro. That's what will make it India's first integrated multi-model transport system.
5. It will be the country's first government agency to hire transgender people; 23 are expected to be on duty for the inaugural run.
6. This new metro will be India's first to extensively use solar panels. As many as 22 stations on the final 25-km full stretch of the rail line will have solar panels.

#### ILC 2017

The 106th Session of International Labour Conference (ILC) was held from 5-16th June 2017. An Indian Tripartite Delegation led by the Minister of State for Labour and Employment (Independent Charge), Shri Bandaru Dattatreya participated in the ILC.

#### What

1. In a historic step towards eradication of Child Labour from the country, India ratified International Labour Organizations Convention No 138 (minimum age for employment) and Convention No 182 (worst forms of child labour) to symbolise its commitment and initiatives for eradication of child labour and attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 related with curbing of child labour.
2. The ratification of both conventions coincided with the International Day against Child Labour **expressing country's commitment along with global partners to fight the menace of child labour and providing the childhood back to them.**
3. With ratification of these two core ILO conventions, India has ratified 6 out of 8 core ILO conventions, with the other 4 core ILO conventions relating to abolition of forced labour, equal remuneration and no discrimination between men and women in employment and occupation, thus reaffirming its commitment for promoting and realizing fundamental principles and right at work. This action is **in sync with the Government's broader intent for social equality and growth for all.**

#### 4th and 5th ODF States in the country

Under the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G), rural Uttarakhand and rural Haryana have declared themselves as the 4th and 5th Open Defecation Free (ODF) States of India. The two joined the league of Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, which were the first three states to be declared ODF. Nationally, the sanitation coverage has increased from 42% to over 64% in just two and a half years since the launch of SBM.

#### What

1. Uttarakhand has 13 districts, 95 blocks, 7256 gram panchayats and 15751 villages while Haryana has 21 districts, 124 blocks, and 6083 gram panchayats - all of which have declared themselves as ODF in formal declarations in Dehradun and Chandigarh, respectively.
2. **It has become a true people's movement. People of Uttarakhand and Haryana, the government officials and representatives of other institutions have contributed towards this milestone."**
3. With the total number of ODF States now rising to 5, more than 2 Lakh villages and 147 districts have also been declared ODF across the country.

#### First air cargo corridor

An aircraft packed with 60 tons of Afghan plants with medicinal uses marked the opening of the first air cargo corridor between Afghanistan and India on 19 June 2017. The cargo, worth about \$5 million dollars, was the first in what officials from the two countries hope will be many flights allowing Afghan and Indian companies to bypass Pakistan, which strictly limits the shipment of goods by land between India and Afghanistan and is often involved in border disputes with them.

#### What

1. The cargo service aims to improve landlocked Afghanistan's links to markets abroad and boost the growth prospects of its agricultural and carpet industries while it battles a deadly Taliban insurgency.
2. There are bound to be some teething problems in any major initiatives such as this but my embassy and my government is committed to working together with your team to resolve all issues that may pop up from time to time.
3. Afghanistan depends on the Pakistani port of Karachi for its foreign trade. It is allowed to send a limited amount of goods overland through Pakistan into India, but imports from India are not allowed along this route.
4. Border crossings are often closed as Afghan and Pakistani forces clash over the disputed border, and Afghan farmers have complained of fruit and other produce rotting without other options for shipping.

#### India top supplier in health to UN in 2016

India was the main supplier in the health sector to the UN system in 2016 with total sales of over USD 800 million, including in pharmaceuticals. According to the total procurement of goods and services for operational activities of the UN system, India maintains its position as the second largest country to supply the UN in 2016, as has been the case since 2012.

#### What

1. India, a top ten supplier country since 2000, supplied six per cent of procurements by UN organisations in 2016, the second highest after the US.
2. The UN procured USD 902 million worth of goods from India last year, making it the top provider, ahead of the US, in this category. India supplied USD 162 million worth of services to the UN system.
3. The decrease in procurement can be attributed to a decrease in pharmaceuticals, which explains 97 per cent of the drop.
4. Procurement from India also included food, management services and medical equipment and supplies. Goods and services from India were procured primarily by the **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)**, the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP).
5. The 10 major countries supplying UN organisations included three developing countries (India, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey) in 2016, with a joint procurement of USD 2.58 billion, accounting for 32.7 per cent of the top ten countries total procurement.
6. The three countries procurement represented 14.6 per cent of the UN total procurement, which is a decrease from last year when there were 4 developing and least developed countries in the top ten, accounting for 18.0 per cent of total UN procurement.

#### 1st country to give to UN Tax Fund contribution

India has contributed \$100,000 to a UN fund to help developing countries actively participate in the discussion of tax issues, becoming the first country to make the contribution. The UN Trust Fund for International Cooperation in Tax Matters (the UN Tax Fund) received its first financial voluntary contribution from India, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Office for Financing for Development Office announced.

#### What

1. The UN Tax Trust Fund aims to support the work of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (the UN Tax Committee).
2. Voluntary contributions for the fund have been called for by the UN and the committee since its establishment in 2006.
3. The call for contributions was also emphasised in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted at the third International Conference on Financing for Development in 2015, the UN department said.

4. India became the first country to respond to the call with an initial contribution of USD 100,000 that will be dedicated towards ensuring greater support for developing countries' participation in the sub-committee meetings of the UN Tax Committee, which are currently unfunded.
5. Through the fund, the UN expects that more developing countries will draw upon the best practice of other bodies, ensuring that global tax cooperation norms and rules will work more effectively and efficiently for all countries and all stakeholders.
6. The UN Tax Committee, a subsidiary body of the UN Economic and Social Council (ESOSOC), has provided guidance on current issues such as double taxation treaties, transfer pricing (profit shifting) taxation of the extractive industries and taxation of services.
7. The committee also provides a framework for dialogues with a view to enhancing and promoting international tax cooperation among national tax authorities, while making recommendations on capacity-building and the provision of technical assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
8. The Addis Agenda provides a global framework to ensure the effective mobilisation of resources at the national and international level for sustainable development.
9. Implementation of the Addis Agenda supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the historic and transformational agenda that countries unanimously adopted in 2015.

#### F-16 make in India

Tata Advanced Systems Ltd and US plane maker Lockheed Martin Corp. have signed an agreement to produce F-16 fighters in India **ahead of the government's plan** to buy more fighter jets. India is likely to need 200 more fighter planes and has sought proposals for single-engine craft. F-16 production in India supports thousands of Lockheed Martin and F-16 supplier jobs in the US, creates new manufacturing jobs in India, and positions Indian industry at the centre of the most extensive fighter aircraft supply ecosystem in the world, said a joint statement on 19 June 2017 by Tata and Lockheed at the Paris Air Show.

#### What

1. This unprecedented **F-16 production partnership between the world's largest defence contractor and India's premier industrial house provides India** the opportunity to produce, operate and export F-16 Block 70 aircraft, the newest and most advanced **version of the world's most successful, combat-proven multi-role fighter**.
2. India will also have the chance to export the F-16, which is flown by air forces around the world, the joint statement said. Some 3,200 of these planes are being flown by 26 countries.
3. Tata is already building airframe components for the C-130 military transport aircraft.
4. This agreement builds on the already established joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Tata and underscores the relationship and commitment between the two companies.
5. **Sweden's Saab is the other contender to supply the Indian Air Force**, offering to make its Gripen fighter in India. It has not yet announced a local partner for the plane, which it has pitched as a modern alternative to the F-16s.
6. Saab has also promised to build what it calls a world-class fighter jet facility in India if it wins the order. It also did not offer any immediate comments on the subject on Monday evening.
7. The Adani Group entered the defence business in 2015. It has a Israeli joint venture called Adani-Elbit Advanced Systems India Ltd.

- Anil Ambani-led Reliance Group has already formed a joint venture firm with Dassault Aviation SA of France for the manufacture of the 36 Rafale aircraft that India ordered for \$8 billion during Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's** trip to France in 2015.

#### ISRO made Satellite-based chip systems

Satellite-based chip systems will now alert road users at unmanned level crossings about approaching trains and also help in tracking train movement on a real-time basis. On a pilot basis, the Mumbai and Guwahati Rajdhani trains will be equipped with this system. Road users will be warned by hooters once a train approaches an unmanned level crossing as railways are installing ISRO-developed integrated circuit (IC) chips on locomotives of trains. There will be hooters at 20 unmanned level crossings on Rajdhani routes for Guwahati and Mumbai.

#### What

- The hooter will be louder as the level crossing nears, and finally it will be silent after the train passes by. Besides alerting road users, the satellite-based system will also be used for tracking trains for disseminating information about their movement on real time basis. This will be of great help to passengers as currently train movements are tracked manually.
- Safety at unmanned level crossings is a cause of serious concern for railways and the public transporter is exploring various ways to address the issue.
- There are about 10,000 unmanned railway crossings in the country which account for around 40 per cent of accidents involving the railways.
- The satellite-based system will also help railways in mapping the area and the technology will come in handy at the time of accidents when it can be used to ascertain the exact location of trains and topography.

