

My Notes....

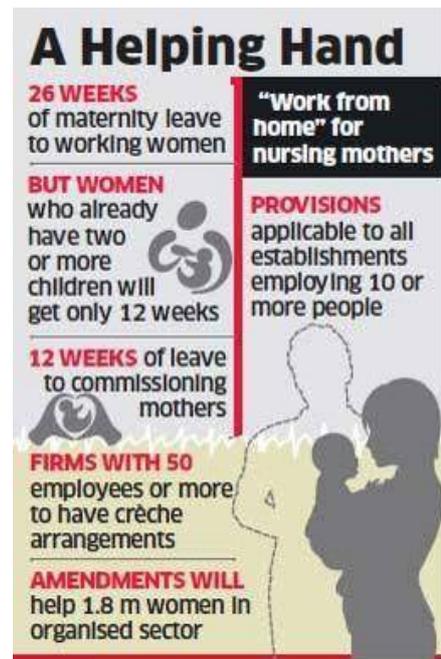
NATIONAL

MATERNITY BENEFIT PROGRAMME APPROVED

The Cabinet gave its nod to the maternity benefit programme, while making it clear that it will be applicable only for the first born. As per the Maternity Benefit Programme of Ministry of Women & Child Development, eligible pregnant women and lactating mothers (PW&LM) will receive Rs 6,000 in nearly all the blocks and districts of the country aimed at improving their health and nutrition status. The scheme is also aimed at arresting high maternal mortality rates.

What

1. The payment will be made in installments but is subject to fulfilment of certain health and nutrition conditions through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.
2. One of the important provisions in the programme also seeks to offset wage losses suffered by women due to pregnancy. This provision is beneficial for women, especially in the unorganised sector, who make up at least 90 per cent of the **country's female workforce**.
3. The programme will prove to be very beneficial for the country whose maternal and infant mortality indicators are very dismal.
4. As per government statistics, every third woman is undernourished and every second woman is anaemic. And an undernourished woman is more likely to give birth to a low-weight baby.
5. In fact, according to the UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2014, India accounted for almost 17 per cent of global deaths due to pregnancy aside from childbirth-related complications (some 50,000 of 2.89 lakh such deaths worldwide).



A Helping Hand

26 WEEKS of maternity leave to working women

"Work from home" for nursing mothers

BUT WOMEN who already have two or more children will get only 12 weeks

PROVISIONS applicable to all establishments employing 10 or more people

12 WEEKS of leave to commissioning mothers

FIRMS WITH 50 employees or more to have crèche arrangements

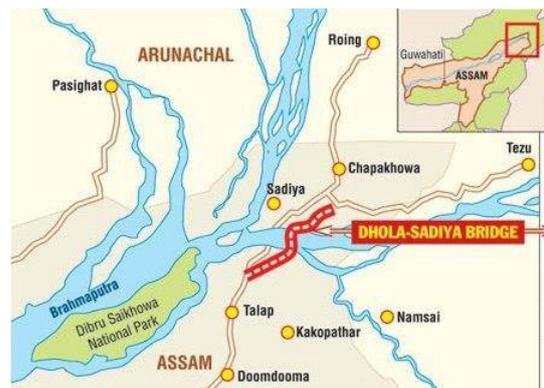
AMENDMENTS WILL help 1.8 m women in organised sector

BHUPEN HAZARIKA SETU LAUNCHED

The Dhola-Sadiya Bridge, the country's longest river bridge, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Assam, will provide a big boost to the Indian Army as it protects the nation's Northeast region against China. The bridge, spanning 9.2 km across the Brahmaputra River, will ensure the smooth movement of troops to Arunachal Pradesh, one of **India's most remote regions that is claimed in full by China**. The bridge will be named the Bhupen Hazarika Setu.

What

1. The bridge across the Brahmaputra into Arunachal Pradesh is a great strategic shift in the thinking in the Indian defence establishment regarding infrastructure development in the borders with China.
2. The new infrastructure will help the Indian military to be prepared for a decent



rebuttal to ward off any misadventure from the Chinese side.

3. The Rs 2,056-crore strategic bridge at Sadiya in Assam's Tinsukia district, which PM Modi inaugurated even as he completes three years in office, will provide an important boost to the logistics capability of the military along the Indo-China border.
4. In Arunachal Pradesh, which China considers South Tibet, India will follow the bridge over the Brahmaputra by building a 2,000-km highway in the state at a cost of \$6 billion.
5. The bridge is a 12.9-metre-wide external post-tensioned design. It has 183 spans, each of 50 meters, along with a two-lane connecting road from Dhola Bazaar to Islampur Tiniali.

INDIA RANKS SECOND IN RENEWABLES LIST

India has been placed in the second spot in the renewable energy country attractiveness index by EY. The UK accountancy firm noted the fast pace of growth in Indian renewable energy in the past three years. Over 10 gigawatt (Gw) of solar power was added between 2015 and 2017 and wind energy capacity grew to 5.4 Gw in 2017-18.

What

1. **This growth is in the context of the government's ambitious targets** — 175 Gw of renewables by 2022, with 40 per cent installed capacity from renewables by 2030 — and the dramatic price falls in photovoltaic technology.
2. In recent tenders, solar developers have offered to supply power at lower prices than newly built coal plants, effectively blocking new coal capacity.
3. In an auction for a 500 megawatt (Mw) solar power park in Rajasthan bids spiralled down to Rs 2.62 per unit. Also, in the first-ever auction of a wind power project, the tariff fell to Rs 3.46 per unit.
4. The government should ensure that distribution companies have the capacity to continue to purchase renewable electricity, especially if bids level off or rise, EY pointed out. The availability of capital remains a concern; the government could ease rules for tapping foreign debt.

ISA PROPOSES CRMM

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) has proposed setting up a mechanism to lower the risk involved in financing solar power projects. Interim Director-General at the International Solar Alliance, **Upendra Tripathy said, "The ISA programme, 'Affordable finance at scale', launched in April 2016 sets the ground for establishment of a Common Risk Mitigating Mechanism."** **This will help de-risk investments and reduce the cost of financing for solar projects in eligible ISA member countries, he added.**

What

1. A concept document is being developed on the lines of a CRMM scheme to create a common guarantee fund and develop guarantee investments with a clear scope, delimitation of risk coverage and recourse options.
2. The target is to reduce transaction costs to mobilise the investment volumes necessary for scaling up solar energy projects.
3. The ISA has also proposed setting up a \$300-billion Global Solar Fund over 10 years with contributions from the World Bank, Overseas Development Assurances and from the Green Climate Fund to leverage \$3,000 billion in investment from the corporate sector.
4. The allocation will be notional and will only be backed by 20 per cent of the amount to be budgeted.
5. The risk guarantee premium may be 0.8 per cent to 1 per cent. The World Bank may administer it as a commercial project.

ICJ RULES IN INDIA'S FAVOUR

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) on 18 May 2017 stayed the execution of former Indian navy officer Khulbhushan Jadhav, pending a final decision in the case. In an

unanimous decision, the 11-member court said: “Pakistan shall take all measures at its disposal to ensure that Mr. Jadhav is not executed pending the final decision in these proceedings and shall inform the Court of all the measures taken in implementation of the present Order. The Court also decides that, until it has given its final decision, it shall remain seised of the matters which form the subject-matter of **this Order.**”

What

1. The matter, prima facie, falls under its jurisdiction, the court observed that India has presented sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Jadhav was at risk of being executed before they could complete the hearing in the case.
2. Dealing a blow to Pakistan, the court clarified that provisions of the Vienna Convention can be invoked even in cases of those charged with espionage. The court also made it clear that its order is binding to all parties of the case.
3. On April 10, a military court in Pakistan awarded death sentence to **Jadhav for alleged “espionage and subversive activities”**.
4. On May 8, India approached ICJ for an urgent hearing and sought suspension of the plea. Acting on the Indian petition, the ICJ two days later wrote to the Pakistan government to put on hold, effectively, the execution of Jadhav. In its petition, India had argued that Pakistan had violated the Vienna Convention with regards to consular relations and that **he had been given “no right” to defend himself.**
5. On May 15, the public hearing in the case was held in the ICJ with India and Pakistan producing arguments in the **case of Jadhav’s death sentence.**

Flashpoint

1. This was after 18 years that India and Pakistan had come face-to-face in the World Court. In the ICJ, **Harish Salve, India’s counsel, reiterated India’s** claim that the death sentence awarded by the Pakistani military court was a violation of the Vienna Convention on consular relations.
2. **Salve’s Pakistani counterpart, Khawar Qureshi said that India’s plea in the case was ‘irrelevant’ as the Vienna Convention did not apply in the case of a ‘spy’.**
3. The ICJ, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, had held a public hearing on May 15, where both India and Pakistan presented their arguments in the case.
4. In the verdict, delivered by a 11-judge bench, the ICJ asserted its jurisdiction over the case and stayed the death sentence until further notice.
5. Regarding the 150-day clemency period, which ends in August, the court directed Pakistan to take all measures to ensure Jadhav is not executed pending its final decision.

NATIONAL PROGRAMME ON PANCHGAVYA

The Ministry of Science and Technology has initiated a three-year national programme on **scientific validation and research on ‘panchagavya’**, a concoction of cow products, including cow dung and cow urine. Used in traditional Hindu rituals, panchagavya or panchakavyam is a mixture of five bovine products — dung, urine, milk, curd and ghee. These are mixed with jaggery, banana and tender coconut in a proper ratio and allowed to ferment for several days to produce panchgavya.

What

1. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has created a 19-member national steering committee, headed by Union Science Minister Harsh Vardhan, to implement the programme and guide the research agenda.
2. Other members of the steering committee include R A Mashelkar, former director general of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Vijay Bhatkar, chancellor of Nalanda University and the brain behind the indigenous PARAM supercomputers.
3. Earlier, the CSIR had looked into some of its properties. We will now look into other aspects, such as its medical use and use in building construction in rural areas.

