

My Notes....

National

Mental Healthcare Bill passed

The Parliament passed the Mental Healthcare Bill, 2016. Its aims to provide for mental healthcare and services for persons with mental illness and ensure these persons have the right to live a life with dignity by not being discriminated against or harassed. The bill also states that a person **who attempts suicide shall be presumed to be suffering from mental illness** at that time and will not be punished under the Indian Penal Code. The bill was previously passed in the Rajya Sabha in August last year with 134 official amendments.

What

1. **Notwithstanding anything contained in section 309 of the Indian Penal Code**, any person who attempts to commit suicide shall be presumed, unless proved otherwise, to have severe stress and shall not be tried and punished under the said Code.
2. The Bill defines "**mental illness**" as a **substantial disorder of thinking, mood, perception, orientation or memory** that grossly impairs judgment or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life.
3. Mental health has today become a much talked about subject. The prominence it has gained in the last few months stands strongly supported given the statistics of mental health related problems in our country.
4. The importance of estimates of mental health related problems place their prevalence rates at 5 percent of the population, which amounts to roughly 50 million individuals in our country.
5. **Mental health contributes to 11.6 percent of the global burden of disease** and the fact is that only 14.52 percent of those afflicted receive treatment which approximates to 7.26 million. Despite this there is a 300 percent shortage of experts in India.

Provisions of Mental Healthcare Bill:

1. **Rights of persons with mental illness:** Every person will have the right to access mental healthcare from services which are operated or funded by the government. This would include, good quality, affordable and easy access to services apart from the right to equality of treatment.
2. **Decriminalising suicide:** The bill decriminalises suicide attempt under the IPC by mentally-ill persons and makes it non-punishable. It was earlier considered punishable.
3. **Mental Health Review Commission and Board:** This is a quasi-judicial body responsible for revising procedure for making advance directives. It will advise the government on protection of mentally ill persons' rights.
4. **Advance Directive:** This provision empowers a mentally-ill person to have the right to make an advance directive that explains how she/he wants to be treated for the requisite illness and who her/his nominated representative shall be.
5. **Under the Mental Healthcare Bill, the punishment for flouting of provisions will attract up to six months in prison or Rs 10,000 fine or both. Repeat offenders can face up to two years in jail or a fine of Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh or both.**

First Time India becomes Net Exporter of Electricity

As per Central Electricity Authority, the Designated Authority of Government of India for Cross Border Trade of Electricity, **1st time India has turned around from a net importer of electricity to Net Exporter of electricity**. During the current year 2016-17 (April to February 2017), India has exported around 5,798 Million Units to Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar which is 213 Million units more than the import of around 5,585

Million units from Bhutan. Export to Nepal and Bangladesh increased 2.5 and 2.8 times respectively in last three years.

What

1. **Ever since the cross border trade of electricity started in mid-Eighties**, India has been importing power from Bhutan and marginally exporting to Nepal in radial mode at 33 kV and 132 kV from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. On an average Bhutan has been supplying around 5,000- 5500 Million units to India.
2. **India had also been exporting around 190 MW power to Nepal** over 12 cross border interconnections at 11kV, 33kV and 132 kV level.
3. The export of power to Nepal further increased by around 145 MW with commissioning of Muzaffarpur (India)- Dhalkhebar(Nepal) 400kV line (being operated at 132 kV) in 2016.
4. Export of power to Bangladesh from India got further boost with commissioning of 1st cross border Interconnection between Baharampur in India and Bheramara in Bangladesh at 400kV in September 2013. It was further augmented by commissioning of 2nd cross border Interconnection between Surjyamaninagar (Tripura) in India and South Comilla in Bangladesh. At present around 600 MW power is being exported to Bangladesh.
5. Export of power to Nepal is expected to increase by around 145 MW shortly over 132 kV Katiya (Bihar)- Kusaha (Nepal) and 132 kV Raxaul (Bihar)- Parwanipur (Nepal).

India ranks 131 in HDI index

India slipped down one place from 130 to 131 among the 188 countries ranked in terms of human development, says the 2016 Human Development Report (HDR) released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). India's human development index (HDI) value of 0.624 puts it in the "**medium human development**" category, alongside countries such as Congo, Namibia and Pakistan. **It is ranked third among the SAARC countries, behind Sri Lanka (73) and the Maldives (105)**, both of which figure in the "**high human development**" category.

What

1. The world's top three countries in HDI are **Norway (0.949)**, **Australia (0.939)** and **Switzerland (0.939)**.
2. The HDI is a measure for assessing progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and access to a decent standard of living.
3. The report says 1.5 million people worldwide still live in multidimensional poverty, 54% of them concentrated in South Asia. While poverty fell significantly from 1990 to 2015, inequalities sharpened in the region.
4. **South Asia also had the highest levels of malnutrition in the world, at 38%**, and the lowest public health expenditure as a percentage of the GDP (1.6%, 2014).
5. **India's public health expenditure was even lower, at 1.4% of the GDP**. However, it did make some gains between 1990 and 2015, improving life expectancy by 10.4 years in this period.
6. **Child malnutrition also declined by 10 percentage points from 2015**, and there was a modest gain in infant and under-five mortality rates.
7. The report praised India's reservation policy, observing that even though it "has not remedied caste-based exclusions", it has "**had substantial positive effects**". It pointed out that "in 1965, for example, Dalits held fewer than 2% of senior civil service positions, but the share had grown to 11% by 2001".

JUMPING UP

Human Development Index

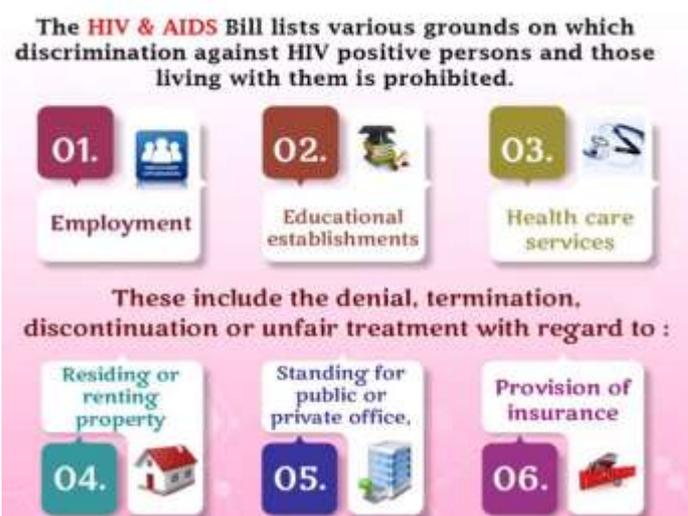
Rank	Country
1	Norway
2	Australia
3	Switzerland
4	Germany
5	Denmark
102	Libya
121	Iraq
125	Namibia
131	India

Source: Human Development Report 2016, UNDP

8. The HDR also hailed the national rural employment guarantee programme as a “prime example” of “combining social protection with appropriate employment strategies”.
9. The report noted with approval India’s progressive laws, especially **the Right to Information, National Food Security, and Right to Education Acts.**
10. In South Asia, **gender gaps in entrepreneurship and labour force participation caused an estimated income loss of 19%.** “Between their first and fifth birthdays, girls in India and Pakistan have a 30% to 50% greater chance of dying than boys,” the report noted.
11. While India’s HDI value increased from 0.428 in 1990 to 0.624 in 2015, it still had the lowest rank among BRIC nations. However, its average annual growth in HDI (1990-2015) was higher than that of other medium HD countries.

Rajya Sabha passes HIV and AIDS bill

The HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Bill, 2014, aimed at ensuring equal rights while seeking treatment, education and job by people living with HIV, was passed by the Rajya Sabha. The Bill also assumes **significance as it protects such people from specific acts of discrimination by the state**, or any other person. It also lays down penal provisions for any discrimination practised against a person with HIV/AIDS and breach of confidentiality.



What

1. **Under the Bill, central and state governments are obliged to provide for anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and management of opportunistic infections (infections that take advantage of weakness in the immune system and occur frequently).**
2. The protection mandated in the Bill extends to the fields of employment, healthcare services, educational services, public facilities, property rights, holding public office, and insurance.
3. **The Bill now makes anti-retroviral treatment a legal right for all HIV/AIDS patients.** It has also adopted "test and treat" policy which means any person testing positive will be entitled for free treatment by the state and central government. Earlier, this was restricted by a CD4 count rate.
4. The Bill also **provides for fast tracking of cases relating to HIV positive persons by courts on a priority basis.** In any legal proceeding, if an HIV infected or affected person is a party, the court may pass orders that the proceedings be conducted (a) by suppressing the identity of the person, (b) in camera, and (c) to restrain any person from publishing information that discloses the identity of the applicant.

CBEC to be renamed CBIC

The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) will be reorganised for the implementation of the **Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime** and will be renamed the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)** following Parliamentary approval.

What

1. **Reorganisation of the field formations of CBEC** for the implementation of GST has been approved by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley.

2. The **existing formations of Central Excise and Service Tax under the CBEC have been re-organised** to implement and enforce the provisions of the proposed GST Laws.
3. **CBEC is being renamed as the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC), after getting legislative approval.** The proposed CBIC shall, inter alia, supervise the work of all its field formations and directorates and assist the government in policy making in relation to GST, continuing Central Excise levy and Customs functions.
4. **CBIC will have 21 zones, 101 GST taxpayer services commissionerates comprising 15 sub-commissionerates, 768 divisions, 3,969 ranges, 49 audit commissionerates and 50 appeals commissionerates.**
5. This will ensure rendering of taxpayer services to all the taxpayers through an indirect tax administration structure, having pan-India presence.
6. **For a robust IT network,** the directorate general of systems under CBEC is being strengthened. The directorate general taxpayer services is being expanded for greater outreach for facilitating smooth transition for the taxpayers to the GST environment.
7. The **existing training establishment will be renamed as National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics** and will have an all-India presence, to enable capacity building to the employees of the indirect tax administration of the Centre as well as of the state governments and to members of trade and industry.
8. The renamed Directorate General of Goods and Service Tax Intelligence is also being strengthened and expanded to become an important wing of the government in its fight against tax evasion and black money.

Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amended Act, 2016

Though the **Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988 has been on the statute book since more than 28 years,** the same could not be made operational because of certain inherent defects. With a view to providing effective regime for prohibition of benami transactions, the said Act was amended through **the Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amended Act, 2016.**

What

1. The **amended law empowers the specified authorities** to provisionally attach benami properties which can eventually be confiscated. Besides, if a person is found guilty of offence of benami transaction by the competent court, he shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term not less than one year but which **may extend to 7 years and shall also be liable to fine which may extend to 25% of the fair market value of the property.**
2. The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016 came into effect from **1st November, 2016.**
3. **Several benami transactions have been identified** since the coming into effect of the amended law. Show cause notices for provisional attachment of benami properties have been issued in 140 cases involving properties of the value of about Rs. 200 crore.
4. Out of these, provisional attachment has already been effected in 124 cases. The **benami properties attached include deposits in bank accounts** and immovable properties.
5. The Government has put in place empowered institutions for efficient implementation of the amended law.
6. In exercise of powers conferred under **sub-section (2) of section 28 read with section 59 of the amended Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act, 1988,** vide Notification No. SO 3290E, dated 25.10.2016 the Central Government has notified specified Income-tax authorities to act as Initiating Officer, Approving Authority and Administrator in respect of benami transactions. Further, vide Notification No. SO 3288E, dated 25.10.2016, the Adjudicating Authority has been notified.

Two pacts ink for Sukhoi jets

India and Russia inked two pacts for long-term maintenance support for Sukhoi-30MKI jets, which are the latest and most potent fighters in the IAF combat fleet but have suffered from poor serviceability, engine problems and lack of spares over the years.

What

1. **IAF has so far inducted 240 Sukhoi-30MKIs of the 272 contracted from Russia** at a cost of over \$12 billion, with the bulk of them being "licensed produced" by defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL).
2. But apart from the serviceability of the Sukhoi fleet, which has improved from the **earlier 52% to over 60%** now, IAF has also lost seven of the fighters in crashes till now. The last Sukhoi crash took place near the Utarlai airbase in Barmer area of Rajasthan.
3. As per the new pacts, **Russian United Aircraft Corporation and United Engine Corporation** will supply HAL with spares, engines and technical assistance for five years to begin with. In effect, said officials, the process of getting spares for the Sukhois will now be speeded up to "just a few weeks", instead of the existing waiting period of one to two years.

Commission for backward classes approved

The Union Cabinet has approved **setting up of a new commission for backward classes as a constitutional body**. The National Commission for **Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (NCSBC)** will replace the **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)**.

What

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a cabinet meeting and approved amending the **Constitution and inserting Article 338B for setting up the new commission**.
2. The new constitutional body, **National Commission for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes**, will function under a chairperson, vice chairperson. Three other members will be on the board.
3. There have been demands in Parliament for grant of constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes to enable it to hear the grievances of OBCs in the same manner like that of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (**constituted under Article 338**) and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (**constituted under Article 338A**).

India joins WHO to end TB

India among other countries in the **South East Asian Region**, which bear half of the global tuberculosis burden, signed a '**call for action**' and pledged to scale up measures to end the disease by 2030. **India reports 2.8 million new TB cases annually** and nearly half a million deaths due to the disease. Health ministers from countries in **WHO South-East Asia Region**, which bear half the global TB burden and WHO signed a '**Call for Action for ending TB**', pledging to scale-up efforts and implement adequately funded, innovative, multi-sectoral and comprehensive measures to achieve the global target to end the disease by 2030.

What

1. **Six of the region's countries** -- Bangladesh, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand -- are among the 30 high TB burden nations globally.
2. The disease continues to be a leading cause of death and lost productive years in the crucial age group of 15-49 years causing catastrophic expenses, financial losses, outright impoverishment of individuals and households and massive aggregate costs to national economies.
3. **The global targets seek to reduce TB mortality by 90 per cent and incidence by 80 per cent by 2030.**
4. The initiative also stresses on increasing government and partner budgetary allocations to enable national TB plans to be fully funded.

5. India represents the single highest number of TB cases in the world, Indian government has approached the "challenge" to end the disease in "all seriousness" and has accelerated action to meet the 'End TB target by 2025'.
6. WHO's South-East Asia Region comprises **Bangladesh, Bhutan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste.**

Navy fires SAM from INS Vikramaditya

The **Indian Navy successfully conducted the maiden trial firing of newly installed surface-to-air missile (SAM) system** from its **aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya**, an official statement said. During the firing carried out in the Arabian Sea, the missile was fired against a live low flying high speed target. The target was successfully engaged and destroyed.

What

1. The test was carried out, as part of the **Operational Readiness Inspection of the Western Fleet** by Western Naval Command chief Vice Admiral Girish Luthra.
2. The missile marks a significant milestone in providing air interception and defence capabilities, thus enhancing operational capabilities of the Navy's aircraft carrier and the fleet.

World Conference on Environment

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee inaugurated the **'World Conference on Environment'** organized by the **National Green Tribunal** in New Delhi March 25, 2017. Speaking on the occasion, the President welcomed the fact that **conservation has now become inclusive and participatory.** He quoted Mahatma Gandhi and said **"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed".**

What

1. Recent studies and systematic reviews indicate that **environmental factors are responsible for an estimated 24% of the global burden of disease** in terms of healthy life years lost and **23 % of all deaths.**
2. Children are the worst sufferers of the adverse impact of environmental diseases. 24% of all deaths under the age of 15 are due to diarrhoea, malaria and respiratory diseases – all of which are environment related. 19% of the deaths caused by Cancer worldwide are attributed to carcinogens that unmindful industrialization produces.
3. The President complimented **the National Green Tribunal** – India's premier environment watch dog for facilitating this forum for wide ranging discussions on environmental issues of universal concern.
4. Global growth is subject to responsible management of the planet's natural resources. Excessive consumption of natural resources has to be impeded. He expressed happiness that over the past decade, consciousness about environmental concerns has grown and also resulted in action on part of governments throughout the world.
5. It was this consciousness that got reflected in the **Paris Agreement under the aegis of the United Nation's Framework Convention on Climate Change.**

'Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav (RSM) – 2017'

The **Fifth 'Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav (RSM) – 2017'** was organized in **North Eastern Region of India by Ministry of Culture from 23rd to 31st March, 2017.** The festival was inaugurated at Parade Ground, Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh on 23rd March, 2017 and extend to other North Eastern states including, Dimapur (Nagaland) from 26th to 28th March, Majuli (Assam) from 27th to 29th March, Imphal (Manipur) from 27th to 29th March, Aizawl (Mizoram) from 28th to 30th March, Gangtok (Sikkim) from 28th to 30th March, Shillong (Meghalaya) from 29th to 31st March and Khowai (Tripura) from 29th to 31st March.

What

1. The **essential thrust of Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav (RSM) is present rich diversity and uniqueness of Indian culture** and to promote the cultural inter-

linkages amongst the states to strengthen National integration and also to bid the artists of other parts of the country with the people of North East in a single thread of culture.

2. The Mahotsav was envisioned to preserve, promote and popularize the heritage and cultural diversity of Indian culture and reconnect the new generation with Indian culture.
3. **The festival was implemented through the seven Zonal Cultural Centres and other organization under Ministry of Culture.**
4. The North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC), Dimapur has been entrusted with the responsibility as the nodal agency to carry forward the execution of the National Cultural Festival.
5. Each Zonal Cultural Centre has been provided with slots to present their arts during the festival which would showcase an amalgamation of **'Ek Bharat, Srestha Bharat', 'HamaariSanskriti, HamaariPanchaan' and 'Swachh India'**.

'Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana' to be launched

"Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana", a 'Scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens belonging to BPL category' will be launched in District Nellore, Andhra Pradesh on 1st April, 2017.

What

1. The Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens will be distributed in Camp mode and the Scheme will be implemented through the sole implementing agency, **'Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)'**, (a PSU under M/o SJ&E), which will undertake **one year free maintenance of the aids & assisted living devices.**
2. The devices will help the Senior Citizens to overcome their age related physical impairment and to lead a dignified and productive life with minimal dependence on care givers or other members of the family.
3. The ambitious Scheme, **first of its kind in the country** is expected to benefit 5,20,000 Senior Citizens over a period of the 3 years.
4. The Scheme **aims at providing Senior Citizens, belonging to BPL category and suffering from any of the age related disability/infirmity** viz. Low vision, Hearing impairment, Loss of teeth and Locomotor disability, with such assisted-living devices which can restore near normalcy in their bodily functions, overcoming the disability/infirmity manifested.
5. The assistive devices shall be of high quality and conforming to the standards laid down by the Bureau of Indian Standards, wherever applicable.
6. **This is a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Central Government.**
7. The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the **"Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund"**.