#### Aadhaar not valid for travel to Nepal, Bhutan

Aadhaar is not a valid identification document for Indians travelling to Nepal and Bhutan, the Home Ministry has said. Indians can travel to Nepal and Bhutan—both countries for which **they don't need visas**—if they possess a valid national passport or election ID card issued by the Election Commission. Moreover, to ease travel, persons over 65 and below 15 years can show documents with photographs to confirm their age and identity. These include PAN card, driving licence, and Central Government Health Service (CGHS) card and ration card but not Aadhaar. Aadhaar (UID) card is not an acceptable travel document for travel to Nepal/Bhutan, a communique issued by the ministry said.

#### What

- The advisory assumes significance as Aadhaar is mandatory for a host of things, including government subsidies on LPG and other social welfare schemes.
- The Aadhaar card, which has a 12—digit unique identification number and personal details like name and address, acts as a proof of identification and residence.
- Indians **entering Bhutan by road are required to obtain an 'Entry Permit' on the** basis of a valid travel document from the immigration office of Royal Government of Bhutan at Phuentsholing, located on the Indo—Bhutan border opposite Jaigaon, West Bengal.
- The border with Nepal is an open one with people who enter the country needing to show any valid identity card.
- Nepal shares borders with five Indian states—Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Around six lakh Indians are living or domiciled in Nepal.
- Bhutan, which shares borders with Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal, has about 60,000 Indian nationals, employed mostly in the hydroelectric power and construction industry. In addition, between 8,000 and 10,000 daily workers enter and exit Bhutan everyday in border towns.

7. In another development, Indians flying abroad will not be required to fill departure cards from next month.
8. It has been decided to discontinue the practice of filling up of the departure card by Indians at all international airports with effect from July 1, 2017.

#### Amendments in the Legal Metrology Rules, 2011

Use of proper, accurate and standard weights and measures are very important for effective functioning of any economy, as it plays an indispensable role in consumer protection as protection from malpractices of under-weight or under-measurement, is an important function of the Government. The Legal Metrology (packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 are framed to regulate the pre-packaged commodities. Under these rules, the pre-packaged commodities have to comply with certain mandatory labelling requirements. Based on the experience of implementation of the Rules and after a detailed stakeholder consultation, the Department has amended the rules, aimed at enhanced consumer protection, but at the same time balancing with the requirement of ease of doing business.

Some of the salient features of the amendments are as below:

1. Goods displayed by the seller on e-commerce platform shall contain declarations required under the Rules like name & Address of the manufacturer, packer and importer, name of the commodity, net content, retail sale price, consumer care complaint, dimension etc.
2. Specific mention is made in the rules that no person shall declare different MRPs (dual MRP) on an identical pre-packaged commodity, unless allowed under any law. This will benefit consumers at large as they are having complaint regarding dual MRP for item depending upon different type of public places like Cinema Hall, Airport, Malls etc.
3. Size of letters and numerals for making declaration is increased, so that consumer can easily read the same.
4. The net quantity checking is made more scientific, with introduction of e-coding.
5. Bar Code/QR Coding is allowed on voluntarily basis.
6. Provisions regarding declarations on Food Products have been harmonized with labelling regulations under the Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006.
7. Medical devices which are declared as drugs, Medical Devices such as stent, valve, orthopaedic implants, syringe, Tools for operations etc. Consumers at large were facing difficulty as prices of devices were sold according to the paying capacity of the consumer. Even after capping of MRP many companies were not displaying. Also there are important declarations other than MRP that need to be displayed, are brought into the purview of declarations to be made under the rules.
8. The definition of Institutional Consumer has been changed to prevent any scope for commercial transactions/retail sale of commodities sourced by the institution for their own use.
9. The rules shall come in to force with effect from 1st January, 2018.

#### Army gets first bullet-proof helmets

The Indian Army has reportedly received its first batch of bullet-proof helmets from Kanpur-based MKU Industries which was awarded a contract to manufacture 1.58 lakh helmets at the cost of Rs 180 crore. According to a report, MKU claims that the bullet-proof helmets go through rigorous quality tests and ballistic lab test conducted at **the company's testing facilities in India as well** as in Germany. The new helmets are reportedly designed to bear the impact of 9 mm ammunition fired from a short range.

What

1. In March this year, government think-tank NITI Aayog had prepared a draft **note on 'incentivising' domestic manufacturing of light weight body armours** for the army and para-military forces.
2. **The Prime Minister's Office (PMO)** had reportedly asked NITI Aayog to prepare a roadmap on the possibility of encouraging production of home-made light weight body armours.

3. As of now, besides MKU, Tata Advanced Materials exports body armour to armed forces around the world including United Kingdom, Germany and Spain.
4. **PTI reports that as per estimates, there's a requirement of over 50,000 bullet proof kits for the police force in the country.**

#### National Biopharma Mission

The first ever Industry-Academia mission to accelerate biopharmaceutical development in India will be formally launched by the Cabinet Minister for Science and Technology, Earth Sciences, Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan in New Delhi on 30th June 2017. The program named Innovate in India (i3) will witness an investment of USD 250 million with USD 125 million as a loan from World Bank and is anticipated to be a game changer for the Indian Biopharmaceutical industry. It aspires to create an enabling ecosystem to promote entrepreneurship and indigenous manufacturing in the sector.

#### What

1. India has been an active player in the pharmaceutical industry and has contributed globally towards making life saving drugs and low cost pharmaceutical products accessible and affordable for those in need. Be it the Rotavirus vaccine, heart valve prosthesis or affordable insulin, India has been a forerunner in these and many more.
2. There was an immediate need felt to focus on consolidated efforts to promote product discovery, translational research and early stage manufacturing in the country to ensure inclusive innovation.
3. i3 is committed to addressing these gaps with a Mission to make India a hub for design and development of novel, affordable and effective biopharmaceutical products and solutions.
4. **The aim of the Mission is to “Enable and nurture an ecosystem for preparing India’s technological and product development capabilities in biopharmaceuticals to a level that will be globally competitive over the next decade, and transform the health standards of India’s population through affordable product development.**
5. As a flagship program of the Government of India in collaboration with World Bank, it promises to boost the growth curve for domestic biopharma in India by accelerating the translation of research concepts into viable products, supporting clinical validation, enabling sustainable networks for collaboration between industry and academia, and supporting entrepreneurial ecosystem amongst many others.
6. Currently India has only 2.8% share in the global biopharmaceutical market, the program would elevate this to 5% resulting in an additional business opportunity of 16 Billion USD.
7. The Mission will provide a holistic and integrated approach to strengthen and support the entire product development value chain for accelerating the research leads to product development.
8. This will help not only in immediate product development addressing public health needs, but will also help to create an ecosystem which will facilitate development of a continuous pipeline of products.
9. The Mission to be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a Public Sector Undertaking of Department of Biotechnology will bring together expertise from national and international corridors to provide strategic guidance and direction to move promising solutions through the product development value chain.
10. The program thereby stands unique in its approach as it becomes a cradle to innovate, co-create and co-facilitate scientific discoveries and offers young entrepreneurs an avenue to engage with the best in the industry.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Cuba deal cancelled

US President Donald Trump has cancelled his predecessor Barack Obama's **"one-sided" Cuba deal** that favoured a detente and put the two Cold War-era rivals on collision course again by vowing to take strong measures against the Raul Castro regime's "military monopoly".

What

1. **Cuba's government criticised the new restrictions on ties with the US** that were announced by Trump, but reiterated its willingness to hold a "respectful dialogue" with Washington.
2. Obama had announced in December 2014 that he and Castro were restoring ties and less than a year later, the US Embassy in Havana re-opened with Obama making a historic visit to Havana in 2016.
3. Trump asserted that the US will take concrete steps to ensure that investments flow directly to the people so they can open private businesses and begin to **build their country's "great, great future, a country of great potential."**
4. The Castro regime has shipped arms to North Korea and fuelled chaos in Venezuela. While imprisoning innocents, it has harboured cop killers, hijackers and terrorists. It has supported human trafficking, forced labour and exploitation **all around the globe,"** Trump alleged.

### EU-India Environment Forum

India and the European Union on 30 June 2017 agreed to strengthen cooperation in the areas of environment, resource efficiency and, circular economy **under the EU's Resource Efficiency Initiative (EU-REI) for India.** At the eighth EU-India Environment Forum, **hosted in New Delhi, the necessity of moving to a resource efficient 'circular economy' wherein waste is reduced, or becomes useful input in others, or renewable inputs** replace non-renewable ones, was discussed.

What

1. The Resource Efficiency Initiative (REI) project will be implemented on behalf of the European Union by a consortium led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Confederation of the Indian Industry (CII) and Adelphi.
2. **The project objectives includes assessment of India's current and future use of resources** and to develop a resource efficiency strategy for India in four sectors – mobility, buildings and construction, renewable energy, and plastic and e-waste management.
3. The project also aims to foster business partnerships for knowledge and technology transfer between European and Indian industry, and raise awareness of best practices in resource efficiency among businesses, the general public, and government and non-government organisations.