4. The programme will concentrate mainly on the scientific validation of the uniqueness of **indigenous cow products, of panchagavya's medicinal and health-related uses**, its agricultural applications and its use as food, nutrition and utility products.

BIGGEST EXPANSION OF NUCLEAR POWER

In the biggest expansion of the **country's nuclear power industry**, the Union Cabinet gave its approval for the construction of 10 units of the new indigenous 700 MWe (mega watt electric) pressurised heavy water reactors (PHWRs). Never before have 10 nuclear reactors been cleared in one go. The addition of 7,000 MWe is more than the combined present installed capacity of 6,780 MWe. There are 22 reactors under operation as of today. What

1. The new reactors are of significantly higher capacities compared to the PHWRs currently under operation — the standard PHWR being used in India is of 220 MWe though two 540 MWe reactors were installed in Tarapur in 2005 and 2006.
2. The ten reactors will be installed in Kaiga in Karnataka (Unit 5 and 6), Chutka in Madhya Pradesh (Unit 1 and 2), Gorakhpur in Haryana (Unit 3 and 4) and Mahi Banswara in Rajasthan (Unit 1, 2, 3 and 4).
3. The decision to step up the indigenous civil nuclear reactor programme comes amid festering concerns over the deployment of imported light water reactor-based projects in collaboration with global vendors such as Toshiba-Westinghouse and Areva.
4. The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) will set up the projects deploying the proposed 700 MWe reactor units, which mark a big leap for the state-owned NPCIL that has so far been building smaller-sized 220 MWe and 540 MWe reactor units as part of **the country's indigenous nuclear power programme**.

FIRST 'SAMAVESH' MEETING

With an aim to bring together 32 premier educational and policy research institutions to **catalyse the country's development process, government think-tank NITI Aayog** held the first Samavesh meeting. This is the first ever initiative taken in the country to bring the large number of institutions cutting across diverse domain themes to deliberate together on the way forward for inclusive development of the country. What

1. As part of Samavesh initiative, **a new link on NITI's website** was launched on the occasion which would eventually emerge as a major repository of knowledge based reports and case studies across different sectors of the economy.
2. The meeting witnessed signing of memorandam of understandings (MoUs) between NITI Aayog and major think tanks across the country to create an ecosystem of evidence-based policy research, it added.
3. The first meeting of the National Steering Group and other knowledge partners was held under the co-chairmanship of NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant and Principal Adviser NITI Aayog Ratan P Watal.
4. This network will enable efficient knowledge sharing and information exchange among all partners to achieve a sustainable and more inclusive development in line with the National Development Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals as well as the 15-year vision, 7-year strategy and 3-year action plan.

INDIA'S FIRST SMART GRID PROJECT

The Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IIST) has successfully **created the country's first smart grid project, which will generate power from renewable sources of energy**.

What

1. The smart grid will be synchronised to generate power from solar, wind and vegetable waste resources, depending on the weather conditions and availability of waste products. It is the first of its kind in the country.

- The power to be generated from solar energy depends on the availability of sunlight while **wind energy will be produced during norwester and tropical storm**. The power from biogas will be generated from vegetable waste collected from the campus kitchen and outside markets.
- In the integrated project, by the Centre for Excellence for Green Energy Systems (CEGESS) of the institute, we are aiming to generate 32 kW of power from whichever resource available and synchronise the smart grid to take the power in the system for use. Thus we will not be depending on one resource.

INDIA GETS NEW HOWITZERS

Almost three decades after Swedish-made Bofors Howitzers were inducted into the Indian Army, the force has received the first two units of its newest batch of 155mm/39 Caliber Ultra Light Howitzers (ULH) from BAE systems. The complete induction of the 145 guns is expected to be completed by June 2021. India plans to equip 169 regiments with 3,503 of these guns by 2020. There is a huge importance of artillery in border warfare, especially in the mountainous kind that we share with both Pakistan and China.

What

- The M777 guns procured by India will fire Indian ammunitions and be able to strike targets anywhere between 24-40 km. While optimised for Indian conditions, guns of this make have already proven battle effectiveness in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- As many as 25 guns will arrive ready for induction while the remaining 120 will be assembled in **India by BAE's partner Mahindra Defence** as part of the offset agreement.
- The US-made C130J Super Hercules aircraft can transport two M777 howitzers at once. The gun weighs around 4.2 ton, which is roughly a third of what a normal 155mm howitzer weighs.

Some of the notable artillery guns in **India's arsenal:**

- 155mm Field Howitzer 77B: This gun from Bofors was originally built as a replacement for the French Haubits F serving in the Swedish Army. The FH77B can strike targets as far as 27 km away.
- 180 mm Gun S-23: This gun is the product of cold war era USSR. It is a heavy gun designed by NII-58 and later shipped off to India. It fires not more than 1 round per minute but has an effective range between 30km and 43 km.
- 88mm 25 Pounder: This is a pre-World War 2 weapon. It has been in service for over 75 years and is a dual-use field gun and howitzer. It has a max strike range of just over 12 km.
- FV433 Abbot SPG: The self-propelled artillery variant of the British Army FV 430 series is currently in use only in the Indian and British Armies. It travels at a maximum speed of 47 km/h and has a huge operational range of 480 km.

This explains the ultra light tag.

'NYAYA SANYOG' IN STATES

The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has come up with a novel idea to set up Legal Assistance Establishments (LAE) in all states to strengthen and streamline its activities aimed at providing free legal aid to the needy. Conceived by NALSA Executive **Chairman Justice Dipak Mishra of the Supreme Court, the first such centre, named 'Nyaya Sanyog', opened in Delhi on May 17.**

What

- Nyaya Sanyog would be manned by Legal Services Advocate(s) on the panel of Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLSEA) along with staff of DSLSEA, besides para legal volunteers, who would have knowledge about and be in possession of database of all the activities of DSLSEA as well as other information that may be required by people making queries. Nyaya Sanyog would be functional from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm on all working days.

2. The LAE will have a dedicated helpline number, email id and video conferencing facility with District Legal Service Authorities and jails.
3. Justice Mishra said the state authorities may adopt their own name for the LAEs.

KUDANKULAM II RESTARTS

The second unit of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KNPP) was reconnected to the southern power grid on 20 May 2017. The unit was shut down early this month due to water and steam leakage. An official at KNPP, the second unit was reconnected to the grid and touched a level of 500 MW during the course of the day.

What

1. India's atomic power plant operator, the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) has two 1,000 MW nuclear power plants at KNPP built with Russian equipment.
2. The first unit was shut down on April 13, for annual maintenance and refuelling, a process that would take around two months.
3. Every year, one third of the reactor's 163 fuel assemblies, or 54 assemblies, will be replaced.
4. This is the second refuelling cycle for Unit 1.

“OZONE2CLIMATE” TECHNOLOGY

In a first, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, along with the UN **Environment OzonAction's Compliance Assistance Programme**, organized an **“Ozone2Climate” Technology Roadshow**, post Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, on the sidelines of the South Asia National Ozone Officers Annual Network Meeting – 2017 in Agra. The Technology Roadshow was organized for the first time as part of the annual network meeting for Ozone Officers of South Asia.

What

1. **The “Ozone2Climate Technology Roadshow”, had 13 exhibitors that promoted ozone and climate-friendly alternative technologies to HCFCs and HFCs in the refrigeration and air-conditioning (RAC) sector.**
2. Along with the Technology Roadshow, UN Environment is also organised the annual network meeting for South Asia Ozone Officers from May 23 to 26, 2017.
3. The Technology Roadshow was organized in association with Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Manufacturers Association (RAMA), Indian Polyurethane Association (IPUA), Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), GIZ and UNDP.

BSNL STARTS SATELLITE PHONE SERVICE

State-owned BSNL on 24 May 2017 started satellite phone service through INMARSAT which will be initially offered to government agencies and later opened for others citizen in phased manner. The service will cover areas where no networks are present and be provided by INMARSAT which has 14 satellites. Agencies handling disasters, state police, railways, Border Security Force and other government agencies will be given the phones in the first phase.

What

1. Satellite phones in India are presently provided by Tata Communications, which inherited the licence from Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) (now Tata Communications Ltd).
2. The services of TCL will be phased out by 30 June, 2017. There are 1,532 authorised satellite phone connections that can operate within the country and a majority of them are used by security forces.
3. TCL has also issued 4,143 permits to maritime community for use of such phones at ships.
4. International Mobile Satellite Organization (INMARSAT) was set up under aegis of United Nations in 1979 and India was one of the founding members.

5. India had set up one gateway required for satellite phone service in Pune under VSNL. There are security concerns on some satellite phones used by paramilitary forces that were supplied by foreign operators. All the connections will be transferred to BSNL. The call rates will be determined by BSNL.
6. Defence forces did not opt for satellite phones from the foreign operators because of security and espionage concerns.
7. Other security agencies have been demanding for a long time for establishment of a new gateway in the country which can support new generation handsets for land mobile connections. Lot of CEOs of multinational companies needs to be connected round the clock.
8. The new services will be provided through a miniature handset and people will not need to carry large equipment in bag at their back.

Other initiatives

1. The Minister of State for Communications has launched other two initiatives along with **BSNL's satellite phone service** is Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Telecom Skill Excellence Award Scheme & Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Sanchar Kaushal Vikas Pratisthan Scheme.
2. Under Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Sanchar Kaushal Vikas Pratisthan Scheme, the ministry will impart training to 10,000 people from 10 States/UTs in the first phase.
3. The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) plans to established more than 1,000 Sanchar Kaushal Vikas Pratisthan in future.
4. In addition, a new award called Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Telecom Skill Excellence Award has been instituted to recognize achievers and talents in Telecom sector.