Under the Scheme, the following Aids and Assisted-Living Devices will be provided:-

1. Walking sticks
2. Elbow crutches
3. Walkers / Crutches
4. Tripods / Quadpods
5. Hearing Aids
6. Wheelchair
7. Artificial Dentures
8. Spectacles

Salient features of the Scheme are as under:-

1. **Free of cost distribution of the devices**, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens.
2. In case of multiple disabilities/infirmities manifested in the same person, the assistive devices will be given in respect of each disability/impairment.
3. **The devices will help the Senior Citizens to overcome their age related physical impairment** and to lead a dignified and productive life with minimal dependence on care givers or other members of the family.
4. The Scheme will be implemented through the sole implementing agency, '**Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO)**', (a PSU under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).
5. ALIMCO will undertake one year free maintenance of the aids & assisted living devices.
6. Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector.
7. As far as possible, 30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.
8. The State Government/UT Administration/District Level Committee can also utilize the data of BPL beneficiaries receiving Old Age Pension under the NSAP or any other Scheme of the State/UT for identification of senior citizens belonging to BPL category.
9. The devices will be distributed in Camp mode.
10. The expected financial outlay over the next three years (i.e. upto 2019-20) is Rs. 483.6 Crores.
11. The ambitious Scheme, first of its kind in the country is expected to benefit 5,20,000 Senior Citizens over a period of the 3 years.

Manipur economic blockade lifted

The **four-month long Manipur economic blockade imposed by the United Naga Council (UNC)** was lifted. The resolution of the **lifting of the indefinite blockade** was taken following an agreement in a tripartite talk, involving two UNC constituents — **All Naga Students' Association Manipur (ANSAM)** and **Naga Women Union (NWU)** — and representatives of the central and Manipur governments.

What

1. **The UNC had blocked the national highways 2 and 37 since November 1**, last year to protest the then Okram Ibobi Singh-led Congress government's decision to creation of seven new districts by the then Congress government in October, 2016.
2. **The tripartite talks were held first on February 7 in Imphal** for ending the blockade on two national highways **NH 2 and NH 37**, but they had failed to make any headway as the UNC refused to allow the seven new districts to be carved out.
3. The stake holders had earlier met in Delhi on February 4 and the Centre had expressed hope that the blockade would end soon.

National Conference on Down syndrome

Shri Thaawarchand Gehlot, Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment inaugurated a "**National Conference on Down Syndrome**" in the presence of Ministers of State for SJ&E Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar and Shri Vijay Sampla. The Conference was organized by **The National Trust for the welfare of persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities** under M/o SJ&E in collaboration with Muskaan, a registered organisation of the National Trust.

What

1. **Down syndrome is a chromosomal condition** associated with intellectual and learning disabilities. Delayed development and behavioural problems are often reported in children with **Down syndrome**.
2. **Persons with Down syndrome have 47 chromosomes as compared to 46 in majority of people.** This one Extra chromosome causes its own impact and slows down learning process.
3. It impacts neurological functioning causing impairment of intellectual functions e.g. analytical thinking, complex abstractions and judgement etc. Good schooling, loving family, learning and work opportunities make them grow up to be responsible, loving and cheerful persons.
4. Their emotions and needs are like any other person of the same age. Accepting and respecting family/community is a big support to their growth and development.
5. **Persons with Down syndrome are working in various areas** and there is a need to recognise their talent and create environment conducive for Persons with Down syndrome.
6. People with Down Syndrome can and do lead full and rewarding lives and contribute as valued and equal members of their communities. Anyone who has taken birth is an integral part of our human resources and people's participation is very necessary for successful implementation of the government's schemes.
7. **Down Syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of chromosome 21** and is associated with physical growth and delays, characteristic facial features and mild to moderate intellectual disability.

Redefine blindness to meet WHO stipulation

The government is set to change a **four-decade-old definition of blindness to bring it in line with the WHO criteria** and ensure the Indian data on blindness meets the global estimates.

What

1. As **defined under the National Programme for Control of Blindness (NPCB)**, a person unable to count fingers from a distance of six metres is categorised as "blind" in India, against the WHO's stipulation of three metres.
2. The definition of blindness at par with the WHO's criteria. Because of the current definition, we project a higher figure of blind people from India at any international forum. Thus India gets presented in a poor light compared to other countries.

RTI applications can be filed orally

The applications under Right to Information (RTI) Act can be filed orally, Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh said. **Section 6 (1) of the Act** provides that where RTI request cannot be made in writing, the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) or State Public Information Officer (SPIO), as the case may be, shall render all reasonable assistance to the person making the request orally to reduce the same in writing.

What

1. The transparency law has provisions for citizens to file RTI request orally but nodal departments for such matters in both the central and state governments have not yet come out with rules and regulations in this regard, say civil rights activists.
2. Besides filing RTI requests orally, the law makes it mandatory for the CPIO or SPIO to provide all assistance to a sensorily disabled person in accessing the information is provided under the Act.
3. But none of the nodal departments for RTI matters at the Centre and in state governments have come out with rules and regulations for this.
4. The RTI Act empowers citizens to seek time-bound response from government department on their query related to governance matters.

128 regional air routes under UDAN

Five airlines will operate on 128 routes under the regional connectivity scheme wherein fares are capped at **Rs 2,500 for one-hour flights**. Over 45 unserved and under-served airports would be connected under the scheme — **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik)** that seeks to make flying more affordable. Announcing the names of winning bidders and the routes, Civil Aviation Secretary R N Choubey said **128 routes are being awarded to a total of five operators**.

What

1. The operators are **Air India subsidiary Airline Allied Services, SpiceJet, Air Deccan, Air Odisha and Turbo Megha**. They would be operating 19-78 seater aircraft.
2. The airports that would be connected under UDAN include Bhatinda, Puducherry and Shimla.
3. On each flight, 50 per cent of the seats would have a cap of Rs 2,500 per seat/hour. Under UDAN, the operators would be extended viability gap funding.
4. The amount is estimated to be around Rs 205 crore per annum for the operators chosen in the first round of bidding.
5. The scheme provides for various benefits including no airport charges and three-year exclusivity on the routes.

Indian Navy inducts INLCU L51

Indian Navy has commissioned latest indigenously developed **surveillance ship INLCU L51**. It was commissioned at a ceremony held in **Port Blair; Andaman & Nicobar Command of Navy INLCU L51** is the first of the eight ships of the LCU Mk IV Class. It has been built and designed indigenously by Kolkata based M/s **Garden Reach Ship Builders & Engineers Ltd**.

What

1. The ship is **62.8 metre in length** and **11 metre in breadth**.
2. It has **displacement capacity of 900 tons**. It is fitted with state-of-the art Electronic Warfare suite for early detection of adversaries.
3. It has 30 mm CRN -91 guns, 12.7 mm Heavy Machine Guns and 7.62 mm Medium Machine Guns.
4. It will be part of the navy's fleet deployed for maritime surveillance of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and to check poaching, illegal fishing, drug trafficking and other unlawful activities in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).

Liberalised visa regime rolls out

A liberalised and simplified visa regime comes into force from April 1, 2017 which the government hopes would make travel to India, particularly for business, tourism and medical purposes, easier. The union cabinet had approved the changes in India's visa regime at its meeting on November 30, with the objective of making India an attractive destination for foreign direct investment and portfolio investment, and also boosts earnings from tourism, medical tourism and exports.

What

1. The **cabinet had liberalised the e-Visa scheme, tourist, business, medical and employment visas** and suggested introduction of new categories of visas such as 'intern visa' and 'film visa'.
2. With effect, e-visa stands sub divided into three categories - e-tourist visa, e-business visa and e-medical visa.
3. The **e-visa facility has been extended to nationals of 161 countries for entry through 24 airports**, from the earlier 16 airports. Entry will also be allowed at three seaports - Cochin, Goa and Mangalore - to tap the potential of cruise tourism from abroad. The service will also be provided soon from Mumbai and Chennai seaports.
4. The window for application under e-visa scheme has been increased from 30 days to 120 days. The duration of stay on e-visa has been increased from 30 days to 60

- days. Double entry has been allowed on e-tourist and e-business visa and triple entry on e-medical visa.
5. Separate immigration counters and facilitation desks to assist medical tourist have been provided at Indian airports namely, **Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad**, a statement from the government's Press Information Bureau said.
 6. The multiple entry tourist and business visas for a period of five years will now be available to nationals of most of countries. Upon urgent requests, business visa and medical visa will be granted within 48 hours of application.
 7. As many as 94 missions of India abroad now have biometric enrolment facilities that has enabled these to start giving five-year long term tourist and business visas from March A new category of visa, the intern, or 'I' visa, is being **offered since March 1, 2017**, to a foreigner intending to pursue internship in Indian companies, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This, however, is subject to certain checks and conditions.
 8. The conditions include that the period of visa is restricted to the duration of internship programme or one year, whichever is less.
 9. The intern visa will be granted immediately after completion of graduation/post-graduation. Intern visa will be issued with prior clearance from the Home Ministry in case of internship in NGOs or internship involving visit to protected and restricted areas.
 10. **Film visa, or 'f' visa, is another new category** introduced with maximum duration of one year with multiple entry facility.
 11. The minimum salary limit of for grant of employment visa, which is presently \$25,000 per annum, has also been modified. This will facilitate foreign nationals engaged as teaching faculty by the Central Higher Educational Institutions.
 12. The government hopes that the liberalised visa regime would increase the numbers of foreigners travelling to India "substantially in the coming years".

2 ILO conventions approved

The government has approved ratification of **two fundamental conventions of Labour Organization (ILO)** to address concerns related to child labour. The Cabinet approves ratification of two fundamental conventions of ILO — **Minimum Age Convention (No 138)** concerns minimum age for admission to employment and **Worst Form of Child Labour Convention (No 182)** concerns prohibition and immediate action for elimination of the worst form of Child labour.

What

1. This is a step towards **eradication of child labour in the country** and India would be legally binding to comply with the provision of the two conventions.
2. India would join majority of countries who have adopted the legislation to prohibit and place severe restrictions on the employment and work of children.
3. India is a founder member of the **Labour Organization (ILO)**, which came into existence in 1919. At present, the ILO has 187 members.
4. The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up of International standards in the form of Conventions, Recommendations and Protocol.
5. **India has so far ratified 45 Conventions**, out of which 42 are in force. Out of these 4 are Fundamental or Core Conventions.
6. The government has taken up a multi-pronged strategy including both stringent legislative and project-based approach to address the concerns related to child labour.
7. There is a need to further accentuate its initiatives to ensure a safe and fulfilled future for the children of our country by ensuring proper implementation of the provisions of the **Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986** which now completely prohibits employment or work of children below 14 years in any occupation or process.