### India and Portugal Sign historical agreement

A Protocol of Cooperation was signed between the National Archives of India and the Minister of Culture of the Portuguese Republic in the field of archives on 17th May, 2017 in Lisbon, Portugal. As a first step under this agreement, the Torre do Tombo (National Archives of Portugal) handed over to the National Archives of India digital copies of 62 volumes of the collection known as **'Moncoes do Reino' (Monsoon correspondence).**

What

1. These volumes were originally part of over 456 volumes that cover the period from 1568 to 1914 and form the largest of all record collections in the Goa State Archives. The collection consists of direct correspondence from Lisbon to Goa and is important primary source for the study of the Portuguese expansion in Asia, their trade rivalries with the Arabs and European powers and their relations with neighbouring Kings in South Asia and East Asia.

- In 1777, these 62 volumes, consisting of over 12,000 documents, pertaining to the period from 1605 to 1651 were shifted from Goa to Lisbon where these were **subsequently printed in under the title 'Documentos Remetidos da India'(Documents sent from India)** by the Academy of Science at Lisbon between 1880 and 1893. The original volumes had remained in Lisbon ever since.

#### Switzerland ratifies AEOI with India

Switzerland on 16 June 2017 ratified automatic exchange of financial account information with India and 40 other jurisdictions to facilitate immediate sharing of details about suspected black money, even as it sought strict adherence to confidentiality and data security. Adopting the dispatch on introduction of the AEOI, a global convention for automatic information exchange on tax matters, the Swiss Federal Council said the implementation is planned for 2018 and the first set of data should be exchanged in 2019.

#### What

- The council, which is the top governing body of the European nation, will soon notify the Indian government about the exact date from which the automatic exchange would begin.
- According to, the draft notification approved by the Council in its meeting on 16 June 2017, the decision is not subject to any referendum — which means there should be no further procedural delay in its implementation.
- The issue of black money has been a matter of great debate in India and Switzerland has been long perceived as one of the safest havens for the illicit wealth allegedly stashed abroad by Indians.
- The council said the proposal to introduce AEOI with India and others "met with widespread approval from the interested parties who voiced their opinions in the consultations".
- The AEOI will be activated with each individual state or territory by means of a specific federal decree within the framework of this dispatch.
- The exchange of information itself will be carried out based on the Multilateral Competent Authority Agreement (MCAA) on the Automatic Exchange of Financial Account Information, which is in turn based on the international standard for the exchange of information developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- The council said it will prepare a situation report before the first exchange of data, which is planned for autumn 2019.
- It is important for the Federal Council that a level playing field be created among states and that all major financial centres, in particular, be included.
- This year, Switzerland has introduced the AEOI with 38 states and territories, including all EU member states and data will start to be exchanged with them in 2018.

#### Amendment of the SSA

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved Amendment of the bilateral Social Security Agreement (SSA) between India and the Netherlands **by incorporating the "Country of Residence" Principle into the said SSA**. The amended SSA between India and the Netherlands, when operational from the third month from the date of notifying the said Amendment to the Netherlands by India, will strengthen the ties between the two countries, and continue to favourably impact the profitability and competitive position of Indian and Dutch companies with foreign operations in either country by reducing their cost of doing business abroad. The SSA will also help promote more investment flows between the two countries.

#### What

- The SSA has been in successful operation since June 2010 and has benefitted Indian expatriates who have been working in the Netherlands.
- Beginning 1st January 2013, the Netherlands introduced new rules on export of social security benefits to countries outside the European Union.

3. Under the new Social Security (Country of Residence) Act, the amount of benefit or allowance paid to a qualified beneficiary (read as Dutch national) is adjusted to the cost of living of the country where the beneficiary is currently residing.
4. As per the new Dutch legislation, social security benefits when exported or remitted would be indexed to the cost of living of the host country (as reflected in the World Bank figures), where the Dutch citizen resides.
5. The new Dutch legislation, in ordinary circumstances, has no implications for the Indian worker working in the Netherlands because it is applicable only to Dutch nationals residing outside the EU except for a very few exceptional cases.

#### Background

1. A bilateral Social Security Agreement, (SSA) was signed between India and the Netherlands on 22nd October 2009 and came into force on 15th June 2010.
2. The SSA allows exemption from double contribution to the social security system in both jurisdictions, exportability of accumulated social security benefits across jurisdictions (applicable even to the self-employed), and totalization of serving periods.
3. Beginning 1st January 2013, new social security legislation came into force in the Netherlands, consequent to which the Netherlands began to apply the "country of residence" principle on certain social security benefits exported to other countries.
4. The principle sought, is to bring in equity in exportability of social benefits to the class of Dutch citizens who reside outside the Netherlands.
5. As on date, India has signed and operationalized SSAs with 18 countries – Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland and South Korea.

6. The Indian posted workers would largely continue to get benefits as per the existing India-Netherlands Social Security Agreement.

#### **NSG postpones decision on India's membership**

A plenary meeting of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) has failed to take a decision on **India's application for its membership**, but decided to discuss in November the issue of entry of non-Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signatories. China, a key member of the NSG, has been stridently opposing **India's bid primarily on the grounds that New Delhi is not a signatory to the NPT. Its opposition has made India's entry into the grouping difficult as the NSG works on the principle of consensus.**

What

1. The NSG had discussions on the issue of technical, legal and political aspects of the participation of non-NPT states in the NSG.
2. The group decided to continue its discussion and noted the intention of the chair to organise an informal meeting in November, the NSG said in a statement at the end of the two- day plenary meeting in Swiss capital Bern.
3. The 48-nation elite grouping said its relationship with India was discussed, particularly about implementation of the 2008 statement on civil nuclear cooperation with New Delhi.
4. In 2008, the NSG had agreed to grant India a unique waiver from its rules governing civilian nuclear trade, paving the way for the landmark Indo-US nuclear deal.

5. At the plenary meeting, the NSG also continued to consider all aspects of the implementation of the 2008 statement on civil nuclear cooperation with India and discussed the NSG relationship with India, the statement said.
6. **After India's application for entry into this elite group which controls nuclear trade, Pakistan, China's "all-weather ally", too had applied with the tacit backing of Beijing.**
7. **The plenary also discussed the NSG's policies regarding transparency and confidentiality besides deliberating on exchange of information and best practices on licensing and enforcement.**
8. The NSG plenary invited all nuclear supplier states to express their responsible approach to nuclear exports by adhering to the NSG guidelines.

### World's most powerful submarine detector

Chinese scientists have claimed a major breakthrough in magnetic detection technology which could find hidden metallic objects, including minerals and submarines.

What

1. The device, which works from the air, could be used to pinpoint the location of minerals buried deep beneath the earth in Inner Mongolia, for example, with a level of precision as high as anything currently available around the world, the experts were quoted as saying by the report.
2. The device could also be used on civilian and military aircraft as a "high-performance equipment and technical solution to resources mapping, civil engineering, archaeology and national defence.
3. The technology could be used to detect minerals on land, and in the ocean to nail down submarines.

India backs UN resolution

India has voted against the UK to back of a UN General Assembly resolution seeking the International Court of Justice's opinion on the decades-long dispute between Britain and Mauritius over an island in the Indian Ocean. In a diplomatic blow to Britain, the General Assembly voted by 94 to 15 to ask The Hague-based court to examine the legal status of the Chagos Archipelago, which Mauritius maintains, is part of its territory that has been unlawfully claimed by the UK since 1965.

What

1. Britain cut off the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 before granting it independence in 1968.
2. India was among the nations voting in favour of the resolution proposed by Mauritius and co-sponsored by the Group of African States.
3. The 193-member General Assembly that the Chagos Archipelago has been part of his country since at least the 18th century, when France had governed it.
4. The entire territory had been ceded to the United Kingdom in 1810, and kept intact until the unlawful excision of the Chagos Archipelago in November 1965.
5. A vote for the draft resolution is a vote in support of completing the process of decolonisation, respect for international law and the rule of law.
6. **The archipelago's biggest island Diego Garcia** is the site of a major British-American military base that is still in operation and served as a key US base during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.
7. The US voted against the draft resolution saying it was an attempt to **circumvent the ICJ's lack of jurisdiction over a bilateral issue in which one of the parties had not consented to the submission.**

China passes tough new intelligence law

China's legislature passed a new national intelligence law on 27 June 2017 after an unusually brief round of discussions, granting authorities new powers to monitor suspects, raid premises, seize vehicles and devices and operate overseas. President Xi Jinping has overseen a raft of legislation to bolster national security against perceived threats from both within and outside China. The government gained new powers with a

national security law passed in 2014, followed by measures on counter-terrorism, the management of foreign non-government bodies and cyber security, among other subjects.