PREFERENCE TO 'MAKE IN INDIA' APPROVED

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a policy for providing preference to 'Make in India' in government procurements. The new policy will give a substantial boost to domestic manufacturing and service provision, thereby creating employment. It will also stimulate the flow of capital and technology into domestic manufacturing and services. It will also provide a further thrust towards manufacture of parts, components, sub-components etc. of these items, in line with the vision of 'Make in India'. The new policy is the reflection of the Government of India to encourage **'Make in India'** and promote manufacturing and production of goods and services in India with a view to enhancing income and employment.

What

1. The policy will be implemented through an Order pursuant to Rule 153(iii) of the General Financial Rules, 2017 to provide purchase preference (linked with local content) in Government procurements.
2. Under the policy, preference in Government procurement will be given to local suppliers. Local suppliers are those whose goods or services meet prescribed minimum thresholds (ordinarily 50%) for local content. Local content is essentially domestic value addition.
3. Small purchases of less than Rs.5 lakhs are exempted. The order also covers **autonomous bodies, government companies/ entities under the government's control.**

What is Make in India ?

- Make in India is an international marketing campaigning slogan coined by **Narendra Modi**, The prime minister of India on **25th September 2014** to attract businesses from around the world to invest and manufacture in India.
- Make In India is a new national program designed to transform India into a global manufacturing hub.
- Through Make In India initiative government will focus on building physical infrastructure as well as creating a digital network.

4. A Standing Committee in Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion will oversee the implementation of this order and issues arising therefrom, and make recommendations to Nodal Ministries and procuring entities.
5. The policy has been developed keeping in view the core principles of procurement including competitiveness and adhering to sound procurement practices and execution of orders.
6. The policy would continue to maintain the balance between promoting 'Make in India' and ensuring timely, value-for-money products for the procuring entities.

INTERNATIONAL CRICKETER OF THE YEAR AWARD

India's Ravichandran Ashwin has won the international cricketer of the Year Award at the CEAT Cricket Rating (CCR) International awards 2017. He was presented with an award at a function held at the Cricket Club of India by former cricketer Sunil Gavaskar and Harsh Goenka of RPG Enterprises. Ashwin has taken 99 wickets in the past 12 months.

FIRST COUNTRY TO HAVE NATIONAL PLAN FOR DRR

India has become UN's greatest match-winner at the 2017 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction being the first country to have come up with a national plan and a local strategy for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and having made significant progress in its commitment to bring down disaster losses and on the climate change. The global platform, organised by the UN's Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), is being attended by representatives of 176 countries, including more than 50 ministers and at least seven heads of state.

What

1. India is leading a global intervention on bringing down disaster losses which is pushing more than 26 million people into abject poverty every year hit by natural calamities.
2. The UN's DRR meet at Cancun is viewed as the second most important event after the Paris climate change conference of 2015.
3. At the global platform, countries will show their progress made on the Sendai declaration which binds all signatory UN nations to bring down disaster related deaths and implement the roadmap agreed upon by 2030.
4. India is the only country which has drawn a comprehensive national plan on its roadmap to fully achieve the Sendai framework by 2030, and a short term goal by 2020.
5. India is the largest democracy which has braced the Sendai framework for disaster risk reduction and the first country to have drawn a national and local strategy with a short term goal achievement target set for 2020.
6. The UNISDR, which is set to launch a global accountability mechanism to measure disaster losses at the Cancun meet, said mortality from some natural hazards has come down but economic losses are estimated to be over \$520 billion annually, pushing more than 26 million people into poverty each year.
7. The global platform for DRR has taken place five times since the Indian Ocean tsunami which left more than 250,000 dead.
8. The UNISDR has since driven major initiatives worldwide on disaster mitigation strategies adopted by countries and engage them to work towards a sustained effort to improve early warning system and disaster risk management.

INDIA'S FIRST UNDERWATER RAIL TUNNEL COMPLETED

The two organizations Afcons Transtonnelstroy and Kolkata Metro Railway Corporation Ltd (KMRCL) involved in implementing the East West Metro have completed boring the **India's first underwater tunnel under the Hooghly river to link Howrah and Kolkata**. The **length of Kolkata's East West Metro is 16.6 km long**. Out of which a length of 502 metres is under the Hooghly river. The project is built by Afcons Transtonnelstroy and implemented by KMRCL.

What

1. Afcons Transtonnelstroy is an Indo-Russian joint venture.
2. The project connects Howrah to the west and Salt lake to the east. Digging the underwater tunnel was the critical task in the project.
3. A massive tunnel boring machine called Rachna was used for boring the underwater tunnel.
4. The tunnel boring job was completed within in a time of one month and six days well ahead of schedule.
5. The East West Metro with a length of 16.6 km will have 12 stations, six of which will be underground stations.
6. The project which was slated to be completed by 2012 got postponed many times.
7. The final commissioning of the project is expected to be held by December 2019.

SIMBEX 2017 CONCLUDES

The Indian Navy and the Singapore Navy have concluded the bilateral military exercise in the South China Sea, during which they conducted a series of advanced naval warfare drills, including air defence exercises and gunnery live-firings. The Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise 2017 (SIMBEX-17) that concluded also displayed the maiden participation of **Singapore's F-15SG** fighter jets. **This year's exercise is the 24th iteration of the annual bilateral exercise held since 1994.**

What

1. Hosted by Singapore, **the exercise comprised a shore phase held at renamed 'RSS Singapura – Changi Naval Base' and a sea phase in the South China Sea.**
2. The drills also saw the inaugural participation of the Republic of **Singapore Air Force's F-15SG** fighter aircraft. Aside from the two F-15SG fighter aircraft, the RSAF also deployed two F-16D+ fighter aircraft and a Fokker-50 maritime patrol aircraft for the **exercise. "During the exercise, the two navies conducted a series of advanced naval warfare serials, including air defence exercises and gunnery live-firings," the statement said.**
3. Apart from SIMBEX, the two navies also interact regularly through professional exchange programmes, staff talks and training courses.

INDO-THAILAND SIAM BHARAT 17

Indo-Thailand Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Table Top Exercise 2017 is in progress at Chiang Mai, Thailand from 22 May to 26 May 17 between the Indian Air Force and Royal Thailand Air Force (RTAF). The eleven member IAF contingent is led by Group Captain Sucharu Rai VM.

What

1. This is second such exercise to be conducted between the two Air Forces.
2. The aim of the bilateral exercise is to evolve SOPs for planning and executing relief missions during unforeseen natural calamities like Tsunami, earthquakes, cyclones, floods etc.
3. The objective is to enhance interoperability between both the Air Forces, while conducting combined air operations triggered by a crisis.
4. The exercise would assist in laying down procedures and establish decision support system at various stages of relief operations.

WORLD BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY DAY

Every year, May 22 is observed as International Day for Biodiversity or World Biodiversity Day. This date commemorates the date of Adoption of the Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity at UNEP Headquarters, Nairobi on 22 May 1992. In 2000, UN General Assembly via resolution 55/201 decided to celebrate World Biodiversity Day on May 22 instead of December 29, which was previously designated as International Biodiversity Day. **The theme for 2017 for World Biodiversity Day is "Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism".**

What

1. The theme is in sync with the observance of 2017 as “International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development” as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly.
2. UN has already declared 2011-20 as United Nations Decade on Biodiversity to support and promote reducing the loss of biodiversity.

About Global Biodiversity

1. The term Biological Diversity was first coined by wildlife scientist and conservationist Raymond F. Dasmann in 1968.
2. This term became widespread in use during 1980s. Biodiversity refers to the “totality of genes, species and ecosystems of a region”.
3. There are three levels of biodiversity viz. species diversity, ecosystem diversity and genetic diversity.

FIRST CASE OF ZIKA VIRUS IN INDIA

The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed the first three cases of Zika virus in India, as having been reported from Ahmedabad, which includes a pregnant lady tested this January. All the cases are from the Bapunagar area of the city. The routine laboratory surveillance detected a laboratory-confirmed case of Zika virus disease through RT-PCR test at B.J. Medical College, Ahmedabad, and Gujarat. The etiology of this case has been further confirmed through a positive RT-PCR test and sequencing at the national reference laboratory, National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune on 4 January 2017.

What

1. The Gujarat government launched its free Gujarat from Malaria by 2022 campaign in Ahmedabad on 24th May, and has made notifiable only cases of dengue, malaria and chikungunya, not all fever cases.
2. An Inter-Ministerial Task Force has been set up under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Health and Family Welfare) together with Secretary (Bio-Technology), and Secretary (Department of Health Research).
3. The Joint Monitoring Group, a technical group tasked to monitor emerging and re-emerging diseases is regularly reviewing the global situation on Zika virus disease.



A AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN FOR OD

The centre on 30 May 2017 launched an aggressive new campaign titled 'Darwaza Band' to promote toilet use and freedom from open defecation (OD) across the country's villages. The campaign produced by the MDWS under Swachh Bharat Mission was launched in the presence of iconic actor, Shri Amitabh Bachchan in Mumbai. The event was widely attended by officials from all the State Districts and selected Gram Panchayat Members.

What

1. The 'Darwaza Band' campaign has been supported by the World Bank and is being rolled out countrywide immediately after the launch.
2. It is designed to encourage behaviour change in men who have toilets but are not using them. A part of the campaign also features actor, Ms Anushka Sharma, who will be seen encouraging women to stand up for this issue in their villages and assume a leadership role.
3. Shri Bachchan has been a major supporter and ambassador for the Swachh Bharat Mission and is already associated with its ongoing campaigns.