8. The momentum of the recent initiatives taken to eradicate child labour has to be maintained as elimination of child labour is also crucial for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
9. The ratification of the Convention No 138 and 182 would move a step ahead in the direction of achieving the goal of eradication of child labour from the country as it would be legally binding to comply with the provisions of the Conventions.
10. **Presently, Convention 138 has been ratified by 169 countries** and Convention 182 has been ratified by 180 countries. Hence, by ratifying these two core conventions, India would join majority of the countries who have adopted the legislation to prohibit and place severe restrictions on the employment and work of children.

First tiger reserve to get official mascot

Kanha in Madhya Pradesh became **first tiger reserve in India** to officially introduce a mascot named **Bhoorsingh the Barasingha**, to create a better connect with its visitors, especially the younger generation. The mascot Bhoorsingh will soon feature in more artwork, posters and merchandise for the park management at Kanha.

What

1. The mascot aims to present the hard ground swamp deer (Barasingha) as the spirit of the reserve and spread awareness to save it from possible extinction.
2. It will also **create a unique identity for Kanha**, and also spread awareness and allow the younger generation to connect with all wildlife.
3. The mascot has been **designed by cartoonist Rohan Chakravarty**, who runs a popular website greenhumour.com which showcases over 350 cartoons, comics and illustrations on wildlife and nature conservation, environment, sustainability etc.

International

World's first country to ban metal mining

Central America's smallest nation **El Salvador** became **first country in the world to ban metal mining nationwide**. In this regard, it has passed a law that bans all mining for gold and other metals. The law imposes broad prohibition on the extraction of minerals to protect the nation's allegedly quite fragile environment, water reservoirs and reduce social tensions.

What

1. The new law bans **all exploration, extraction and processing of metals** both in open pits and mines.
2. It bans the **use of cyanide and mercury for mining**. It does not apply to quarrying or the mining of coal, salt and other non-metallic resources.

Pakistan test-fires surface-to-sea missile

Pakistan Navy has conducted a **successful test of a land-based anti-ship missile**, bolstering the operational reach of the country's navy to launch long-range, anti-ship missiles from land. The trial of the missile was conducted from **the coastal region** and the missile secured a hit on a target placed at sea.

What

Background

1. According to UN, **El Salvador is one of the most densely populated countries** and second-most environmentally degraded in America after Haiti, making it sensitive to potential impact of large mining projects.
2. The new mining ban law comes after a **long-dragged dispute over a proposed gold mine** by Pac Rim Cayman, a unit of Canadian-Australian company OceanaGold Corp over the environmental issue.
3. In October 2016, El Salvador Government had won an international arbitration case filed by Pac Rim over a rejected licence to build gold mine in the country's north.
4. The international arbitration panel had rejected the company's claim for compensation.

1. The **missile is equipped with advanced technology and avionics**, which enable engagement of targets at sea with a high degree of accuracy.
2. On January 24, Pakistan had test-fired 2,200-km range indigenously-developed surface to surface nuclear-capable missile Ababeel. The missile is capable of delivering multiple warheads, using Multiple Independent Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology.
3. The Ababeel test flight was aimed at validating various design and technical parameters of the weapon system.
4. During the same month, submarine-launched cruise missile Babur-III was successfully test-fired. Babur weapons system incorporates advanced aerodynamics and avionics that can strike targets both at land and sea with high accuracy at a range of 700kms.
5. Babur-III is a low flying, terrain hugging missile, which carries certain stealth features and is capable of carrying various types of warheads.

China-backed AIIB

China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has approved the membership of 13 more countries, including US' close-ally Canada, seen as a coup for the Communist giant after Washington discouraged major Western powers from signing up.

What

1. The **AIIB has approved the applications of Afghanistan, Armenia, Fiji, China's Hong Kong and Timor Leste** from the region and eight non-regional prospective members including Belgium, Canada, Ethiopia, Hungary, Ireland, Peru, Sudan and Venezuela.
2. The interest in joining AIIB from around the world affirms the rapid progress we have made to establish the bank as an international institution.
3. The AIIB has several major European countries among its shareholders that joined despite Washington's objections.
4. The **AIIB was officially established late last year with 57 founding members**, with authorised capital of USD 100 billion, China is the largest shareholder with **26.06 per cent voting shares**.
5. **India is the second largest shareholder with 7.5 per cent followed by Russia 5.93 per cent** and Germany with 4.5 per cent.
6. The 13 prospective members will officially join AIIB once they complete the required domestic processes and deposit the first installment of capital with the bank.
7. The shares allocated to the new prospective members come from the bank's existing pool of unallocated shares, according to the bank.
8. With 57 founding members, **the AIIB which was established in 2015 aims to provide financing to address the daunting infrastructure needs across Asia**.
9. The 13 new additions will take the total number of members of AIIB to 70.

Global Nutrition Report 2016

India is ranked 170th in terms of anemia among women as per the Global Nutrition Report 2016 and 114th in terms of prevalence of under-five stunting, Health Minister J P Nadda said.

What

1. As per **the Global Nutrition Report 2016**, India is ranked 114th in terms of under-five stunting prevalence, **120th in terms of under-five wasting prevalence** and **170th in terms of anemia prevalence in women**.
2. Global Nutrition Targets were set for 2025 in 65th World Health Assembly 2012 for stunting and wasting in under-five children and anemia in women of reproductive age group.
3. The targets are - **childhood stunting: 40 per cent reduction in the number of stunted children**, childhood wasting: reduce and maintain childhood wasting to

less than 5 per cent, anemia in women reproductive age: achieve a 50 per cent reduction of anemia in women of reproductive age.

UN talks on global nuclear weapons ban

More than 100 countries are set to launch the **first UN talks on a global nuclear weapons ban** over objections from the major nuclear powers. Some 123 UN members announced in October that they would launch the UN conference to negotiate a legally binding nuclear ban treaty, even as most of the **world's declared and undeclared nuclear powers voted against the talks. Britain, France, Israel, Russia and the United States** voted no, while **China, India and Pakistan** abstained.

What

1. Even Japan — **the only country to have suffered atomic attacks, in 1945** — voted against the talks, saying the lack of consensus over the negotiations could undermine progress on effective nuclear disarmament.
2. The countries leading the effort include **Austria, Ireland, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa and Sweden**. They say the threat of nuclear disaster is growing thanks to mounting tensions fanned by North Korea's nuclear weapons program and an unpredictable new administration in Washington.
3. Supporters point to successful grassroots movements that led to the prohibition of landmines in 1997 and cluster munitions in 2008.
4. No progress has been made on nuclear disarmament in recent years despite commitments made by **the major nuclear powers to work toward disarmament under the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**.
5. Then-president **Barack Obama announced a drive in 2009** to reduce the role of nuclear weapons and eventually eliminate them.
6. His administration strongly encouraged NATO allies to vote against this year's UN negotiations, saying a ban would obstruct cooperation to respond to nuclear threats from adversaries.

Economy

Parliament passes Finance Bill 2017

The Parliament approved the **Finance Bill 2017** after the Lok Sabha rejected five amendments moved to it by the Upper House with regard to curbing more powers to taxmen and a cap on donation by companies to political parties.

What

1. With regard to the taxation amendments proposed by the Rajya Sabha, The current position will continue and the government as a matter of **"abundant caution"** and to protect whistle-blowers, the bill has specified that the "satisfaction note" will not be given to the target of investigation.
2. Since 1961, **There is no example that the target of investigation was revealed** the satisfaction note which forms the basis of investigation with regard to tax evasion.
3. The Rajya Sabha also approved an amendment that there should be a cap of 7.5% of net profit of the last three financial years for donation to political parties. It also approved a provision to disclose the name of political parties to which contribution has been made by a company.

First Loan Agreement with NDB

The Loan Agreement for New Development Bank (NDB) financing of US\$ 350 Million for Development and Upgradation of **Major District Roads Project in Madhya Pradesh** was signed between Government of India and the New Development Bank (NDB). **This is the First Loan Agreement for NDB assisted project in India.**

What

1. The objective of the Project is upgradation of major district roads in the state of Madhya Pradesh **to improve connectivity of the interior areas of the state** with the national and state highway networks.
2. The Project would include **upgradation, rehabilitation or reconstruction of approx. 1,500 (One thousand Five Hundred Only) km of district roads** to intermediate lane, all-weather standards, with road safety features and improved road asset maintenance & management.
3. The project outcome is to improve transport connectivity to the interior regions and resultant boost to economic activity in the rural hinterland.
4. The **project implementation is 5 years**. Government of Madhya Pradesh and the MPRDC are the implementing agencies.

GST supplementary bills passed

The Lok Sabha passed the much-awaited **Central Goods and Services Tax (GST) Bill, Integrated GST Bill, Compensation GST Bill and Union Territory GST Bill 2017**. All the four bills that were moved by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley in the lower house was passed by voice vote. The historic GST regime is now closer to meet its July 1 target of rollout.

What

1. Noting that both the **central and state governments are pooling their sovereignty to have this tax regime**, despite being one political entity, remained different economic entities with states having different taxes.
2. The GST Council has recommended a four-tier tax structure — **5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent**. On top of the highest slab, a cess will be imposed on luxury and demerit goods to compensate the states for revenue loss in the first five years of GST implementation.
3. However, the Central GST (CGST) law has pegged the peak rate at 20 per cent and a similar rate has been prescribed in the State GST (SGST) law, which takes the peak rate to **40 per cent which will come into force only in financial exigencies**. Jaitley said the cess would be transient for a period of 5 years so that the proceeds can be utilised to compensate the states.
4. Touted as the biggest taxation reform since Independence, GST will subsume central excise, service tax, VAT and other local levies to create an uniform market. GST is expected to boost GDP growth by about 2 per cent and check tax evasion.