What

1. On 27 June 2017, the **standing committee of the National People's Congress** (NPC) passed the law, the largely rubber stamp body said in a short statement on its website. The law will go into effect on 28 June 2017.
2. A draft was released for one round of public consultation that lasted three weeks. Laws are often subject to at least two rounds of consultation, or more if controversial.
3. The legislation was also passed after only two rounds of discussion by **parliament's standing committee. Laws often go through three or more rounds.**
4. Intelligence work needs to be performed both within and outside China, and foreign groups and individuals who damage national security must be investigated, according to the **law, which was also carried on parliament's website.**
5. The law will give authorities new legal grounds to monitor and investigate foreign and domestic individuals and bodies in order to protect national security. Chinese activists have said they fear intensified state surveillance.
6. The law says authorities will also be able to propose customs and border **inspections or "quarantine", as well as "administrative detention" of up to 15 days** for those who obstruct their work or leak related state secrets.

First in Africa to get latest AIDS drug

Kenya is the first African country to start using a generic version of the latest AIDS drug that can improve and prolong the lives of tens of thousands of people who suffer severe side effects and resistance to other treatments. A generic of Dolutegravir (DTG), first approved in the United States in 2013, is being given to 20,000 patients in Kenya before being rolled out in Nigeria and Uganda later this year, with the backing of the health agency UNITAID.

What

1. DTG is the drug of choice for people with HIV in high-income countries who have never taken antiretroviral therapy before and for those who have developed resistance to other treatment.
2. Sub-Saharan Africa has been at the epicenter of the HIV epidemic for decades and home to nearly three-quarters of all people with HIV/AIDS. UNAIDS aims for 90 percent of people diagnosed with HIV to receive antiretroviral treatment by 2020.
3. The brand name version of DTG is Tivicay, produced by ViiV Healthcare, which is majority-owned by GlaxoSmithKline.
4. About 15 percent of HIV patients are resistant, which means the medicines do not work on them.
5. UNITAID works to bring medicines to market quickly and to reduce manufacturing costs by allowing generic companies to access patents for a small royalty and produce them cheaply for the developing world. Kenya, with one of the **world's largest HIV-positive populations**, has made great strides in addressing HIV in its public medical facilities.
6. About 1.5 million Kenyans are HIV positive, with more than two-thirds on treatment.
7. The number of new infections in Kenya has almost halved over the last decade to 80,000 a year.

## ECONOMY

For first ever Banks accountable for misselling

Banks for the first time have been made accountable for misselling third-party products like insurance policies or mutual fund schemes. Customers can also file

complaints against banks for problems with mobile and digital banking services. The RBI said that it has widened the scope of its Banking Ombudsman Scheme 2006 to include deficiencies arising out of sale of third-party investment products by lenders. Under the amended scheme, a customer would also be able to lodge a complaint against banks for non-adherence to the RBI instructions with regard to mobile or electronic banking services.

What

1. Following the amendment, the pecuniary jurisdiction of the ombudsman to pass an award has been doubled from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh.
2. The ombudsman has been empowered to award compensation not exceeding Rs 1 lakh for loss of time, expenses incurred and also harassment and mental anguish suffered by the complainant. There is also an option for customers to go in for appeal in respects to closed complaints which was not available earlier.
3. Until now, if the buyer of an insurance policy or mutual fund was missold s/he had to seek redressal from the insurance company or the mutual fund.
4. This was a departure from global practices. For instance, last year in UK four of the biggest banks, Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds and RBS, faced large fines for misspelling payment protection insurance.
5. There are 20 ombudsmen in India, each with a territorial jurisdiction. Aggrieved customers can lodge their complaints with the ombudsman either through an email or a post.

ECBC 2017

Shri Piyush Goyal, Minister of State (IC) for Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy and Mines launched the Energy Conservation Building Code 2017 (ECBC 2017). Developed by Ministry of Power and Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), ECBC 2017 prescribes the energy performance standards for new commercial buildings to be constructed across India.

What

1. The updated version of ECBC provides current as well as futuristic advancements in building technology to further reduce building energy consumption and promote low-carbon growth.
2. ECBC 2017 sets parameters for builders, designers and architects to integrate renewable energy sources in building design with the inclusion of passive design strategies.
3. The code aims to optimise energy savings with the comfort levels for occupants, and prefers life-cycle cost effectiveness to achieve energy neutrality in commercial buildings.
4. The new code reflects current and futuristic advancements in building technology, market changes, and energy demand scenario of the country, setting the benchmark for Indian buildings to be amongst some of the most efficient globally.
5. ECBC 2017 was developed by BEE with technical support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the U.S.-India bilateral Partnership to Advance Clean Energy – Deployment Technical Assistance (PACE-D TA) Program.

RBI deadline on Basel III norms

The finance ministry has made a case for pushing back **the Reserve Bank's (RBI) deadline** for implementing Basel III banking norms in view of higher capital requirement to deal with bad loans which have reached unacceptable levels. In a recent meeting with RBI, senior officials from the ministry pitched for deferring the implementation beyond March 2019, saying it will help banks meet the capital needs and increase credit flow to productive sectors along with balance sheet clean-up.

What

1. These global capitals to risk norms, called Basel III capital regulation, are being implemented in phased manner by Reserve Bank of India since April 1, 2013.

2. They are to be fully implemented as on March 31, 2019. As per the norms, banks have to maintain a minimum common equity ratio of 8 per cent and total capital ratio of 11.5 per cent by March 2019.
3. Most of the 21 state-owned banks are already above the average prescribed by RBI but there are 6 PSU banks including IDBI Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Central Bank of India, which have been put under prompt corrective action (PCA) requiring course correction and higher capital to come out of poor financial health.
4. As per the scheme, PSBs need to raise Rs 1.10 lakh crore from markets, including follow-on public offer, to meet Basel III requirements, which kick in from March 2019.
5. RBI had already extended the deadline from March 2018 to March 2019 in 2014 after getting representation from various quarters.
6. This (implementation of Basel III capital regulations) may necessitate some lead time for banks to raise capital within the internationally agreed timeline for full implementation of the Basel III capital regulations.
7. According to sources, RBI believes that there is a set framework and it should not be disturbed and any divergence from Basel III norms by the RBI can impact the perception on Indian banks and the central bank globally.

#### Flashpoint

1. Basel III reforms are the response of Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) to **improve the banking sector's** ability to absorb shocks arising from financial and economic stress, whatever the source, thus reducing the risk of spill over from the financial sector to the real economy.
2. Following the global financial crisis 2007-08, during Pittsburgh summit in September 2009, the G20 leaders committed to strengthening the regulatory system for banks and other financial firms.
3. They aimed at implementing strong international compensation standards aimed at ending practices that lead to excessive risk-taking, to improve the over-the-counter derivatives market and to create more powerful tools to hold large global firms to account for the risks they take.
4. As a result of this Basel II replaced Basel III reforms on capital regulation.

#### Oversight committee for bad loan resolution

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has expanded the oversight committee by appointing three more members to the high-level panel that will vet the process of resolving mounting bad loans bogging down the banking sector. Former chief vigilance commissioner Pradeep Kumar will head the now five-member oversight committee that will work through multiple benches. The expansion follows promulgation of the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017 last month. The ordinance had outlined the reconstitution of the oversight committee with an expanded mandate. The Reserve Bank has since brought the oversight committee under its aegis. The oversight committee will, for the present, have five members, including a chairman, and will work through multiple benches as may be necessary and constituted by the chairman to opine on the cases referred to it by the banks.

#### What

1. The reconstituted oversight committee will work with an expanded mandate to review, in addition to cases being restructured under the Scheme for Sustainable Structuring of Stressed Assets (S4A), resolution of other cases where the aggregate exposure of the banking sector to the borrowing entity is greater than Rs500 crore.

2. Besides Kumar, the other members of the committee are former SBI chairman Janki Ballabh, former Canara Bank chairman and managing director M.B.N. Rao, former chairman and managing of L&T Finance Y.M. Deosthalee and S. Raman, member of Sebi. Raman would be inducted into the panel from 7 September after he completes the term at Sebi.
3. On 22 May, the RBI had said it will reconstitute the oversight committee under its aegis to operationalize the banking ordinance for resolving the issue of bad loans that have soared to over Rs8 trillion.
4. The ordinance authorizes RBI to issue directions to banks to initiate the insolvency resolution process in respect of a default under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

#### ONGC Videsh Limited shortlisted in Mexico

ONGC Videsh Ltd, the overseas arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp, has been shortlisted alongside global giants like Chevron, Shell and Total to bid in Mexico's latest round of oil and gas field auction. Mexico is offering 15 shallow-water exploration blocks in the second round of hydrocarbon auction, called round 2.1. These blocks cover a combined area of 8,908 sq km and hold prospective resources of 4 billion barrels of oil and oil equivalent gas.