4. Behaviour change has been the focus of Swachh Bharat Mission, which is being pursued through a countrywide comprehensive IEC (Information-Education-Communication) programme. Communication campaigns have been taken up both, at the central and State levels, for promoting sustained use of toilets and for sustaining the Open Defecation Free status achieved.
5. The Amitabh Bachchan series of ads encourages behaviour change in men who have toilets but are not using them.
6. The Anushka Sharma series of ads is a clarion call for women who are more affected by this problem to stand up for this issue in their village and influence a positive change.
7. These have been developed by Lowe Lintas, Mumbai under a World Bank Project.

DEEP OCEAN MISSION

Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India **is all set to launch 'Deep Ocean Mission' by January 2018. This will improve India's position in ocean research field.** India achieved a lot in the field of ocean research; still it is long way to go, said Secretary M Rajeevan on this occasion.

What

1. The program on Poly metallic nodules was initiated at CSIR-NIO with the collection of the first nodule sample from Arabian Sea on board the first Research Vessel Gaveshani on 26 January 1981.
2. India was the first country in the world to have been given the Pioneer Area for exploration of deep-sea mineral viz. Polymetallic nodules in the Central Indian Ocean Basin in 1987.
3. This was based on the extensive surveys carried out by the scientists of CSIR-NIO, on several research ships leading to the allocation of an area of 150,000 sq km to the country with exclusive rights under the UN Law of the sea.
4. Based on the resource evaluation, India has now retained an area of 75,000 sq km with an estimated resource of about 100 million tons of strategic metals such Copper, Nickel, Cobalt besides Manganese and Iron.
5. A First Generation Mine-site (FGM) with an area of 18,000 sq km has been identified. Latest technologies for extraction of metals from the minerals have also been developed under the programme.

FIRST EVER MOU FOR FODDER ACREAGE ESTIMATION

Two of India's iconic brands, Amul and ISRO, have announced a tie up for the benefit of dairy farmers by signing a memorandum of understanding, envisaging fodder acreage assessment using satellite observation and space technology. The main objective of this MoU is identification/discrimination between food crops and fodder crops and identifying suitable areas of current fallows and cultivable wastelands at village-level for green fodder cultivation.

What

1. This is for first time in the India, and probably in the world, where a top space research organization and a dairy cooperative are together using satellite technology for fodder acreage estimation.
2. Amul is procuring around 150 lakh litres of milk daily from 35 lakhs milk producer members from over 18,500 villages under the Amul model. The milk producer farmers of Gujarat will get benefit of fodder cultivation by using this technology.
3. Recognizing the importance of fodder crop estimation, the Ahmedabad-based Space Application Centre (SAC), of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), has developed space-based remote sensing for fodder crop assessment using satellite observation and space technology.
4. Amul and SAC have jointly carried out pilot study and found that it is feasible to assess green fodder availability for dairy livestock at district and village-level through remote sensing.

5. Fodder acreage estimation would act as a decision-making tool for monitoring and planning of fodder development activities by all the stakeholders in the dairy sector.
6. The use of this technology will also help provide season-wise remote sensing-based estimates on area under fodder crop and cultivable wastelands for dissemination of information among member unions and other stakeholders in the dairy sector.

INTERNATIONAL

OUTCOMES OF OBOR SUMMIT

Belt and Road Forum (BRF) is a gathering of world leaders from across the globe, organized by China to showcase its plans to build a network of trade routes under the One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. As of now, 68 countries and international organisations have signed belt and road agreements with China. China has stated that the Belt and Road initiative is an open and inclusive platform to explore and co-develop the China-led blueprint of reviving the Silk Road. India, however, has boycotted the summit owing to sovereignty concerns related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Outcomes

1. The two-day Belt and Road Forum identified and agreed on 270 deliverable goals of Belt and Road Initiative.
2. The Forum resulted in signing of a joint communique by 30 heads of state that promised to implement plans for cooperation in trade and infrastructure programs across Asia, Europe and Africa.
3. The forum ended with only promises of joint action by participating countries and did not result in establishment of an institutional framework for implementing the planned program.
4. The Signatories to the joint communique also pledged their support for promoting a rules-based, open and multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organisation at its core.
5. China has taken the first step to institutionalise the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) by announcing that the next edition of the BRF would be held in Beijing in 2019 indicating that China will continue to control the Belt and Road Initiative.

About OBOR

1. OBOR is an ambitious **China's** ambitious development strategy and framework that aims to boost its connectivity and trade that will that will connect Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe.
2. It was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013.
3. It comprises two components viz. the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.
4. OBOR **initiative is part of China's** revived 21st century Silk Road diplomacy that seeks to push it to take a bigger role in global affairs as a major global power.
5. It is basically investment and trade promotion scheme aiming to deepen economic connections between China and rest of the world.

UN CLIMATE TALKS WRAP UP

UN climate negotiations conclude in Bonn on 18 May 2017 with delegates putting on a brave face despite the threat of an American exodus hanging over their global pact to stem global warming. Envoys from nearly 200 country signatories to the Paris Agreement kept a close eye on Washington throughout their 10-day huddle for any signal about President **Donald Trump's intentions.**

What

1. A historically small US delegation at the annual round of technical negotiations was thus also left in the dark.
2. Observers pointed to the importance of coming meetings of the G7 and G20, strategic country groupings of which the US is a member, in putting pressure on Trump, who has **described climate change as a "hoax" perpetrated by China.**

3. Germany stays committed to the international UN climate process. We believe that it is irreversible and many, many countries indicate to us that nobody has the intention of thinking about another format, another track apart from the UN.
4. The Paris Agreement commits signatories to limiting average global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels.
5. This will be achieved by limiting emissions from burning coal, oil and gas. But the fossil fuel lobby in America exerts a strong influence over climate politics, both national and international.
6. **The “rule book” the Bonn participants started work on is meant to guide countries in implementing the Paris Agreement’s goals.**

ICBM DEFENCE SYSTEM TESTED

The US military said it had intercepted a mock-up of an intercontinental ballistic missile in a first-of-its-kind test that comes amid **concerns over North Korea’s weapons program**. A ground-based interceptor launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California **“successfully intercepted an intercontinental ballistic missile target”** fired from the Reagan Test Site in the Marshall Islands.

What

1. The test saw a rocket from the Ground-based Midcourse Defence (GMD) system blast **into space and then deploy its “exo-atmospheric kill vehicle,” which smashed into the dummy ICBM, destroying it in a direct collision.**
2. This system is vitally important to the defence of our homeland, and this test demonstrates that we have a capable, credible deterrent against a very real threat.
3. The exercise marked a significant step for the GMD system, which has had a checkered record in previous tests.
4. Though it succeeded in the last test in 2014, it failed during the three prior attempts against slower-moving, non-**ICBM missiles**. **“The intercept of a complex, threat-representative ICBM target is an incredible accomplishment for the GMD system and a critical milestone for this program.**
5. The technology behind the GMD is extremely complex, and the system uses globally deployed sensors to detect and track ballistic missile threats.
6. The interception is a move that the Pentagon says is akin to hitting a bullet with another bullet — though at far higher speeds.
7. Initial indications are that the test met its primary objective, but program officials will continue to evaluate system performance based upon telemetry and other data obtained during the test.

FIRST DRAFT NUCLEAR BAN TREATY

A U.N. conference on eliminating nuclear weapons published its first draft text on 22 May 2017, in the face of strong opposition from the United States and other nuclear armed states. The treaty would require ratification by 40 states to come into force. It could not strip current nuclear states of their arsenals but its backers seek to stigmatise nuclear arms, after similar campaigns against cluster munitions and landmines.

DEADLINE FOR POLAND

The European Union set a June deadline for Poland and Hungary to start admitting their share of migrants from overstretched Italy and Greece or risk sanctions. Eastern European countries like Hungary and Poland have opposed an EU plan adopted in 2015 to take in 160,000 Syrian, Eritrean and Iraq asylum seekers from Greece and Italy.

What

1. Under so-called EU “infringement proceedings” **Brussels sends a letter to national governments to demand legal explanations over certain issues, before possibly referring them to the European Court of Justice.**
2. EU states can eventually face stiff financial penalties if they fail to comply.

3. The relocation plan was launched to help people fleeing the mainly Muslim war-torn countries of Syria and Iraq as well as the repressive east African state of Eritrea.

'FLAMMABLE ICE' MINES SUCCESSFULLY

China has successfully mined 'flammable ice' from under the South China Sea, describing the advance as a major breakthrough and the key to future global energy supply. The ice-like compounds, called Methane hydrates, hold vast reserves of natural gas trapped in water molecules.

What

1. Officially known as methane clathrates or hydrates, they are formed at very low temperatures and under high pressure.
2. They can be found in sediments under the ocean floor as well as underneath permafrost on land. Despite the low temperature, these hydrates are flammable.
3. One cubic metre of the compound releases about 160 cubic metres of gas, making it a highly energy-intensive fuel.
4. Methane hydrates were discovered in Russia in the 1960s, but research into how to extract gas from them from maritime sediment only began in the last 10 to 15 years.
5. The compound is thought to have the potential to be a revolutionary energy source that could be key to future energy needs and likely the **world's last great source of carbon-based fuel**.

INDIA, SPAIN SIGN 7 AGREEMENTS

India and Spain on 31 May 2017 signed seven agreements, including on cyber security and technical cooperation in civil aviation, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the European country. The agreements were signed after Prime Minister Modi held wide-ranging talks with Spanish President Mariano Rajoy at the Moncloa Palace in the Spanish capital.

What

1. The two sides signed agreements on transfer of sentenced persons and visa waiver for holders of diplomatic passports.
2. Five MoUs were signed between the two countries on cooperation in organ transplantation, cyber security, renewable energy, civil aviation and one between India's Foreign Service Institute and Diplomatic Academy of Spain.
3. Modi, the first Indian prime minister to visit Spain since 1988, praised the Spanish president saying under Rajoy's leadership the country has undergone economic reforms "which is also the biggest priority of my government."
4. Spain is India's seventh largest trading partner in the European Union. Two-way trade totalled USD 5.27 billion in 2016.