What is GST?

1. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) will **replace nearly a dozen central and state levies into a single national sales tax**.
2. It will make the movement of goods cheaper and seamless across the country.
3. It would be far simpler than the current system, where a good is taxed multiple times and at different rates.

What will be the rates?

1. There would be **four tax slabs of 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent**, plus a levy on taxes on luxury items like cars, aerated drinks and tobacco products to compensate states for any revenue losses in the first five years.
2. The GST council is yet to decide which goods fall in which slab. The GST rates will remain broadly in line with the existing rates. To keep inflation under check, essential items including food, which presently constitute roughly half of the consumer inflation basket, will be taxed at zero rate.

How will consumer benefit from the GST?

1. With the implementation of GST, **consumers will not be subjected to double taxation**. All taxes that are levied while purchasing good will include both the central government's taxes as well as the state government's taxes.
2. The move would deter state governments from indiscriminately increasing taxes fearing public backlash.

IBBI notifies IU Regulations

The **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI)**, in exercise of its powers conferred by **Sections 196, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216** read with **Section 240 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code)**, has notified the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Information Utilities) Regulations, 2017**. The Regulations provide for a framework for registration and regulation of information utilities.

What

1. An **Information Utility (IU)** stores financial information that helps to establish defaults as well as verify claims expeditiously and thereby facilitate completion of transactions under the Code in a time bound manner.
2. It constitutes a key pillar of the insolvency and bankruptcy ecosystem, the other three being the Adjudicating Authority (National Company Law Tribunal and Debt Recovery Tribunal), the IBBI and Insolvency Professionals.
3. The Regulations lay down the **eligibility criteria for registration of an IU**. A public company with a minimum net worth of Rs.50 crore is eligible. More than half of the directors of its Governing Board shall be independent directors.
4. The IU, its promoters, its directors, its key managerial personnel, and persons holding more than 5% of its paid-up equity share capital or its total voting power, shall be fit and proper persons. Ordinarily a person should not hold more than 10% of paid up equity share capital, while certain specified persons may hold up to 25% of paid up equity share capital.
5. The **Regulations enable the IBBI to lay down Technical Standards, through guidelines**, for the performance of core services and other services by IUs. The Technical Standards shall inter-alia provide for matters relating to authentication and verification of information to be stored with the IU, registration of users, data integrity and security, porting of information, inter-operability among information utilities etc.
6. The Regulations require that each registered user and each information submitted to the IU shall have a unique identifier.
7. The Regulations set out the duties to be performed and services to be delivered by an IU. In order to safeguard the interests of the user, the regulations require an IU to have a grievance redressal policy as well as an exit management plan.
8. An IU shall also have a compliance officer who shall ensure compliance with the provisions of the Code and shall, immediately and independently, report to the IBBI any non-compliance of any provision of the Code observed by him. **The Regulations will be effective from 1st April, 2017.**

Sebi's regulatory framework to assess by WB, IMF

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)** will go through a third-party assessment of its **regulatory framework** by the **World Bank and the IMF this year**, an exercise which will help the former align itself closer to global regulatory standards and get feedback on its current functioning. The assessment will be conducted as part of the **Financial Sector Assessment Program (FSAP)**, a **joint programme of the IMF and World Bank established in 1999**. The programme analyses the resilience of a country's financial sector, the quality of its regulatory and supervisory framework, and the capacity to manage and resolve financial crises.

What

1. **This is the third time Sebi is going through this programme**, with previous supervisions in 2012 and 2001, which was a pilot assessment.
2. In September 2010, **IMF had made it mandatory for 25 jurisdictions (including India)**, with systemically important financial sectors to undergo financial stability assessments under the FSAP every five years.
3. The programme will test the regulations that are being prescribed by Sebi and the manner in which they are being implemented. The market impact of the regulations on the financial sector, including the cost of compliance, will be

scrutinised. Accounting and auditing standards as well as financial disclosures by listed firms will be examined.

4. **IMF's 2012 "detailed assessment report"** published the subsequent year had asked Sebi to focus on strengthening its supervision of securities market intermediaries including fund managers.
5. The regulator has in the past been criticised for trying to **micro-manage the functioning of market players**. Increasing compliance costs have also been an area of concern, especially for brokers and mutual funds.
6. **Sebi has taken a number of big-bang initiatives in the past few years** which include implementing the Takeover Code, minimum public shareholding norms and uniform know-your-customer norms. It has introduced a **new corporate governance framework based on the Companies Act, 2013**.

4 public sector banks watch under AQR

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has put **four public sector lenders**, including **IDBI Bank** and **Indian Overseas Bank**, under watch and advised them to stay off risky assets so that their financial health is not stressed further. While UCO Bank also figures in the list, the name of the fourth lender could not be immediately ascertained.

What

1. These lenders were on the RBI's radar as **their financial health may not improve after the central bank's asset quality review (AQR)** comes to an end on March 31.
2. These banks have been advised by both the Finance Ministry and the RBI to improve their financials, look for avenues for capital infusion and create a self-sustaining model by selling assets.
3. **RBI had embarked on the AQR exercise from December 2015** and asked banks to recognise some top defaulting accounts as non-performing assets (NPAs) and provide for them.
4. The move resulted in a spike in **bad assets with lenders recognising over Rs 1 lakh crore of bad assets** in the December quarter alone.
5. Kolkata-based UCO Bank's bottomline too is expected to remain under stress during the fourth quarter ending March 31.
6. Its gross NPA during the third quarter surged by 49 per cent to Rs 2,181.26 crore and the loss was Rs 437 crore.
7. IOB was also put under 'prompt corrective action' in 2015 when its gross NPA touched 10 per cent.
8. The RBI has specified certain regulatory trigger points as part of the prompt corrective action (PCA) framework.
9. They include three parameters -- **capital to risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR)**, **net NPA** and **Return on Assets (RoA)**, for initiation of certain structured and discretionary steps.

Birth of a telecom giant

The **Aditya Birla Group** and **British telecom giant Vodafone Plc** announced the merger of their wireless telephony businesses, creating the largest telecom operator in the country. At present, **Vodafone and Idea together have a customer base of 400 million**. Their joint revenue share is 44 per cent but is likely to go down to 41 per cent after the merger is complete at the end of 2018.

What

1. **Bharti Airtel, which used to be the biggest market player till now**, will be a distant second, with 268 million customers in India. Revenue-wise, too, Airtel would be on the second spot with a market share of 35.6 per cent, along with Telenor. Airtel and Telenor are planning to merge their operations.
2. **According to the merger plan, in the next four years**, the Birlas have the right to acquire an additional 9.5 per cent stake from Vodafone, at Rs 130 per share, implying that the merged entity's equity value would be Rs 94,600 crore.

- The regulatory regime will have to ensure that benefits of effective competition continue to be availed by customers.
- Vodafone will also explore strategic options for its 42 per cent stake in Indus Towers.** Colao said Vodafone would sell its entire stake or a part of it, depending upon offers it gets.

BMB to be merged with SBI

After Cabinet approval on the **merger of five associate banks with the State Bank of India**, the Government has decided to merge **Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB)** with the country's largest lender. **BMB will be merged with State Bank of India (SBI)** to ensure greater banking services outreach to a larger number of women, at a faster pace.

What

- The **objectives of affordable credit to women** as well as propagation of women-centric products need to be quickly achieved through a wider network and lower cost of funds.
- The decision to merge BMB with SBI has been taken in view of the advantage of the large network of SBI among other things.
- In the three years since BMB was established, it has extended loans of Rs 192 crore to women borrowers, while the SBI group has provided loans of about Rs.46,000 crore to women borrowers.
- Earlier, the Cabinet had cleared the merger of five associate banks --- State Bank of Bikaner and Jaipur (SBBJ), State Bank of Mysore (SBM), State Bank of Travancore (SBT), State Bank of Hyderabad (SBH) and State Bank of Patiala (SBP) -- with SBI. April one will be the record date for the merger.
- After the merger, SBI is set to be among the top 50 large banks of the world. SBI was ranked 52 in the world in terms of assets in 2015, according to Bloomberg, and a merger will see it break into the top 50.

Science and Technology

MoPNG e Seva launched

Minister of State (I/C) for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan launched **MoP&NG e-Seva**, a **dedicated grievances redressal platform on Social Media for all queries and grievances relating to Oil and Gas Sector.**

What

- The **MOPNG e-Seva is an integrated grievances redressal platform across social media** for all Oil & Gas related service issues.
- This portal will be a **single point interface** for all customers to reach out to the government for addressing their feedback or grievances related to Oil & Gas Sector on social media.
- MOPNG e-Seva will also deliver 24 x 7 supports for consumers.**
- The e-Seva portal will serve as a single point for queries on Twitter and Facebook to begin with;** and other social media platforms in due course. A team of Nodal Officers from Oil Companies and Allied Services have been formed to address issues on real-time basis.
- Conversations are being tracked on real-time basis and a standard operating procedure has been put into place for immediate intervention and closure by concerned officials of Companies under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- Oil Companies will continue to do regular redressal through their respective channels for complaints redressal, the MOPNG e-Seva is an exclusive integrated portal that would handle queries that are received on the official handles of Petroleum Minister, Petroleum Ministry and MOPNG e-Seva.

India first to get weather alert technology

IBM and The Weather Company, an IBM Business announced the launch of the **Mesh Network Alerts technology in India.** The mobile alerting platform can deliver

weather and disaster alerts to remote places without Internet. Designed for low bandwidth environments, the Mesh network technology enables people in low internet connectivity area to exchange messages.