#### What

1. Of these, 20 have been selected to participate individually. These include OVL and other global giants like Chevron, CNOOC of China, ConocoPhillips, Ecopetrol, Italy's ENI, Lukoil of Russia, Repsol of Spain, Shell, and Total of France. The other 16 shortlisted to bid in consortiums.
2. Of the blocks on auction, four are the largest: block five with 466 million barrels of oil and oil equivalent gas (boe), block 11 with 426 million boe, block four with 403.9 million boe and block 12 with 409 million boe.
3. In 2015, OVL was among the 19 companies and seven groups that was pre-qualified to bid for Mexico's maiden offshore oil blocks auction. It was however unsuccessful in getting any block.
4. OVL has stake in 38 projects in 17 countries including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Iraq, Syria, Libya, South Sudan, Sudan, Mozambique, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Vietnam and New Zealand.
5. It contributes to 14.5 per cent and 8 per cent of oil and natural gas production of India, respectively. In terms of reserves and production, it is the second largest petroleum company of India, next only to its parent ONGC.

#### Govt notifies amended income tax rules

The Government has made it mandatory to link the existing Aadhaar numbers with the PAN of taxpayers with effect from July 1. Amending income-tax rules and notifying the same, the Government has made quoting of the 12-digit biometric Aadhaar or the enrolment ID a must at the time of application of permanent account number (PAN). Finance Minister Arun Jaitley through an amendment to tax proposals in the Finance Bill for 2017-18 had made Aadhaar mandatory for filing income-tax returns and provided for linking of PAN with Aadhaar to check tax evasion through the use of multiple PAN cards.

#### What

1. Every person who has been allotted PAN as on July 1, 2017, and who in accordance with the provisions of sub-section (2) of section 139AA is required to intimate his Aadhaar number, shall intimate his Aadhaar number to the principal director general of income tax (systems) or DGIT (systems).'
2. It also entrusted principal DGIT (systems) with specifying the formats and standards along with the procedure for verification of documents filed with PAN application or intimation of Aadhaar number.
3. The rules will come into force from July 1, 2017, the revenue department, said while amending Rule 114 of the I-T Act, which deals in application for allotment of PAN.

4. As many as 2.07 crore taxpayers have already linked their Aadhaar with PAN. There are over 25 crore PAN cardholders in the country while Aadhaar has been issued to 111 crore people.
5. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court had upheld the validity of an I-T Act provision making Aadhaar mandatory for allotment of PAN cards and ITR filing, but had put a partial stay on its implementation till a Constitution Bench addressed the issue of right to privacy.
6. Pursuant to this, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had said the linking of Aadhaar and PAN will be a **“must” for filing of income tax returns (ITR) and obtaining PAN from July 1.**
7. While Aadhaar is a biometric authentication issued by UIDAI, PAN is a 10-digit alphanumeric number allotted by the I-T department to individuals and entities.

#### Green light to Air India disinvestment

The government on 28 June 2017 gave a green light for disinvesting stake in state-owned Air India. Whether or not the airline will be fully privatised is not yet known. The Cabinet has accepted the recommendations of the NITI Aayog and has given an in-principle nod for disinvestment of Air India and its five subsidiaries, said Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. The government will now have to set up a group of minister (GoM), headed by Jaitley. It will decide on how much stake will be sold and the process of disinvestment.

#### What

1. Some of the issues that the GoM will deliberate upon are how to tackle the **unsustainable portion of Air India’s debt**, the eligibility criteria for bidders, hiving-off assets to a shell company, and disinvestment of **the airline’s profit-making subsidiaries.**
2. Air India has five subsidiaries — Air India Engineering Services, Air India Transport Services, Air India Charters, Hotel Corporations of India and Air India SATS (along with Singapore Airport Terminal Services).
3. The NITI Ayog had suggested complete privatisation of the company. During an inter-ministerial discussion, the Ministry of Civil Aviation had recommended **selling Air India’s assets and profit-making subsidiaries** to reduce debt.
4. The national carrier is saddled with a debt of about Rs 46,500 crore. The previous **United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government’s turnaround plan of infusing Rs 30,000 crore** showed little improvement in the financial metrics of the company.
5. The Atal Bihari Vajpayee government before it had also planned to disinvest stake in Air India, but found no buyers.

#### Govt to scrap public procurement wing

After abolishing the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), which was responsible for clearance of foreign direct investment proposals, the government is all set to scrap its public procurement wing called Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D). The work will now be handled by the government e-market, or GeM, platform which will be run by a private party under a government-appointed CEO.

#### What

1. The online platform was launched on 6 August 2016 after finance minister Arun Jaitley in his 2016-17 budget speech announced setting up of a technology-driven platform to facilitate procurement of goods and services by various ministries and agencies of the government.
2. The GeM platform has become all the more important after the government cleared a decision mandating giving preference to locally made goods and services **in government procurements, in line with the US’s “Buy American” policy.**
3. DGS&D currently has four regional offices, 12 purchase directorates and 20 quality assurance sub-centres.
4. In total, it has 1,235 officers including 61 supply wing and 107 inspection wing officers. In 1860, the British government set up the India Stores Department in

London under a concept of centralized buying to meet procurement needs of the government of India, which later turned into DGS&D.

5. GeM acts as a public procurement platform between suppliers and buyers, by providing them a common, unified and transparent government-to-business portal for supply and procurement of goods and services registered with GeM.
6. GeM will be run on a revenue-sharing model without any government support except for the initial two years.
7. The MSP will keep a portion of fees collected from vendors registered on the GeM platform. This will ensure the MSP is a stakeholder in development of GeM and will be interested to get more and more sellers to the platform.

#### Govt defers TDS, TCS under GST

To help industry, especially e-commerce players, prepare for the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Finance Ministry has deferred the provision for tax deduction and collection at source under the new levy. It will be started from a date which will be notified separately, said the Ministry. Similarly, persons supplying goods or services through an electronic commerce operator and liable to collect tax at source will not be required to register immediately until the tax collection at source (TCS) provision is brought into force.

#### What

1. This step has been taken to provide more time for persons liable to deduct tax at source/e-commerce companies and their suppliers to prepare for the historic tax reform.
2. According to the Central GST (CGST) Act, the notified entities are required to collect TDS at one per cent on payments to suppliers of goods or services in excess of 2.5 lakh. GST will be implemented from July 1.
3. The move will also benefit small businesses with a turnover less than 20 lakh that are required to register with the GST portal for selling goods or services through e-commerce portal.
4. However, all other businesses that have to deduct or collect tax at source will be required to register, but the liability to deduct or collect tax will arise from the date when the respective sections are brought in force.
5. The move comes at a time when the GST common portal has reopened the enrolment window for fresh registrations of first-time taxpayers, including those to be registered as TDS/TCS and enrolment of GST practitioners. It is also open for existing taxpayers to complete their enrolment process.
6. E-commerce players are also expected to enrol under GST during this time.
7. The decision has been taken to ensure smooth rollout of GST and is based on the feedback of trade and industry.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

#### Nasa, Isro start work on common satellite

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) have started to build components required to make the Nasa-Isro Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR), a dedicated earth monitoring satellite that will study hazards and global environmental change.

#### What

1. The satellite being built as part of Nasa-Isro collaboration will monitor measure and provide images of motion of tectonic plates, ice sheets and changes in vegetation over land in agriculture and forests. It is scheduled to be launched in 2021.
2. Nasa is also keen on collaborating with Isro on its future Mars orbiter missions.
3. NASA released a catalogue of more than 4,000 planets identified by Kepler telescope. There is no evidence of life on these planets, yet.

- The data we get from Kepler is the existence of a planet, how fast they orbit the sun, and their size. With our new telescope, we will probably look at those earth-like planets. But we are a decade away from building it.

#### Winner in IATA hackathon

IBS Software emerged the winner at the NDC (new distribution capacity) Hackathon for corporates held by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in Dublin, Ireland. IBS Software will now have the opportunity to present the award winning app to over 700 senior stakeholders in the air transport industry at the World Passenger Symposium in Barcelona later in the year.

#### What

- IATA hackathons (this was the fourth such event) are intended to encourage fresh, innovative solutions to enhance airline retailing through the use of NDC-capable APIs (application programming interface).
- The winning teams have the opportunity to present their solutions at industry forums for wider acceptance.
- Amadeus and SITA were among the winners in the 2016 edition of the IATA NDC hackathon.
- Code named 'Pho Tra', the app developed and showcased by IBS** Software enables leisure travellers to plan their entire travel itinerary at a click on the Internet image of their dream destination.
- The app identifies the destination from the image and then, in real time, plugs into a range of compatible APIs from third parties –hotels, car rentals, airport locations, flight reservations and even carbon foot print calculations - and build a fully automated comprehensive tour package.
- This is the first event in a series of three, organised by IATA in 2017 to encourage creative thinking in the travel space by taking airline retailing to the next level through NDC.

#### Sebi eases norms distressed assets

Markets regulator Sebi on 21 June 2017 relaxed takeover norms for acquisition of stressed assets to help the government and the RBI in their efforts to tackle bad loans. After a board meeting, Sebi Chairman Ajay Tyagi said the regulator has decided to ease norms for acquisition of distressed assets of listed companies.