NEW PRESIDENT OF ECUADOR

Lenin Moreno was sworn in as president of Ecuador following a tight race that the disabled former vice president won on promises of maintaining the social programs of his leftist predecessor Rafael Correa.

What

1. The 64-year-old Moreno, a socialist, last month won a runoff vote in the oil-exporting country, bucking a shift to the right in South America as leftist governments struggle to maintain support.
2. Guillermo Lasso, a former banker, called for a recount after losing the runoff election. The electoral council upheld Moreno's 2.3 percent margin of victory.

NEW PRIME MINISTER OF FRANCE

French President Emmanuel Macron has appointed Edouard Philippe as the new prime minister of France. At 46, Edouard Philippe would be the second-youngest Prime Minister of France after Laurent Fabius (1984 to 1986), who was 37 at the time of appointment.

Philippe is the Mayor of the port city Le Havre since 2010 and is a member of the Les Républicains party .

G-7 SUMMIT ENDS

The G-7 summit 2017 hosted by Italy for two consecutive days including world's wealthiest democracies ended on 27 May 2017 without a finalised decision on climate change. Climate change being the most problematic issue for this summit, US President Donald Trump refused to sign an agreement in unanimity with other leaders on global climate change following a lengthy discussion at G-7 summit saying he wants more time to decide whether to back 2015 Paris Agreement. **The G-7 leaders agreed to Trump's stance on trade. He had previously described Germany's trade as poor because of its surplus with United States.**

What

1. The leaders hoped that **the summit would focus more on Europe's** migration crisis and the problems of neighbouring Africa.
2. Niger President Mahamadou Issoufou urged the G-7 to take urgent measures to end the crisis in Libya — the point of departure for hundreds of thousands of migrants looking for a better life in Europe.
3. Host Italy was disappointed not to receive more backing for its call to open up more legal channels for immigration to try to slow the flow of people risking their lives to reach Europe on flimsy boats from lawless Libya.
4. The European Union and the United States imposed sanctions on Russia after Moscow annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and pledged to up the penalties if Russian interference in Ukraine intensified.
5. The initial G-7 discussions was dominated by security questions and the leaders called **on internet service providers and social media firms** to “substantially increase” their efforts to rein in extremist content.

CHINA LAUNCHES SNPS

China on 28 May 2017 launched national satellite navigation and positioning system (SNPS) which will provide positioning service to transportation, emergency medical rescue and city planning and management. It is the largest in the country and boasts the widest coverage. The system consists of 2,700 base stations, a national database centre and 30 provincial level database centres.

What

1. The system, featuring faster speed, higher accuracy and wider coverage, will be compatible with other satellite navigation systems, such as the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System and Global Position System (GPS).
2. The system is able to provide positioning service to transportation, emergency medical rescue and city planning and management.
3. China will launch some 18 Beidou navigation satellites by 2018. Six to eight Beidou satellites will be sent into orbit in the second half this year.
4. Till last year China had a constellation of 32 satellites for the navigation system.
5. Beidou satellite navigation system can provide services for countries along the Belt and Road Initiative by 2018.
6. By 2020, the Beidou satellites will form a complete global satellite navigation system.

DEAL SIGN ON MARITIME SECURITY

India and Mauritius signed a maritime security agreement after extensive talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the visiting Mauritius PM Pravind Jugnauth. Both agreed that effective management of conventional and non-conventional threats in the Indian Ocean is essential to pursue economic opportunities and provide security to the people of both the countries.

What

1. The bilateral maritime pact is expected to strengthen cooperation and capacities, he said, noting that the two sides also agreed to strengthen wide-ranging cooperation in hydrography for a secure and peaceful maritime domain.
2. The two countries need to ensure that the sea lanes of communications are secure and regular patrolling is conducted to combat illegal activities such as piracy, illegal fishing in territorial waters and drug trafficking. India also announced a \$500 million line of credit to Mauritius.

ECONOMY

GOVERNMENT AMENDS DEFINITION OF START-UPS

The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), which is the nodal body for Start-up India, has amended the definition of a start-up. As per the new definition, an entity will be considered as a Start-Up if its turnover is less than Rs 25 crore and has not completed seven years from the date of its incorporation/registration.

What

1. In the definition, the change is with respect to the time period which is currently five years.
2. The new definition has increased it to 7 years taking into the consideration the long gestation period involved in establishing start-ups.
3. The scope of definition of start-up will also be widened to include scalability of business model with potential of employment generation or wealth creation.
4. The process of recognition of an entity as a start-up will be through an online application made over the mobile app/portal set up by the DIPP.
5. For the Start-Ups in the biotechnology sector, they will be considered as start-ups for a period of up to 10 years from the date of incorporation/registration.
6. Start-ups will not require a letter of recommendation from an incubator or an industry association to get tax benefits under the Start-up India action plan.
7. An entity will be deemed as a start-up if it is working towards innovation, development or improvement of products/processes/services, or if it is a scalable business model with potential for employment generation or wealth creation.
8. The new definition and amendments will help to ease of starting new business and will promote the start-up ecosystem.
9. It will create more jobs and promote entrepreneurship under the Start-up India scheme.

83 SERVICES EXEMPT IN GST

Thirteen services including travelling by road and by air in the economy class or to any airport covered under the **government's regional connectivity scheme** will attract a concessional 5% goods and service tax (GST) rate, while seven services including rail freight, business class air travel and construction services will be taxed at 12%, as per the full GST schedule on services released by the federal indirect tax body the GST Council.

What

1. The Council decided to continue tax exemption on services including health, education, select government services, budget hotels charging less than Rs1,000 a day and services given to international bodies like the UN.
2. It also added a new item to the exemption list —services provided by the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN), the company that provides the IT infrastructure to union and state governments and union territories for the new indirect tax regime. That takes the total number of services out of GST to 83.
3. The government has over the last several years widened the service tax base through a negative list-based approach as per which all services other than those that are specifically excluded from taxation are taxed.

INDIA'S MOST PROFITABLE PSU

Indian Oil Corp (IOC) has overtaken Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) to become India's most profitable state-owned company. IOC, which has for decades been India's biggest company by turnover, posted a 70 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 19,106.40 crore in the financial year ended March 31, 2017. This was more than the Rs 17,900 crore net profit ONGC posted in the 2016-17 fiscal, making IOC the most profitable PSU, according to earning statements of the companies.

What

1. Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries retained the crown of being India's most profitable company for the third year in a row, posting a net Rs 29,901 crore in financial year 2016-17.
2. Tata Consultancy Services, India's largest software services exporter, with a net profit of Rs 26,357 crore was the second most profitable company in the country.
3. ONGC was long India's most profitable company but lost the crown to private sector Reliance and TCS a couple of years back. It has now been unseated as the most profitable PSU by IOC.
4. While IOC Chairman B Ashok attributed the profit growth to higher refining margins, inventory gains and operational efficiencies, ONGC Chairman and Managing Director Dinesh K Sarraf said.
5. ONGC is the country's biggest gas producer, accounting for some 80 per cent of the 70 million standard cubic meters per day current output.

DOORS CLOSE OF FIPB

The Union Cabinet on 24 May 2017 approved winding up of the 25-year-old Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB), which has been vetting foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals requiring government approval, and it will be replaced by a new mechanism.

What

1. This is the latest in a series of steps taken aimed at attracting more FDI. The FIPB was set up under the Prime Minister's Office soon after India embarked on its first market reforms in 1991, in a departure from decades of socialist planning.
2. The FIPB will be replaced by a new mechanism under which the proposals will be approved by the ministries concerned as per the standard operating procedure approved by the Cabinet, he added.
3. Currently, only 11 sectors, including defence and retail trading, require government approval for FDI.
4. About 91-95 per cent of FDI proposals are under the automatic route.
5. There could also be a provision for quarterly review of pending proposals by the economic affairs secretary and annual review by the finance minister.
6. The FDI proposals above Rs 5,000 crore would continue to be cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA).
7. The inflow of FDI into India increased by 9 per cent to \$43.48 billion in 2016-17.

COUNTRY'S MOST VALUABLE BRAND

The House of Tatas has retained its position as **India's leading brand** in valuation firm **Brand Finance's annual study of the country's top 100 names**. But the 150-year-old group's brand value has fallen four per cent to \$13.1 billion in 2017 over 2016, according to findings shared exclusively by the UK-based valuation firm with Business Standard. The firm says the drop is not a result of the boardroom battle the diversified conglomerate, which saw erstwhile chairman Cyrus Mistry ousted in October last year.

What

1. The drop in Tata brand value this year is due to challenges faced by the salt-to-software group in multiple industries.
2. Among the other brands in the top 10 list for 2017 are Airtel at number two (brand value: \$7.7 billion), LIC at third position (brand value: \$6.8 billion), Infosys at fourth

position (\$6.2 billion), SBI at fifth position (\$5.5 billion), Reliance at sixth position (\$4.8 billion), L&T at seventh (\$4.6 billion), Indian Oil at eighth (\$4.5 billion), HCL at ninth (\$4.4 billion) and Mahindra at tenth position (\$3.5 billion).

3. SBI is the other brand, apart from Tata, in the top 10 list to have seen its valuation drop from \$5.7 billion to \$5.5 billion.

PAYTM PAYMENTS BANK LAUNCHED

Paytm Payments Bank Ltd on 23 May 2017 rolled out its banking operations. With the launch of Paytm Payments Bank, there are now three payments bank in the country, including Airtel Payments Bank Ltd and India Post Payments Bank Ltd. Payments bank is a differentiated bank which allows customers to open a savings account for a deposit amount of up to Rs1 lakh. As of now, Paytm Payments Bank is offering the service by invitation only.