What

1. The **technology developed by IBM**, links the user's mobile phone with other nearby phones, allowing devices to talk to each other without using cell towers. The network provides weather information, maps and alerts via The Weather Channel app.
2. In the Mesh, each smartphone becomes a node that stores the message and passes it to the next nearest device, eliminating the need for a cellular network.
3. Today, **India has the second largest smartphone market in terms of active smartphone users** but at times of severe weather the cellular networks get congested, connectivity is intermittent and data access is often limited.
4. The **Mesh Network Alerts** can help send notification of an upcoming disaster that could help people and their families stay safe. It's a matter of great pride for us as this technology is **first introduced in India**.

Massive brown dwarf discovered

Scientists have identified a record breaking brown dwarf with the 'purest' composition that is **about 90 times as massive as Jupiter**, located **750 light years away** in the outermost reaches of our galaxy. Brown dwarfs are intermediate between planets and fully-fledged stars. **Their mass is too small for full nuclear fusion of hydrogen to helium** (with a consequent release of energy) to take place, but they are usually significantly more massive than planets.

What

1. The object, **known as SDSS J0104+1535**, is located 750 light years away in the constellation of Pisces, SDSS J0104+1535 is made of gas that is around 250 times purer than the Sun, so consists of more than 99.99 per cent hydrogen and helium.
2. Estimated to have formed about 10 billion years ago, measurements also suggest it has a mass equivalent to 90 times that of Jupiter, making it the most massive brown dwarf found to date.
3. It was previously not known if brown dwarfs could form from such primordial gas, and the discovery points the way to a larger undiscovered population of extremely pure brown dwarfs from our Galaxy's ancient past.
4. **SDSS J0104+1535 has been classified** as an L type ultra-subdwarf using its optical and near-infrared spectrum, measured using the European Southern Observatory's Very Large Telescope (VLT).

MRO completes 50,000th orbit

NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) has completed its 50,000th orbit this week, continuing to compile the most **sharp-eyed global coverage** ever accomplished by a camera at the red planet. The orbiter continues diverse science observations of Mars and communications-relay service for two active **Mars rovers, Curiosity and Opportunity**. MRO's Context Camera (CTX) exploits a sweet spot in the balance between resolution and image file size. With a resolution of about six metres per pixel in images of the Martian surface, it has provided a library of images **now covering 99.1 per cent of Mars**.

What

1. That is about **equivalent to the land area of Earth**. No other camera ever sent to Mars has photographed so much of the planet in such high resolution.
2. The Context Camera has taken about 90,000 images since the spacecraft **began examining Mars from orbit in late 2006**.
3. Each one reveals shapes of features down to sizes smaller than a tennis court, in a swath of ground about 30 kilometers wide.
4. Reaching 99.1 per cent coverage has been tricky because a number of factors, including weather conditions, coordination with other instruments, downlink limitations, and orbital constraints, tend to limit where we can image and when."

said Michael Malin, Context Camera Team Leader of Malin Space Science Systems in the US.

5. In addition to observing nearly the entire planet at least once, the Context Camera has observed 60.4 per cent of the planet more than once. These observations aid science directly and also certify the safety of future landing sites.
6. A dramatic type of change the Context Camera has documented more than 200 times is a fresh impact crater appearing between the times of two observations.
7. These images enabled scientists to calculate the rate at which small asteroids, or bits of comets, are colliding with Mars. Some of the fresh impacts reveal white material interpreted as water ice.
8. **The spacecraft was launched in 2005.** It entered an **elongated orbit of Mars in March 2006**, and then spent several months using friction with Mars' upper atmosphere to revise its orbit.
9. Since beginning its science operations in November 2006, MRO has been flying near-polar orbits lasting about two hours, at altitudes from 250 to 316 kilometers.
10. The mission completed its 50,000th orbit on March 27. After 11 and a half years in flight, the spacecraft is healthy and remains fully functional.

SpaceX launches its first recycled rocket

SpaceX successfully launched and then retrieved its **first recycled rocket**, a **historic feat and the biggest leap yet in its bid to drive down costs and speed up flights**. It was the first time SpaceX founder Elon Musk tried to fly a booster that soared before on an orbital mission.

What

1. **This particular first stage landed on an ocean platform almost exactly a year ago** after a space station launch for NASA.
2. SpaceX refurbished and tested the 15-foot booster, still sporting its nine original engines. It nailed another vertical landing at sea, once it was finished boosting the satellite for the SES company of Luxembourg.
3. **SpaceX granted SES insight into the entire process of getting the booster ready to fly again**, providing confidence everything would go well. SES, in fact, is considering more launches later this year on reused Falcon boosters.
4. The company even managed to recover the Falcon's \$6 million satellite enclosure, which used thrusters and parachutes to drop into the Atlantic. Until 31 March 2017, trying to retrieve the second stage used to get the satellite into the proper, high orbit seemed like a "Hail Mary" pass, Musk said. But no more.
5. **NASA also has shared the quest for rocket reusability.** During the space shuttle program, the twin booster rockets dropped away two minutes into flight and parachuted into the Atlantic for recovery. The booster segments were mixed and matched for each flight.

Miscellaneous

World Happiness Index 2017

India ranked a low 122 on a list of the world's happiest countries, dropping four slots from last year and coming **behind China, Pakistan and Nepal. Norway was ranked as the happiest country in the world**, according to The World Happiness Report 2017, which ranked 155 countries by their happiness levels. Norway jumped three spots from last year, displacing Denmark, which had held the top spot for three out of the past four years.

What

1. **India was ranked on the 122nd spot**, down from 118 in the 2013-2015 report, which maps happiness on the parameters of GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity and perceptions of corruption.
2. China (79), Pakistan (80), Nepal (99), Bangladesh (110), Iraq (117) and Sri Lanka (120) fared better than India on the ranking.

3. The report was released at an event celebrating International Day of Happiness. It is the fifth report to come out since 2012.
4. The World Happiness Report continues to draw global attention around the need to create sound policy for what matters most to people — their well-being," said Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network that produced the report.
5. The **World Happiness Report 2017 looks at trends in the data recording how highly people evaluate their lives on a scale running from 0 to 10**. The rankings, which are based on surveys in 155 countries covering the three years 2014-2016, reveal an average score of 5.3 (out of 10).

Happiest Countries

1. Norway 7.54
2. Denmark 7.42
3. Iceland 7.5
4. Switzerland 7.49
5. Finland 7.47
6. Netherlands 7.38
7. Canada 7.32
8. New Zealand 7.321
9. Sweden 7.28
10. Australia 7.28

BSF gets first woman combat officer

Tanushree Pareek became the **first woman combat officer to be commissioned in the 51-year history of the BSF**, the country's largest border guarding force. Pareek (25) also led the passing out parade of 67 trainee officers that was reviewed by Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh at the Border Security Force camp.

What

1. **Pareek**, a resident of Rajasthan's Bikaner, is the **first woman to join the force in the officer rank after she was selected in the all-India exam conducted by the UPSC in 2014**.
2. The Home Minister himself put the rank stars on the shoulders of Pareek during the piping ceremony.
3. **The force had begun induction of woman officers in 2013**.

India win eight medals in para Athletics Grand Prix

Indian para athletes bagged eight medals, including three gold in 9th Fazza **IPC Athletics Grand Prix in Dubai**. With 3 gold, 1 silver and 4 bronze medal till the second day of competition, India are currently at the seventh spot out of 48 participating countries.

What

1. **Sundar Singh Gurjar** was the star among the Indians as he won a gold each in the men's Javelin Throw F-46 and Discus Throw F-46 competitions.
2. The 21-year-old Gurjar, who lost his left hand in an accident two years ago, threw a best of 60.33m in Javelin Throw F-46, a whopping 11m more than the second best. He threw 44.56m in Discus Throw F-46, over five meters clear of the rest of the field.
3. Gurjar could not take part in his event at Rio Paralympic Games last year due to late reporting at the event arena but today he proved his mettle at his very first opportunity.
4. The third Indian gold was bagged by Narender Ranbir in men's Javelin Throw F-44 with an effort of 47.75m, a release from Paralympic Committee of India said.
5. The other Indian medal winners were Anandan Gunasekaran (silver) in 400m Men T-42/44/46, Ramkaran Singh (bronze) in 800m Men T-13/20, Surjit Singh (bronze) in Shotput Men F-40/41/42, Rohit (bronze) in 400m Men T-11/12/13 and Pramod K Yadav (bronze) in 400m Men T-42/44/46.

First Airbus Training Centre in Asia

Airbus is setting up a Greenfield training facility at Aerocity, New Delhi, to support India's growing need for Airbus aircraft pilots and maintenance engineers. The ground-breaking for the Airbus India Training Centre was performed by P. Ashok Gajapathi

Saddest Countries

146. Yemen 3.59
147. South Sudan 3.59
148. Liberia 3.53
149. Guinea 3.51
150. Togo 3.49
151. Rwanda 3.47
152. Syria 3.46
153. Tanzania 3.35
154. Burundi 2.91
155. Central African Republic 2.69

Raju, Minister of Civil Aviation and Tom Enders, CEO, Airbus in the presence of Jayant Sinha, Minister of State for Civil Aviation.