#### What

- The board also approved a proposal to tighten the rules for participatory notes through imposition of a regulatory fee on issuers of such instruments.
- There is no proposal to completely ban these instruments as they can be useful for new foreign investors looking to test the Indian markets.
- Sebi would want foreign investors to come directly but P-notes also have their usefulness.
- Sebi would issue discussion paper for easier registration of foreign investors. Another discussion paper would be floated for ways to help develop equity derivatives markets.

#### Cyberattack similar to WannaCry spreads

A new cyberattack similar to WannaCry is spreading across Europe, hitting major companies from Rosneft PJSC in Moscow to A.P. Moller-Maersk in Copenhagen while disrupting government systems in Kiev. More than 80 companies in Russia and Ukraine were affected by the Petya virus that disabled computers on 27 June 2017 and told users to pay \$300 in cryptocurrency to unlock them, according to the Moscow-based cybersecurity company Group-IB. Telecommunications operators and retailers were also affected and the virus is spreading in a similar way to the WannaCry attack in May.

#### What

- The intrusion is “the biggest in Ukraine’s history. The goal was “the destabilization of the economic situation and in the civic consciousness of Ukraine,” though it was “disguised as an extortion attempt”.**

2. Kremlin-controlled Rosneft, Russia's largest crude producer, said in a statement that it avoided "serious consequences" from the "hacker attack" by switching to "a backup system for managing production processes."
3. Maersk, operator of the world's largest container line, said its customers **can't** use online booking tools and its internal systems are down. The attack is affecting multiple sites and units, which include a major port operator and an oil and gas producer, spokeswoman Concepcion Boo Arias said by phone.
4. The strikes follow the global ransomware assault involving the WannaCry virus that affected hundreds of thousands of computers in more than 150 countries as extortionists demanded \$300 in bitcoin from victims.
5. Ransomware attacks have been soaring and the number of such incidents increased by 50% in 2016.
6. The new virus has a fake Microsoft digital signature appended to it and the attack is spreading to many countries.

#### BIO 2017

The Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO) BIO 2017 was held in the San Diego Convention Centre, San Diego from 19th June to 22nd June, 2017. The Indian delegation took part in the BIO 2017 was led by Shri Y S Chowdary, Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences.

#### What

1. The BIO International Convention is the largest global event for the biotechnology industry and attracts the biggest names in biotech, offers key networking and partnering opportunities, and provides insights and inspiration on the major trends affecting the industry.
2. The Convention also features the BIO Business Forum (One-on-One Partnering), hundreds of sessions covering biotech trends, policy issues and technological innovations, and the world's largest biotechnology exhibition - the BIO Exhibition. The first BIO International Convention was held in 1993 and attracted approximately 1,400 attendees.
3. The BIO International Convention is hosted by the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO).
4. BIO represents more than 1,100 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations across the United States and in more than 30 other nations.

#### Sounding rocket lunched

After several unsuccessful attempts, NASA has finally launched a sounding rocket that created artificial colourful clouds that were visible from New York to North Carolina.

The NASA Terrier-Improved Malemute sounding rocket was successfully launched on 29 June 2017 from the agency's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia.

#### What

1. During the eight-minute flight, 10 canisters about the size of a soft drink can were ejected in space, about nine to 19 km away from the main payload.
2. The canisters deployed blue-green and red vapour that formed artificial clouds.
3. During an ionosphere or aurora science mission, these clouds, or vapour tracers, allow scientists on the ground to visually track particle motions in space.
4. The development of the multi-canister ampoule ejection system would allow scientists to gather information over a much larger area than previously possible when deploying the tracers just from the main payload, Nasa said.
5. The rocket, after being delayed multiple times over the last 30 days, flew to an altitude of about 190 km.

#### SpaceX launches 10 satellites

A SpaceX rocket carried 10 communications satellites into orbit from California, after the company successfully launched a satellite from Florida. The Falcon 9 rocket blasted off on 25 June 2017 through low-lying fog from Vandenberg Air Force Base northwest of Los Angeles. It carried a second batch of new satellites for Iridium Communications, which is replacing its orbiting fleet with a next-generation constellation of satellites.

What

1. A SpaceX Falcon 9 on 23 June 2017 launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida and boosted a communications satellite for Bulgaria into orbit. Its first stage was recovered after landing on a drone ship in the Atlantic.
2. Iridium plans to put in place 75 new satellites for its mobile voice and data communications system by mid-2018, requiring six more launches, all by SpaceX.
3. Several old satellites have been moved into lower orbits to use up their remaining fuel and configure the solar panels for maximum drag so they will re-enter the atmosphere and burn up.
4. The new satellites also carry payloads for joint-venture Aerion's space-based, real-time tracking and surveillance of aircraft around the globe, which has implications for efficiency, economy and safety especially in remote airspace over the oceans.
5. The technology, which requires aircraft to be equipped with certain equipment, is undergoing testing involving eight of the initial batch of Iridium NEXT satellites.
6. The Iridium NEXT program also will bring an end to so-called "Iridium flares," which space enthusiasts have observed for years. The new satellites will not create visible flashes of reflected sunlight as they passed overhead.

Nasa launches world's lightest satellite

On 22 June 2017, India once again broke a global space record by launching the world's lightest satellite weighing a mere 64 grams, called Kalamsat, designed and developed not by professional space scientists and engineers, but by 18-year-old Tamil Nadu student Rifath Sharook and his team.

What

1. The tiny satellite, named after Abdul Kalam, was flown by a Nasa sounding rocket and the lift-off was from the space agency's Wallops Island facility around 3pm (IST).
2. Kalam had his training in the sounding rocket programme at Wallops Island in the '60s. Kalamsat was the only Indian payload in the mission.
3. The total flight time of the rocket was 240 minutes and the satellite, assembled at her T.Nagar residence in Chennai, separated from the rocket 125 minutes after lift-off.
4. Kalamsat fell into the sea. It will be recovered and Nasa will be sending it back to us for decoding the data.
5. This one-of-its-kind satellite, which can be held in one's palm is a 3.8cm cube and its structure is fully 3-D printed with reinforced carbon fiber polymer.
6. It is equipped with a nano Geiger Muller counter which will measure radiation in space.

## Miscellaneous

Kanyashree scheme bags UN award

The United Nations has awarded the West Bengal government the first place for **Public Service for its "Kanyashree" scheme**. The award ceremony was held at the World Forum, The Hague. A total of 552 projects from 62 countries were nominated for the award.

What

1. A trophy and a certificate was received by the Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee.
2. **The “Kanyashree Prakalpa” is a targeted conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at retaining girls in schools and other educational institutions.**
3. It also aims towards skill development and prevent child marriage.
4. Over 4 million adolescent girls have already enrolled in the scheme and about \$ 500 million handed over to the beneficiaries through their bank accounts, a release from the State government said.
5. The scheme is being implemented through 16000 institutes and schools.

#### UNICEF names first refugee ambassador

The UN children's agency has announced the appointment of its youngest goodwill ambassador 19-year-old Syrian refugee and education activist Muzoon Almellehan.

UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Justin Forsyth said that Muzoon is the first goodwill envoy with official refugee status.

#### What

1. UNICEF said she received support from the agency while she was living in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan.
2. She follows in the footsteps the late actress and goodwill ambassador Audrey Hepburn who was also supported by UNICEF as a child.
3. Muzoon said when she fled Syria she only took her school books with her.

#### India re-nominates Dalveer Bhandari for ICJ

India has re-nominated Justice Dalveer Bhandari as its candidate for another term as judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal judicial organ of the UN. Bhandari, 69, was elected in April 2012 during simultaneous balloting in both the General Assembly and the Security Council to a seat on the International Court of Justice, which is also known as the World Court and is based in The Hague in the Netherlands. His current term runs through February 2018.

#### What

1. **India filed Bhandari's re-nomination** on 19 June 2017 with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, well ahead of the July 3 deadline.
2. During his term at the ICJ, Bhandari has been engaged actively in the work of the Court and has delivered individual opinions in eleven cases covering a broad spectrum of subjects such as maritime disputes, whaling in Antarctica, crime of genocide, delimitation of continental shelf, nuclear disarmament, financing of terrorism and violation of sovereign rights.
3. Before joining the ICJ, Bhandari was a judge in the higher judiciary in India for more than 20 years.
4. He had served as a senior judge in the Supreme Court of India. The ICJ is composed of 15 judges elected to nine-year terms by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council that vote simultaneously but separately. In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies.
5. Established in 1945, the ICJ settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions on legal questions that have been referred to it by other authorized UN organs.
6. The Court is open to all parties to its Statute, which automatically includes all UN Member States.