What

1. The newly launched Paytm Payments Bank is offering 4% interest rate on savings account. Its competitor Airtel Payments Bank is giving 7.25% interest on deposits in savings accounts, while India Post Payments Bank is providing 5.5% interest on deposits depending on the amount.
2. **Paytm Payments Bank's interest rate is in line with all the large commercial banks**, including State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and ICICI Bank Ltd, which continue to offer 4% interest rate on savings account deposits. Some of the smaller banks, including Yes Bank Ltd and RBL Bank Ltd, offer 5.5-7.1% interest rate on savings accounts, depending on the deposit amount.
3. India Post Payments Bank is offering three kinds of accounts: one regular and two basic savings bank deposit accounts.
4. **Paytm Payments Bank's cash withdrawal charges using the ATM is similar to any other major bank of the country.**
5. Paytm Payments Bank will provide Rupay debit card to its customers at an annual subscription cost of Rs100 plus delivery charges.
6. Paytm Payments Bank will provide online fund transfer services such as Immediate Payment Service (IMPS), Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and National Electronic Fund Transfer (NEFT) free of cost.

CONVENTION ON BEPS

The Cabinet on gave its go-ahead for signing of a multilateral convention to implement tax treaty to check evasion by preventing Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS). The convention is an outcome of the OECD/G20 BEPS Project to tackle BEPS through tax planning strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations, resulting in little or no overall corporate tax being paid. The final BEPS project identified 15 actions to address BEPS in a comprehensive manner.

What

1. Implementation of the final BEPS Package requires changes to more than 3,000 bilateral tax treaties which will be burdensome and time-consuming.
2. The convention was conceived as a multilateral instrument which would swiftly modify all covered bilateral tax treaties (Covered Tax Agreements/CTA) to implement BEPS measures.
3. For this purpose, formation of an Ad-hoc Group for the development of such multilateral instrument was endorsed by the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors in February 2015.
4. India was part of the Ad Hoc Group of more than 100 countries and jurisdictions from G20, OECD, BEPS associates and other interested countries, which worked on an equal footing on the finalisation of the text of the Multilateral Convention, starting May 2015.
5. The convention has been opened for signature as on December 31, 2016, and a first joint signing ceremony is scheduled to be held in Paris on June 7.

6. Signature is the first step in the process of expressing consent to be bound by the convention, which will become binding only upon ratification.
7. A list of Covered Tax Agreements as well as a list of reservations and options chosen by a country are required to be made at the time of signature or when depositing the instrument of ratification.

IOC, REC ENTER MSCI INDEX

Two state-owned firms Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) will be included in the MSCI India index, while drug firm Divis Laboratories will move out. Shares of IOC rose by 1.09 per cent to settle at Rs 446.45 on BSE.

What

1. Divis Laboratories will move out from the index. Shares of the company ended flat at Rs 623.85, down 0.06 per cent.
2. 15 companies would be added to the index, while 11 will move out.
3. Additions in the MSCI India index include BSE, Dr Lal PathLabs, while those who would move out are AstraZeneca Pharma, Coffee Day Enterprises, Unitech among others.
4. MSCI is a leading provider of benchmark indices globally.

OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE FOR BAD LOAN RESOLUTION

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on 22 May 2017 proposed expanding the scope of oversight committees and a larger role for credit rating agencies as it draws up an action plan to deal **with the Indian banking system's Rs7.7 trillion bad loan problem. Earlier this month, the government moved an ordinance empowering the central bank to intervene directly in stressed asset cases.**

What

1. It was planned to allow the oversight panel to look at cases beyond S4A (Scheme for Sustainable Restructuring of Stressed Assets).
2. Secondly, the central bank has proposed creating an advisory committee of its independent board members. The regulator said it was working on a framework that will **allow "objective and consistent decision making process" or invoking the insolvency and bankruptcy code.**
3. The NPA ordinance gives government powers to authorize RBI to invoke the insolvency and bankruptcy code against defaulters.
4. The central bank also said it was considering revising the current rules on restructuring **so that stressed assets can be resolved in a "value optimising manner."**
5. Bankers have asked RBI for more powers to push errant borrowers to give up ownership and voting rights, effect a management change and even split the debt into sustainable and unsustainable parts to better restructure loans.
6. Currently, there are rigid rules for invoking these powers, a key reason for the failure of these schemes, according to bankers.

FINANCIAL SERVICES COMPANIES GLOBALLY

Mortgage lender HDFC Ltd is the only Indian company to be named among the top 10 consumer financial services companies in the world, with American Express claiming the first position. With profits of \$1.6 billion and sales of \$8.1 billion, HDFC has been ranked seventh on the Forbes Global List 2017 in the consumer financial services sector — same as last year. The company has been featured in the coveted list for the third consecutive year.

What

1. American Express topped the list followed by Capital One Financial and Visa in the second and third place, respectively.
2. The other consumer finance services companies that made it into the list include Orix at the fourth place, Synchrony Financial (5th), Discover Financial Services (6th), Mastercard (8th), PayPal (9th) and CIT group (10th).
3. As many as 58 Indian companies appeared in the overall Forbes Global 2000 list.

4. **The comprehensive ranking of the world's biggest, most powerful and valuable publicly listed companies** is based on a mix of four metrics: sales, profits, assets and market value. Forbes gave an equal weighting of all four metrics to rank companies according to size.

INDIA IS SECOND MOST COMPLEX TAX JURISDICTION

Indian tax laws are perceived to be second most complex in the Asia-Pacific region, becoming even less predictable over the last three years, a Deloitte survey has said. India ranks only after China in having most complex jurisdiction for taxation and most complicated requirements of tax, the Asia Pacific Tax Complexity Survey conducted by Deloitte said. Japan, Australia, Indonesia and South Korea trail India in the complexity index.

What

1. In these two jurisdictions (China and India), well over half of the respondents believe complexity in the regime has increased in the last 3 years.
2. The report surveyed over 300 financial and tax executives on their views of the current and anticipated tax environment of 20 jurisdictions across Asia Pacific. Of the respondents, 147 had business operations in India.
3. While developed markets have the most consistent tax regime, in India, China and Indonesia, it has become less predictable, the survey said.
4. Jurisdictions like Hong Kong and Japan offer stability that investors seek whereas China and India offer promise against a more challenging social, economic and tax environment.
5. There is a general satisfaction with tax environments in the more developed jurisdictions while significant opportunities exist for emerging economies to improve their predictability and consistency of their tax environments.
6. Many respondents felt reforms were needed in India around administration of tax, like training for tax officers to improve understanding of taxpayers.
7. In addition to GST, introduction of GAAR from April 2017 and adoption of BEPS (Base Erosion and Profit Shifting) actions will increase complexity over next 2—3 years in the field of M&A tax and indirect tax in particular.
8. As regards tax audits, the report said in larger jurisdictions like China, India, Australia and Japan, most feel that tax audits conducted by authorities are rigorous and many are witnessing high frequency of such audits.
9. India, at 45 per cent, is the jurisdiction known to have the most rigorous tax audits.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NEW BACTERIA NAMED AFTER KALAM

Scientists at NASA have named a new organism discovered by them after the A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Till date, the new organism — a form of bacteria — has been found only on the International Space Station (ISS) and has not been found on earth. Researchers at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), the foremost lab of NASA for work on interplanetary travel, discovered the new bacteria on the filters of the International Space Station (ISS) and named it *Solibacillus kalamii* to honour the late President, who was a renowned aerospace scientist.

What

1. Dr. Kalam had his early training at NASA in 1963 **before he set up India's first rocket-launching facility** in the fishing village of Thumba in Kerala.
2. The name of the bacterium is *Solibacillus kalamii*, the species name is after Dr. Abdul Kalam and genus name is *Solibacillus* which is a spore-forming bacteria.
3. Today the ISS is the size of a football field and its construction started with a launch in 1998 and as of now it is the largest human-made object orbiting the earth.
4. Weighing about 419 tonnes, it can house a maximum of six astronauts and has costs roughly USD 150 billion.

NEW MOON FOUND

Scientists have discovered a new moon orbiting the third largest dwarf planet that resides in the frigid outskirts in our solar system. With this discovery, most of the known dwarf planets in the Kuiper Belt larger than 965 kilometres across have companions. These bodies provide insight into how moons formed in the young solar system.

What

1. The combined power of three space observatories, including **NASA's** Hubble Space Telescope, has helped uncover the moon orbiting the dwarf planet 2007 OR10 in the **Kuiper Belt, a realm of icy debris left over from our solar system's formation 4.6 billion years ago.**
2. The discovery of satellites around all of the known large dwarf planets – except for Sedna – means that at the time these bodies formed billions of years ago, collisions must have **been more frequent, and that's a constraint on the formation models," said Csaba Kiss** of the Konkoly Observatory in Hungary.
3. The objects most likely slammed into each other more often because they inhabited a crowded region. The team uncovered the moon in archival images of 2007 OR10 taken by the Hubble Telescope.
4. Gravitationally bound to 2007 OR10 because it moves with the dwarf planet, as seen against a background of stars.

NEW 'STYROFOAM' PLANET FOUND

Researchers have discovered a new giant planet orbiting an extremely bright star 320 light years from Earth that has the density of styrofoam. **This "puffy planet" outside our solar system may hold opportunities for testing atmospheres that will be useful when assessing future planets for signs of life. It is highly inflated, so that while it is only a fifth as massive as Jupiter, it is nearly 40 per cent larger, making it about as dense as styrofoam, with an extraordinarily large atmosphere," said Joshua Pepper, assistant professor at Lehigh University in the US.** Styrofoam is a kind of expanded polystyrene used especially for making food containers.