What

1. **India's rapidly growing passenger aircraft fleet** must be matched by adequate availability of skilled pilots and maintenance engineers. Airbus' pilot and maintenance engineering training center is the type of facility which will help augment the talent pool of such personnel and thus be a force multiplier for the Indian aviation sector.
2. Airbus to think of creating MRO facility in India to take forward the Make in India policy of the Government, as this would create employment opportunity.
3. **India is the fastest growing domestic aviation market in the world** and is expected to continue to grow at an annualised 9.3% over the next 20 years, outpacing the world average of 4.6%.
4. The number of trips per capita in India is expected to quadruple by 2035 due to a combination of economic and demographic factors.
5. To cater to this huge demand, Airbus forecasts a requirement for at least 1,600 new passenger and freighter aircraft by 2035. The consequent increase in Indian in-service aircraft fleet will lead to an accompanying need for over 24,000 new pilots and maintenance engineers.
6. **The almost 7000 m2 Airbus India Training Centre will be built in a modular concept** in order to become operational by end-2018 with two A320 full flight simulators, increasing to four and potentially to six simulators in due course. It will start with an initial capacity to train over 800 pilots and 200 maintenance engineers annually.
7. The centre will cater primarily to Airbus operators in India and the region. Airbus has more than 250 aircraft in service in India and over 570 are on order by Indian airlines.

Earth Hour turns 10

Sydney's Opera House and **Harbour Bridge** plunged into darkness on 25 March 2017 to mark the **Earth Hour**, as global landmarks began dimming their lights to draw attention to climate change. Millions of people from some **170 countries and territories** were expected to take part in the annual bid to highlight global warming caused by the burning of coal, oil and gas to drive cars and power plants.

What

1. **The event, which originated in Sydney**, has grown to become a worldwide environmental campaign, celebrated across all continents.
2. **Conservation group WWF, which organises Earth Hour**, said great strides had been made in highlighting the dire state of the planet.
3. **It started Earth Hour in 2007** to show leaders that climate change was an issue people cared about.
4. For that symbolic moment to turn into the global movement it is today, is really humbling and speaks volumes about the powerful role of people in issues that affect their lives.
5. In Sydney, many harbour side buildings switched off their lights for an hour from **8.30 p.m. local time** as the call for action began rolling out across the world.
6. The **WWF said teams around the world would use Earth Hour this year** to highlight climate issues most relevant to individual countries.
7. In South Africa, the focus would be on renewable energy while in China, the WWF was working with businesses to encourage a shift towards more sustainable lifestyles.
8. Last year, scientists recorded the Earth's hottest temperatures in modern times for the third year in a row. Nations agreed in Paris in 2015 to limit average global warming to two degrees Celsius over pre-industrial temperatures.

Nobel Prize-winning poet dies

Derek Walcott, a Nobel Prize-winning poet known for capturing the essence of his native Caribbean and who became the region's most internationally famous writer, has died on the island of St. Lucia. He was 87. Walcott died early at his home in the eastern Caribbean nation.

What

1. **The prolific and versatile poet received the Nobel Prize in literature in 1992** after being shortlisted for the honour for many years. In selecting Walcott, the academy cited the great luminosity" of his writings, including the 1990 Omeros, a 64-chapter Caribbean epic it praised as "majestic".
2. **Walcott, who was of African, Dutch and English ancestry**, said his writing reflected the "very rich and complicated experience" of life in the Caribbean. He compared his feeling for poetry to a religious vocation.
3. **Walcott was born in St. Lucia's capital of Castries on January 23, 1930**, to a Methodist schoolteacher mother and a civil servant father, an aspiring artist who died when Walcott and his twin brother, Roderick, were babies.

'National tribal and north east art conclave' inaugurated

Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of State (I/C) for Culture and Tourism inaugurated the "**National Tribal and North East Conclave-2017**" organized by **Lalit Kala Akademi** under **Ministry of Culture**. Dr. Mahesh Sharma applauded the creativity of the tribal communities, as also of the artists from the North East region and select contemporary artists. The Conclave is a unique artistic event representing the important schools of Indian tribal art, alongside other art genres. He wished them grand success in their creative endeavours.

What

1. The **conclave platform features more than a dozen forms of tribal art**. Most of these artists from 100 and more artist contingents have showcased their art forms at Festivals of India held abroad and distinguished platforms elsewhere.
2. The handpicked coteries are fielding their master painters for the event. Some of the noteworthy forms on schedule are Cheriyal painters from Telangana, southern miniature paintings, Patachitra art from Odisha, fresco paintings from Rajasthan, as also Bhil, Mina works, and paintings on leather by artists from Andhra Pradesh. The event includes demonstrations of folk traditions that allow visitors to gauge the in-depth sourcing of their output.
3. As part of its ongoing effort to discover, nurture, promote and propagate quality art in India, the Akademi has organized this 7 days Conclave from 28th March, 2017 till 4th April, 2017 at the Lalit Kala Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan Lawns, 35 Ferozshah Road, New Delhi.
4. There was a gala Folk dance from the folk traditions of Rajasthan to kick start the Conclave in the right mood.

Only seven per cent women in police forces

There are about seven per cent women in police forces in the states and union territories of country have been asked to increase their numbers by up to **33 per cent. As on January 1, 2016**, the representation of women police personnel is **7.10 per cent at all India level**," Minister of State for Home Hansraj G Ahir said.

What

1. The Union Home Ministry has also issued advisories in 2009 and 2012 to "all the state governments and Union Territories administrations to increase the strength of women police personnel **up to 33 per cent of the total strength**."
2. All the state governments have been requested to create additional posts of women constables and sub-Inspectors by converting the vacant posts of men constables into the posts of women constables.
3. The minister said **his ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD)** has envisaged engagement of **Mahila Police**

Volunteers (MPV) in states and UTs who will act as a link between police and community and help women in distress.

4. **The MPV will encourage women to come forward with complaints of violence and discrimination**, provide information to them on remedies for this and assist them in taking their cases to police authorities.
5. **Haryana has become the first state to operationalise the MPV scheme**. It was launched jointly by the Ministry of WCD and Government of Haryana at Karnal on December 14, 2016 for the districts of Karnal and Mahendragarh.

Wealthiest Asians in UK in 2017

NRI businessmen Hindujas have retained their position as **the richest Asians in the UK in 2017** with an estimated wealth of 19 billion pounds, an increase of 2.5 billion pounds over last year, according to an **annual ranking of the richest Asians in Britain**. Steel tycoon Lakshmi N Mittals secured the second place with a fortune of 12.6 billion pounds – up from 6.4 billion pounds last year – in the Eastern Eye Asian Rich List, Britain's 101 Wealthiest Asians 2017.

According to the list

1. The **Hinduja brothers – Srichand and Gopi in London, Prakash in Geneva and Ashok in Mumbai** -have seen sharp increases in profitability in Ashok Leyland, InduSind bank, Gulf Oil, energy and real estate.
2. Britain's 101 wealthiest Asians are collectively worth 69.9 billion pounds, up from 55.4 billion pounds last year – a rise of 25 per cent.
3. **Anil Agarwal, executive chairman of Vedanta Resources**, one of the fastest growing mining and metals group in the world, is fourth in the list along with Arora brothers -Simon, Bobby and Robin who own a chain of retail stores.
4. **Leading NRI industrialist Lord Swraj Paul is 14th in the list** with an estimated wealth of 800 million pounds as against 300 million pounds last year.
5. Other winners included Young Entrepreneur of the year **Aly Esmail, CEO of SME Group, Entrepreneur of the year Subodh Agrawal**, Chairman of Euromax Capital and the Business Personality Award winner Prakash Lohia, Founder and Chairman of Indorama Group.
6. London is home to one of the largest, and most diverse South-Asian communities in the world, which contributes a huge amount to the city's success – socially, culturally and economically.

New CM in Uttarakhand

BJP leader **Trivendra Singh Rawat** was sworn in as Uttarakhand Chief Minister. **Governor K K Paul** administered the oath of office and secrecy to 56-year-old Rawat, a former RSS pracharak, and nine ministers at a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP chief Amit Shah and other national and state party leaders.

What

1. **Rawat was appointed the party's national secretary in 2013**. He was later made co-incharge of the party's affairs in Uttar Pradesh in 2014.
2. He had wrested the Doiwala seat from Congress with an impressive margin of 24,869 votes to win it for the third time.

5 Indians on WEF's 2017

Five Indians, including Paytm founder and chief executive officer (CEO) Vijay Shekhar Sharma and Shruti Shibulal, promoter and director of The Tamara Hospitality, have made it to the **World Economic Forum's 100 Young Global Leaders list**.

What

1. The other individuals who represented India on the list include **Ambarish Mitra, founder and CEO of Blippar**, a mobile phone app business valued at \$1.5 billion; **Hindol Sengupta, editor-at-large of Fortune India**, and Rwitwika Bhattacharya-Agarwal, founder and CEO of Swaniti Initiative.
2. There were nine global leaders from South Asia, of which five are from India. Besides, there are some persons of Indian origin in the US and Europe were also named on the list.

3. **Each year, the World Economic Forum (WEF) selects 100 young leaders**, under the age of 40, who are tackling the world's most complex challenges with innovative approaches.
4. In this year's list of 100 Young Global Leaders, half the intake comes from emerging economies, reflecting a trend towards greater diversity in global leadership.
5. The Class of 2017 features two of the world's top scientists on genome editing: **Luhan Yang, chief scientist at eGenesis Biosciences**, and Feng Zhang, a core member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard.

21st CM of Uttar Pradesh

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, Yogi Adityanath sworn in as the **21 st Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh** - the most populous state of the country. **UP Governor Ram Naik** administered the oath of office and secrecy to Adityanath and his Cabinet at a function in Lucknow's Kanshiram memorial ground. BJP state unit chief Keshav Prasad Maurya and party's national vice president Dinesh Sharma were sworn in as cabinet ministers by Governor Ram Naik at a grand ceremony at Kanshiram Smriti Upvan.

What

1. The elevation of the five-term MP from Gorakhpur, who has chequered rapport with the BJP leadership, has left many puzzled, with political circles abuzz with talk of the RSS having prevailed over the party in deciding the chief minister.
2. In the recently held polls in the state, BJP had bagged 312 seats, and its allies 13, taking the alliance's tally to 325 in the 403-member Assembly.