#### Ninth most expensive office market in world

Connaught Place in Delhi has been ranked ninth most expensive prime office market in the world with an occupancy cost of \$153.89 per square feet per annum, said a new survey. Connaught Place was seventh in the last year's survey. According to the bi-annual Global Prime Office Occupancy Costs survey of US-based CBRE, **Mumbai's** Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC) moved one place up from nineteen to 20 while the CBD of Nariman Point ranked thirty-third on the list of the top 50 most expensive office

markets around the world. Global prime office occupancy costs include rent, plus local taxes and service charges for the highest-quality, prime office properties.

What

1. **Hong Kong (Central) became the world's highest**-priced office market with an occupancy cost of \$302.51 per sq ft per annum.
2. Global prime office occupancy costs rose 1.9% year-on-year which is lower than the growth in rate in the year ended Q1, 2016 (2.2%) This was largely attributed to the slowdown in the year-on-year growth in Asia Pacific (1.2%) and EMEA (0.8%).
3. The two most expensive markets in the world continue to be **Hong Kong (Central) and London's West End**. The top 10 list remains largely consistent, reflecting the ongoing strength of these global gateway cities in attracting and maintaining a successful occupier base.
4. CBRE tracks occupancy costs for prime office space in 121 markets around the globe. Of the top 50 most expensive markets, 18 were in Asia Pacific, 20 in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), and 12 in the Americas.

India crush Pak in Hockey

A India demolished a hapless Pakistan 7-1 to register their third consecutive victory and seal a place in the quarter-finals of the Hockey World League Semi-Final. It was a complete performance by the Indians who dominated their arch-rivals throughout the match to post a facile win and zoom to the top of Pool B ahead of The Netherlands.

What

1. India are atop Pool B with three wins from as many games, just ahead of The Netherlands, who are placed second.
2. Pakistan, on the other hand, is at the bottom of the pool after losing all three matches they have played so far.
3. India secured another penalty corner four minutes into the second quarter but Harmanpreet's flick was saved by Amjad Ali in front of Pakistan goal.
4. India continued in the same vein after the change of ends and three minutes into the second half Harmanpreet scored from another set piece to extend the lead.

Awards given for Rural Development

The Ministry of Rural Development organized an Award function on 19th June, 2017. The Programme showcased achievements under different programmes implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development. States, Institutions and Government Functionaries, who have done commendable work under different schemes, were awarded in the function. Short films on Water Conservation under Geo-MGNREGA, Construction of houses under Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana of Jadia Bai, 100 year old tribal women of Madhya Pradesh and an audio visual song on PMGSY which was sung by Shan were also shown. A Citizen centric mobile application on MGNREGA capable of providing information on different aspects of GNREGA Programme was launched by the Minister for Rural Development. The Department of Rural Development extensively uses Information and Space Technology in its programme management and the "**Jan-MGNREGA" App** is a third such citizen centric initiative of the department after "**Meri Sadak**" and "**Aawas**" mobile app.

What

1. Total of 144 Awards were given under different programmes. Awards on Sustainable Livelihood, Transparency and Accountability, Aadhaar Seeding, Conversion and Geo-MGNREGA were given under MGNREGA. Under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, awards were given to States for highest amount of rural roads (Bihar) and use of Non conventional construction material (Madhya Pradesh).
2. Haryana, Gujarat and Karnataka received a special prize for completing more than 95 percent of PMGSY (Phase I &II) targets.
3. Under PMAY-G Awards were given to States which performed well on different parameters, Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee which provided

technical vetting of housing typologies, NIC team of the Department of Rural Development for technical support and Dr. Prabir Kumar Das, Senior citizen, Advisor, UNDP for significant contribution in use of innovative technologies.

4. 9 District Collectors who have completed largest number of PMAY-G houses were also awarded, the significant part being 5 of the 9 District Collectors coming from Odisha.
5. Awards were given to National Resource Organizations, State Rural Livelihood Missions and Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, Allahabad Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India and ICICI Bank. The States which received awards were Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Karnataka and West Bengal under different categories. Under skill development category the best performing States, best champion employers and best training partners, received the awards.

#### Olympics sponsorship deal

Intel Corp said it would become a major sponsor of the International Olympic Committee, making the chipmaker the latest technology company to put marketing dollars behind the global sporting event. The new deal, which goes until 2024, comes a week after longtime Olympics sponsor McDonald's Corp bowed out of its sponsorship deal three years early, citing a change in the company's priorities as it tries to hold down costs.

#### What

1. Intel joins about a dozen global Olympics sponsors such as Coca-Cola Co, Samsung and most recently, Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba which signed on six months ago.
2. The IOC has been trying to make the Olympics more technologically savvy and appeal to younger people through its internet-based TV network, the Olympic Channel.
3. Intel said it would provide 5G wireless technology, virtual reality, artificial intelligence platforms, and drones that could be used in aerial filming or light shows.
4. Intel may be seeking to expand its reach in Asia, which is preparing to host three consecutive Olympic Games.
5. Pyeongchang in South Korea is staging the 2018 winter games, Tokyo the 2020 Summer Olympics and Beijing the 2022 Winter Olympics.
6. The IOC is deciding between Paris and Los Angeles for the 2024 summer games.

#### Feasibility of different time zones in India

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is conducting a study to assess the feasibility of having different time zones in the country. The study is being **conducted to give 'scientific inputs' on the matter. Recently**, Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh had demanded a separate time zone for the northeast.

#### What

1. The DST has been conducting studies on this, looking at the potential for energy saving if you have two different time zones.
2. One can actually save energy because the sunrise and sunset timings are different (in the country), but the office timings are one across the nation.
3. The study is also expected to cover the overall impact, especially on the transportation system.
4. Leaders from the northeast region argue that a separate time zone, a long pending demand would increase daylight savings and efficiency.
5. One of the arguments is that early sunrise means that by the time they start their day, almost half the day has passed.
6. This means an early sunset which requires extra use of lights in both homes, offices and public places hampering the productivity.

7. Similar is the case with the archipelagos of the Andaman and Nicobar and the Lakshadweep where sunrise and sunset timings are different from the mainland.

#### Cities under Smart City Mission

The Government on 23 June 2017 announced that another 30 cities will be developed as smart cities taking the total number of cities identified under Smart City Mission launched in June 2015 to 90. Announcing the new batch of smart cities, the Minister for Urban Development and Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, M Venkaiah Naidu, said that 45 cities contested for 40 available smart city slots but only 30 were selected to ensure feasible and workable plans.

#### What

1. Of the 30 cities announced, 26 of them have proposed affordable housing projects that benefit the urban poor, 26 cities will be taking up school and hospital projects, 29 will be taking up redesign and redevelopment of roads.
2. Tiruppur, Tirunelveli, Tiruchi and Thootukkudi in Tamil Nadu are among the new batch of 30 cities to be developed as smart cities. Thiruvanthapuram, the capital of Kerala, topped the list in this round of selection, followed by Naya Raipur, the capital of Chhattisgarh.
3. 20 cities will be contesting for the remaining 10 slots under smart city mission. These are; Itanagar (Arunachal Pradesh), Biharsharif (Bihar), Diu (Daman & Diu), Silvassa (Dadra and Nager Haveli), Kavaratti (Lakshadweep), Navi Mumbai, Greater Mumbai and Amaravati (Maharashtra), Imphal (Manipur), Shillong (Meghalaya), Dindigul and Erode (Tamil Nadu), Bidhannagar, Durgapur and Haldia (West Bengal), Meerut, Rai Bareilly, Ghaziabad, Sharanpur and Rampur (UP).
4. Since January 2016, names of 60 cities have been announced in three rounds of competition. Of these, New Town Kolkata withdrew after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee decided she would create 'Green Cities' without the Centre's mission funding.

#### City liveability index

1. On the occasion, the Government also launched a City Liveability Index, which will provide a common framework for helping cities know where they stand. About 116 cities will take up this exercise and they will be measured on 76 parameters defined in the index.
2. Meanwhile, the Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), a global **coalition, called for an "inclusionary and sustainable approach to development" of smart cities, including human right and environment impact studies before project clearances**

#### Failing clocks worry for India's GPS

A seven-satellite, indigenous Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System, created by the Indian Space Research Organisation to service the global positioning data needs of the defence forces, has run into problems with a number of rubidium atomic clocks crucial to providing data failing or developing inherent problems. ISRO had announced in July last year that all three atomic clocks on IRNSS-1A, the first of the seven satellites that was launched on July 1, 2013, had malfunctioned, rendering that **satellite ineffective. Now, sources associated with ISRO's satellite navigation programme say four more atomic clocks on the other six satellites are not performing as required.**

#### What

1. Timekeeping is vital to GPS because it pinpoints a location on Earth by measuring the travel time of radio signals between the location and satellites in space. Since radio signals travel at the speed of light — 300,000 km/second — inaccuracy of one millisecond can send navigation information awry by a distance of 300 km on Earth.
2. ISRO plans to launch a replacement satellite called IRNSS-1H in July-August to compensate for the loss of IRNSS-1A, although it is yet to announce the failure of more atomic clocks, which has not incapacitated the clock systems on the other six satellites.