What

1. The planet, called KELT-11b, is an extreme version of a gas planet, like Jupiter or Saturn, but is orbiting very close to its host star in an orbit that lasts less than five days.
2. The star, KELT-11, has started using up its nuclear fuel and is evolving into a red giant, so the planet will be engulfed by its star and not survive the next hundred million years.
3. The KELT (Kilodegree Extremely Little Telescope) survey uses two small robotic telescopes, one in Arizona, US and the other in South Africa. The telescopes scan the sky night after night, measuring the brightness of about five million stars.
4. The KELT project is specifically designed to discover a few scientifically valuable planets orbiting very bright stars, and KELT-11b is a prime example of that.

'SEVA' APP LAUNCHED

Union Minister of State (IC) for Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, Shri Piyush Goyal launched the Saral Eindhyan Vitaran Application (SEVA), developed in-house by Coal India Limited (CIL) for power sector consumers, here today. **SEVA is a part of 'Digital India'** initiative, which is aimed at increasing the Consumer Connect as well as the Transparency and Accountability in Coal dispatch.

What

1. These people-centric mobile apps would make the citizen empowered and hold the Government accountable for its decisions through increased transparency.
2. The SEVA Dashboard provides summary of quantity of coal dispatched along with grades for the given day, month, and the latest yearly updates as well.
3. It also provides information on rake movement including latest status of indents of rake, allotment and loading.

4. This would help consumers making advance logistics planning. Further, the app has a dedicated backend team to monitor the status of specific grievances from consumers and take action on the feedback received on the app. While much of the information on the SEVA Dashboard is available in open access, consumer specific data would be password protected.

NEW KING OF GALAXY FIND

A team of astronomers has discovered new kind of galaxies which, although extremely old – formed less than a billion years after the Big Bang – create stars more than a hundred times faster than our own Milky Way. The team made this discovery by accident when investigating quasars, which are super-massive black holes that sit at the centre of enormous galaxies, accreting matter. They were trying to study star formation in the galaxies that host these quasars.

What

1. Quasars are thought to form in regions of the universe where the large-scale density of matter is much higher than average. Those same conditions should also be conducive to galaxies forming new stars at a greatly increased rate.
2. The team also found what appears to be the earliest known example of two galaxies undergoing a merger, which is another major mechanism of galaxy growth.
3. The new observations provide the first direct evidence that such mergers have been taking place even at the earliest stages of galaxy evolution, less than a billion years after the Big Bang.

JUNO REVEALS FIRST RESULT

Jupiter's poles are covered in Earth-sized swirling storms that are densely clustered and rubbing together, reveal first science results from NASA's Juno mission to the largest planet in our solar system.

What

1. The results also showed that Jupiter's magnetic field is even stronger than models expected, and more irregular in shape.
2. Measurements of the massive planet's magnetosphere, from Juno's magnetometer investigation (MAG) indicates the magnetic field greatly exceeded expectations at 7.766 Gauss, about 10 times stronger than the strongest magnetic field found on Earth.
3. Juno is giving us a view of the magnetic field close to Jupiter that we've never had before.
4. Launched on August 5, 2011, Juno entering Jupiter's orbit on July 4, 2016.
5. The findings from the first data-collection pass, which flew within about 4,200 kilometres of Jupiter's swirling cloud tops on August 27, were published in the journal Science.
6. Juno also is designed to study the polar magnetosphere and the origin of Jupiter's powerful auroras -- its northern and southern lights.
7. These auroral emissions are caused by particles that pick up energy, slamming into atmospheric molecules.
8. Juno's initial observations indicate that the process seems to work differently at Jupiter than at Earth.
9. Juno is in a polar orbit around Jupiter, and the majority of each orbit is spent well away from the gas giant.

MISCELLANEOUS

ROUHANI WINS IRAN'S PRESIDENT

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has won a second term in office on 20 May 2017. Rouhani defeated his conservative challenger Ebrahim Raisi in the Presidential election in a victory

for the reformist camp in the predominantly Shia nation. Over 40 million people took part in the polls and Rouhani received more than half of those counted, with some areas still to declare.

What

1. Rouhani, a moderate, was a key architect of the 2015 nuclear deal with the world powers in return for the lifting of economic sanctions. He seeks to normalise ties with the West.
2. Every incumbent President has been re-elected in Iran since 1985, when Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei himself won a second term.

COCHIN PORT TRUST BAGS TWO AWARDS

Cochin Port Trust has received two Best Performance Awards from Ministry of Shipping for the highest growth in operating surplus and also for achieving third highest growth in cargo traffic among the major ports in the year 2016-17.

What

1. Cochin Port Trust has registered an operating profit of Rs. 127.72 crore during 2016-17 as against Rs. 70.89 crore during 2015-16 recording a growth of 80 per cent.
2. The Port handled 25.01 MMT cargo during 2016-17 with a growth of 13.2 per cent over 22.10 MMT handled in 2015-16.
3. The containers handled during 2016-17 are 4.91 lakh TEUs with a growth of 17.0 per cent over 4.20 lakh TEUs in 2015-16.

RANK OF INDIA IMPROVES IN ITAS

As per the UNWTO definition, International Tourist Arrivals (ITAs) comprises two components namely Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs) and Arrivals of Non-Resident Nationals. The UNWTO in its barometer ranks countries in terms of their ITAs. So far only the figures of FTAs were compiled in India. However, now India has started compiling the data arrivals of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs), also.

What

1. Due to this inclusion, **India's improved rank reflecting the true and comparable** scenario has now been acknowledged by the UNWTO.
2. **Earlier India's rank in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), 2017 had also** shown a 12 places jump from 2015. Rank of India in TTCI Report of 2017 was 40th as compared to 52nd in 2015, 65th in 2013 and 68th in 2011.
3. While UNWTO gives ranking in terms of numbers of ITAs, TTCI is composed of 14 pillars organized into four sub-indices of 'Enabling Environment', 'Travel & Trade Policy and Enabling Conditions', **'Infrastructure'** and **'Natural and Cultural Resources'**.

ANIL DAVE PASSES AWAY

Anil Madhav Dave was a man with many feathers in his cap. He was an author, pilot, party strategist and, most importantly, a passionate environmental activist. Appointed as **environment minister during a Cabinet reshuffle in 2016, Dave's work through his** NGO, Narmada Samagra, made him an expert in river conservation.

What

1. Dave founded the NGO Narmada Samagra for conservation of the Narmada river. He has been campaigning for many years to clean up the highly polluted river body. Recently, Madhya Pradesh Assembly passed a resolution declaring the river as a living entity. The state government also kickstarted Narmada Seva Yatra, a campaign to clean the river.
2. In 2009, Dave was elected to the Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh. He was part of various parliamentary committees and served as Chairman for the Select Committee on Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill 2013.
3. He was also known for successfully organising the World Hindi Conference in Bhopal and an international conference on the occasion of Simhastha (Kumbh) Mela in Ujjain.

4. **Dave was born to Pushpa and Madhav Dave on July 6, 1956 in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain district.**

DR. HARSH VARDHAN ASSUMES CHARGE AS ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, assumed charge at the IP Bhavan, following the sudden and untimely demise of former Minister of State (Independent Charge) Shri Anil Madhav Dave.

IDB 2017 CELEBRATED

The International Day for Biodiversity (IDB) 2017 was celebrated all over the country on 22 May 2017, by different States and various organisations. The national level celebrations of IDB were held at Dinanath Mangeshkar Auditorium, Kala Academy in Goa, with enthusiastic participation of all stakeholders. Chief Minister of Goa, Shri Manohar Parrikar was the chief guest on the occasion.

What

1. The Chief Minister inaugurated an exhibition on the theme and Green Haat, which had exhibits from 12 States including Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh besides stalls from UNDP, GIZ, Zoological Survey of India, Botanical Survey of India, Goa Forest Department, Goa State Biodiversity Board and NBA.
2. During the event, Call for 2018 India Biodiversity Awards, and a newsletter **'Biodiversity Matters' was launched.**
3. In India, a recognized megadiverse country rich in biodiversity, nearly 300 million people are dependent on biodiversity for subsistence and livelihoods.
4. Across India, people, communities, governments and civil society organizations are demonstrating ways to conserve biodiversity, sustain livelihoods, and contribute to sustainable development.

WORLD'S LARGEST AIRCRAFT COMPLETES TEST FLIGHT

The world's largest aircraft has successfully completed a test flight, bringing the massive helium-filled airship one step closer to commercial use. The hybrid aircraft dubbed the Airlander 10 combines technology from airplanes, helicopters and airships. It is designed to fly at altitudes of 6,100 meters for up to five days when manned. With a length of 92 metres, it is the largest aircraft currently flying.

What

1. **On May 10, the Airlander 10 flew for a total of 180 minutes to test the aircraft's handling,** improved landing technology and more, according to Hybrid Air Vehicles, the British company that built the aircraft.
2. This was only the third flight of the Airlander 10. It first successfully flew in 2012 as **part of the US Army's Long Endurance Multi-intelligence Vehicle programme.**
3. The modified Airlander 10 made its maiden voyage in August last year, kicking off a flight **test programme to assess the aircraft's performance and attempting to fly the airship** farther away from its base.

WORLD'S MOST DENSELY POPULATED CITIES

Two Indian cities — Mumbai and Kota have been named among the worlds most crowded in a list topped by Dhaka, said World Economic Forum (WEF) citing UN Habitat data. With a population density of 44,500 people per square kilometre, Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is the most crowded city on the planet, **followed by India's financial capital** Mumbai, home to 31,700 people per square kilometre at the second place. Kota in Rajasthan with 12,100 people per square kilometre was ranked seventh.