India becomes third largest aviation market

India has become the third largest aviation market in terms of domestic passenger traffic, beating Japan, an industry report has said. India's domestic air passenger traffic stood at 100 million in 2016 and was behind only the US (719 million) and China (436 million), Sydney-based aviation think-tank Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) said in its latest report.

What

1. **India acquired the third spot globally** by unseating Japan, which flew 97 million domestic passengers in 2016, CAPA said.
2. Domestic air traffic has shown a consistent growth of 20 -25 per cent throughout 2015 and 2016, peaking in January this year at 25.13 per cent.
3. The domestic travel demand rose 16 per cent in February this year, ending the long streak of over 20 per cent.
4. India which enjoyed the fourth position in terms of overall air passenger traffic (both domestic and international) along with the UK, has also inched closer to becoming the third largest one by March next year.
5. India will become the third largest market 2-3 years ahead of what was projected. This is because the growth has been much higher," Kapil Kaul, head of CAPA India, said.
6. Japan, which flew 141 million passengers in 2016, was ahead of India whose total air passenger traffic was 131 million in the previous year, as per CAPA.
7. **United States with 815 million passengers in 2016 enjoyed the top position**, followed by China with 490 million, according to the report.

Indian in best CEOs list

HDFC Bank Managing Director Aditya Puri's name has featured in the list of **world's 30 best chief executive officers (CEO)**, published by American financial magazine Barron's.

What

1. **Puri, 66, has transformed HDFC Bank from a start-up into one of the world's highest-quality banks**, generating eye-popping returns by maintaining lending standards while expanding beyond corporate loans into a full-service retail bank.

2. According to the magazine, a 2014 trip to Silicon Valley made Puri a digital evangelist.
3. In hallmark style, the banker swiftly set out to remake India's second-largest private-sector bank into the digital spot for anything money-related.
4. That's proving to be a bigger competitive advantage than even he imagined, as India's surprise demonetisation in November, which voided 86 per cent of the country's cash, catapulted demand for digital payments.

World's richest man

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates once again topped the Forbes magazine list of the world's richest billionaires, while US President Donald Trump slipped more than 200 spots, the magazine said. Gates, whose wealth is estimated at \$86 billion, led the list for the **fourth straight year**. He was followed by Berkshire Hathaway chief Warren Buffett among the top 10 billionaires, a group heavily dominated by Americans, many of whom work in the technology sector. Buffett's wealth was estimated at USD 75.6 billion.

What

1. **Others in the top 10 included Amazon founder Jeff Bezos at number three**, Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg at number five and Oracle co-founder Larry Ellison at number seven.
2. The **global billionaire population jumped 13 per cent from last year to 2,043**, the biggest annual increase in the 31 years since the magazine began compiling the list, Forbes said.
3. The US led countries with the most billionaires with 565, a product of the swelling value of the American stock market since Trump's November 2016 election.
4. **China was second with 319 billionaires, and Germany was third with 114.**
5. Trump himself slipped 220 spots on the list to number 544 with an estimated USD 3.5 billion. Forbes attributed Trump's drop to sluggishness in the Manhattan real estate market which is responsible for a disproportionate amount of his wealth.
6. Forty per cent of Donald Trump's fortune is tied up in Trump Tower and eight buildings within one mile of it.
7. Among others in the Forbes top 10, Amancio Ortega of Spanish apparel chain Zara was fourth, Mexican telecom tycoon Carlos Slim was sixth, the Koch brothers, Charles and David, were eighth and ninth and former New York City mayor and Bloomberg News founder Michael Bloomberg was 10th.
8. This year it took at least USD 3.7 billion in wealth to make it onto the list, but only in a tie for 501th place, a group that included Hollywood director Steven Spielberg.

World's most expensive cities

India's capital and its financial capital — **New Delhi and Mumbai** — finished in the bottom 10 in a list of the world's most expensive cities to live in. **Kathmandu has been declared the third-most expensive city in South Asia**, higher than New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Karachi, according to a report by The Economist Group. The capital city of Nepal was **ranked 116th**.

What

1. The **report was prepared by the Economist Intelligence Unit**, the research and analysis division of The Economist Group. While last year it was 118, it moved up the list this year, sharing its position with Johannesburg, South Africa's biggest city.
2. The South Asian cities that rank higher than Kathmandu were Dhaka (62), capital of Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka's capital Colombo (108). Other South Asian cities included in the survey were New Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Karachi and Bangalore.
3. **New Delhi was ranked at 124, Chennai and Mumbai shared the 127th rank** and Bangalore was the cheapest at 131. Interesting, London was pegged at 24 — its lowest position in 20 years.

4. The survey was conducted by making a comparison between 400 individual prices of 160 goods and services.
5. These goods and services factored in included, food and drinks, clothing, home supplies and personal care, rent, transport, utility bills, schooling, domestic help and finally entertainment and recreational expenditures.
6. The total numbers of cities surveyed were 133. Results of the survey are most often used by HR managers as metric while offering pay packages for overseas jobs.
7. **The survey has ranked Singapore as the most expensive city in the world** while Hong Kong comes a close second. Other Asian cities in the top 10 most expensive cities were Tokyo, Osaka and Seoul.

How Cyclone Debbie got her name

The huge storm that tore through parts of northeastern Australia was almost called **Caleb instead of Debbie. The next one will be named Ernie.** Debbie started life as a tropical low off Queensland state, but formed into a cyclone just after Caleb - another weather system brewing off Western Australia - fizzled out.

What

1. **The process of choosing a moniker for storms comes from a formal system managed by the World Meteorological Organisation**, with 10 global regions submitting names.
2. **The practice of naming storms (tropical cyclones) began years ago** in order to help in the quick identification of storms in warning messages because names are presumed to be far easier to remember than numbers and technical terms.
3. They used to be arbitrarily picked, but by the middle of last century **the practice of using female names began**, with meteorologists later moving to an alphabetic list.
4. **Australia was the first country to switch to alternating between male and female names in 1975**, according to its Bureau of Meteorology, and other areas have followed suit.
5. Currently, Australia uses 104 names in a system that started from the 2008-09 season.
6. Other regions, such as the Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and the North Atlantic, use names better suited to their parts of the world.
7. **First up in 2016-17 for Australia was Yvette.** Before Debbie came Caleb, Blanche and Alfred, with the next tropical cyclones set to be Ernie, then Frances, Greg, and Hilda.
8. Despite the threat of disaster and chaos, some Australians took to social media to joke about the name Debbie, riffing on a 1978 pornographic film "Debbie Does Dallas".

Online Film Certification System launched

The Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry has launched the **e-Cinepramaan**, an online film certification system of the **Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC)**. This initiative was launched **on the lines of Union Government's vision of ease-of-doing business** and digital India, to make the entire process transparent and efficient. Its objective is **to eliminate the need for human interface** to the extent possible and enable good governance by automating film certification process.

What

1. The system will show status of each application **online in the dashboard** of the producer and concerned CBFC official.
2. Producers of short films/promos/trailers **less than 10 minutes can submit their creations online** for examination purposes without need to not visit CBFC Office/Theatre.
3. In case of films longer than 10 minutes, the producer/applicant will only have to show the film at the Examining theatre.

4. He will not have to visit the CBFC Offices at all except to collect their certificates. The producer/applicant will be informed status of their application by SMS/e-mail.
5. It will also inform any action needed and provide receipt of application to the certificate collection. It will bring transparency in the system by eliminating middle men.
6. It will mitigate chances of any corruption and avoid allegations of jumping the queue or rigging up of Examination committees.
7. **Under it, QR code on the certificates** will be implemented to eliminate chances of fraudulent certificates.

World Meteorological Day

The **World Meteorological Day (WMD)** is observed **every year on 23rd March** to mark establishment of **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** on this day in 1950. The Theme of this year is: “**Understanding Clouds**”. It seeks to highlight the enormous importance of clouds for weather climate and water. They play a critical role in the water cycle and shaping the global distribution of water resources. **Clouds are central to weather observations and forecasts.** Clouds are one of the key uncertainties in the study of climate change.

What

1. On this occasion, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) launched new edition of the **Cloud Atlas**.
2. It is a treasure trove of hundreds of images of clouds, including a few newly classified cloud types and is single authoritative and most comprehensive reference for identifying clouds.
3. It also features other **meteorological phenomena such as rainbows, halos, snow devils and hailstones.**
4. This Atlas for the first time has been produced in a digital format and is accessible via both computers and mobile devices.

About WMO

1. It is an intergovernmental organization whose mandate covers **weather, climate and water resources.**
2. It is UN specialized agency for meteorology, operational hydrology and related geophysical sciences.
3. It is dedicated to international cooperation and coordination on state and behaviour of Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with land and oceans, the weather and climate and distribution of water resources.
4. It has 191 Member States and Territories. It originated from the International Meteorological Organization (IMO), which was founded in 1873. It has its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

Background

1. On this day in 1950 the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) Convention came into force that aimed at creating WMO.
2. Later in 1951, **WMO became United Nations specialized agency for meteorology**, geophysical sciences and operational hydrology.

Odisha to host hockey World League Final 2017

Bhubaneswar will host the mens hockey World League Final 2017 and World Cup 2018, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) and the government of Odisha confirmed. It was also confirmed that Odisha will be the title sponsor of both events. As a result, the official event titles will be the **Odisha Men's Hockey World League Final Bhubaneswar 2017** and the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018.

What

1. The multi-purpose stadium, built in 2010, has facilities for athletics, football, basketball, tennis, table-tennis and swimming, ensuring that it is well-equipped to host international sporting events.
2. India is a nation with a proud hockey heritage with a history of hosting world-class sports events.
3. The Odisha Men's Hockey World League Final Bhubaneswar 2017 and the Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup Bhubaneswar 2018 will be unforgettable events for everyone involved.