3. The failure of seven of the 21 clocks in the constellation has, however, raised concerns. There are, however, inherent hardware problems on the rubidium atomic clocks in some of these. These clocks developed the same problems when used in the Galileo satellite system by the European Space Agency.
4. The European Space Agency reported last January that anomalies had occurred in three of 36 Rubidium Atomic Frequency Standard (RAFS) clocks in the 18-satellite Galileo system, although none of the satellites were affected.
5. ISRO has nine satellites indented for IRNSS. While seven satellites make up the Indian regional navigation constellation, the other two were indented as backup in the event of failure. Each satellite has three atomic clocks, one the primary timekeeper and the other two acting as backup.
6. ISRO launched IRNSS-1A to 1G between July 1, 2013, and April 28, 2016, a Rs 1,420-crore-project. One of the reasons for providing an indigenous GPS over India, despite the existence of several international systems, was the reliability it offers when used for defence purposes.
7. ISRO had started work on the programme in 1999, after the Kargil war where Indian forces could not use GPS to identify the location of its soldiers.
8. IRNSS, also called NavIC (Navigation Indian Constellation), is intended to provide two services — Standard Positioning Service for general users and an encrypted Restricted Service for authorised users like the defence forces.
9. NavIC is designed to provide a position information service to users within India and up to 1,500 km from its borders.
10. As many as 45 rubidium atomic clocks were reportedly procured. They have been used in IRNSS despite warnings by senior officials within the system over their efficacy, said a source associated with the satellite navigation programme over the years.
11. The IRNSS clocks have been out of spec since the launch of the first satellite. It is a serious situation for the satellite navigation system known as Indian GPS. ISRO has glossed over this because only experts can find out when information from a satellite is incorrect.
12. In July last year, shortly after the seventh satellite was launched, ISRO reported that the three clocks on IRNSS-1A had failed.
13. Three atomic clocks of IRNSS-1A have stopped working. But the rest of the satellite components are functioning perfectly. In fact, we are using this satellite for messaging activity.

#### Draft regulations for organic food products

Food regulator FSSAI has come out with a draft regulation for organic food products, seeking to ensure that these food items are actually organic. Organic foods will have to comply with the provisions under the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) administered by the government or the Participatory Guarantee System for India (PGS-India) run by the Agriculture Ministry or any other standards notified by the food authority. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has sought public comments of the draft regulations, which has been prepared in view of rising demand for organic food products, being considered as healthy, in the country.

#### What

1. The draft regulation on organic food is aimed at overcoming this problem and ensuring that what is sold as organic food is really organic.
2. The draft regulation mandates that labelling of organic foods should convey full and accurate information on the organic status of the product.
3. Organic food products should also carry a certification mark or a quality assurance mark given by any of the notified certification bodies.
4. **The FSSAI's draft has exempted organic food marketed through direct sale** by the original producer or producer organisation to the end consumer from verification compliance.

5. The FSSAI has defined **'organic agriculture' as a system of farm design and management** to create an ecosystem of agriculture production without the use of synthetic external inputs such as chemicals, fertilisers, pesticides and synthetic hormones or genetically modified organisms.
6. Organic farm produce means the produce obtained from organic agriculture, while organic food means food products that have been produced in accordance with specified standards for organic production, as per the draft.

#### Meeting on bitcoin risk

Union finance minister Arun Jaitley on 27 June 2017 held an inter-ministerial meeting to examine risks related to virtual currencies like bitcoins. Although several issues concerning bitcoins were discussed, no decision was taken, people close to the matter said. The government has been debating over the issues concerning bitcoins and had last month sought public opinion on allowing virtual currencies.

#### What

1. The circulation of virtual currencies has been a cause of concern among central bankers the world over for quite a while now. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) also cautioned the users, holders and traders of virtual currency, including bitcoins.
2. In March, the finance ministry had constituted an inter-disciplinary committee to take stock of the present status of virtual currencies both in India and globally and suggest measures for dealing with such currencies.
3. Bitcoins were in news recently after a massive global ransomware attack triggered by the WannaCry virus hit systems in over 100 countries. The cyber criminals demanded a fee of about \$300 in crypto-currencies like bitcoin for unlocking affected devices.
4. Recently, a domestic app-based bitcoin exchange Zebpay said it has five lakh downloads on the Android operating system and was adding more than 2,500 users every day.

#### National Awards for MSME 2015

National Awards for MSME 2015 was organized on 27 June 2017. Shri Kalraj Mishra, Union Minister for MSME gave away the MSME Awards 2015. Since the United Nations has declared 27th June as the UN Day for MSMEs, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has selected this day for distributing National Awards to Micro, Small and Medium Entrepreneurs for their outstanding performance, to express the gratitude of the Government to the achievers in this field which is so important for the national economy.

#### What

1. On this occasion the Union Minister for MSME Shri Kalraj Mishra also launched **'Digital MSME Scheme' and handed** over three Memorandums of Understandings to SAP India, Intel and HMT respectively.
2. These steps would further boost **Ministry's effort towards making the Digital India Mission** successful. The Digital MSME Scheme is revolving around Cloud computing which is emerging as a cost effective and viable alternative in comparison to in-house IT infrastructure installed by MSMEs.
3. In cloud computing, MSMEs use the internet to access common as well as tailor-made IT infrastructure including software for managing their business processes.

4. Cloud computing is free from the burden of investment on hardware/software and infrastructural facilities. Therefore CAPEX converts into OPEX. This scheme would encourage MSMEs towards this new approach i.e. Cloud Computing for ICT adoption
5. For the year 2015 the total number of National Awardees are 56 for various categories, including 50 for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and 6 for Banks.
6. For the year 2015 the total number of National Awardees are 56 for various categories, including 50 for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and 6 for Banks.
7. The MSMEs have shown growth of over 10% in recent years, this being more than that recorded by the large corporates. The MSMEs provide employment to over 110 million persons through over 50 million enterprises producing over six thousand products.

#### Flashback

1. Recognizing the achievements of successful entrepreneurs in the MSME sector, in the form of exceptional entrepreneurial capability, excellent product quality and excellence in exports, Innovation and Lean Manufacturing Techniques, the Union Government decided to encourage them by giving the national awards.
2. The First, Second and Third National Awards carry a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/-, in each category, a certificate and a trophy.
3. Special Awards are given to honour one outstanding woman entrepreneur, one outstanding entrepreneur from SC/ST community and one entrepreneur from North Eastern Region, and the best divyang entrepreneur.
4. The event aims not only to recognize the contribution made by the entrepreneurs but also aims to encourage the participation of rural and **urban population in the country's trade and commerce** including the economically and socially backward people.
5. The awards are also given to Banks in recognition of their outstanding efforts in providing credit support to the Micro and Small Enterprises.
6. Three National Awards each under two categories namely Excellence in MSE lending and Excellence in lending to Micro Enterprises to Public Sector Banks are given.
7. The First and Second Awards in each category are given to the major Public Sector Banks & a special award is given to one of the Associate Banks of State Bank of India. The awards are given in the form of Trophies along with Certificates.

#### 11th Statistics Day celebrated

In recognition of the notable contributions made by Late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis in the fields of statistics, statistical system and economic planning Government of India in 2007, designated 29th June the birth anniversary of **Prof. Mahalanobis. as the "Statistics Day"** in the category of Special Days to be celebrated every year at the National level.

#### What

1. The objective of celebration of this Day is to create public awareness about the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formulation, to acknowledge the contribution of Prof. Mahalanobis and to pay homage to him.
2. Every year, one particular theme of current national importance is selected for focused discussions and efforts made throughout the year aimed at bringing about improvements in the selected area.

3. **‘Administrative Statistics’ is this year’s theme for the Statistics Day.** Administrative Statistical system needs to be further strengthened as it is both cost and time effective, reduces the dependence on censuses and sample surveys.
4. The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) was set up by Prof. Mahalanobis in 1931 in Kolkata.
5. **The Institute was declared an “Institute of National Importance” and made an autonomous body of Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, through an act of Parliament in 1959.**
6. **ISI celebrates 29th June as the “Workers Day”.** This year, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation and ISI had a joint event on 29th June in Kolkata to celebrate the birth anniversary of Prof. Mahalanobis.

New attorney general for India

Senior advocate **K.K. Venugopal’s name has been cleared for appointment as** the attorney general for India, following the decision of Mukul Rohatgi to step down as the top law officer. A decision to appoint the 86-year-old veteran lawyer as the successor of Rohatgi was discussed before the departure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a visit to the US, Netherlands and Portugal.

What

1. Venugopal is the recipient of Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan. He would become a law officer for the second time after being an Additional Solicitor General during the Morarji Desai government during the seventies.
2. He has been associated with several government instrumentalities and has been representing them as a senior advocate. Lately, he has been appearing for the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate before the Supreme Court in the 2G spectrum allocation scam.
3. He also represented the Madhya Pradesh Government during the hearing of National Judicial Appointments Commission Act in which he supported the validity of the central law to do away with the collegium system of appointment of judges for the higher judiciary.