What

1. Others in the list include Medellin in Columbia ranked third with 19,700 people per square kilometre, Manila, Philippines (4th, 14,800), Casablanca, Morocco (5th, 14,200), Lagos, Nigeria (6th, 13,300), Singapore (8th, 10,200) and Jakarta, Indonesia (9th, 9,600).
2. There are various reasons why vast numbers of people decide to settle in urban areas, but in the majority of cases it boils down to the simple fact that cities are where the work is.
3. **Kibera, Africa's biggest slum, is just 5 km from Nairobi city centre** and is infamous for its poverty and its metal shacks built millimetres away from railway lines, while Dharavi in Mumbai has a reported density of over 200,000 people per square kilometre.

NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF WHO

Former Ethiopian Health Minister Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been elected the new Director-General of the World Health Organisation, an election keenly watched by pro-health and patient advocacy groups. Nominated by the Ethiopian government, Tedros, as he is reportedly known as, will take charge in July, for a five-year term. He takes over from Margaret Chan who in her two-term stint since January 2007 oversaw global public health crises such as H1N1 (swine flu) and Ebola, more recently. The election is the first where all WHO member-states participated in the voting process.

What

1. Tedros will have to tackle challenges like the spread of the Zika virus and Ebola alongside existing public health concerns like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, to name a few.
2. Tedros has worn different hats including that of Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs Minister (2012-2016) and Health Minister (2005-2012).
3. He has also served as chair of the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; as chair of the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership Board, and as co-chair of the Board of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

FIRST INDIAN TO WIN GOLD IN INTERNATIONAL FENCING TOURNAMENT

India's C.A Bhavani Devi has become first Indian to win a Gold Medal in an international fencing tournament. She has won the gold medal in the sabre event of the Turnoi Satellite Fencing Championship held at Reykjavik in Iceland. In the final, she beat Sarah Jane Hampson of Great Britain 15-13 on points. C A Bhavani Devi is a sabre fencer from Chennai. She had previously won silver medal in another event. She is currently a fencing coach at Sagar Lagu's training academy, the SAI Centre in Thalassery, Kerala.

SHORT FILMS ON FLAGSHIP SCHEME

The Government in the last three years had taken various initiatives for the welfare of the people ensuring Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas. The 14 Short Films produced by Doordarshan showcased the success stories under various Flagship Schemes of the **Government which had positively impacted people's lives** and had brought a transformational change in the country. The films have successfully portrayed the underlying development narrative through testimonials from the beneficiaries at the field level all across the country. These films would be showcased on all Doordarshan channels in Hindi and all other Indian languages with the purpose to motivate and inspire others also to use the benefits under various Flagship Schemes of the Government. These films would also be used by all other Media units of the Ministry of I&B to enhance outreach across media platforms. Ministry of I&B would be facilitating the outreach programmes of the Government through MODI (Making of Developed India) fests all across the country along with its media units.

Themes have been covered in the short films

1. Mission Indradhanush
2. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna and Soil Health Card
3. Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas

4. Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana
5. Skill India
6. Beti Bachao Beto Padhao
7. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojna
8. Kaushal Bharat Kushal Bharat
9. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojna
10. National Solar Mission under Ujjwal Bharat

WORLD'S FIRST INFRARED TELESCOPE

The world's largest optical and infrared telescope is being built in Chile that will help scientists understand the inner-workings of the universe. With a main mirror 39 metres in diameter, the Extremely Large Telescope (ELT) is being built by the European Southern Observatory (ESO). ELT is also designed to be an adaptive telescope and has the ability to correct atmospheric turbulence, taking telescope engineering to another level.

What

1. The future giant telescope set for completion in 2024 will be built on top of Cerro Armazones, a 3,046-metre peak mountain in Chile.
2. Oxford University scientists are playing a key role in the project, and are responsible for the design and construction of its spectrograph; 'HARMONI', an instrument designed to simultaneously take 4,000 images, each in a slightly different colour.
3. The visible and near-infrared instrument will harness the telescope's adaptive optics to provide extremely sharp images.
4. 'HARMONI' will enable scientists to form a more detailed picture of the formation and evolution of objects in the universe.
5. It is the element of 'exploring the unknown' that most excites me about the ELT. It will be an engineering feat, and its sheer size and light grasp will dwarf all other telescopes that we have built to date.
6. The ELT will produce discoveries that we simply cannot imagine today, and it will surely inspire numerous people around the world to think about science, technology and our place in the universe.

SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI PURASKAR

Satyabrata Rout has been awarded Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar for the year 2016. He is a professor from the Department of Theatre Arts, S N School of Arts and Communication, University of Hyderabad (UoH). He has been awarded for developing a unique method of teaching and practicing direction and design achieved from his experience working with eminent theatre practitioners and scholars. Satyabrata Rout is **considered as one of the pioneers of 'visual theatre' in India.**

What

1. The Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar (Akademi Award) is an award given by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.
2. The award is the highest Indian recognition given to practicing artists. The award includes a purse of Rs 50000, besides a Tamrapatra and Angavastram.
3. The awards are being presented in the categories of music, dance, theatre, other traditional arts and puppetry.
4. The award was set up in 1953 for the promotion of performing arts.
5. The Sangeet Natak Akademi is an Autonomous Body under the Ministry of Culture.
6. It acts at the national level body for the promotion and growth of Indian music, dance and drama; maintenance of standards of training in the performing arts; recognition of outstanding artists; revival, preservation, documentation and dissemination of materials as well as instruments relating to various forms of music, dance and drama.

FIRST INDIAN WOMEN TO SCALE MOUNT EVEREST FOUR TIMES

Anshu Jamsenpa, a native of Bomdila in Arunachal Pradesh has scripted history by becoming the first Indian woman to scale Mount Everest for the fourth time. Anshu Jamsenpa who is a mother of two children had already had ascended Mount Everest twice in a season that too taking only a gap of 10 days between the two climbs. She scaled the highest peak twice in May 2011. She again conquered the peak on May 18, 2013. Anshu began her summit expedition after 38 days of acclimatization and scaling several nearby peaks and passes.

What

1. Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay of Nepal were the first climbers to conquer Mount Everest.
2. They achieved this feat on May 29, 1953. Reinhold Messner, an Italian explorer became the first person to scale Mount Everest without supplemental oxygen in 1978.
3. He is also first climber to ascend all fourteen peaks over 8,000 metres (26,000 ft) above sea level, including the Mount Everest.

INDIAN LEAD UN PROBE INTO ROHINGYA CRACKDOWN

The United Nations on 30 May 2017 appointed an Indian human rights lawyer and two other experts to a fact-finding mission investigating alleged killings, rape and torture by security forces against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar's Rakhine state. The mission will be led by Indira Jaising, an advocate of the Supreme Court of India, a UN statement said. The other two members are Harvard-trained Sri Lankan lawyer Radhika Coomaraswamy and Australian consultant Christopher Dominic.

What

1. A UN report from February, based on interviews with some of the Rohingya refugees, said **Myanmar's security forces have committed mass killings and gang rapes of Rohingya in a campaign that "very likely" amounts to crimes against humanity and possibly ethnic cleansing.**
2. The UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to set up the mission in March. It was brought by the European Union and supported by countries including the United States that called for **"ensuring full accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims"**.
3. China and India distanced themselves from the resolution. Aung San Suu Kyi, the **de facto leader of Myanmar's civilian government and also its foreign minister, has said she would only accept recommendations from a separate advisory commission led by former UN chief Kofi Annan.**
4. **Jaising drafted India's first domestic violence act**, allowing women to bring civil and criminal suits against attackers for the first time.
5. The mission will present an oral update to the UN Human Rights Council in September and a full report in March 2018. The members will meet in Geneva to plan their work.

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

World No-Tobacco Day (WNTD) is observed every year across the world on 31 May. This day highlights the health risks associated with consumption all forms of tobacco and advocates for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. In 1988, World Health Assembly of WHO had passed a resolution calling for the celebration of World No Tobacco Day, every year on May 31. Since then, the WHO has supported the observance of World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) every year.

What

1. WNTD is one of eight official global public health campaigns marked by the WHO. **Tobacco has emerged as world's single biggest cause of preventable death.**
2. The report has estimated that by 2030, over 80% of the deaths will occur in developing countries which are increasingly targeted by tobacco companies.
3. This is the first time the report has looked into the environmental impact of tobacco use.

DAN DAVID PRIZE

Indian scientist Shrinivas Kulkarni has won the prestigious Dan David prize as a recognition for his contributions made in the field of astronomy. Shrinivas Kulkarni, a professor of astrophysics and planetary science at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, is a pioneer in the field of time-domain astrophysics. He has been credited for building and conducting the Palomar Transient Factory, which is a large-area survey of the night sky that has turned up with thousands of stellar explosions. He would share the award with Andrej Udalski of the University of Warsaw and Neil Gehrels of NASA for their discoveries on time-domain astrophysics in the “Future” category of the prize. With this award, Shrinivas Kulkarni will join other prominent Indians who have won the Dan David prize like noted author Amitav Ghosh, music conductor Zubin Mehta and renowned chemist CNR Rao.

What

1. The Dan David Foundation was established in 2000 by the late Dan David, an international businessman and philanthropist.
2. Three Dan David prizes of \$1 million each are awarded each year in the categories of **“Past,” “Present” and “Future”** to people who have made exemplary contributions to humanity in the field of sciences, humanities, or for their work in civil society.
3. **The recipients in the “Past” category are chosen from the field of history, archaeology, paleontology, biography, etc.**
4. **The recipients in the “Present” category are chosen from arts, media, policy, economics, etc.**
5. **The recipients in the “Future” category are chosen from one of the exact or natural sciences.**
6. The prize mandates the laureates to donate 10% of their prize money to provide scholarships for graduate or post-graduate researchers in their respective fields.